

# DR. FLORIAN FORSTER



## Empathic Leader Delivering Excellence in Digital, Strategy, and Transformation

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Empathic leader delivering excellence in digital, strategy, and transformation. Proven experience in scaling teams, driving growth, and implementing tech-driven solutions with 13+ years of international leadership experience across 20+ countries. Honored as a 'Top 100 Thought Leader in E-Commerce' 🔗, I excel in scaling high-performing teams from 0 to 650 FTEs, managing P&Ls exceeding €12M, and leveraging AI- and tech-driven solutions to drive growth, operational efficiency, sustainable results, and above all, a positive, goal-oriented culture.

Adaptable to complex VUCA environments, I combine hands-on execution with a strategic vision to solve challenges, deliver transformative business outcomes, and foster a growth-oriented mindset. My expertise is underpinned by a top-notch postdoctoral education 🔗 in entrepreneurship and technology, certifications in Systemic Business Coaching 🔗 and Generative AI 🔗, and senior advisory roles 🔗 - enabling me to foster trust-based cultures, empower teams, and implement innovation.

Beyond these lines, I invite you to explore my feature on the Entrepreneur Podcast 'Mission: Machen' 🔗, read testimonials from my peers 🔗, and view my further certifications 🔗 and awards 🔗 on my LinkedIn profile 🔗 and my homepage 🔗.

## WORK EXPERIENCE

### Forster&Co - Founder, Strategic Consultant & Interim / Fractional Management

Since 01/2016

- Helping organizations thrive in today's fast-paced, ambidextrous world by proving excellence in digital, strategy, and transformation through principles grounded in academia and successfully applied at international corporations 🔗.
- Senior Director** E-Commerce EMEA (Interim) at a leading global premium luxury fashion brand
- Senior Advisor** for **Arthur D. Little** (Innovation Practice) 🔗 & **Senior Advisor** for **DEFACTO** (AI & Customer Excellence) 🔗

### IU.org - International University Group - Senior Director, Global Education Excellence

01/2024 – 08/2024

- Led agile transformations of 170 FTEs for DE, UK, and CAN, boosted efficiency by +15% and employee NPS by +36 bps.
- Directed a 20-member AI/SaaS tech team to develop GenAI solutions for video/text development, cutting costs by 75% and increasing productivity by +50% through process training and workflow optimization.
- Managed a €12M P&L and achieved €1.3M annual OpEx savings through process, organization, and partner optimization.

### Alibaba.com - Country Manager - Germany, Austria, Switzerland (DACH)

04/2022 – 01/2024

- Delivered go-to-market (GTM) for Mittelstand (SME) and formed a high-performing sales and marketing team of 12 FTEs.
- Secured 10 strategic partnerships, grew B2B customer base to 100+, delivered the highest global basket value of +30%.
- Served as media spokesperson at 25+ industry events, boosted brand visibility and sales pipeline to 1000+ leads.

### zooplus - Head of Operational Excellence & Head of Customer Care & Head of Product (VP level)

09/2019 – 04/2022

- Delivered strategic guidance to the COO and board by establishing an agile Project Management Office (PMO, 12 FTEs), setting OKRs to prioritize operational and strategic improvement initiatives for 300+ FTEs across 9 departments.
- Initiated digital transformation of the global DTC customer service team (30 FTEs, 600 agents) for 5M inquiries p.a. in 22 languages with 5 BPOs. Head of Product: launched new CRM, reduced budget by 15%, and improved customer satisfaction by +25%. Stock delisting by Hellman & Friedmann and EQT.
- Championed a €900K carbon footprint offsetting program and positioned Zooplus as the industry leader in sustainability.

### Dirk Rossmann - A.S. Watson Group - Head of International Strategic Innovation

10/2018 - 09/2019

- Founded a European innovation hub, driving New Retail, digital transformation, and enhancing cross-border collaboration.
- Advised C-level on strategies to optimize operations, redesign business processes, and define new product development (e.g., self-checkout, loyalty app), improving efficiency and fostering innovation.

### Amazon.com - Acting Country Leader - Marketplace Prime Now Germany

06/2016 - 10/2018

- Launched ultra-fast delivery service in 9 months, exceeding revenue targets by +50% through cross-functional collaboration with a team of 8 and 5 strategic partners.
- Created a new logistics and organizational structure, reduced costs by 25%, and improved fulfillment efficiency and scalability through technical leadership.
- Co-founded an awarded tech initiative promoting inclusivity across thousands of Amazon employees, improved cross-team collaboration, and drove employee engagement.

### Amazon.com - Senior Program and Technical Product Manager - Marketplace Germany & Europe

05/2014 - 06/2016

- Coordinated interdisciplinary collaboration between 50 stakeholders to launch the European Fulfillment Network, reducing fulfillment costs by 20% while enhancing delivery speed and customer satisfaction. Ownership of FBA program.
- Developed business requirements and deployed an innovative data collection tool for EU Account Managers, improving seller insights by 5x accuracy and speed, driving business growth and customer satisfaction.

- Streamlined operations procedures for long-tail selection and returns, driving a +5% to +25% increase in product assortment and profitability across key European markets.

#### **HSG Entrepreneurship Campus - Head of Business Incubator & Co-founder**

**07/2010 - 11/2013**

- Co-founded business accelerator, raising €1M+ in venture funding for 13 start-ups. Co-led founder programs, high-tech venture creation, University-industry partnerships, boosting awareness and participation among vast national network.

#### **WHU Accelerator - Project Leader & Startup Coach**

**11/2008 - 07/2010**

- Launched entrepreneurial ecosystem engaging 100+ students, alumni, and industry partnerships. Securing €500K in venture funding, established a student mentoring program, participated in two international business plan competitions, and implemented a multi-stakeholder governance structure with alumni, research institutions (RWTH), and corporations.

#### **fon.com - FON Technology S.L. - Head of Business Development Central Europe**

**05/2006 - 05/2010**

- Scaled a peer-to-peer business model to achieve 2M+ hotspots globally, pioneering pre-SaaS innovations. Built strategic partnerships with major European corporations in telecom and media (e.g., DTAG, KPM, XING). Launched an urban Wi-Fi Community showcase, increased user engagement by 3x, and enhanced public network visibility in key cities.

## **EDUCATION**

#### **University of California, Berkeley - Haas School of Business - Postdoctoral Researcher and SNCF Fellow**

- Research on Sustainability and Cluster of Innovation ↗, MBA teaching staff, Berkeley Postdoc Entrepreneur Program.

#### **University of St.Gallen (HSG) - Institute of Technology Management - Doctoral Student in Entrepreneurship**

- Doctoral student, lecturer in innovation management, recognized as youngest faculty in HSG-MBA for excellence. Visiting researcher at Copenhagen Business School (CBS), DK ↗ and Max Planck Seminar for Innovation & Entrepreneurship ↗.

#### **WHU - Otto Beisheim School of Management - Doctoral Student in Entrepreneurship**

- Dr. rer. pol., equivalent to Ph.D.: Magna cum laude, lecturer for bachelor and master students. Published award-winning research papers, teachings ↗, and accolades ↗ in cooperation with DHL, the Schwab Foundation, and Vodafone.

#### **Technical University of Munich (TUM) - Graduate Student in Management and Computer Science**

- Dipl.-Kfm. Univ., equivalent to Master in Business and IT: Magna cum laude; awarded thesis ↗ on Business Process Improvement Patterns; visiting student at Queensland University of Technology (QUT), AU ↗ and Tampere University, FI.

## **AWARDS**

- Top 100 Leader in E-Commerce ↗ (Internet World Business):** Recognized for thought leadership in global e-commerce innovation.
- Extra Mile Award ↗ (Amazon German):** For developing a quantitative market analytics tool with EU-wide Account Management rollout.
- Best Social Entrepreneurship Research Award ↗ (FGF e.V.):** Honored for impactful research publication in social entrepreneurship.
- Swiss National Science Foundation Fellowship ↗ (UC Berkeley):** Fully funded postdoctoral research on innovation & sustainability.
- Communication Impact Award ↗ (HSG):** For launching an entrepreneurship campus fostering innovation with students and beyond.
- Karl Max von Bauernfeind Medal ↗ (TUM):** Awarded for interdisciplinary excellence in MedTech entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Munich Business Plan Competition ↗ Winner overall:** Recognized for founding and leading a tech entrepreneurship team to success.

## **STRENGTH & SKILLS**

- Team Leadership & Organizational Growth:** Skilled in building cross-functional, high-performing teams, promoting talent development, and aligning strategic initiatives with business goals. Adept at computational thinking and forming strategic partnerships.
- Digital Transformation & Strategy:** Expertise in digital ecosystems, technology adoption, and innovation frameworks, leading complex digital transformations to drive resilience and efficiency.
- Stakeholder Communication:** Expertise in written and oral executive-level reporting, relationship management, and stakeholder alignment, ensuring cross-functional cohesion and clear communication of strategic priorities.
- Technical Mastery:** Proficient in AI, GenAI, Agentic AI, Claude Artefacts, GPT, Power BI, Python, SQL, Tableau, Qualtrics, Looker, AWS, Oracle, and Salesforce. Experienced in e-commerce, SaaS, CRM, predictive data analytics, and AI-driven decision-making.
- Project & Process Management:** Proven mastery in Agile methodologies (Scrum, SAFe, LeSS), CIP, Lean Six Sigma, OKRs, business intelligence, PMP / PMI and Prince2, process optimization, and KPI management.
- Change Management & CSR:** Proven ability in change management, crisis navigation, conflict resolution, training, and fostering resilient organizations - experienced in CSR, sustainable business practices, and ESG initiatives.
- Language Skills:** German: Native (C2), English: Distinguished (C2), French: Intermediate (B1), Spanish: Elementary (A2)

## **SPECIAL INTERESTS**

- Sports & Outdoor Activities:** Enthusiastic about cycling, running, volleyball, hiking, kayaking, climbing, and the outdoors.
- Innovation & Sustainability:** Passionate about entrepreneurship, sustainable technology adoption, and smart tech/IoT solutions.
- Personal Growth & Education:** Avid reader of utopian literature, DIY, advocate for digital education initiatives, renewable energy ↗.

Links included at ↗ - See <https://forster.company> for full profile