

A powerful woman in the digital world



Tanja zu Waldeck, COO of *BurdaForward* and founder of *Netmoms*

Hard work, a deep breath and a brilliant idea are the main ingredients for a successful start-up. Tanja zu Waldeck, COO of *BurdaForward*, founded the parents' portal *Netmoms* 10 years ago. At Startup Grind, a global event and networking series in which successful founders talk about their journey, she headed to the Burda Bar to share her personal experiences of setting up a company.

I caught up with her at the event to discuss topics such as native advertising, editorial content and online influencers. What has changed in the last 10 years and where do we stand today?

Tanja, you have a doctorate, spent six years working for McKinsey, founded a successful start-up and then sold it for millions. You have four children and are now COO of BurdaForward, one of Germany's largest digital publishing and marketing companies. Many people would have been busy enough with just one of these roles – you seem to do it all with ease. What drives you, where do you get your energy and who has been your greatest support?

I draw my greatest motivation from goals that challenge me and that I believe in wholeheartedly. I also need a team with whom I am happy to refine these goals – day and night if necessary. My family gives me energy and helps me to get some distance. They help me to clear my mind and gain clarity on what is actually important. After a weekend with my husband and children, I am full of energy and ready to tackle the next challenge.

When you set up Netmoms 10 years ago, the only parenting platforms were those with editorial content. You created a kind of Facebook for parents and then focused intensively on native advertising in your subsequent career. What role do editorial content, advertising and influencers play on social media today?

The boundaries between editorial content and content from influencers, experts and users have become much more fluid. The only important thing is to offer users maximum value. Social media, and Facebook in particular, bring together the things that are most important to a person – whatever the source.

This is really exciting on the one hand, and of course very dangerous on the other. In addition to personalised content, we publishers are required to act as a counterpart and provide people with key news and information, regardless of the filters they have selected.

When Netmoms first started, your site was punished by Google and for a time was not listed in the search index. You had to learn the hard way how important SEO and Google are to the success of a website. Today, 10 years and several Google algorithm updates later, the internet is totally different. Is it even possible to be independent of Google and what role does SEO actually play?

Google is a main source of traffic for almost all publishers and online offerings. Naturally, you can also build up other sources with traffic via Facebook and other social media platforms like Instagram and Pinterest. But it's particularly important to develop products, such as apps, that you control yourself. Not all services achieve this, which is why we are so proud of our large and successful apps, like the *Focus Online* and *Finanzen100* apps.

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