DATAGROUP

# IT's

# Simplicity

**Business**
Competitive Advantage "Simplicity"

**Future**
Simplification through Digitization

**Interview**
Max H.-H. Schaber on
Founder Passion and Simplicity

IT's that simple.

# Editorial
# Less is more. Simplicity.

## Ladies and Gentlemen,

From specific matters to concepts and ideals: Many things we are dealing with are more complex and more complicated than ever. So it is no wonder that everyone is talking about simplicity. And it is definitely a key to success for companies as well.

Simplicity enables many things which are absent today. It creates freedom – and with it flexibility. It saves energy and time. It makes the basics catchier and more understandable. But how can we transform something to make it "simple"? Especially if it has become more complicated over many years? A simple motto might help: Less is more.

The reason: This wording implies that there is no requirement at all to achieve a maximum amount of "little" at once. Instead, we can proceed step by step, which makes it easier. Discard one piece of ballast at first, sort out the first elements of a process, trim down a draft from five to three pages, replace a control with trust and learn something important: This "little" often does not cause any loss. But is a benefit instead.

All of a sudden, a decision-making process costs less energy. Meetings come to an end with the participants' energy still at a good level. Customers are more satisfied because a product is more intuitive, a service is smoother. Classical advantages are gained through simplicity, which sets the mood for the next round of reductions. Which add to one another over time. Until one day we realize we have achieved optimal simplicity. We will dive deeper into this topic on the following pages – Enjoy reading!

Best regards,

*Your Editorial Team*

# Content

Trend:
Simplicity is
Precious

# Every Day, We Are Surrounded by Gigantism and a Tendency for More and More

Dr. Michael Hartschen

Some 1,420,000,000 websites are online according to current estimates (summer 2018). And more are added every day. The global increase in knowledge, information and data is bigger than ever before in human history. And the earth is currently populated with more scientists, researchers and engineers today than have ever lived before! We experience these effects every day. The inflow of business options has become exorbitant.

Online marketplaces like Amazon have grown to become giants today, having more than 229 million products on stock (as of 2016). Or the Alibaba Group in the Asian regions, which has generated USD 10bn in one hour at the Singles Day in 2018. These companies spend over USD 10bn p. a. for research and development, more than any other company from the old economy.

Whether technological developments, innovations or new market services, news and novelties are changing by the millisecond. This leads to incredible dynamics and thus changes. The growing desire for continuity and stability on part of the customer therefore does not come as a surprise. For there is a wealth of offers in private and business areas, which mankind simply can't overlook anymore. This increase in complexity and intricacy eventually leads to the human desire for simplicity and easiness – both in private and business life.

## Simplicity – so Desirable and yet so Difficult

As a counter-trend to these widespread environmental developments, people often search for solutions in the other extreme, namely minimalism. The absolute and omnipresent solution and answer to difficult questions is in focus here. Minimalism is colloquially associated with the term of simplicity (the less the better). As a state which is regarded as perfect, brilliant and graceful.

This may well be a personal and meaningful answer to this development in private life. But it does not have the same meaning in a business environment. It is not a matter of a person's own focus, but rather addresses customers, users, offers, processes, communication or structures which have to be designed, and which are embedded in the collaboration and organization of people. All this requires a completely different fundamental understanding of how to face this challenge.

First off, simplicity in a business environment is no absolute dimension. It can always be considered relative to the respective industry. Simplicity in a banking environment is not the same as in retail or in a hospital. There are different rules, standards and requirements. The customers' level of knowledge regarding proposals and processes or priorities is also different. It isn't about the person itself, who defines simplicity for itself, but rather about arrangements for others! This is one of the biggest tasks to deal with. Current discussions are centered around new leadership approaches and a new customer understanding in the economy, as can be observed, for instance in the topic of agility.

## Simplicity – a Shared Understanding Is Key!

Companies do not clearly define the term simplicity. This is one of the central problems. But what is "simple"? How can we reduce it to a common denominator? If we would ask ten people in the IT departments of ten different companies, whether the software structure of a particular IT system is "simple", this would most likely result in ten different answers. How can this be explained?

Taking a sober view of the term "simple" and its colloquial use, this is an evaluation, namely a personal evaluation, which depends on a person's or a group of persons' experience, degree of knowledge and individual assessment. It reflects what this person or group thinks and believes. Therefore, it is essential to know your customers and their needs and perceptions very well.

For this reason, the term "simplicity" is very conflictual and yet is often confused with right or wrong. If someone said that it is not easy, this would be just as true as if someone said that it is easy for them. There is no one single truth like we are always searching for. This must be accepted first.

If a group has the same basic understanding about a situation, has the same experience, and is living and decides according to the same values and behavior patterns, it can be assumed that they will make a similar evaluation.

In a nutshell, simplicity is an individual evaluation, which is person- and subject-specific and which is constantly being developed. There is no fundamental right or wrong.

An example: While flights could only be booked by specialized persons in travel agencies 15 years ago, it can be done at home by anyone today who has a credit card and access to the internet. Companies therefore should seek to define the term "simplicity" with a focus on the user and should closely monitor its development so as not to miss the boat. After all, simplicity is also a value proposition which is given from a user's point of view!

Simplicity makes us happy.

"Simplicity is no tool and no method either.
It is a shared entrepreneurial attitude."
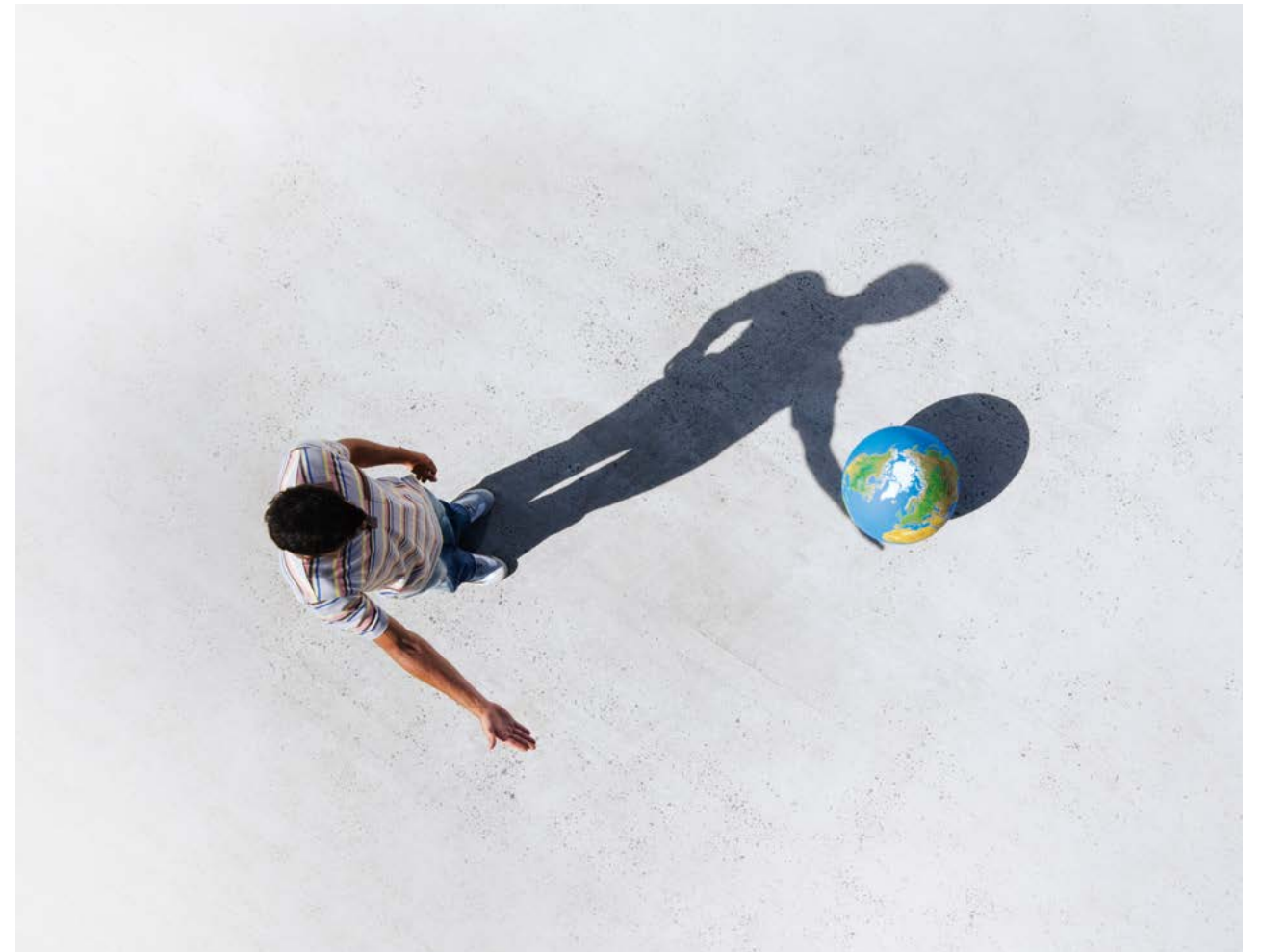
## The Power of Simplicity

The big advantage of simplicity is the impact it can achieve. When an organization can protect the user or customer from a high degree of complexity or intricacy, it has a central competitive advantage. This confidence and binding character must be established and cultivated. This will be awarded by the strong loyalty of the customer and also of the associates to the company itself.

Current studies of the so-called global brand simplicity index from Siegel & Gale also reveal the true value of simplicity. For instance, 63 % of customers are willing to pay more for simpler experiences. But even more vital is that 69 % of customers actively recommend a brand because it is simple and that the share price of these simple companies outperforms the stock market indices many times over. Conversely, it can be observed that customers deliberately decide not to invest because they consider it too complicated, even though they would have the funds to do so! Therefore, billions of euros in Germany are not being spent.

## Conclusion

Conclusion: Simplicity is no tool and no method either. It is a shared entrepreneurial attitude. It is ingrained in our way of thinking, in the way we act and decide. It continues to develop in line with a common understanding and the respective priorities which are applied in a company. The individuality of the applied and designed simplicity has become so engraved that it can't be copied.

Hence the management of an organization determines whether simple brands are realized, simple processes institutionalized, or simple structures are set up. It can be noticed by the clear feedback of associates and customers. You may want to pay more attention to this going forward. For customers love simplicity.

## About Dr. Michael Hartschen

Following studies in mechanical engineering in Stuttgart, Michael Hartschen received his PhD in innovation management from the Zurich Technical College (ETH) and finally discovered his liking for simplicity. He works as an entrepreneur, coach, trainer and presenter in the field of simplicity, innovation and business development and has many years of experience gained in a diversity of industries.

In 1998, he established his first company and in 2001, obtained his first lectureship at today's Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW). He is author of various books and specialist articles. ▮

Dr. Michael Hartschen is Managing Director of Brain Connection GmbH and has committed himself to simplicity.

# Combining Studies and Full-time Job



Not only keep pace, but precede. That's possible for Marcus Schäfer in the IT field through a clever combination of continuing education and his job.

## Employee Portrait Marcus Schäfer

It is not always easy to pursue an education alongside a full-time job. Marcus Schäfer, service manager at DATAGROUP, knows it very well, because he has studied alongside his day time job for years.

Marcus has worked for DATAGROUP for years. He has completed his apprenticeship as IT specialist here. Following positions in technical fields and in project management, he changed to service management. So continuous development is nothing new to him.

"I consider it important to further educate myself on a regular basis. Especially today, and especially in IT, so many things are changing so fast that it is good to leave the traditional path in terms of training and focus on regular continuing training instead, also on the job", explains Marcus.

For years, Marcus has studied business administration by correspondence course alongside his full-time job. He got up earlier, learned, and drove to work. His studies were paid by DATAGROUP, as the company supports an employee's efforts to further educate themselves.

"Back then, it certainly was exhausting but it paid off. You gain insights you do not necessarily gain on the job, but which you can put into use afterwards", explains Marcus, who acquired his business administration degree in 2015.

This flexibility is important in his daily work, as he is the primary contact for his customers. He makes sure that these customers receive the services they ordered and have a partner who supports them in their further development. To this end, he must also look into the customers' business processes, understand these processes and have an overview of new technologies to advise them as best as possible.

With the constant arrival of new customers from different industries, who have individual requirements, Marcus benefits from his studies and his willingness for further development. "I am glad I could do what I wanted and that my employer will support me when I want to continue my education", says Marcus. ◐

# IT's that simple.

"For us, **simplicity** means transparency, humanity and customer proximity amidst the complexity of our environment or notwithstanding the complexity."
Roland Bihler

# DATAGROUP – Agile Partner for Digital Transformation

Digitization is fundamentally changing both the economy and society – and companies across all industries are faced with huge challenges. Today, one out of two entrepreneurs in Germany says they feel well prepared to face digitization.

Still, the German economy lags behind in an international comparison according to numerous studies. In view of immense costs, existing rigid structures, a sometimes outdated infrastructure and an immanent lack of specialists, a partner at eye level proves to be indispensable to support a company's IT on its path to digitization and thus to successfully master digital transformation.

Now more than ever, IT has become an indispensable means of production for companies across all industries. What is more: IT itself is driving the entrepreneurial development. To exploit this, it is necessary to have the willingness to change and a strong creative drive. And above all, proximity to the customer.

This is exactly what DATAGROUP stands for.

Agility has been an integral part of the IT outsourcing company's corporate DNA for over 30 years. Because we know from experience that we must consistently develop ourselves to stay up to date and to effectively strengthen our customers and to take their burden off in day-to-day business. ◗▮
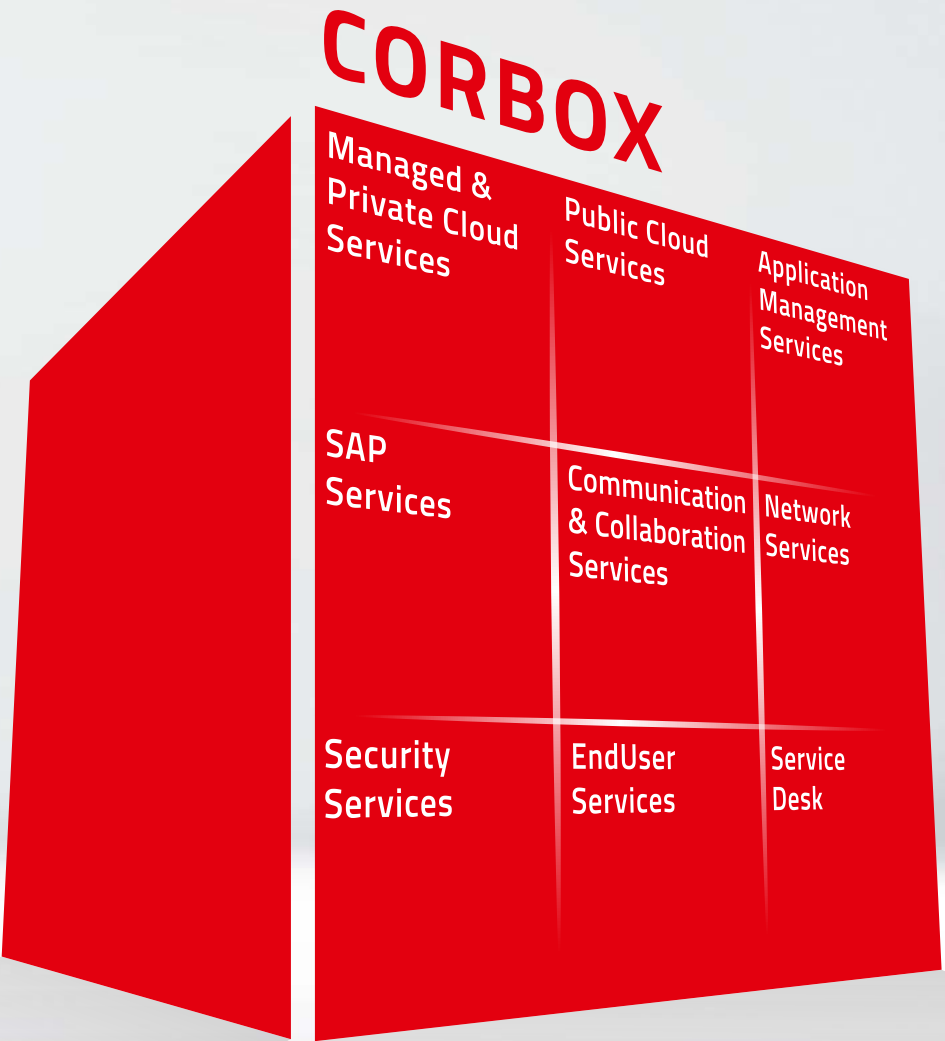
IT's that empowering.

# CORBOX

With CORBOX, DATAGROUP has created a custom-fit solution. CORBOX sets a new standard for fail-safe processes, efficiency and flexibility in IT operations – and thus is the optimal platform for digital transformation.

The CORBOX concept is based on a modular suite of IT services, covering all sectors of corporate IT operations. What is new about CORBOX? IT services become products with clearly defined quality features which customers can choose from a catalog. They are perfectly compatible, individually combinable and therefore can be very flexibly adapted to a company's actual requirements.

IT thus becomes a reliable and efficient means of production helping customers to advance the digital transformation of their business.

**CORBOX**

| Managed & Private Cloud Services | Public Cloud Services | Application Management Services |
| SAP Services | Communication & Collaboration Services | Network Services |
| Security Services | EndUser Services | Service Desk |

## Benefits:

### STANDARDIZED

All COBROX IT services are based on standardized and controlled processes and meet the quality criteria of industrial production. This guarantees **a consistently high process and service quality** and factory-made reproducible services.

### TRANSPARENT

Service level agreements guarantee **maximum service and cost transparency**. This is the basis for economic IT.

### CONTROLLED

Our services are based on best practices of the IT Infrastructure Library (briefly ITIL©). **Professionalism is not only lip service but part of our company's DNA**. This is documented by our extensive ISO 20000 certification – the highest possible standard for professional IT service management.

### FLEXIBLE

CORBOX provides customers with **the highest level of flexibility**. The modular system with nine service families allows them to choose exactly those services they need and to individually combine them with each other – and precisely in the quality required.

### MADE IN GERMANY

All CORBOX IT services are **"made in Germany"**: This guarantees stringent conformity with the strict German data protection guidelines. For maximum IT security, our data centers are also voluntarily certified according to ISO 27001.

### BETTER AND BETTER

The **continuous improvement of our services and processes** is an integral part of our IT service management system – and we consider it self-evident! For instance, by providing new services in the areas of Cloud computing and SAP.

CORBOX

IT-TRANSFORMATION

Cloud Transformation

Platform Transformation

Application Transformation

SAP Transformation

Managed & Private Cloud Services

Public Cloud Services

Application Management Services

SAP Services

Communication & Collaboration Services

Network Services

Security Services

EndUser Services

Service Desk

IT-SOLUTIONS

IT-Consulting

Robotic Process Automation & AI

Mobile & App Solutions

Sector Solutions

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Wilhelmshaven · Hamburg · Rostock · Schwerin · Bremen · Berlin · Hannover · Duisburg · Dortmund · Düsseldorf · Köln · Siegburg · Leipzig · Jena · Mainz · Frankfurt Neu-Isenburg · Würzburg · Nürnberg · Walldorf · Ditzingen · Böblingen · Offenburg · Ludwigsburg · Stuttgart · Pliezhausen · Reutlingen · Ismaning

Data Center · SAP · Service Desk

**Central supply units**
The virtual centralization of Service Desk, Data Center and SAP allows for the experts' and systems' meaningful specialization and efficient use of capacities. The result is a constantly high quality of our production.

**Market units**
All other CORBOX services are provided locally from our on-site market units. They also ensure smooth service management and assume responsibility for the care-free IT operations of our customers.

**Customers**
The high customer satisfaction is a logical consequence of the close contact which we keep to our customers. The local DATAGROUP companies and their respective Managing Directors at the helm are the central contacts at eye-level for our customers and guarantee compliance with our value proposition.

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## Support through Expertise in Software Development, Integration and Operations

Caused by mobilization and digitization of IT and the regular emergence of new technologies, changes will continue to happen. Companies require competent guidance through this process and ask for individual solutions tailored to their needs.

DATAGROUP can serve these demands as well. DATAGROUP accompanies companies in their IT transformation stages with the aim to quickly transfer isolated, separated or merged IT landscapes to independent, functional IT environments without any loss. Inspired by the modular CORBOX approach, customers can also choose those modules from the IT transformation portfolio which are relevant to them: Cloud, platform, application and SAP transformations. Every module includes solutions which have proven successful many times and have a holistic view of the company's IT, which already takes into account later IT operations from the very beginning.

In addition to its core competence in process standardization to ensure basic IT operations, DATAGROUP's transformation portfolio demonstrates its great achievements in taking on projects and addressing challenges according to each customer's needs.

In the area of solutions, the IT outsourcing company takes it a step further: IT solutions should be a perfect fit for the company and must keep pace with requirements. DATAGROUP's individual and customized solutions help companies generate competitive advantages – either by developing an application which describes an innovative approach to a familiar process or by automating recurring processes by means of Robotic Process Automation (RPA) with a significant gain in efficiency. Errors are avoided, and sought-after specialists will be able to dedicate their time to higher ranking tasks.

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## One DATAGROUP – throughout Germany

**LOCAL SITES AND CENTRAL SUPPLY UNITS FOR AN OPTIMAL COMBINATION OF ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY AND CUSTOMER PROXIMITY.**

Highly standardized processes and services, which are continually improved, are one aspect of success. Proximity to the customer is the other one! DATAGROUP is achieving this through an optimal combination of local and central production. This means: Parts of the service production – Service desk, Data Center and SAP Services – are virtually centralized in supply units. This leads to economies of scale and quality advantages through specialization and better utilization of experts and systems.

The other CORBOX services such as End User Services or Printing Services are produced at the local sites in all important economic regions of Germany. The entire service management, and thus our responsibility towards the customers that our service promise is kept, likewise is carried out by the local DATAGROUP companies. They and their respective managers at the helm are the key contact partners at eye level for our customers.

Thanks to the combined supply model with local sites and centralized virtual service factories we can produce all CORBOX services in Germany, efficiently and in top quality, while guaranteeing proximity to the customer.

# DATAGROUP Leadership Team

## Management Board

Max H.-H. Schaber

Dirk Peters

Andreas Baresel

Stefan Huhn

Sandra Kiemes

Bernd Krakau

Torsten Langer

Dr. Sabine Laukemann

Andreas Manderfeld

Alexandra Mülders

Michael Oberdorfer

## Management

Karl-Heinz Augustin

Sarah Berger-Niemann

Roland Bihler

Dieter Braun

Jörg Pauseback

Christian Sauter

Olaf Schaefers

Hendrik Schultz

Gaby Dimter

Peter Gißmann

Ralf Heinze

Michael Heide

Eva Türk

Helge Viehof

Martin Voelker

Bernhard Zeitler

# Constantly in Motion

Interview with Christian Sauter

IT's that smart.

## Christian Sauter

Studies in Business Informatics and Business Studies (Master of Arts), at DATAGROUP since 2014. Researcher, Software Developer and Director of application development, project management and Managing Director in Luxembourg, Switzerland, Singapore and Australia. Since 1999 founding, building and selling several IT companies. Finally with Excelsis to DATAGROUP.

**When did you start working for DATAGROUP and what is your position today?**
I've been with DATAGROUP since 2014 and I work as an executive of DATAGROUP Mobile Solutions AG. We are the Group's specialist for customized mobility solutions, supplying numerous top companies with business-critical applications. Additionally, I am one of the Managing Directors of ALMATO GmbH. This very successful company has been part of the Group since early 2018 and is specialized in Robotic Process Automation.

**How many people do you manage today?**
We are a team of just under 60 people in Mobility and roughly 50 at ALMATO.

**How did you join DATAGROUP?**
I was one of the founders of Excelsis Business Technology AG. In 2014, we sold the company to DATAGROUP. I stayed with the company after the integration because I like DATAGROUP very much.

**What do you appreciate most about DATAGROUP?**
I can contribute my entrepreneurial ideas here and implement them together with other ambitious people. We are all makers and benefit from flat hierarchies, but also work closely together with the Group Management Board, which is extremely rewarding.

**Characterize yourself with three keywords / in one sentence.**
I am attracted to complicated tasks.

**What is a situation that still makes you sweat today?**
There are two things in Germany right now which I can't put up with: 1.) The quality of our mobile phone networks and 2.) The reliability of the public transportation companies. These are situations that regularly make me sweat.

**Do you have a life motto?**
No, I don't have one. However, it would probably be a good idea to have one. Constant changes driven by technology have proven to be a recurring theme throughout my working life. This is super exciting but also challenging, of course, since the pace of technological developments is picking up.

**What was the biggest challenge in your career?**
The development of a start-up in Singapore. Culture, customers, product – all of which was completely new for me and extremely challenging.

**What event in your career makes you particularly proud?**
We have developed and launched the first mobile banking system throughout Europe. This was real pioneering work.

**What is the one thing you cannot do without in your working life?**
The cooperation in agile and interdisciplinary teams.

**From today's point of view: What advice do you wish you had received as a novice at DATAGROUP?**
Things can happen quicker than you may think!

## Outlook

**DATAGROUP in five years – Where is it taking us? Three keywords.**
AI, AI, AI*. We are intensely engaged in AI applications and their impact on business processes. The leaps in development in this sector are breathtaking.

**What personal goals will you set for the future at DATAGROUP?**
I am working hard on beating our sport's commissioner Sebastian Darimont in a race sometime. He must have an extremely bad day then, but I will succeed.

**What would you advise to someone in their early twenties, who is currently looking for a job and is interested in IT?**
I would certainly advise him or her to attach importance on a broad education. It makes little sense to only focus on current products and technologies, whose half-life is steadily decreasing. It is much more important to also – and above all – have a look at the field of methods, for instance in software engineering or project methodology.

**Thank you very much for this interview Mr. Sauter!**

*Artificial Intelligence

# Success with Joy –
# From the Beginning

Interview with Roland Bihler

## Rohland Bihler

Graduate economist, at DATAGROUP since 1994. Senior Sales Representative AC Service AG (today All for One) from 1988 to 1993. From 1993 to 1994 Sales Manager Bechtle AG; 1994 to 2006 Managing Director DATANET GmbH. From 2006 to 2011 member of the executive board of DATAGROUP AG. Today Managing Director of DATAGROUP Stuttgart GmbH.

**When did you start working for DATAGROUP and what is your position today?**
Since January 1, 1994. Managing Director of DATAGROUP Stuttgart GmbH.

**How many people do you manage today?**
160 employees.

**How did you join DATAGROUP**
In 1994 through a management-buy-in of the former DATANET GmbH.

**What do you appreciate most about DATAGROUP?**
I particularly appreciate the successful development in the last 20 years alongside many great people.

**Characterize yourself with three keywords / in one sentence.**
Pleasure in life and at work.

**What is a situation that still makes you sweat today?**
Sports in many forms.

**Do you have a life motto?**
Carpe diem.

**What are typical tasks in your daily business?**
Listen, decide, organize. Talk.

**What was the biggest challenge in your career?**
The merger and the integration of new companies and people.

**What event in your career makes you particularly proud?**
The IPO of DATAGROUP in 2006.

**What is the one thing you cannot do without in your working life?**
My colleagues.

**From today's point of view: What advice do you wish you had received as a novice at DATAGROUP?**
After more than 20 years: Caution, you will be very successful!

## Outlook

**DATAGROUP in five years – Where is it taking us? Three keywords.**
Growth. Many exciting new topics. Success.

**What personal goals will you set for the future at DATAGROUP?**
Strategic alignment of my company, DATAGROUP Stuttgart, to the DATAGROUP 2025 corporate strategy.

**What would you advise to someone in their early twenties, who is currently looking for a job and is interested in IT?**
Join DATAGROUP – It's great.

**Thank you very much for this interview Mr. Bihler!** 🔴

# Successful Communication
# in Cologne

Interview with Alexandra Mülders

## Alexandra Mülders

Two apprenticeships in the commercial and technical area. 26 years of sales experience in medium-sized IT companies in Berlin and NRW, since 2010 at DATAGROUP. From 2001 Head of Sales and Regions at arxes, since 2010 Managing Director at DATAGROUP Köln GmbH (formerly arxes).

**When did you start working for DATAGROUP and what is your position today?**
I've been with DATAGROUP since the former arxes GmbH became part of DATAGROUP, in February 2010. I started working for arxes on January 1, 2001. And I have been Managing Director of DATAROUP Köln GmbH since March 2010.

**How many people do you manage today?**
We have around 200 colleagues on the payroll, 13 of which directly report to me.

**How did you join DATAGROUP?**
I was "bought". (Smiles)

**What do you appreciate most about DATAGROUP?**
On the one hand, my autonomy in operational decision-making processes, and on the other hand, the strength arising from joint cross-company decisions.

**Characterize yourself with three keywords / in one sentence.**
I am strong, brave, honest and pugnacious.

**What is a situation that still makes you sweat today?**
To this day I am embarrassed when my own organization cannot fully keep up to the performance I promised to a customer.

**Do you have a life motto?**
"Et kütt, wie et kütt"* and the remainder can be controlled by stringent project management.

**What are typical tasks in your daily business?**
To guide, lead and instruct human beings. I attach great importance to personal communication with our customer.

**What was the biggest challenge in your career?**
My biggest challenge was the company's restructuring in FY 2013 / 2014. I had to part with 72 employees to eventually have a sustainable, healthy company.

**What event in your career makes you particularly proud?**
The result of the restructuring. Despite all the hardship that came with this assignment I am very proud today that the implemented measures were right and that my company is in a very strong position today.

**What is the one thing you cannot do without in your working life?**
My assistant, Mrs. Crüll. We work very closely together every day and are perfectly attuned to one another after these many years of cooperation. A lot of my working days would end in chaos without Mrs Crüll. This has never happened thanks to her. Thank you!

*Cologne dialect for "it comes as it comes".
Article 2 of the "Kölsch Constitution", typical characteristics that govern the life of the citizens of Cologne, especially during carnival.
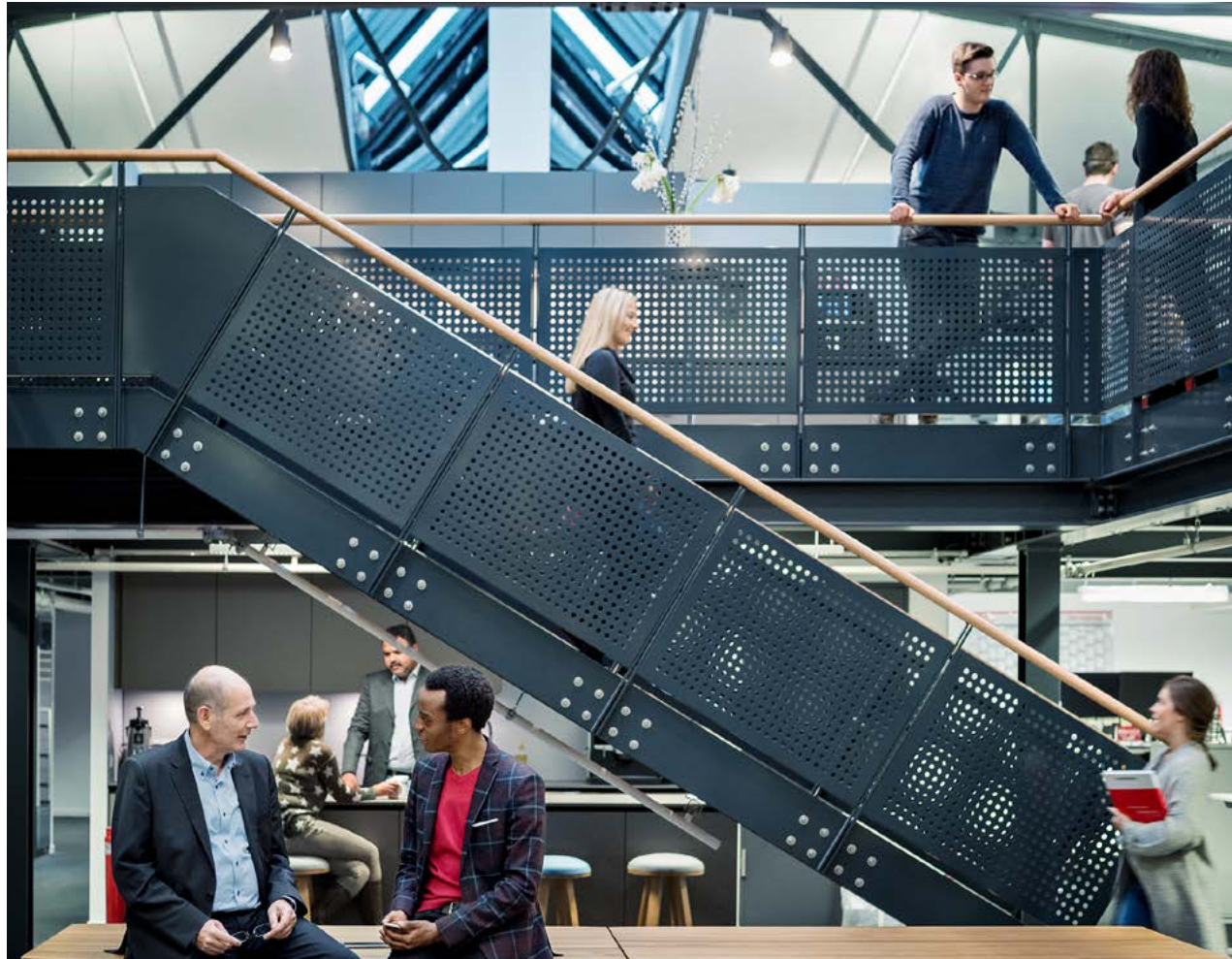
**From today's point of view: What advice do you wish you had received as a novice at DATAGROUP?**
I would have liked to have had an experienced DATAGROUP manager by my side, who knows all the internal structures and would have prevented me from various mistakes. Instead, some things have gone wrong, but I have learned from these mistakes and it had a particularly lasting effect.

## Outlook

**DATAGROUP in five years – Where is it taking us? Three keywords.**
Cloud technologies, social skills among the staff and having more human beings who do not always insist on life-life balance. (Smiles)

**What personal goals will you set for the future at DATAGROUP?**
I want to continue to help achieve the goals above.

**What would you advise to someone in their early twenties, who is currently looking for a job and is interested in IT?**
Be on time for the job interview and wear appropriate clothes!

**Thank you very much for this interview Mrs. Mülders!** ▮

# The dream of Living and Working in Germany

Employee Portrait: Maryam Habib

"DATAGROUP is like a second home to me. The working atmosphere, the colleagues, the work. And the support I received".

When Maryam Habib fled from Afghanistan to Germany, she was determined to build a new life. This also includes a job. She found it at DATAGROUP, but she also found so much more: support in all areas.

Maryam Habib is trained as an IT specialist for system integration at DATAGROUP. Unlike other apprentices she must face challenges which are much more important than the next exam. Because Maryam comes from Afghanistan and her asylum claim has been rejected.



Maryam got to know DATAGROUP when she attended an Open Day organized by the Chamber of Industry and Commerce. She was invited to an interview right away, which took place on her birthday. After the interview, she was very sure she wanted to work for DATAGROUP. "I had been offered an apprenticeship at another company at that time, but the interview convinced me. The atmosphere was so friendly and warm that I decided in favor of DATAGROUP", says Maryam.

She did not regret her decision, because DATAGROUP supported her far more than she had hoped for from an employer. At the very beginning, DATAGROUP provided her a company flat until she had found her own apartment in Cologne. Otherwise, she, her husband and their daughter would have had to move into a refugee center.

Moreover, DATAGROUP was extremely sympathetic regarding the hurdles of the German bureaucracy, which Maryam had to face. They even released an employee from work, who supported her and accompanied her to appointments.

When her asylum claim was rejected, DATAGROUP provided a lawyer at their own expenses. They did not want to lose Maryam as an employee. The result was a so-called "Ausbildungsduldung", i.e. a letter of tolerance for the purpose of vocational training. This means further uncertainty both for Maryam and for DATAGROUP. Maryam can finish her apprenticeship, but it is still unclear what will happen
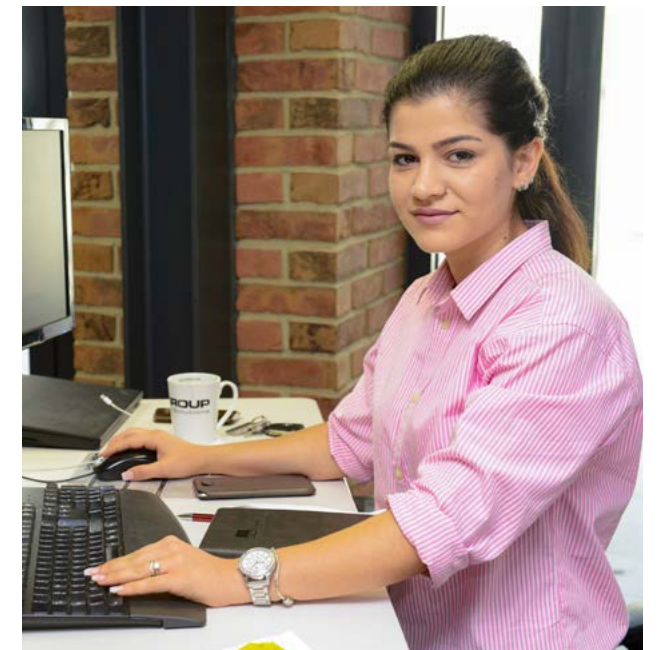
afterwards. DATAGROUP will do all it can so that Maryam can remain there after her apprenticeship.

As well as the support, Maryam mainly appreciates the working atmosphere at DATAGROUP and the diversity of her tasks. "DATAGROUP is like a second home to me. The working atmosphere, the colleagues, the work. And the support I received", says Maryam. ▮

Good communication does not happen exclusively at a desk. Positive collaboration contributes significantly to good results.
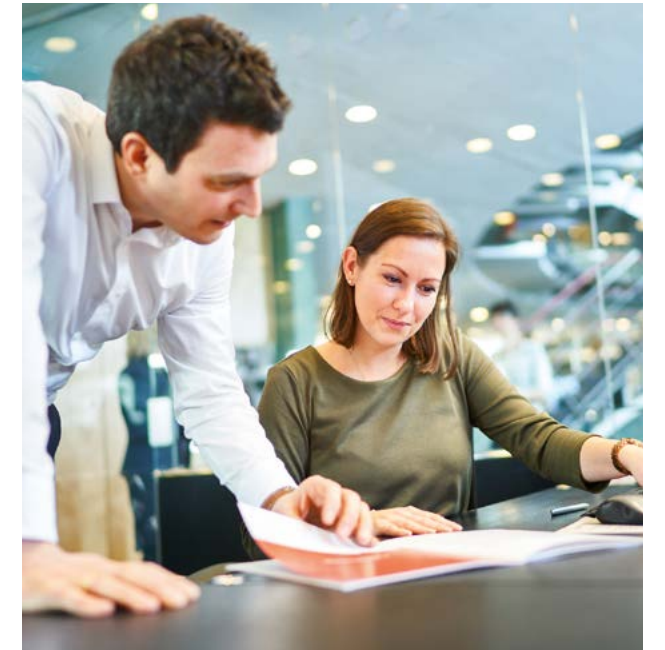
# IT's us.

"At eye level" is a lived and central value of our corporate culture. Internally we mean a motivating atmosphere of appreciation and recognition, reliability and commitment, good communication, social commitment, fairness and equality.
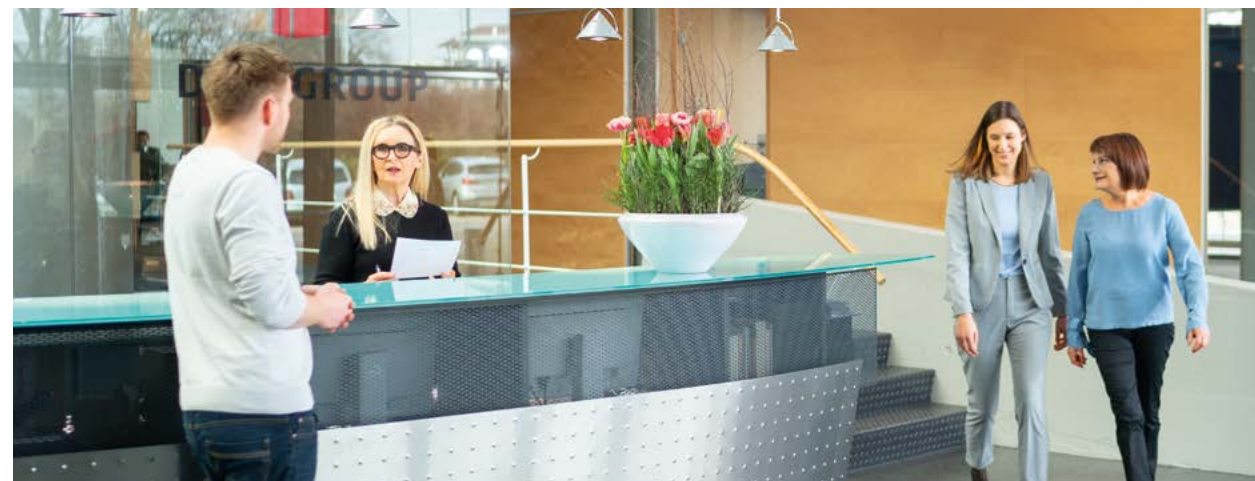
# Founder Passion,
# Success Factors and Simplicity

Interview with Max H.-H. Schaber

"Precisely describe the complexity of the IT world and break it up into small chunks."



DATAGROUP founder Max H.-H. Schaber has played a crucial part in determining the fate of the company until today. A time for taking stock: In an interview, the Stuttgart-based entrepreneur talks about what is important to him and what motivates him.

1983: At the early age of 27, with a fresh master's degree in mechanical engineering in hand, Max H.-H. Schaber establishes his own enterprise – Datapec Gesellschaft für Datenverarbeitung. The first contract: an individual solution for a physiotherapy practice. Today, under the name of DATAGROUP SE, the company is one of the 20 leading IT service providers in Germany according to the Lünendonk list. DATAGROUP generates annual revenue of more than EUR 272m (FY 2017 / 2018) with over 2,000 employees.

As a member and Chief Executive Officer of the Management Board, Max H.-H. Schaber is responsible for finance, legal affairs, human resources and corporate development. In an interview with IT's he tells us what once motivated him as a founder, what makes DATAGROUP successful today and in the future and how the company makes IT much easier.

**You established DATAGROUP 35 years ago – back then under the name of Datapec. What was your vision?**
I did not have one to be honest. I only wanted to be self-employed. Because it was important to me to be my own boss, to be able to do what I consider right.

**What did you learn from your start-ups? What would you advise to a young person who wants to establish a company?**
You certainly take a risk when establishing a company. But you don't look at it like this at the age of 27. This is the advantage of young founders. You have no family to provide for, you do not worry about a failure. If something goes wrong, you simply start all over again. This is the over-riding message I want to share with young people and founders: Don't let yourself get discouraged. Even the smallest failure receives a thumbs down. We must remain immune to this; we must be able to take blows. There are far more "quitters" than losers.

**What has motivated you, back then as well as today?**
The daily business is pushing me ahead. When being self-employed, you take on all roles at the beginning – developer, finance specialist, head of sales etc. You gain an extremely broad perspective. In turn, many things are easier to recognize: What else is interesting? What brings more success? A lot of decisions were taken out of necessity, because something did not work anymore – for instance, when margins in IT retail fell rapidly, we sold this business. But there is also this strong will to create!

**The IT world becomes more and more complex. How does DATAGROUP make IT simple?**
In the end, we simply tried to precisely describe the complexity of the IT world and to break it up into small chunks. This description is predominantly reflected in the CORBOX, our modular all-in-one solution for carefree IT operations. Companies can choose from combinable services which optimally support their business and they receive all IT outsourcing services from a single source. The customer does not have to go into the smallest details but can simply say: Organize my IT operations! This makes it a lot easier.

**You started your career as an engineer, you studied mechanical engineering – and today you are a visionary and strategist of an IT service provider with over 2,000 employees. How does this fit together?**
An engineer is rather closely related to IT, especially in my generation. During my student days we did not have any IT specialists yet. When you were looking for a certain control as an engineer, as in my case, you had to build it yourself. I really enjoyed it! My first job was in an engineering office which was specialized in processing laboratory data systems. Which was simply perfect.

Dialogue: The three board members Max H.-H. Schaber, Dirk Peters and Andreas Baresel (from left to right).

> "The customer does not have to go into the smallest details but can simply say: Organize my IT operations! This makes it a lot easier."

IT's worth it.

**What differentiates DATAGROUP from other IT service providers?**

We define IT services as a product so that every customer knows what to expect and every employee knows what to do: I personally think that this makes us stand out already. A lot of companies make the mistake to be imprecise in this respect.

**Why should people work for DATAGROUP?**

Very spontaneously: Because it is fun! Because we try to impart a sense of joy in work – by avoiding to put an emphasis on the division of labor; instead we give our employees responsibility, communicate appreciation, have a positive error culture. We have initiated large-scale projects for this, for instance "Master of Leadership". A still young project for us, which is based on the idea that the better the company the better its managers.

**Which characteristics are most beneficial to have a career with DATAGROUP?**

Openness, industriousness, courage … Almost everything is possible at DATAGROUP with these characteristics. Some of our employees who started out as apprentices in our house have leading positions now.

**All of DATAGROUP's sites are exclusively in Germany. Don't you think it would be more profitable to relocate services such as programming or call center abroad?**

We once analyzed how much it would cost us to have Indian programmers provide services to customers in Germany. In fact, the all-in-costs are not materially different. I do not know though if it will remain the same forever. We have far too few people in Germany which are trained in MINT* subjects (*mathematics, information technology, natural sciences and technology, editor's note). It may well be that we have no choice but to go abroad someday. However, we rather think of nearshore solutions, meaning countries and regions such as Lithuania or Eastern Europe in general or Ireland.

**How would you describe your leadership style? What kind of leadership culture have you established at DATAGROUP?**

I personally think I have an authoritarian-participative leadership style. We are generally trying to have an appreciative but quite authoritarian leadership style in the truest sense of the word – Authority through professionalism but also through personal strengths such as articulateness or the ability to motivate others. I believe that, more than ever, leadership will decide a company's fate. What will be most important in this respect is to provide space for the development of people so they can develop and use their strengths.

**A current study attests DATAGROUP a disproportionately high customer satisfaction. What is the reason?**

First of all, there is the eye level: We take our customers seriously but in return want to be taken seriously as a service provider as well. And this also defines the target group which we address – large Mittelstand companies with revenue starting from EUR 100m p. a. There's a great mutual appreciation and a culture of working together to find solutions. Another reason is, without a doubt, that we only have German-speaking employees at the service desk – people who are socialized here. And: The customer gets the telephone number of the CEO. You can call me directly. Even though this very rarely occurs.

## Agility and Customer Orientation as a Recipe for Success

"What I also hope for in the future is that the company remains as open and willing to change as before. This opens up a wealth of opportunities for us."



**On a more personal level: What hobbies do you have as a balance to work?**

I like to play golf, unfortunately not enough and I am not good at it. And I am a passionate skier, at which I am better. I exercise regularly to keep myself fit: Four to five times a week I use the home trainer at home while watching international TV shows. At present, I am very interested in "Black Mirror" – a British series about possible developments in the future. This is a must-see for everyone in our industry! I also like to go to the movies. I am always fully immersed in a film.

**What is particularly important to you in your life?**

Interior design is extremely important for me. I attach great importance to having a beautifully designed home. My home town means a lot to me – I would never move away from Stuttgart. And I also enjoy gardening from time to time.

**Acting or reacting: How do we systematically think ahead as DATAGROUP does in its business strategy?**

I will answer this question with an image: I should know in which direction the wind blows, I should be aware of the currents and where I want to go. In general, we always define the targets in teamwork. The DATAGROUP 2025 vision, for instance, is the joint effort of the upper management level. We take plenty of time for this and put even more work into it. This is the reason for its success: We stand behind it 100 %.

**Where do you want to see DATAGROUP in ten, fifteen years?**

To be honest, that's a very long period of time. Let's limit it to between five and seven years. I do believe that DATAGROUP will be a leading, if not the leading IT service provider in Germany by then. What I also hope for in the future is that the company remains as open and willing to change as before. This opens up a wealth of opportunities for us.

**Thank you very much for this interview Mr. Schaber!**
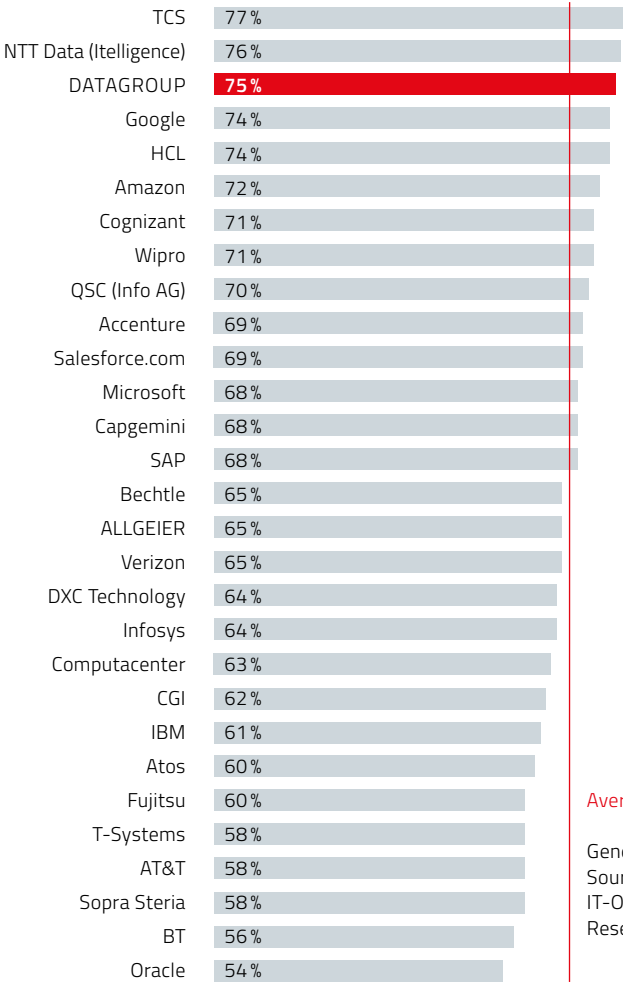
Only those who are consistently geared to the customers' needs will succeed in the long term. For this reason, DATAGROUP strives to identify new requirements as early as possible and to transform them into efficient and high-quality solutions. With success, as proven by the outcome of the IT Outsourcing Study 2018 conducted by Whitelane Research and sourcing advisor Navisco: We are again at the top in terms of customer satisfaction among the leading IT service providers.

| Provider | Satisfaction |
|---|---|
| TCS | 77 % |
| NTT Data (Itelligence) | 76 % |
| DATAGROUP | 75 % |
| Google | 74 % |
| HCL | 74 % |
| Amazon | 72 % |
| Cognizant | 71 % |
| Wipro | 71 % |
| QSC (Info AG) | 70 % |
| Accenture | 69 % |
| Salesforce.com | 69 % |
| Microsoft | 68 % |
| Capgemini | 68 % |
| SAP | 68 % |
| Bechtle | 65 % |
| ALLGEIER | 65 % |
| Verizon | 65 % |
| DXC Technology | 64 % |
| Infosys | 64 % |
| Computacenter | 63 % |
| CGI | 62 % |
| IBM | 61 % |
| Atos | 60 % |
| Fujitsu | 60 % |
| T-Systems | 58 % |
| AT&T | 58 % |
| Sopra Steria | 58 % |
| BT | 56 % |
| Oracle | 54 % |

Average in customer satisfaction = 66 %

General customer satisfaction
Source: IT Outsourcing Study 2018 on IT-Outsourcing in Germany / Whitelane Research and Navisco

# Approachable Architecture that Creates Enthusiasm for Innovation



Transparency in dealing with customers and colleagues – transparency also in the architecture.

## Wolfgang Kergaßner, architect of DATAGROUP's headquarters in Pliezhausen near Stuttgart, in an interview

Wolfgang Kergaßner, owner of the Stuttgart-based architectural office of the same name, is considered a renowned representative of his profession in the German-speaking area. As the responsible project partner for the construction of the company headquarters in Pliezhausen he designed a building on behalf of DATAGROUP, which is still seen as a benchmark after more than 25 years. He gives some insights in this interview on the underlying concept and presents his view on general topics such as simplicity in architecture or the significance of corporate architecture.

**Is there a project you are particularly proud of?**
Among the buildings that touch my heart, I spontaneously think of the company headquarters, which were to become the new location of DATAGROUP then, as well as our own house and the Linde Agora, the restaurant of the Linde AG. These buildings do not only have a high degree of usability, but also a certain emotional quality which can still be felt today.

**Tell us more about the DATAGROUP project …**
At that time, I was the responsible architect in close cooperation with the subject areas involved and with Max H.-H. Schaber as the representative of the team of builders. Back then, the integration of new thought patterns was on the agenda, combined with DATAGROUP's desire to translate the idea of an "open conceptual model" into a building. The result was an approachable architecture for people, in which employees and visitors can come together in an informal atmosphere and feel comfortable. To this day, the building's architecture is still philanthropic, inspiring and

encouraging, open and communicative. And: It stimulates the passion for innovation of employees and visitors alike. I was very pleased to hear that the building was awarded the Hugo-Häring-Preis in 1997, one of the most important architecture awards in Baden-Wuerttemberg.

**What is your attitude towards simplicity in design and architecture? What possibilities do you have to reflect simplicity in architecture?**
I would first like to go into more detail about how architecture starts. Each design consideration starts with the development of an underlying theoretic conception. This is the only way to develop a holistic concept, which is uncoupled from raw materials and independent of formal surfaces. At the same time, the building must be emotionally accessible. This makes the world more diverse and interesting. It must be reflected in the architecture. Everyone dealing with architecture must be aware that, first of all, architecture always serves a purpose. The architect primarily has the obligation to

"To this day, the building's architecture is still philanthropic, inspiring and encouraging, open and communicative."





The highly flexible and transparent building concept is suited to the dynamic forms of the project work – in the true sense of a breathing organization.

complete his work program. And then we get started: For every job we do, we have to ask ourselves over and over again how things would ideally look like, without external constraints. A lot of solutions take form when following the very simple decision-making pattern of "right" or "wrong". And one thing is for sure: The process always ends with the simple things.

**How was it to work with Max H.-H. Schaber as a builder?**
The cooperation with DATAGROUP, represented by Max H.-H. Schaber, was characterized by mutual acceptance and respect. Even more: It was a symbiosis in the classical sense.

The builder's decision-making competence, his position as exclusive contact and the overall structured and target-oriented approach definitely were beneficial for the project.

**How would you specifically describe the cooperation?**
DIN standards were critically scrutinized in a problem-oriented way. We did not aim to build a house which complies to DIN standards but wanted to create something which is focused on the users. To this end, we also exploited synergies with the professional planning services involved and inter-connected every aspect of building. Our aim was to reflect building and corporate culture through architecture – while complying with the economic conditions. True to the motto that building means responsibility not self-promotion.

**The building has some features that are special for the early 1990s. What was your ambition when you planned and designed the building?**
From the beginning, the flexible structure of the object ensures a maximum degree of diversification due to the arrangement, size and form of the individual rentable utilization units. After all, it had always been planned to also be able to let out certain spaces and floors to other companies, which helped to reduce the investment risk.

Even today, I am still delighted to see that the house has always met the respective generations' expectations caused by changing working conditions and requirements. This also holds true for the future: The digital natives, young representatives of the generations Y and Z – more than ever they expect spatial and time flexibility at work. The organizational structure and atmosphere of the building also meet these requirements.

**Please describe some of the basics and details of the building.**
The workflow, communication and interfaces between the individual working groups were the basis for the room design. Areas for confidential talks, areas offering privacy for highly concentrated work as well as space for meetings and conferences were made possible in conceptual terms right from the start. The highly flexible and transparent building concept is suited to the dynamic forms of the project work – in the true sense of a breathing organization, which can respond to spontaneous and constantly changing growth at any time.

**"With a useful integration of alternative systems ... and a conscious use of energy the building stands for a consistently implemented low-energy concept to this day."**

**How efficient is this object?**

Economy in architecture already starts with the general construction in connection with the available premises. It continues with a sophisticated, long-term facility management. With a useful integration of alternative systems such as underground conduits or concrete core activation and a conscious use of energy the building stands for a consistently implemented low-energy concept to this day.

**Last but not least, is there something particularly dear to you?**

The identity of a company becomes most visible in its buildings. You could say that it is a "built" reflection. Corporate architecture can have a real impact. It requires self-respect to handle it carefully. On top of that, corporate architecture also requires a responsibility for solidarity – next to aesthetic consciousness – and, consequently, a responsibility for the built environment. As such, architecture becomes an identity.

**Thank you very much for this interview Mr. Kergaßner!** ◀

Not least because of temperature control through, among other things, thermal circulation does the building to this day stand for a consistently implemented low energy concept

# Lean Construction Management: How Much Digital Is Ingenious?

Ralf Schneller in an interview on IT in the construction sector and efficient simplicity
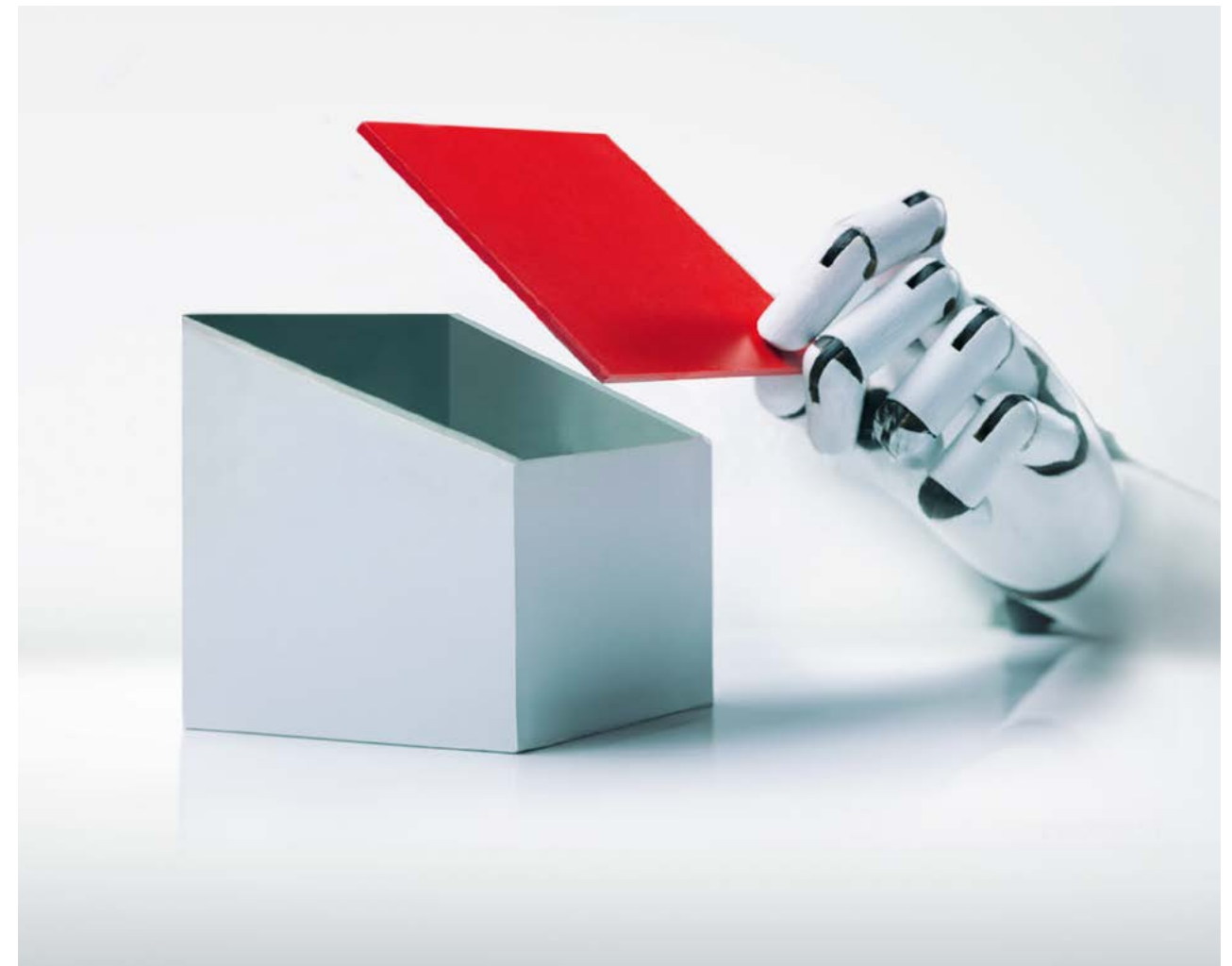


Ralf Schneller is responsible for IT procurement at Drees & Sommer, an international consultancy for the construction and real-estate industries headquartered in Stuttgart. The company's main services are development, process and infrastructure consulting as well as project management and engineering. Before Ralf Schneller joined Drees & Sommer, he was key account manager of an international IT company for more than 17 years.

**How did you come to join Drees & Sommer?**

I had looked after Drees & Sommer for many years in my previous position as a key account manager of an IT company. When I learned that the position as head of IT procurement became vacant, I simply changed to the other side of the desk.

**What is the core business of Drees & Sommer?**

As a leading European consulting, planning and project management company, we provide support and advice to private and public builders as well as investors on all issues relating to properties and infrastructure. Both analog and digital.

**Digitization and the construction industry – how does this work?**

Digitization in the construction industry is noticeably lagging behind the development in other industries. There is still a lot of room for development in the future, where we are pioneers in terms of digitization.

**Where and how does Drees & Sommer use IT?**

The question is no longer where we use IT today – we are literally surrounded by it. The challenge today rather is to find good answers to the key question: How much digital is ingenious? Add to this all the requirements given by the market. I am thinking building information modeling (BIM) solutions, LCM

(digital lean construction) or smart city. Our major asset is that we have both comprehensive know-how in strategic corporate consulting approaches and great competence in the design and support of projects at the interface between digitization, IT and construction. We thus combine all the competencies required to actively and profitably drive forward and shape the digital revolution in the construction industry.

**Where exactly does simplicity play a role?**
I believe every one of us feels that the variety of tools available to us today can become counterproductive someday. Just look at today's communication possibilities! Even in our private lives, we are hardly able to control the flood of information with all the tools and platforms such as WhatsApp, Skype, email, text messages, fixed line, cell phone and Facebook. We note that the building construction projects and infrastructure projects in our core business become ever more complex as well.

**What are the reasons?**
There are several factors which come into play. For instance, an ever-increasing variety of project participants. Cost and time pressure increase, while the quality of the process flows declines. The design variety and the requirements for safety and sustainability have grown significantly as well. The consequence: It is becoming increasingly difficult to purposefully manage construction projects and to achieve set goals, e.g. in terms of costs, deadlines and quality.

**Which solutions are possible here?**
One trend driven by this demand is lean construction management, which is focused on an integrated project solution. This methodology is based on lean management in automotive production and the agile approaches in software development which are transferred to the execution respectively the planning phase of construction projects. Simplicity arises from transparency, which helps to better coordinate planning processes in a target-oriented manner.

**In which way does IT make it easier for your customers?**
I think we generally perceive something as easy when we have a feeling of control. Things we do not understand or comprehend are automatically perceived as difficult. IT-supported systems help us understand complex systems and to break them down into easy – because straightforward – steps and to provide tools to handle these steps. Clear arrangements, e.g. dashboards, provide the necessary security through control.

**What were the most striking changes and milestones of Drees & Sommer?**
What we have learned from building: If the foundations are wrong, the most beautiful building on top is of no use. However, you do not see the foundations anymore, once the building is finished. I think we have done our homework properly when it comes to foundations, and therefore can build on it on a grand scale. This holds true for both our IT and the other company segments. We can look back on a successful business development of almost 50 years.

**How did the cooperation with DATAGROUP start?**
We had already advanced quite far in the outsourcing process for our helpdesk, when a mailing on CORBOX arrived on my desk. I was especially impressed by the handwritten accompanying letter.

**How did you proceed?**
It was soon obvious that the CORBOX really is a valuable collection of professional competence and complete processes for us. We also got along really well on a personal level. All of this contributed to DATAGROUP winning the project.

**What do DATAGROUP and Drees & Sommer have in common?**
The mission of Drees & Sommer consists of eight statements which express how we tick, how we collaborate and what defines us. In DATAGROUP we have found a partner whose value system is comparable to ours and who therefore is a good addition to our own capabilities. Like pot and lid …

**Is there something at work you do not consider simple enough?**
In IT procurement, we constantly strive to improve our processes and operations. There is definitely room for simplification. Just recently, for instance, we have analyzed our procurement processes together with our colleagues from Consulting, which led to a couple of measures which we will fine-tune in the next few months.

**Thank you very much for this interview Mr. Schneller!**

Japan Center, Frankfurt am Main Complex conversion and move-in of a financial institution. Lean Construction Management by Drees & Sommer.

# Between Office and Blue Lights

Employee Portrait Nadine Schwaiger

The first four days of each week, Nadine can be found at the company headquarters in Pliezhausen. She works in Corporate Communications, organizing events for employees and customers and managing sponsorship amongst others. On Friday, she works as an ambulance officer for humanitarian organization Malteser Hilfsdienst in nearby Reutlingen.





DATAGROUP Work-Life-Balance: a flexible work model where you don't have to decide between your job and social commitment.

Nadine has been with DATAGROUP since her apprenticeship as a management assistant in IT systems and has never worked for another company. "I like the variety within DATAGROUP, the company's dynamics. There are always new aspects, new projects. It definitely does not get boring."

She has experienced a lot in her thirteen years with DATAGROUP. One year, for instance, at the traditional Christmas tree felling with customers: The field was so muddy on this day that the cars were stuck by the dozen. "We mobilized a family living nearby who came with their tractor to pull the cars out again", Nadine says with a smile.

Four years ago, she began to volunteer at Malteser. She started as a so-called "Einsatzsanitäter", a special form of training provided by Malteser Hilfsdienst, but quickly decided she wanted to learn more. So she also completed training as an ambulance officer. She went to school on the weekends, worked at a hospital during her summer vacation to do her mandatory internship, and was on ambulance shifts as an intern. When she held the certificate in her hands, she knew that the skills and experience she had gained would be lost quickly if she did not apply them on a regular base. She then began to work night shifts mostly during the weekend.

Eventually Nadine decided to ask DATAGROUP for a day in the week where she could work as an ambulance officer.

"DATAGROUP was open-minded towards the idea from the very start. It was important to ensure that it is feasible in terms of workload, so I do not have to accomplish the work of five days within four days", explains Nadine.

Responsibilities were analyzed together and were shared with others, if necessary, so she could reconcile her job and her work as an ambulance officer. In general, DATAGROUP is also particularly determined that employees can pursue their voluntary commitment. In addition to her service every Friday, Nadine can also be reached via a wireless detector, similar to the fire brigade. If she receives an emergency call for her home town, the company makes sure she will be able to participate as a certified first responder to provide the required local support.

„It is great that I can combine the two aspects of my life at DATAGROUP. But it is also good to know that DATAGROUP will be responsive if my life situation changes some day", says Nadine.

Until then, however, she will be on duty every week both for DATAGROUP and her fellow human beings.

The brand design is the visible result of an in-depth identity process.



The simplest way to abstract a cube are two trapezoids.



# "IT's that simple." The Brand Essence of DATAGROUP

Jörg Nuber, Managing Director of the brand agency Apollo 11 on the success factor brand

Successful B2B brands have one thing in common: They are consistently moving forward and clearly get the message across. In doing so, they succeed in turning customers into fans and employees into friends.

"One of the few market-leading IT service providers which remained human" – this is how a customer of many years has characterized DATAGROUP in an interview. Which is exactly in line with the principles of this unique company: On the one hand, it is as strong as an ox when it comes to technology, having the power of central IT production and the manpower of 2,000 experts. On the other hand, it is unusually human, likeable, accessible and at eye level with Mittelstand companies. A recipe for success can be that simple.

As part of its "brand mission" initiated in 2018, DATAGROUP has listened very closely: to customers, investors and employees. To enthusiastic fans, but also to critical sceptics. IT managers from the North Sea to the Alps have expressed their appreciation for their partner DATAGROUP – but sometimes also had a bone to pick with us. The outcome of these intensive efforts of looking at the status quo has been analyzed, discussed and condensed. DATAGROUP is remarkably open to novelties and changes. Many findings have already been transformed into concrete strategies of action. But above all it has become apparent that there are so many good things happening at DATAGROUP which have not been sufficiently communicated so far. There is great potential here according to the principle: „Do good and tell people about it."

However, this key phrase in advertising is nothing new and has come to be the easiest part of successful brand communication in the 21st century. Especially in IT, the biggest challenge is not to find and bind customers but to attract and retain the best specialists. For this reason, creating a brand has to come from within. Successful employer branding is what really counts here – and it only works with authenticity and a true employee focus.

From the very beginning, Max H.-H. Schaber had the vision of a company – DATAGROUP – which simplifies the world of IT and the business of its customers. Simplicity, of all things, around a topic which seems to stand out for its complexity. The DATAGROUP brand has adopted this demand and actually succeeded. This is why the new brand claim is "IT's that simple". A clear statement which is also visually reflected in a new corporate design. Born out of the CORBOX, the formally reduced red dice stands for what Max H.-H. Schaber has captured in a nutshell during a brand workshop:

"DATAGROUP is when it works."

## Brand Agency Apollo 11 GmbH

The astronauts of the Apollo missions have consistently reported that the true benefit of space travel has been the new perspective of Earth. A cooperation with Apollo 11 aims at such a change of perspective. In the end, this very change always leads to a "true" and self-assured brilliant appearance. ◨

### Mission Brand

- 11 customer interviews
- 6 internal interviews
- 950 evaluated employee questionnaires
- Lots of workshop energy in the "taskforce brand"
- A creative firework

# Simplification through Digitization

Future expert Dr. Pero Mićić on the chances and risks of tomorrow

"Leaders in business and politics must offer a strong and clear vision of the future. Leadership without vision is blind. Those who see a bright future for themselves, achieve more and enjoy a happier and healthier life."

**Dr Mićić, you are an internationally known expert on future management. What fascinates you about the future and what was the trigger for your interest in the complex field of futurology?**

Future is a place which offers unused opportunities. But also threats. This is what fascinates me. My theme is not futurology but future management. Futurology only offers the raw material, whereas in future management we examine our own assumptions for the future and make them more solid. We become aware of potential surprises, prepare ourselves to identify opportunities and turn threats to opportunities, we develop a mission, vision and future strategy and work towards this vision with agile planning.

**Your consultancy FutureManagementGroup supports companies and top decision-makers from economy, politics and administration in developing future strategies.**

What significance do future strategies have for companies? I believe a future-robust, motivating vision and future strategy which is effective for employees is the most profitable investment. Because everything will be designed in a more precise, more focused and thus a more congruent way, every thought, activity, process and project.

**What kinds of questions do you usually hear from companies?**

What does lie ahead and what does not? What kinds of risks and threats will the future bring? How can I safeguard my business for the future? How can we best position our company for future markets? How can we steer the business easier and more motivating with a clear mission and vision? How do we design a future-robust business model?

**What are the challenges a company must face when developing a future strategy?**

The most important one is that the human brain could not care less about the future. Virtually all other challenges are a result of this fact. For this reason, people do not invest enough time, find it exhausting to think about the future, and when they finally have a clear future strategy, more energy is needed again and again to have people conduct themselves accordingly.

**Is there such a thing as a recipe for a successful strategy?**

A guarantee for success does not exist. But there are many requirements. Just a few examples: It must be precise and straightforward, and this can only be achieved when the people involved in the decision-making process have developed it together. It must provide security, which means potential surprises have to be incorporated. It must be credible and provide confidence, which means it must be based on future opportunities. It must offer a meaning of work, a concrete use for the customers and for mankind if possible.

**What kind of role does simplicity play in your life?**

Simplicity frees up thoughts and time for really difficult and complex matters. Simplicity is a true art. Complicated is easy, simple is difficult.

"Complicated is easy,
simple is difficult. "

**What kind of role will simplicity play in the future?**
I believe its benefit and importance will continue to strongly increase. The world is becoming increasingly more complex and faster. Complexity slows us down. IT which has parted with the very comprehensive and complex exercise sheets in favor of agile processes is the best example. But also the disappearance of manuals for hardware and software. Successful providers make the use of their products as easy and simple as possible so we can do without a manual. This was still very different ten or twenty years ago.

**Simplicity, a trend that will continue?**
As mentioned above, the benefit and importance of simplicity will increase and will never be less important again in my opinion.

**How do you succeed in reducing a complex process, for instance the development of a future strategy, to the most significant points? How do you proceed to help a company achieve more simplicity?**
The first step is to have the opposite of simplicity, namely variety. Many ideas, many options, many opportunities, many potential threats. Then you need a methodology to filter out the most significant points with the help of criteria, in several rounds if necessary.

**Thank you very much for this interview Dr. Mićić!** ◖

Simplicity in no time. Dr. Pero Mićić is an expert on the simplification of complex processes. In the beginning, however, always stands variety.

## About Dr. Pero Mićić

Dr. Pero Mićić is a leading international expert in future management. He is CEO of the FutureManagementGroup AG (www.FutureManagementGroup.com) and Director of the Leader's Foresight Institute.
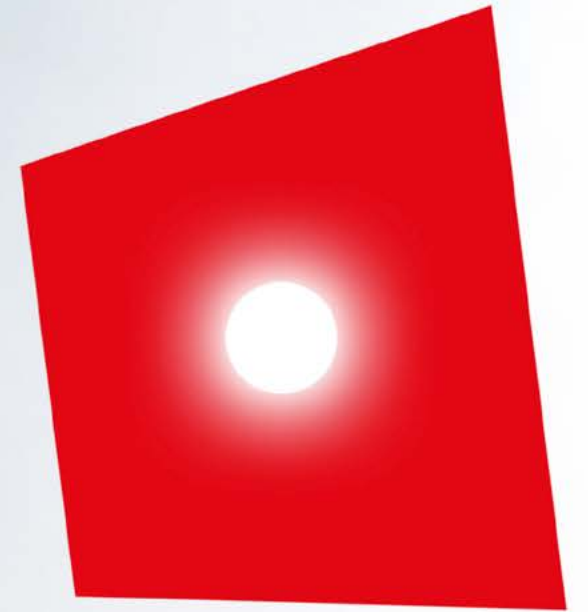
He advises the management teams and strategists of large corporations and leading medium-sized companies on the preparation for future markets and the development of well-grounded scenarios, motivating visions and effective strategies.

Pero Mićić is the author of „Wie wir uns täglich die Zukunft versauen" (How we mess up the future every day, International Book Award), „The Five Future Glasses" („Most Significant Futures Work" Award); „Das ZukunftsRadar" (The future radar) and „Der ZukunftsManager" (The future manager). He studied Business and Future Studies in Germany and in the USA and received his PhD in the UK.

Mićić is a lecturer at renowned universities and colleges and a frequent keynote speaker at international symposia and functions. He is a founding member of the Association of Professional Futurists in the USA, on the advisory board of the Master's Degree course in Future Studies in Houston, Business Centurion of the Leeds Business School and was president of the advisory board of the European Futurists Conference.

The cooperation between DATAGROUP and Dr. Mićić started in 2013, when the company engaged him as an expert for the development of the future strategy DATAGROUP 2020. Last year, the strategy, which was published in 2015, was examined and developed further. In this context, DATAGROUP also relied on the experience of Dr. Mićić and the FutureManagementGroup AG. ◖

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