

Hidden Champions: The Trend Hunter



"My interview took place walking Steffi Czerny's dogs." Laughing, Alexandra Schiel, Head of Europe's leading digital conference *DLD*, remembers her first meeting with the *DLD* founder. At the time, she applied for an internship and was in the final stages of her business studies: "Actually, I was afraid of dogs, but of course I didn't let that show. The first meeting lasted only five minutes, then I got a verbal confirmation - in the park! As always, Steffi trusted in her gut feeling and her knowledge of human nature. I've been there for 12 years now - so she seems to have been right."

Gut feeling and people skills

One of the basic virtues of *DLD* are a good intuition when it comes to people, easily connecting with others, courage and simply listening to one's gut feeling. Many international superstars had their first appearances at *DLD* when they were still relatively unknown to a wide audience: Only a few months after the German launch of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg explained his vision of the social media platform. And Lady Gaga sang and danced at the innovation conference long before she became an international pop icon.

From intern to honey bee

After her internship, Alex, as everyone calls her, stayed and worked her way up to Head of *DLD*. In this role she is responsible for the content, topics and speakers of the conferences. Today, she reaches out to the audience, identifies trends and has to rely on her gut feeling again and again. "My work is a bit like that of a honey bee. I always swarm out, go to conferences, talk to interesting people who would fit *DLD* and keep up to date. This is how I collect the nectar, which we then regularly process into honey at our *DLD* events. The participants can only guess how much work is actually behind it."

Alex has always been passionate about digital technologies and has been there since the second ever *DLD* event. "At my first *DLD*, I met Marissa Mayer, at that time she was No. 7 at Google and still looked very unremarkable and shy - later she became CEO of Yahoo," Alex remembers. "We had given her the Aenne Burda Award for Creative Leadership and the marble trophy was still so big and heavy that we had to roll onto the stage with a trolley that we had borrowed from catering. We just improvised and quickly threw two tablecloths over it to make it look like something - the award has become a bit smaller and handier ever since."

What's behind the horizon?

But what hasn't changed since the first *DLD* conference is the wide range of topics and the variety of participants, who are all experts in their fields: "We want to connect people with each other who might not otherwise cross paths. You might ask yourself what an artist could talk about with a scientist or with a CEO, but that's exactly what *DLD*'s appeal lies in: "Connect the unexpected", looking beyond one's own nose and thereby leveraging undreamt-of synergies."

Do you want to be part of the next *DLD* event?

The third *DLD Campus* will take place in Bayreuth on 27 June. In addition to the Bavarian State Minister for Digital Affairs, Judith Gerlach, David Hanson (Hanson Robotics), Terry von Bibra (Alibaba) and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (Stanford University) will appear on the *DLD* stage at the University of Bayreuth. Further information [can be found here](#).

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