Leif Fogelberg -Senior Coaching for the German, Swiss and Austrian Markets

Would you like to expand your business to the German market?

With 25 years of experience of the German market I have plenty of expersionce to discuss the best strategy suited for each individual case.

-Leif Fogelberg. January 10, 2013.

Previous Clients

Over the years Mr. Fogelberg has worked closely with many international groups, including but not limited to:

Daimler AG Deutsche Bank HSH Nordbank WestLB

Swiss air BDF Beiersdorf Lufthansa

Why Germany and why is it so very different to Sweden?

Should you wish to expand your business, penetrating the German speaking markets is essential. Germany is the largest, most stable, and most export-oriented economy in the EU with -80 million citizens- a significant consumer and industrial market. When the German-speaking parts of Switzerland, Austria and certain regions of the Czech Republic and Slovakia are included, you will find that “the German-speaking population “ in Europe is well over 100 million people. This demographic segment is more than ten times larger than the population of Sweden.

Similarities and vast differences...

The “German-speaking market” does indeed have many similarities with the Swedish market - in terms of consumer behavior, distribution channels, and social/political “ethos”; and those who believe that language represents the main difference are likely to be punished in the marketplace. An historical anecdote may assist in describing these huge behavioral distinctions. A very wise man, Sir Winston Churchill, once said after an intensive, one week negotiating session with the Americans,that the biggest issue in the outcome of the negotiations was that while both parties spoke the same language and could therefore be expected to understand each other, the outcomes were worlds apart since the two linguistically-related cultures shared diametrically opposed versions of the same “truth”.

The language is not the problem

Even a Swedish businessman fluent in German will often lack the understanding of German philosophy or business norms if he or she has not been living for a long time in Germany – i.e. take nothing for granted and prepare carefully for market entry. implementing these decisions. Layer a healthy dose of corporate infrastructure, shared accounting costs, and an often rigid strategic planning functions on top of “something new”, and one begins to understand the complexity (and resulting strength and stability) of German corporate relationships.

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The key “big picture” issues are...

• Consensual decision making in all facets of strategic planning, budgeting, new product adaptation or production changes.

• Far higher degree of business relationship certainty and commitment once decisions have been taken – i.e. a business partner in Germany is often more than a commercial arrangement of convenience and must be treated accordingly.

• A decided lack of tolerance should a business partner fail to live up to an equal standard of commitment as outlined above – i.e. changes from up the corporate hierarchy for political or budget reasons will not be well-received.

• Personnel decisions are legally binding and should be made with great care. Firms are well advised to do their homework, do HR Research, and to exercise caution as the hiring of the wrong executives can quickly undo the best-laid plans.

• Senior management at the “Geschaeftsführer level” has a liability first to the going-concern, and to the employees and shareholders second, due to the hybrid nature of German corporate governance systems.

• Tax and accounting systems particularly in “the Mittelstand” may distort reported results and complicate budgeting.

• Social norms in the workplace, within the local business community, on vacation, and even on the golf course, must be observed or at least given some form of validation by management – i.e. living business norms by example is expected and senior management is expected to “walk the walk” when dealing with business partners, co-workers, and service-providers.

Bridging the gap

In Germany there are numerous consultancy service firms as well as a functioning Swedish –German Chamber of Commerce. How and when these organizations should be used for a successful business launch is a difficult question. One choice in a particular situation may be the right one, while in other circumstances it could be a very expensive mistake. The key to success is in appropriate preparation, the reasonable delineation of roles, responsibilities, and objectives within the team, and most importantly, a firm grasp of realistic timing to achieve the stated goals. Success in the German business market is also the careful creation of a “group consensus” around the decision making process that includes both managers, operational line functions, and the marketing staff tasked with implementing these decisions. Layer a healthy dose of corporate infrastructure, shared accounting costs, and an often rigid strategic planning functions on top of “something new”, and one begins to understand the complexity (and resulting strength and stability) of German corporate relationships.

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Why Leif Fogelberg?

Leif Fogelberg can look back on more than 25 years of entrepreneurial experience, mainly in Germany with a base in Frankfurt, but also in Switzerland with bases in Zug and Zürich. The main services marketed have typically been related to the IT sector but also include pure management consulting as well.

Within Mr. Fogelberg’s network, you will find a solid grounding in German legal systems, experience in tax-related matters (in particular when contemplating the use of Switzerland as a business base), and a highly developed “gut feel” for what will or will not be accepted in German corporate structures. Note that in spite of significant changes in the Swiss-German bilateral tax code, Switzerland remains a very attractive geographical domicile, especially for companies of moderate size. The use of the English language for contracts and protocols in Switzerland is officially accepted by all kind of audits, which is not the case in Germany.

A coach is not a “normal” Consultant

Leif Fogelberg is not a “normal” consultant. What he is offerring is a short and intensive “coaching”. That means that 25 years of active managerial experience in the German-speaking market is at your disposal. This intensive approach provides the basis for discussions about how your company can profit by entering Europe’s largest, most stable market. The intense “front-loaded” consulting approach is designed to allow companies to engage specialists or sector teams for special areas once market entry has been achieved.

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With my knowledge and experience I am more than capable of helping your business to expand to the German market.

Some facts about Mr. Fogelberg

Mr. Fogelberg communicates fluently by using various languages, concentrated but not limited to Swedish, English and of course German. In a personal Network there are professionals within alternative types of consulting, including but not limited to HR, marketing and sales, insurance and tax advising. Fogelberg has been a member of der Schwedische Handelskammer in Deutschland (Düsseldorf) for many years.

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