



A lifelong passion

INTERVIEW

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KPT

Published in SMART insights 2022 magazine
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PATRICK KALTENRIEDER IS IN CHARGE OF DIGITALISATION AT KPT KRANKENKASSE, A SWISS HEALTH INSURER, AND RESPONSIBLE FOR IT OPERATIONS. HE ALSO LECTURES ON ONLINE MARKETING STRATEGIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BERN. THE SECRET TO HIS ENERGY? IT'S SIMPLE, HE SAYS. LOVING WHAT HE DOES AND DOING A WORTHWHILE JOB ARE THE KEYS TO HIS WORK-LIFE BALANCE. HE COUNTS HIMSELF LUCKY TO HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING AND FORWARD-THINKING EMPLOYER.

Patrick Kaltenrieder, can you describe what you do?

I'm responsible for both the strategy and implementation of digitalisation at KPT. That ranges from taking the internal lead on all digitalisation issues, to providing strategic advice to management, to popping up on external committees. In reality that's all a fancy side hustle, though. My main job is leading the IT operations.

How big is your team?

There are 25 of us in my area. There isn't actually a dedicated digitalisation department, but a dedicated team that I lead. It is made up of people from all over the company, so we get everyone's perspective.

What does this team set out to do?

We're driving digitalisation at KPT and using it as a progressive way of putting our strategies into effect. We also keep track of trends in that we research and analyse the latest innovations and implement them where necessary.

What is the greatest challenge with digitalisation?

It's that everyone sees it from a different angle. For some it's a risk, for others an opportunity. It takes an extremely open and agile corporate culture to take all of those opinions on board and skilfully synthesise them.

What did you actually study?

Information systems at the University of Bern. Then I became a digital transformation consultant at an online agency. I was lecturing at the same time. I've always lectured, and I still do, also at University of Bern. These days I'm in charge of the online marketing strategies module of the CAS in Online Marketing and Social Media.

Seems like lecturing is really close to your heart.

Definitely. I'm in a win-win situation at the forefront of technology. As a lecturer you invest a lot of time and energy in one field, but your return is the valuable input you get from your students, and you can put that back into your everyday working life. You don't get that if you shut yourself in an ivory tower.

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What's so fascinating about digitalisation?

It's being able to watch these endless opportunities, innovations and trends unfold in near-real time, align them with the needs of a business, and put them into action. At no time in the history of humanity have we been able to do that at the speed we can now.

What has been your biggest challenge so far?

Ten years ago I was still working for one of Switzerland's big banks, where I had a number of lucrative career opportunities to choose from. But the only challenge that excited me at the time was to get off that pre-programmed path and get on with my doctorate. I haven't regretted that decision for a second.

What made you change careers?

I had an urge to do a deep dive into a subject and get lost in it. There was a burning need to know everything there is to know about digitalisation. It was so strong that I knew I would be denying myself if I tried to extinguish it. I'm at my best when I have fire in my belly.

What qualities does a manager need?

First of all, you have to trust in yourself and in your team. Second, you need to be open and flexible, so you can grab opportunities and actively make the most of them. The third thing is the ability to keep a balance between your own opinion and other people's.

How do you create that basis of trust with external partners?

Well, it takes more than a single workshop! The main things for me are spending a lot of time together, and formulating

and pursuing shared objectives. It works with Airlock!

You work and lecture. Is there any time for a personal life?

You know, if you're fulfilled by the substance of your work, you can't help but find the necessary balance in your personal life, regardless of how you divide your time.

So work-life balance is a matter of opinion?

Exactly. I think that where work-life balance is concerned, it's not the hours themselves you need to measure, but what they're filled with. Then it doesn't matter if you work a bit more here and a bit less there, because it all levels out in the end.

What would you do differently if you could start again?

Nothing. If you follow your passion you'll find that lots of doors open themselves. You realise in time that there are no wrong doors, just instructive detours. The only important thing is to keep moving forward, using that passion as the key.

What about your plans for the future?

I will always love doing what I do, and I'm sure that it will keep opening exciting doors for me, for KPT and for its digitalisation. I am very grateful to my employer for giving me the opportunity to identify and evaluate trends and ultimately put them into practice. There's nothing better, is there? />

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