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Entrepreneurship with a human face

Address:

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

To begin with I would like to thank all those responsible for the invitation and for kind reception and for the hospitality. The many impressions during these days have overwhelmed me. This is my first visit to China and – so I hope it is not the last.

I was requested to speak on the topic *Entrepreneurship with a human face* for not longer than 30 minutes – lesser would be better for me.

At first a few words about myself:

I am 64 years old and a dentist by profession. I am married to a dentist and have 3 daughters and a son. Two daughters are lawyers, one daughter is a teacher, media expert, reader in a school book publishing house, thus a versatile person. Our son is also a dentist and at present doing research at the University in Oslo Norway. We have two grand children, 8 and 2 years old.

I have been independently practising my profession for 37 years along with my wife and seven employees, thus at my risk and own, as a so called established dentist, a small enterprise in Bad Lauterberg in Germany near Göttingen, one of the oldest university cities in the central part of Germany. 270 years old Georg – August – University stands in the tradition of the free and critical mind. Around 26.000 students live in Göttingen. Since the foundation of the university, scientists of either sex with international reputation have worked in our city. More than 40 Nobel Prize winners have lived, taught und researched here. With its numerous courses at its faculties, the Georgia Augusta offers a wide spectrum of teaching not often found at German universities.

In my free time, with my heart and soul and without any allowance, I am with a relief organization, a charitable establishment that has been engaged in social work for more than 20 years. I have invested as donation 20 million Euros in more than 900 aid projects in more than 60 countries around the world. These are the donations that are primarily sourced from patients from many German dental practices which are widely acknowledged as facilitators with ‘social responsibility ‘.

We have traveled here from Germany, to a place where old Chinese wisdom and traditions are coexisting, side by side, with the modern metropolitan culture and entrepreneurial spirit of the business community.

„As in so many German metropolitan cities even here we sense the hope and the longing of people for surviving in the middle of the whole consume- and throwaway society, to discover out of the heart of loneliness and alienation real communities.

We are impressed by the economic growth that is reflected in tall soaring skyscrapers made of glass and concrete, and at the same time we encounter people who are suffering from the greed of a few powerful persons and we hope together with other observers that the fruits of this growth will be shared with the most needy.“

If these sketchy superficial impressions are right, then the world here in China appear no different than the one in which we live in Europe and particularly in Germany.

In many universities worldwide we are aware of the fact that technological advances testify to human ingenuity and we believe that the promises of the technology should remove human problems and counteract the monotony in our life.

„Technology solves the world problems. The leading industrial nations, especially the Americans, Chinese and the Germans, are leading players in this and hence the eligible creators of the future.“

So said a central statement of the Expo 2000 – held that year in Germany in Hannover – with the information on the advances in biotechnology, green genetics, genetic databases, nuclear technology..., just to name a few.

(This world of tomorrow, by the way, is shown renewed with these themes. This time the world exhibition 2010 is in Shanghai:

EXPO theme: „Better City, Better Life“ The German Pavilion has been christened “balancity” – a newly coined word signifying a city in balance. A city can be a good place to live – if it provides a balance between renewal and preservation, innovation and tradition, urbanity and nature, community and individual development and work and leisure. That’s the message of the German Pavilion.)

If we are to retain the two core statements together in this context:

1. Economy, ecology and social responsibility must be thought of together, when one takes international political and also managerial decisions.
2. Human actions are limited and cannot be fully dominated even through technology.

Today where are we people to actually taking power, courage and trust over in order to take decisions for tomorrow?

How will ambitious goals be achieved? Thinking about creation, about nature, about environmental protection and climate change, about mobile society and world trade, is highly complex, since we are simultaneously imposed upon to contribute towards the conservation of essential natural resources and at the same time a sparing handling of the resources.

All the citizens of a responsible society, according to their capabilities, are called to accept responsibility for the common good and develop willingness as well as initiative for it. At the same time we hope that this new world becomes a World in which the dignity of man and the sanctity of the creation of our globe are respected

The focus is therefore always on Man with his almost unsolvable self created problems. Worldwide we are researching, producing, processing, consuming.... In the accomplishment of his goals is Man actually on the 'Stretch?'

As an entrepreneur in this world, one never ceases to be an entrepreneur and is always thinking about what more can be done, what can still be undertaken.

Even for me as the owner of a dental practice the commitment to find solution for social, cultural and other social task is a question of basic attitude. (See above)

For a long time in Germany we have been believing:

That what is good for the economic development of an enterprise is good for the country and is good for the people.

Ever since a leading German politician had compared international business and finance managers to locusts, who invade a country, graze there and move on, people do no more appear to meekly accept this simple comparison – and now not at all, after the international financial crisis has put a dark shadow upon everything. So the solution of the world problems today is much more about talking about 'unleashed capitalism' and about the implication of the entrepreneur as far as his social responsibility is taken up more intensely. Yes, what does 'social responsibility' actually mean?

Does it mean that entrepreneur should jump in the breach as a patron of culture and promoter of social facilities for the highly indebted state?

Is the socially responsible entrepreneur one who creates new jobs?

Or does it mean social responsibility, that an enterprise is also satisfied with less than maximum possible profit, if on the other hand that may have damaging effects upon society as a whole? (Locust scenario!)

The responsibility of an entrepreneur extends much further. He must vouch for the fact that our common weal on long term basis generates means (taxes), which were required for securing the basis of our existence and for maintaining our living standards. Thus he takes direct responsibility in his own area of work, in his enterprise. And this responsibility must always be seen with reference to the general conditions set by the political committees (political parties, government).

This should not lead to a situation where political action wrongly considers enterprises as social facilities and treats them that way. This has sometimes resulted in economically irrational decisions which extended to threatening existence itself.

Practically: The task of the entrepreneur is to provide economic benefits and to ensure the future economic viability of his enterprise.

The entrepreneur, especially the small and medium scale businesses, should strengthen the structure of the society and the government should support its efforts towards further development of the country.

The responsibility for the permanent economic productivity of his enterprise implies the responsibility of the entrepreneur for his employees. This personal responsibility goes beyond the legally prescribed duty of the employer to care and supplement covers for

- acquiring and training sufficiently qualified employees
- providing productive and suitable work places
- assigning and setting reasonable performance requirements

- creating and maintaining a constructive and motivating work atmosphere
- Employing staff based on capability and performance

One can debate about to what extent the entrepreneur is responsible for the humane atmosphere in his office and for the personal well being of his employees. No doubt his behaviour has the maximum effect on the quality of the human relationships and the satisfaction of the employees.

Since the employees who feel comfortable, in the long run are more productive and – above all – are motivated, the entrepreneur – in the interest of the economic productivity of his enterprise – pays attention to issues concerning his employees.

"Only when I know the needs of my employees, can I motivate them" or "management is nothing other than the art of motivating other people!"

(Quotation of a management consultant)

An enterprise should *act* and not complain. A gram of entrepreneurial spirit weighs more than a kilogram of bureaucracy. To exercise managerial activity in social responsibility and to clarify the managerial functions, risks and standpoints in the public, are the goals of the economic commitment.

With the entrepreneurship I associate terms like: decision, success, so called human capital, clients, moral in enterprise, public relations, standpoint:

Quotation from Robert Bosch, German Industrialist 1861 - 1942

"I do not pay good wages, because I have plenty of money, but I have plenty of money because I pay good wages." (Merit!!)

Employees are the resources of the enterprise, they are the 'mineral resources' of an enterprise. And these mineral resources must be taken care of and not only exploited or used. There is a live value culture in an enterprise:

i.e. create trust, attention, give mindfulness, establish authenticity from such enterprising conduct, from these enterprising actions grows trust and eventually the mentality of 'service'.

If there is trust in an enterprise, then this itself brings the balance, then giving and taking themselves hold the scale.

If the employee does not trust the employee, feels hierarchy, or agonized by thinking of status, then there is lack of praise from the employer. Each person has a need for personal appreciation, recognition and development. The employee has a need for community and cooperation, i.e. reciprocal cooperation. Cooperation means giving orientation.

The employee has a need for meaningful work, for a meaningful occupation, that is to recognize the meaning and the definition of the task. Only then can he contribute towards the optimization of the production.

The so called *feedback – culture* = is a MUST in any enterprise. A good manager, entrepreneur discovers and promotes talent in his enterprise.

Entrepreneurs are the key players and leaders, entrepreneur must develop identity development: Recognize yourself, put yourself to test- who am I really. Entrepreneurs must be firmly on the ground, they must be authentic and train attitude.

A culture that is built on values is a valuable culture.

A value oriented enterprise is a healthy enterprise. A value culture is culture about performance. Of course a value culture cannot emerge without trust. Thereby trust is gained only through small steps. It cannot be prescribed.

From trust can grow a culture of service. Each minute, which I invest in the development of trust for my patients, is an investment in my practice, in my enterprise.

In the financial crisis – much cited worldwide these days – the trust in the so called finance experts has been lost. In this time this saying appears to be no more valid:
„Trust is costlier than Gold’.

When the world around us changes dynamically (negatively), we rely on our inner stabilizing forces and look at similarities with our fellow men. Confidence, chin, ‘Xinxin’, is the Chinese proverb of the present day in your country. To find confidence and stability again should be the goal of all political forces. For this we need entrepreneurs who have a social vision as basic attitude.

A person who comes to terms with change, crisis and uncertainties better, is successful. For this one needs an enterprise with a social organism: ‘entrepreneurship with a human face’.

We must promote such entrepreneurial spirit at all levels of society and in all forms, so that we can master present challenges. Hereby

‘**entrepreneurial** spirit ’ should be understood in its widest sense, namely as initiative spirit as well as with reference to the youth and older fellow citizens, as also in the sphere of economic and scientific activities. At first from the economic viewpoint entrepreneurial initiative is the key to overcoming the challenges associated with globalization.

Entrepreneurial initiative is however not an end in itself, it must also have a ‘human face’ Finally the overriding goal here is, the European social model (health care, health insurance, accident insurance, nursing care insurance, maternity protection, extended maternity leave, part time employment, pension fund, leave entitlement, part time work instead of dismissal etc), which is being taken as a role model in other parts of the world to safeguard and to make it such a way that it can resist the threats resulting from worldwide competition, as also from demographic change.

I am getting at the end of my remarks now. However before I thank you for your attention, I would like to stress a point: Entrepreneur must not always be men!

In South China, around a mountain lake, live the Mosuo – a community of nearly 35000 people, in which women are in power. For three months last year Ricardo Coler, an Argentinian Doctor, photographer and author, lived amongst them. He wrote about his experiences there in a book.

Title: "Paradise is Feminine."

He states that there are a few scattered matriarchies in the world that are similar to the Mosuo. However the Mosuo is the purest, the real matriarchy. There the women do not only have more rights, but have also de facto the say. One comes there and is received by a

woman. What one can organize, with whom one can speak, where one stays is decided by a woman.

„Women have the ownership, the money and make almost everything!’ quotes Ricardo Coler in a leading German Sunday newspaper.

The most significant thing is this: there is no violence there, because Women are embarrassed by violence. Violence is taboo in this society.

The reign of women also works elsewhere, but according to Coler’s assertions this feminine reign of the Mosuo is the best.

This must be understood by one (man): a region, where Men (almost) always have a break – and this here in China. A paradise with human face!

Perhaps do we still need in our enterprises more feminine genes, not just cosmetic improvements, looking for more humanity and social responsibility.

"The most important hour in our life is always the current moment; the most meaningful person in our life is always the one we currently face; the most needed work in our life is always love."

(Leo Tolstoi)

Thank you for your attention.