

# DR. FLORIAN FORSTER

**Executive Leader for Excellence in Operations, Innovation & Digital Change | €300M P&L | 0 to 650 FTEs**

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**--- Past performance is the most reliable indicator of future value creation ---**

Entrepreneurial executive with a distinguished record of leading e-commerce, product, and operational excellence for global market leaders including **Amazon, Alibaba, Birkenstock, IU, or zooplus**. I have managed **P&Ls exceeding €300M** and scaled international organizations from 0 to 650 FTEs, consistently delivering high-impact growth and cost-optimization initiatives.

Recognized as a **'Top 100 Leader in E-Commerce'**, I combine board-level operating rigor with international research at **WHU, HSG, and UC Berkeley** to bridge the gap between core business stability and radical innovation. I specialize in the **'Ambidextrous Organization'** - protecting the high-margin core while architecting the high-risk, GenAI-driven future. I don't just deploy tech; I re-engineer the human processes that make tech stick.

- **Enterprise Scaling & P&L Leadership:** Direct accountability for **€300M P&Ls** with a focus on building resilient, high-growth organizations. Expert at scaling global teams while balancing **operational efficiency gains of +15%** with cultural health, evidenced by significant **+36pt eNPS** improvements.
- **Technological Fluency & Radical Innovation:** Transforming complex technologies into competitive advantages, such as deploying **GenAI workflows to unlock productivity gains** or architecting setups that **exceeded revenue targets by +50%**.
- **Strategic Growth & Change Management:** Navigating the competing interests of global stakeholders to deliver sustainable internal alignment and market expansion, including generating an **incremental €12M NetOV** for a **+4pp annual growth uplift** through targeted digital transformations.

## WORK EXPERIENCE

**Birkenstock - Senior Director E-Commerce EMEA (Interim) 06/2025 – 01/2026**

- Governed a €300M P&L and 9 departments for 27 countries, driving strategic business growth and customer excellence.
- Generated €12M in incremental sales growth by orchestrating an agile operational transition, securing high-impact marketing partnerships and executing multimillion cost reduction initiatives.
- Pioneered AI-driven forecasting and automation to optimize operational efficiency and accelerate time-to-market.

**Forster&Co – Founder, Strategic Advisor, Consultant & Interim and Fractional Management since 01/2016**

- Advise organizations on balancing core business operations with radical innovation strategies. Apply principles from my postdoctoral research to address practical challenges for international clients.
- **Senior Advisor** at Arthur D. Little (Innovation Practice) & **Senior Advisor** at Defacto (AI & Customer Excellence)
- Elected to the **Board of Trustees** at Waldorf School München to architect the school's education roadmap, balancing humanistic Waldorf values with the necessity of 21st-century technological literacy.

**International University Group - IU.org - Senior Director Global Excellence 01/2024 – 08/2024**

- Led restructuring involving 170 FTEs to increase operational efficiency by +15% and employee NPS by 36 points.
- Directed a 20-member AI/SaaS team to deliver GenAI solutions in multi-modal content development, achieving a +50% productivity gain through pivoting to a value-first stakeholder management.
- Optimized a €12M budget to realize €1.3M in annual savings via strategic partner realignment and process streamlining.

**Alibaba.com - Country Manager DACH 04/2022 – 01/2024**

- Architected the DACH go-to-market strategy, scaling a 12-person sales and marketing unit to capture the SME market.
- Scaled B2B base from 0 to 100+ and secured 10 strategic partnerships, exceeding global LTV targets by +30%.
- Evangelized technology as key media spokesperson at 25+ events, generating sales pipeline of 1,000+ qualified leads.

**zooplus – VP level Head of Operational Excellence & Head of Customer Care & Head of Product 09/2019 – 04/2022**

- Advised C-suite and Board and executed on strategic initiatives, establishing an agile PMO (12 FTEs) and OKR framework for 300+ cross-functional FTEs in 9 departments to prioritize operational and strategic improvement initiatives.
- Transformed global service division (customer service team with 30 FTEs and 600 agents) for 5M annual inquiries in 22 languages with 5 BPOs, launching a new CRM and reducing budget by -15% while increasing satisfaction.
- Launched a €900K carbon footprint offsetting program, establishing zooplus as an industry leader in sustainability.

**Dirk Rossmann / A.S. Watson Group - Head of International Strategic Innovation 10/2018 – 09/2019**

- Founded a European innovation hub for 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 Lead Germany - Marketplace Prime Now 06/2016 – 10/2018**

- Launched the German 3P market division within 9 months, exceeding revenue targets by +50%. Securing 5 strategic key accounts incl. the first OTC pharmacy on Amazon globally in Berlin and Munich.

- Created a new ultra-fast logistics and organizational model yielding -25% in costs and improved fulfillment effectiveness.
- Co-founded an award-winning 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**

- Managed 50 distinct stakeholders to align and launch the European Fulfillment Network, successfully reducing fulfillment costs by -20%. Holistic ownership of the FBA/Prime seller program in Germany and Europe.
- Engineered business requirements and deployed an innovative data collection tool for EU Account Managers, improving seller insights on accuracy and speed by 5x, 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. Built governance structures, university-industry partnerships, and coaching programs to boost engagement and success within national networks.

**WHU Accelerator - Project Leader & Startup Coach (EXIST [↗](#) start-up network) 11/2008 – 07/2010**

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

**FON Technology (fon.com) - Head of Business Development Central Europe 05/2006 – 05/2010**

- Pioneered early SaaS/networking innovations, scaling a peer-to-peer business model to 2M+ hotspots globally.
- Negotiated and secured strategic growth partnerships with major European corporations, incl. DTAG, KPM, and XING.

## EDUCATION

**University of California, Berkeley / Haas School of Business - Postdoctoral Researcher**

- SNCF Fellow conducting research on Entrepreneurship & Cluster of Innovation [↗](#).
- MBA teaching staff and active member of the Berkeley Postdoc Entrepreneur Program.

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

- Recognized as the youngest faculty member in HSG-MBA for teaching excellence.
- Visiting scholar at Copenhagen Business School (CBS) [↗](#) and Max Planck Seminar in Innovation & Entrepreneurship [↗](#).

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

- Dr. rer. pol. (Ph.D. equivalent): Graduated Magna cum laude, awarded research, teachings [↗](#), and accolades [↗](#).
- Research collaborations with DHL, the Schwab Foundation, and Vodafone.

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

- Dipl.-Kfm. Univ. (IT) / Master in Business and IT: Graduated Magna cum laude; awarded thesis on Business Process Improvement Patterns. Visiting student at Queensland University of Technology (QUT), AU [↗](#) & Tampere University, FI.

## TECHNICAL & GLOBAL TOOLKIT

- **AI & Data Execution:** Hands-on mastery of GenAI and Agentic AI workflows and data-driven decision-making.
- **Enterprise Systems:** Strategic experience with global e-commerce, SaaS, and CRM platforms, e.g. AWS, Salesforce, Zendesk.
- **Global Communication:** Multilingual leadership in German (Native), English (C2), French (B1), and Spanish (A2).

## HONORS & MEDIA

- **Top 100 Leader in E-Commerce [↗](#) (W&V):** Recognized for thought leadership in global e-commerce business and innovation.
- **Entrepreneur Podcast 'Mission Machen' [↗](#):** Invited to share and discuss agile leadership and digital transformation strategies.
- **Extra Mile Award [↗](#) (Amazon):** For developing a quantitative market analytics tool with EU-wide Account Management rollout.
- **Best Social Entrepreneurship Research Award [↗](#) (FGF e.V.):** Honored for research publication in social entrepreneurship.
- **Swiss National Science Foundation Fellowship [↗](#) (UC Berkeley):** Awarded 12-month fully funded postdoctoral research grant.
- **Communication Impact Award [↗](#) (HSG):** For launching a startup ecosystem that fosters innovation with students and beyond.
- **Karl Max von Bauernfeind Medal [↗](#) (TUM):** Awarded for interdisciplinary excellence in MedTech entrepreneurship.
- **Munich Business Plan Competition [↗](#) (winner overall):** For founding and leading a tech entrepreneurship team to success.

## SPECIAL INTERESTS

- **Sports & Outdoor enthusiast:** long-distance off-road cycling, running, volleyball, swimming, hiking, and climbing.
- **Innovation & Sustainability:** Passionate about entrepreneurship, sustainable technology adoption, and smart tech/IoT solutions.
- **Personal Growth:** Avid reader of utopian literature, DIY enthusiast, humanist, advocate for digital education and renewables [↗](#).