

THE COMPANY WE KEEP

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Be yourself- an original is worth more than a copy

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WHERE WERE YOU BORN, AND WHERE DO YOU LIVE NOW?

I was born in Gidrostroytel near Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan. We moved when I was just five years old and I grew up in Freiburg, Germany. For the past 11 years, I have lived in Bottmingen, a lovely place near Basel in Switzerland.

WHAT DID YOU STUDY AND WHY?

A Bachelor's degree in Financial Services at DHBW in Lörrach, in southern Germany. I completed my Master's in General Management at HFH in Stuttgart as I knew I wanted to run my own business. I submitted my thesis in the same year I gave birth to my daughter, so two very special milestones in one.

MY MOST REDEEMING QUALITY IS...

I can handle difficult situations with a smile.

FIRST JOB?

Financial Consultant at Deutsche Vermögensberatung, close to Freiburg in a place called Waldkirch. I have a soft spot for the town as I started my first consultancy there. After the financial crisis in 2008, I decided to switch industries and, by chance, got into headhunting. And so began my second career.

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST SURPRISE ABOUT YOUR JOB?

The number of companies that still operate along strict hierarchal lines, with bosses making all the decisions, despite all the literature extolling the merits of flat management structures with spread accountability. There is a lot of merit in everyone knowing who is in charge, and the stability and consistency that provides.

BIGGEST RISK YOU EVER TOOK?

Buying MPB Recruitment. It was a big step, especially as a young single mom.

WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER ON A BAD DAY?

Music – of every kind. I can play the piano and I love to dance. I go to clubs just to feel the music.

FIRST CAR? CURRENT CAR?

A silver Peugeot 208 cc, convertible. Pure freedom! Now it's Audi A5 Sportback. Plenty of room and it looks cool too

I HAVE LEARNED TO COME TO TERMS WITH...

The fact that I can't sit in front of a computer for hours at a time looking at facts and figures. I need more variety than that.

WHAT'S THE THING THAT PEOPLE ARE MOST SURPRISED TO LEARN ABOUT YOU?

How strong I am on the inside, even though I'm not very tall. I am much tougher and more resilient than my petite frame suggests.



BEST GADGET YOU OWN?

My e-scooter.

IN THE LAST MONTH, WHAT IS THE MOST INTERESTING CONVERSATION YOU HAVE HAD?

I had a profound conversation with a well-known government official about the challenges he overcame to succeed in public life. Usually, people assume such individuals had secure and stable upbringings. His story was both touching and inspirational.

LAST (OR MOST LOVED) HOLIDAY?

A road trip across California with my sister. I so admired the friendly, relaxed, can-do approach of the people we met along the way.

CHARITY/ CAUSE CLOSEST TO YOUR HEART?

ROKJ the organisation I helped set up under the auspices of the Rotary Club of Allschwil to give economically and socially disadvantaged children and young people in the Basel area access to opportunities to help them integrate into their communities and realise their dreams.

BEST BOOK YOU'VE READ IN THE PAST YEAR?

Lean In: Woman, Work, and the Will to Lead by Sheryl Sandberg

YOUR BINGE-WATCH SERIES?

The Dropout on Netflix, about the Elizabeth Holmes scandal. Utterly gripping and a timely reminder of the importance of ethics in tech.

MY GO-TO WAY TO RELAX & REWIND?

I like to treat myself to "me time." For my last birthday, I went to a spa hotel, read a book, and had dinner at a Japanese restaurant with a beautiful view. It was so relaxing.

I HAVE A COLLECTION OF...

Peak caps from different football teams, some from when I lived in San Diego. I wear them often – they're both cosy and stylish.

IN MY FRIDGE YOU WILL ALWAYS FIND...

Very good gin. My favourite is Hendrick's paired with cucumber, pepper, and Fever-Tree tonic. Delicious!