

Dr. Florian Forster

Empathic Leader in Digital, Innovation, Tech, AI, and Operations | Strategic Growth and Global Transformation



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EDUCATION

University of California, Berkeley

- Haas School of Business: Postdoctoral Fellow

- San Francisco, USA
- Research on Sustainability and Cluster of Innovation ↗
- Lean LaunchPad Educator facilitator, MBA teaching

University of St.Gallen (HSG) - Institute of Technology Mgmt.

(ITEM): Research Assistant

- St. Gallen, CH
- Lecturer in entrepreneurship and innovation, youngest faculty in MBA program ↗
- Visiting researcher at Copenhagen Business School (CBS), DK, scholar at the Max Planck Seminar for Innovation & Entrepreneurship

WHU - Otto Beisheim School of Management: Doctoral Student in Entrepreneurship (Dr. rer. pol., equivalent to Ph.D.)

- Vallendar, DE
- Magna cum laude, lecturer for undergraduate and graduate, and students, incl. RWTH
- Published award-winning research papers ↗, teachings, and accolades ↗ together with DHL, Schwab, and Vodafone

Technical University of Munich (TUM): Graduate Student in Management and Computer Science (Dipl.-Kfm. Univ.)

- Munich, DE
- Magna cum laude, visiting student at QUT, AU, and TU, FI
- Best Thesis Award ↗: Business Process Improvement Patterns

SUMMARY

Decisive and empathetic leader in digital innovation and operations with 13+ years of global experience spanning 20+ countries. Recognized as a "Top 100 Thought Leaders in E-Commerce" ↗, I excel in scaling high-performing teams (from 0 to 650 FTEs), managing P&Ls exceeding €12M, and leveraging AI- and tech-driven solutions to drive growth, operational efficiency, and sustainable results.

Adaptable and reliable in complex, fast-paced VUCA environments, I combine a hands-on approach with a strategic vision to solve challenges and deliver sustainable outcomes. My expertise is underpinned by a top-notch postdoctoral education ↗ in entrepreneurship and technology, alongside certifications in Systemic Business Coaching ↗ and Generative AI ↗ - enabling me to foster trust-based cultures, empower teams, and implement transformative strategies. Known for navigating ambiguity with agility and decisiveness, I thrive on creating lasting impact through strategic change, cross-functional leadership, and cultivating positive high-performing cultures.

Beyond these lines, I invite you to explore my feature on the Entrepreneur Podcast 'Mission: Machen' ↗. For additional insights, hear directly from my peers about my drive, passion, and commitment to innovation ↗.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Forster&Co Since 01/2015

Founder | Strategic Consultant & Advisor Munich, DE

- Helping organizations thrive in today's fast-paced, digital-first world in digital transformation, AI integration, leveraging technology, and operational efficiency.

IU.org - International University Group N.V. 01/24 – 08/24

Senior Director Education Excellence Munich, DE

- Spearheaded agile transformations for 170 FTEs in a remote setup to a multi-platform business model in Germany, the UK, and Canada. Boosted operational efficiency by +15% and raised employee NPS by +36 bps.
- Led a 20-member AI and SaaS team to develop GenAI solutions for video/text automation, reduced costs by -75%, and drove a +50% increase in productivity and AI adoption through targeted training programs and workflow optimization.
- Managed a €12M P&L and streamlined organizational structures and operations, driving -€1.3M in annual operating expense (OpEx) savings through AI integration, process optimization, and partner collaboration.

Alibaba.com - Alibaba Deutschland GmbH 04/22 – 01/24

Country Manager - Germany, Austria, Switzerland Munich, DE

- Developed and executed a Mittelstand go-to-market strategy, built and led a global high-performing sales and marketing team of 12 FTEs.
- Negotiated and secured 10 strategic partnerships, growing the B2B customer base to 100+ and delivering the highest global basket value of +30% in the first year.
- Served as media spokesperson at 25+ industry events, boosting brand visibility and generating 1000+ qualified leads for future sales pipeline growth.

zooplus.com - zooplus SE 09/19 – 04/22

Head of Operational Excellence & Head of Customer Care (VP level) Munich, DE

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

Dirk Rossmann GmbH - A.S. Watson Group 10/18 – 09/19

International Head of Strategic Innovation Munich, DE & Hannover, DE

- Established and led a European innovation hub, driving New Retail and digital transformation while enhancing cross-border collaboration for six European entities.
- Advised C-level on strategies to optimize operations and redesign business processes (e.g., self-checkout, loyalty app), improving efficiency and fostering innovation.

STRENGTH & SKILLS

- Team Leadership & Organizational Growth:** Skilled in building cross-functional, high-performing teams, promoting talent development, and aligning strategic initiatives with business goals. Adept at computational thinking and forming strategic partnerships for market growth.
- Digital Transformation & Strategy:** Expertise in digital ecosystems, technology adoption, and innovation frameworks, leading complex digital transformations to drive resilience and efficiency.
- Stakeholder Communication:** Expertise in written and oral executive-level reporting, relationship management, and stakeholder alignment, ensuring cross-functional cohesion and clear communication of strategic priorities.
- Technical Skills:** Proficient in AI, Machine Learning (ML), Large Language Models (LLMs), GenAI, Power BI, Python, SQL, Tableau, Qualtrics, Looker, AWS, Oracle, Salesforce and Zapier. Experienced in e-commerce, SaaS, CRM systems, predictive data analytics, and AI-driven decision-making.
- Project & Process Management:** Proven mastery in Agile methodologies (Scrum, SAFe, LeSS), CIP, Lean Six Sigma, OKRs, business intelligence, PMI and Prince2, process optimization, and KPI management.
- Change Management & CSR:** Proven ability in change management, crisis navigation, conflict resolution, training, and fostering resilient organizations - experienced in CSR, sustainable business practices, and ESG initiatives.
- Licenses & certifications ↗ and peer recommendations ↗** can be found on my LinkedIn profile ↗.

LANGUAGE SKILLS

- German: Native (C2)
- English: Distinguished (C2)
- French: Intermediate (B1)
- Spanish: Elementary (A2)
- Finish: Basic (A1)

WORK EXPERIENCE (CONTINUED)

Amazon.com - Amazon EU SARL 05/14 – 10/18
Munich, Berlin, DE

Prime Now - Acting Country Leader

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

Marketplace EU - Senior Program Manager Munich, DE & Luxembourg, LU

- Orchestrated cross-functional collaboration between 50 stakeholders to launch the European Fulfillment Network, reducing fulfillment costs by -20% while enhancing delivery and customer satisfaction.
- Developed and deployed an innovative data collection tool for EU Account Managers, improving seller insights by 5x accuracy and speed, driving business growth and customer satisfaction.
- Streamlined operations procedures for long-tail selection and returns, driving a +5% to +25% increase in product assortment and profitability across key European markets.

University of St. Gallen - HSG Entrepreneurship Campus 07/10 – 10/13
St. Gallen, CH

Head of Business Incubator, Co-founder

- Co-founded and shaped a thriving business accelerator, spearheaded fundraising efforts that raised €1M+, and supported the growth of 13 start-ups.
- Initiated and led multiple founder programs, increased awareness and participation, and received awards for excellence in public communication.
- Admitted as the youngest faculty member in the prestigious HSG-MBA program, recognized with the highest rating for teaching excellence and entrepreneurial drive.

WHU - Otto Beisheim School of Management - Startup Center 11/08 – 07/10
Vallendar, DE

Project Leader, Startup Coach

- Pioneered an entrepreneurial ecosystem of >100 students, alumni, and corporations
- Established and managed a mentoring program for entrepreneurial students, focused on strategic planning and business development - secured €500K in venture funding.
- Participated in and supported two international business plan competitions.

fon.com - FON Technology S.L. 05/06 – 05/10
Madrid, ES & Munich, DE

Head of Business Development Central Europe

- Cultivated strategic partnerships with leading European corporations (DTAG, KPM, and XING), driving market penetration in the telecommunications and media sectors.
- Developed a scalable peer-to-peer business model, drove growth to 2M+ hotspots globally, and pivoted through pre-SaaS innovations.
- Introduced an innovative urban Wi-Fi Community showcase, resulting in a 3x increase in user engagement and expanding the network's public presence in key urban areas.

AWARDS

- [Digital] Internet World Business - **Top100 Leader** in E-Commerce Award ↗ 2023
- [Impact] Amazon Germany - **Extra Mile Award** ↗ 2016
- [Research] FGF e.V. - Best Social Entrepreneurship **Research Award** ↗ 2013
- [Academia] Swiss National Science Foundation - **Postdoctoral fellowships** ↗ 2012
- [Results] HSG **Communication Impact Award** for Business Innovation ↗ 2011
- [Leader] Technical University of Munich - Karl Max von **Bauernfeind Medal** ↗ 2005
- [Entrepreneurship] Munich **Business Plan Competition**, winner overall ↗ 2005

SPECIAL INTERESTS

- Sports: Passionate about cycling, running, hiking, volleyball, kayaking, climbing
- Interests: Entrepreneurship, sustainability, technology adoption, utopian literature
- Hobbies: Outdoor aficionado, DIY, bikes, smart tech / IoT, education, photovoltaics ↗