



What's your story?

Eleven Stories About
Creativity@Bertelsmann

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What's
your
story?



Thomas Rabe

Chairman & CEO, Bertelsmann

Foreword

Creativity@Bertelsmann



Bertelsmann is the home of creative content and customer solutions – of broadcasting, TV production, radio, books, magazines, music and services, whether in analog, print, or digital form. We reach, inspire, and support millions of people. Day after day. All over the world.

Behind everything we do are creative minds: program originators and producers, publishers and journalists, entrepreneurs and technicians. Bertelsmann lives by their efforts and their ideas. Our business wouldn't be productive without them.

In this book, "What's Your Story – Creativity@Bertelsmann," some of these women and men, our colleagues, tell their own personal business stories, with specific examples to give you a large sense of our company's creativity.

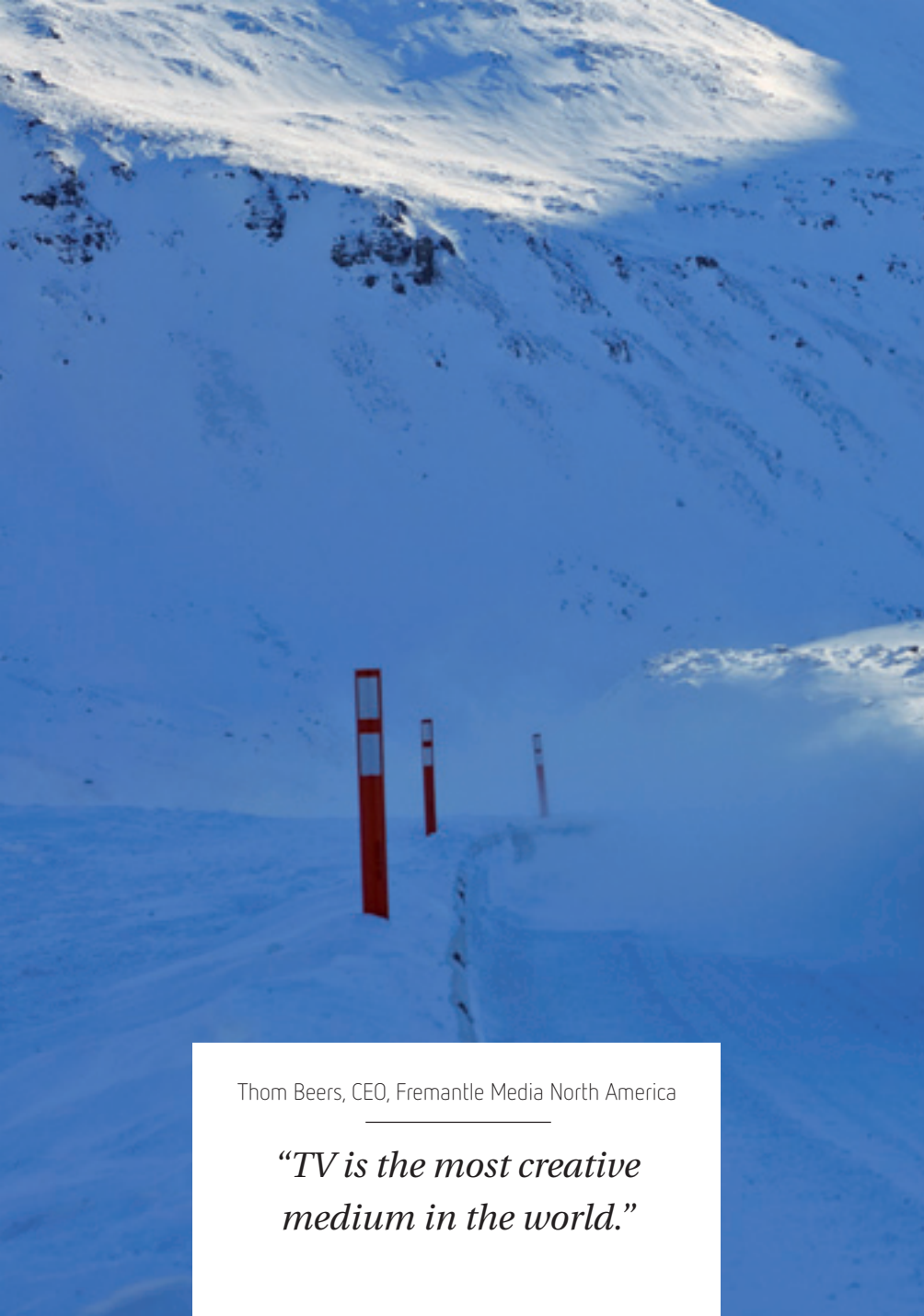
Their stories span all divisions and facets of Bertelsmann: from entertaining or unusual television productions and books that are moving in every sense of the word to a cooking magazine for men only and an award-winning travel app; from visits to football and Olympic stadiums to an interview session on Bryan Ferry's sofa; from booming mobile services in China to the comprehensive service package put together for an American health insurer.

They are but a few of the many examples you will be reading about. They demonstrate just how pronounced and ingrained creativity is at Bertelsmann and the great importance we assign to it. For it is precisely those creative achievements – manifested in content and solutions – that make us sought-after partners. Creativity is the bedrock of our business, the backbone of our economic success.

Thomas Rabe

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Bertelsmann Corporate Communications*

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Thom Beers, CEO, Fremantle Media North America

*“TV is the most creative
medium in the world.”*



Living On The Edge



Thom Beers has worked as an assistant and cable carrier, a grip, a gaffer, a camera operator, an actor, a playwright, a stage director, a documentary filmmaker, a network executive and a narrator. He is now an Executive producer, an entrepreneur and a creative professional. His inexhaustible wellspring of ideas has given rise to more than 40 television series. With “Dangerous Jobs,” he created a whole new TV genre. So you’d be hard pressed to find someone with more varied and extensive experience in the TV business than Thom Beers. This alone lends weight to the words of the Fremantle Media North America boss when he asserts, with total conviction: “Television is the most creative medium in the world.” And his words carry the same weight when he succinctly defines creativity, saying: “Ideas are nothing. Execution is everything.” In an interview on the sidelines of this year’s RTL Group management meeting in Hilversum, the Netherlands, Beers explains why.

His boss Cécile Frot-Coutaz, CEO of Fremantle Media, had set the tone herself a few minutes earlier at the meeting: “In order to realize the next TV hit, first we need broadcaster’s courage and secondly producer’s creativity.” She said that both are equally important for her – and women like her and men like Thom Beers, who succeeded Frot-Coutaz as U.S. chief in 2012, personify the producer’s creativity at Fremantle Media. He was already a familiar face when he moved up to the position of CEO – Fremantle Media had acquired a majority stake in his company, Original Productions, three years earlier.

Original Productions stands for TV series that delight audiences and critics alike and often go on from the U.S. to conquer the world: “Ice Road Truckers,” “Monster Garage,” “Monster House,” “Ax Men,” “Lobster Wars,” “Bering Sea Gold”, “Storage Wars” and, most notably, “Deadliest Catch,”



Thom Beers

*on perilous jobs that provide the material
for top-notch TV entertainment*



Mortal combat for Alaskan crabs

*Crab fishermen stay on board, braving hurricanes,
towering waves and icy cold, for shifts lasting
up to 40 hours.*

which has been nominated for 31 Emmys and has won 15, including Best Nonfiction Series in 2011.

“We invented a whole new ‘Dangerous Occupations’ genre with this series,” says Beers. “It showcases people who work in very different, but always perilous and sometimes life-threatening jobs.” With high risk comes high reward, and that’s what makes a great series! In some cases they are crab fishermen risking their lives hauling crab pots in the Aleutian Islands off the coast of Alaska in rough seas, high winds, and rolling decks through thick ice in the dead of January. In others, they are loggers who can topple giant trees in the American forests like matchsticks. And sometimes they are truckers who steer their huge rigs across frozen lakes above the Arctic Circle.

These heroes and their everyday adventures all have one thing in common: Thom Beers had the idea of using them as subjects for gripping television entertainment. In the process there has never been one silver bullet for turning such ideas into TV formats. Quite the opposite: “Once I really did have a dream that later went on to become a television series called ‘Monster Garage,’ but often it’s just chance,” says Beers. For instance, chance helped launch his most successful series to date: “Deadliest Catch.” “Actually, I was commissioned to shoot a two-hour Special for Discovery on Extreme Alaska ... I had researched it and decided to shoot a 12-minute sequence about crab fishing in Alaska as part of the larger film project, but when I went to sea everything changed. Two days after leaving the port in Dutch Harbor, weather rolled in, and I was about to experience and survive the worst storm in 40 years. Winds were whipping at 70 knots and waves crested at 40 feet. Two boats sank in that storm and seven guys drowned; never found the bodies. After that I realized: Twelve minutes is not enough. The battle for the valuable crab and against the towering waves, extremely brutal weather, 40 straight hours of work before sleep, the solidarity and conflicts on the team – all this is worth much, much more.” And so the series about fishing in the toughest conditions, and the men who risk their lives for it, was born.

However, no matter whether by chance or in a dream, as a producer Thom Beers is continuously searching for new ideas, day and night. Yet he doesn’t place a lot of value on ideas themselves on the road to TV suc-

cess, however good they are: “Lots of people have great ideas. Every day. So do I. But they’re not worth a penny. The only thing that matters is the execution.” Only this step proves true creativity, he says. “You know, in my opinion, television is the most creative medium of all, because it has so many facets and because its actual creative power lies in the perfect combination of these elements.” In the case of a painter, one creative person, the painter, and a subject, is enough for a creative outcome, the painting. TV is a different matter, he says. “Because here all the creatives have to work together, from the lighting and camera crews, sound guys to the performers or actors, director and producer, the editor, the composer. Only when you succeed in forging a truly creative team from many individual creative minds does this result in the creative result on the screen.”

Because he has done each of these jobs himself at some point in his long career, Beers knows what he is talking about like few others when he now directs all the parties in a new production – like a conductor with his orchestra. “I know exactly what goes on in a production. I’m trained to create character arcs, story arcs, dramatic arcs. I know who, when and what to do or how to create the perfect cliffhanger before a commercial break, so people don’t change the channel. I know every single mechanism and the way to shape it into a whole,” says Beers. But he also knows that television is and remains a business. Creativity is one side of the coin; the other is formed by network needs, audience expectations, trending topics, competition, marketing and promotion.

“You have to master that as well,” says the producer, who demands this of himself as well as others. And in this respect, he says, it doesn’t make a difference whether you are running your own firm, as he used to do with Original Productions, or you work for a larger company like Fremantle Media or RTL Group. “I still look after the money as if it was my own,” laughs Beers. “I’ve never changed in this respect and never will.” On the other hand, he is happy that he can realize his enormous creativity within the bigger group at Bertelsmann just as he used to as head of his own company: “Every day I’m reminded that I work in a company that values creative performance and rewards it accordingly.”

The business streak in Thom Beers is probably responsible for the fact that, despite all the creativity, he is always able to look at his business with



Axing all the right questions

*In "Ax Men," Thom Beers documents
the dangerous work done by loggers in Canada.*



A hands-on guy

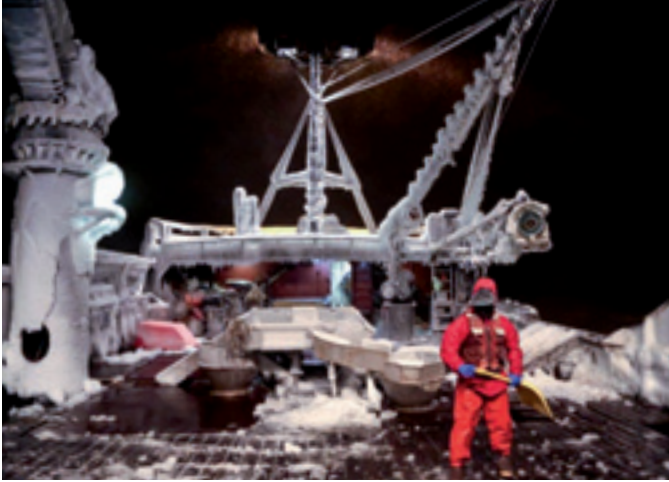
There is no job in the TV business that Thom Beers hasn't done himself - from cable carrier to producer.



objectivity. For instance, when asked why “unscripted programming” – filming the daily lives of people without a script – is so successful at the moment, he answers: “Because it’s relatively inexpensive.” Nowhere are production costs as low as in this genre, he says, and that is what all broadcasters are looking for these days. No wonder that in 2013, eleven of the 20 most-watched cable programs in the U.S. were unscripted. “The ratings share of these formats has never been as high as it is today,” says Beers. Besides being economical for the broadcasters, there is another, audience-side aspect: “Viewers are demanding more reality and authenticity,” Beers believes.

Beers promises that his audience of millions will continue to get both real and authentic television. In the interview, he reveals that he is always working on the development of four or five new formats simultaneously – and also that his latest idea is about “marathon dancing.” Based on the phenomenon of marathon dances in the U.S. during the Depression era, he plans to have professional dancers compete in a five-day dance-off – nonstop with only two hours’ sleep a day. And with ever-new dance styles. For five days in a row. “This can be perfectly executed in this day and age,” Beers enthuses. “24 hours a day on social media, and then on TV during primetime.” In any case, anything less than a marathon won’t cut it for the maestro of dangerous occupations, whose motto is, “If you aren’t living on the edge, you’re taking up too much space.”





Icy Cold

Subzero temperatures prevail on deck when the fishermen are at sea in January – challenging conditions for the camera equipment as well ...





Fred Casimir, EVP, International Repertoire BMG

*“Today we are partners
to artists like Bryan Ferry.”*

Music That Tells Stories



The setting: a spacious room on the second floor of an inconspicuous building in Chelsea, West London. Large transom windows, stylish furniture, paintings worthy of a collection, precious fabrics on the walls and in the display cases, numerous smaller and larger, sometimes quirky, souvenirs from around the world. Altogether they reveal good taste and the enjoyment of furnishing a house – and give the place a special charm of refinement and cosmopolitanism. Bryan Ferry, a musical icon since the 1970s both with his band Roxy Music and as a solo musician, lives in the house with his family. He invites friends and business partners here – like Fred Casimir, Executive Vice President, International Repertoire at BMG. About two years ago, Casimir and some colleagues had the privilege of sitting down on the music star’s sofa, famous for having been photographed so many times, to discuss one of the most remarkable musical projects of recent times with Ferry and his management – a project that has impressively demonstrated what a strong partnership between artists and music companies can lead to, as Casimir explains during a visit to BMG’s London headquarters.

“In 2012 we had already agreed with Ferry that we would take over the publishing rights to most of his songs from over four decades. We had also signed a master recording contract for the production and sale of his next three albums when he approached us with a very unusual idea,” says the music manager, who joined BMG in 2009, recalling only all too well the chat on the sofa – which of course was followed by a visit downstairs to the artist’s equally famous “Studio One.” “Six instrumental jazz versions of some of his own compositions had been recorded with the Bryan Ferry Orchestra as a commissioned work for a then still unrealized movie, arranged with loving attention to detail and in the style of the 1920s. Bryan asked us quite frankly what we thought of it – but didn’t try to talk us into



Fred Casimir

*On changing times and changing business models
in the music industry that center more than ever –
and successfully – on the creative originator*

anything at all.” Fred Casimir and his colleagues just listened and responded spontaneously. “We thought the tracks were very charming and original. In short: We knew we would want to release them,” says the BMG manager. “We also knew that we would not reach a mass audience with this album – recorded by a salon orchestra without Bryan Ferry’s distinctive voice and in mono – but we were convinced that we could publish a unique and beautiful product that presents the artist in an unusual way and that might serve as the groundwork for a more commercial studio album. Ultimately, we see it as our task to provide services and a home for creative artists, and to develop interesting strategies and products with them.”

According to Casimir, the basis for cooperation is BMG’s unusual Artist Services business model. “The artist ends up getting a much larger proportion of sales revenues than from a traditional record deal,” he says. BMG doesn’t pay any lavish advances on the expected revenue. Instead, the artist and label jointly determine a project budget to pay for the production, marketing and promotion. “The advantage of this model is its scalability and transparency for the artist,” says the music manager.

And so BMG deliberately avoided launching extensive marketing campaigns with the associated costs for the “Jazz Age” album. “Instead, we first organized just one exclusive concert in London in consultation with Bryan Ferry and informed the press in advance,” says Casimir. Around 250 guests selected by Ferry himself, including numerous media representatives and opinion leaders, of course, were invited to the prestigious Annabel’s Club, which was suitably furnished for the album with furniture and paintings from the last century and featured dancers in appropriate costumes. “There was enormous advance media hype,” says Casimir. “Newspapers reported at length on the show, radio stations played the songs, which led to many, many more fans trying to get tickets – in vain.”

He says this caused all the more people flock to Annabel’s on the evening of the performance to catch a glimpse of Bryan Ferry. “The media coverage in the following days was likewise enthusiastic,” adds Casimir. “For this reason, Bryan Ferry decided to open his upcoming concerts in Berlin, Paris, Milan and Madrid with a ‘Jazz Age’ set. The album was launched at New York Fashion Week, and three tracks were eventually used in one of the biggest movies of the year, ‘The Great Gatsby,’ as well as on its sound-

track. We had expected to sell around 20,000 copies – to date the album has sold more than 120,000,” says Casimir.

The BMG manager sees the “Jazz Age” project with Bryan Ferry as a prime example of how success can be achieved in what is in many respects a difficult music market. “The days when a music company molded an artist according to its ideas, prescribed their songs and maybe even their outfits and public appearances, and hoped to be successful are over. We realized years ago that our business has to be about building and nurturing a partnership with the artist and their management. In an more and more fragmented and digital market, we can only operate successfully in cooperation with the artist.” This leads to a different creative approach than in the past, says Casimir. “We want to tell emotional stories with our songs and products, stories that move people and get noticed in this world that has become so complex,” Casimir stresses. “The public and media are not waiting for some artist and their new record, they want to be won over. If we take this into consideration, if we find a story featuring and for our stars that we can disseminate and win people over with, then we will be able to sell their music.” Of course, he adds, there are market conditions that the BMG team needs to consider: “The successful execution of a campaign requires a lot of attention to every detail, but the essential building blocks of a campaign usually come directly from the artists – because they know their fans best,” says Casimir. “By granting them this artistic freedom and fully supporting them with our experience and expertise, we create the preconditions for commercial success. And that is what the artists appreciate about BMG. We are their partner and honor their creative power with our work.”

Specifically, this means that at the beginning of a new project, before the production of a new album, the artist and his management exchange ideas with BMG employees from different countries on the basis of expectations gleaned from market research – and also on the success of the project. Only later do they go into specific planning about marketing and PR campaigns and sales strategies. “These measures must be coordinated between the artist and the team,” says Casimir. At the same time, plans are designed to be flexible. “If in the course of a campaign an artist like Anastasia is requested by nearly every major TV show in Europe, we

need to be able to respond flexibly, and within hours, because this kind of presence can be crucial in certain circumstances.”

In all the planning, the BMG manager says the diversity of the markets is also taken into account. “Germany, for example, is a market dominated by physical sales – CDs still sell relatively well here, though the share of digital music is steadily increasing. In Italy, the newsstands are becoming an ever more important retail partner; the French market is strongly driven by local products; and in Sweden streaming is dominant, as it is in China, where we want to grow strongly in the future. Markets change rapidly. We have to be able to cope with all these differences and changes quickly if we want to market our international artists.”

Add to that the social media, which he says is playing an increasingly important role in the music world. “BMG needs to be very well versed in the social networks and support our artists as needed,” says Casimir, describing his employees’ wide range of responsibilities. But here, too, quality over quantity is the maxim: “If a star gets 80,000 likes on Facebook, that doesn’t mean a thing. The audience’s loyalty to the artist and the appropriate communication to enhance this loyalty long-term is much more important,” the BMG manager believes. “The artist should really mean something to the audience and fit in with their lives and attitude to life. In the social media as elsewhere, the long-term relevance of a presence depends on the artist’s integrity and credibility.”

BMG invests the most work and money in the first two years after the launch of a given new project. When a new album is released, either physically or digitally, it has to be produced and advertised. After a certain time, more costs are incurred for CD reprints – and the time begins when consideration can be given to further “exploitation options” for the music. “This is particularly attractive to us because this downstream exploitation opens up expanded opportunities and sectors: into the licensing business, for instance,” says Casimir, explaining BMG’s strategy, which is successful and effective because it is inexpensive – and which applies to the entire repertoires of well-known BMG stars. Artists and music companies can earn money for quite some time after the initial release if their songs are used in commercials, in movies or on TV, or if CDs are reissued in combination with another product or in a modified



Jazz Age

The Bryan Ferry Orchestra recorded jazz versions of original compositions in the style of the 1920s - BMG has sold 130,000 copies of the album to date.



The Music Manager

Fred Casimir in front of the 'Wall of Fame' of BMG stars in London



edition for specific occasions. Here, too, the BMG experts' creativity is called for: "What possibilities are there for remarketing which songs in which context? Our catalog exploitation team is always busy creating campaigns across all relevant topics and genres – whether it's the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall or other events," says Casimir. "Releasing special editions is an integral part of long-term exploitation."

That is why artists with an extensive catalog or repertoire of albums and songs are particularly attractive for BMG. Their fans are very loyal, and the numerous successful songs in such catalogs can be put to excellent use for various publication purposes. "These artists are a guarantee of our success," the BMG manager says. Nevertheless, he says BMG also focuses on emerging artists, who, with a bit of luck and talent, will have tomorrow's attractive catalogs.

BMG's tried and tested model of comprehensive artist support involves building a personal relationship. "Of course we need to know an artist's work," says Casimir, citing the basic prerequisite – which he says was very easy to meet with Bryan Ferry: "I grew up with his music." The artists he has worked with in his career include many other music business greats such as Yello, Herbert Grönemeyer, Grace Jones and Henry Rollins. And even before his time at BMG, he had gained experience in the music business at companies including EMI, Polygram and Fremantle Media. "Above all, we need to communicate with our artists, listen to them, understand them. They are the focus of our work. Our job is to help them develop their musical career. We work on their behalf to create a suitable environment for them and their music so that their songs will find buyers in all the major territories. We mustn't forget that it is from their creativity we all earn our living."

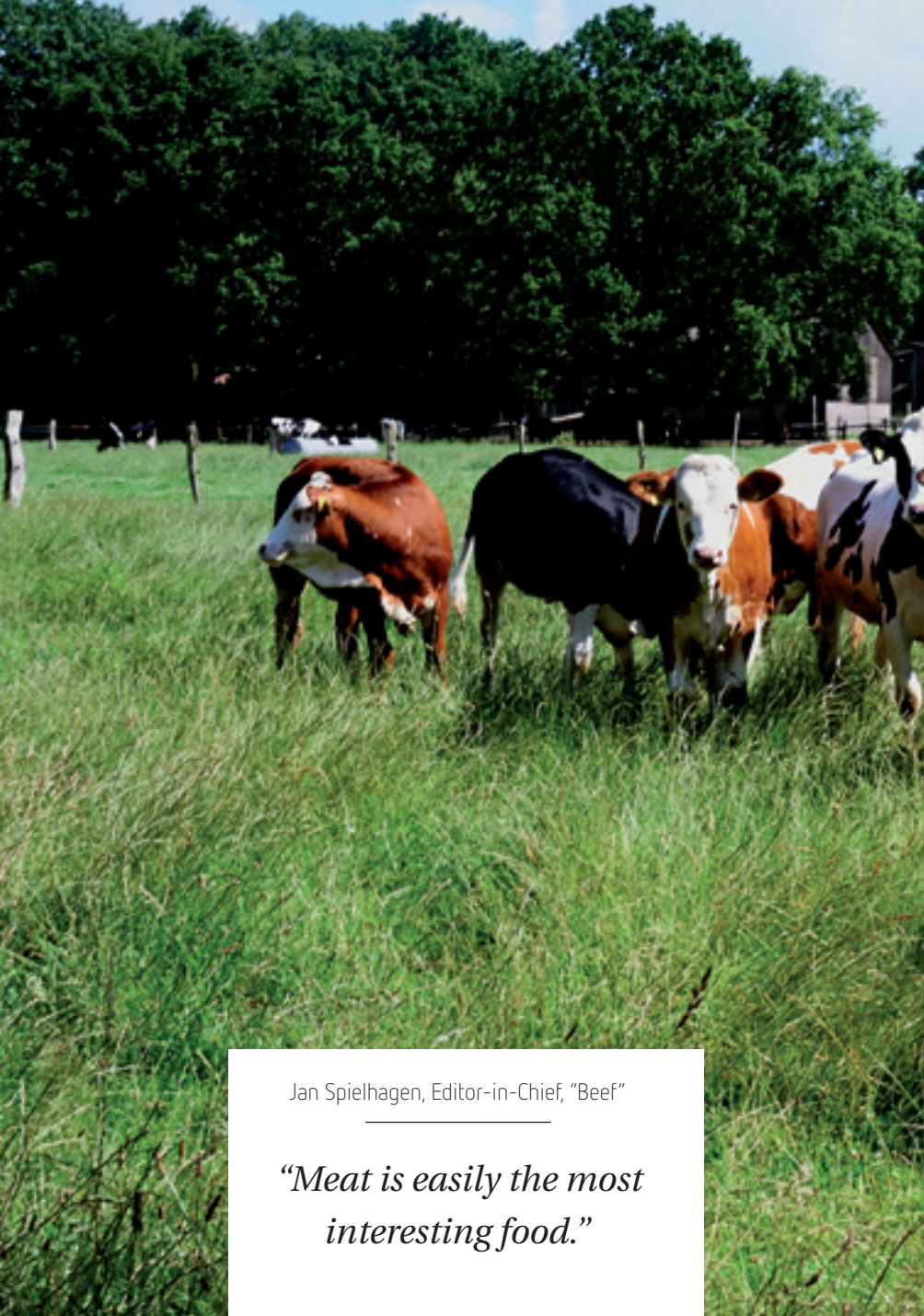
It sounds so simple and yet it is unprecedented: Its extensive Artist Services model makes BMG unique in the international music market – and has also made it the most successful company of its kind, as the music manager emphasizes. This is impressively demonstrated by its many chart successes in all major territories, as well as the high level of artist satisfaction: So far, says Casimir, not one successful artist has left BMG, although quite a few have been courted by other music companies. On the contrary, they themselves are contacting BMG more and more often

and eventually sign contracts with the company. Just like Bryan Ferry, to whom the creative environment at BMG and the many possibilities of co-determination in the music projects were particularly important. “I have always liked to be hands-on with every aspect of the release of my records, and the BMG deal offers a new way of doing things,” said Ferry when his collaboration with BMG was announced. And Ferry’s manager Alistair Norbury added: “From the moment we met with the BMG people, it became clear that the BMG model was very well suited to work with Bryan’s creative team at Studio One in London.” Being able to rely on experienced professionals when coming up with new albums is very appealing for an artist. “When stars with such long careers say this kind of thing and choose us as their service provider, word gets around,” says Casimir.

He says that just a few years ago, BMG was belittled by other music companies. “Those days are over - now we have become co-competitors in the international business,” Casimir continues. “And yet we are in a continuous process of learning,” he adds. “We are changing and must change, because the music market is also constantly changing. And we must be both self-critical and self-confident in meeting challenges.” He says these include digital sales channels such as inexpensive streaming, and artists’ options for directly marketing their own songs, e.g., via their websites. In addition, he says the good old CD is on its way out in more and more countries. “We have to deal with this,” says Casimir pragmatically. “It’s important that we have music catalogs that are relevant for generations of people, because no amount of money can make uninteresting music interesting.”

Meanwhile, BMG doesn’t really have to worry about uninteresting music. According to Fred Casimir, this year and next will see the release of a number of new albums by well-known and successful stars and bands, including the Smashing Pumpkins, the Backstreet Boys, Dido, Limp Bizkit and Nena. And there’ll be something from Bryan Ferry soon, too – even before the Christmas edition of “The Jazz Age”. His new album is scheduled for release this fall. With all-new tracks. No jazz. With vocals. And in stereo.





Jan Spielhagen, Editor-in-Chief, "Beef"

*"Meat is easily the most
interesting food."*



Food Is The New Fashion



Put the steak on the grid, then on the grill, cranking the grid up until just a few millimeters separate it from the glowing coals. In seconds, the 800-plus-degree heat will start to darken and crisp the outside of the meat. Give it 45 seconds on each side, and then let it sit at low heat – perfect! This gives you the typical, unique taste of a New York steak.” When Jan Spielhagen, Editor-in-Chief of the Gruner + Jahr food magazine “Beef,” talks about the “Beefer,” his eyes light up. The “Beefer” is a small, heavy stainless-steel barbecue the size of an espresso machine that “Beef” sells to its readers for 849 euros. And somehow, this barbecue stands for everything that makes the young magazine such an impressive success story. “Beef” is aimed at affluent men who can cook sophisticated food, are interested in having the most perfect kitchen equipment they can buy, and who love the unusual.

“Our men get excited about barbecuing or smoking food, sous vide cooking, upscale design, handmade knives, and the technology used,” says Spielhagen. “But most of all they want to be able to tell great stories about cooking, about special wine, fine ingredients, about breeders, rarities, and their successes at the stove. The experience just wouldn’t be complete otherwise. And this 800-degree barbecue fit the bill perfectly.” In fact, this is what “Beef” regularly delivers to readers every two months: fascinating stories about the production, preparation and beautiful presentation of the finest and most exotic foods. Some 60,000 readers are currently willing to pay 9.80 euros per issue for this pleasure, making ‘Beef’ one of the first G+J magazines in this upper price range, which was previously unthinkable for a food title,” says Spielhagen.

In the beginning, even colleagues at G+J didn’t think much of the prospects of a high-priced men’s cooking magazine. But “Beef” was



Jan Spielhagen

*On the development of a food magazine
"only for men"*



BEEF!

FÜR MÄNNER MIT GESCHMACK

KOBE KOMMT!
Endlich gibt es Japans
Edelfleisch auch bei
uns. So kriegen Sie's

KÜRBIS & KERLE
Mehr Geschmack für
das Riesengemüse:
fünf starke Rezepte

GENUG GESTOPFT!
Kann man Foie gras
herstellen, ohne die
Tiere zu quälen? Report

5

**JAHRE
BEEF!**

**WIR SAGEN
DANKE!**

HÄNGT SIE AUF!

Rauch rockt! Hier ist Ihr Räucher-Guide für Speck,
Saibling, Pastrami, Paprika, Gänsebrust, Huhn, Würste ...

"Beef!"

The G+J magazine has been published since 2009.

given a chance. In the end Spielhagen and three colleagues, who were all working at the women's magazine "Healthy Living" at the time, won G+J's in-house "Grüne Wiese" contest with the concept in 2009. "I had the idea for this kind of a magazine three years earlier. At the time I wasn't working at Gruner + Jahr, but at another publishing house, and I had even presented it to my boss there once," says Spielhagen. His boss shot the concept down, saying, "I don't know any men who cook." "He's bound to be pretty annoyed today," says Spielhagen, smiling.

In October 2009, just a few months after the contest, G+J launched the pilot edition of "Beef." The bar for a continuation of the magazine was quite high at that time: it would have to sell ten pages of advertising and 20,000 copies – in the middle of the economic and financial crisis. "We sold 20 pages of advertising and 50,000 copies," Spielhagen recalls proudly. The "Beef" express was up and running, and has been gathering speed ever since.

At first it was published quarterly. In 2013, the rhythm was increased to six issues per year. And even the skeptics have long since fallen silent: "Food is the new fashion – cooking and eating are THE megatrend, with all the facets we're seeing today: regionality, seasonality, vegetarianism, veganism, urban gardening and the rediscovery of socializing with friends," says Spielhagen. It is a megatrend as strong as fashion has been over the past two decades, with less glamor, but more authenticity. The advertisers have taken note, too. Nowadays, big luxury brands like Porsche, Rolex, Audemars Piguet and Chanel advertise in "Beef," something hardly anyone had thought possible at first.

But back to the "Beef Beefer": It actually came about quite by chance. Preparing a typical New York steak – akin to the Holy Grail of all meat fans – requires at least 800 degrees of heat, and therefore an American "gastro grill" the size of a wardrobe. "There are maybe ten of these professional pieces of equipment in Germany," says Spielhagen. So there was no chance of ambitious amateur BBQ enthusiasts being able to pamper their guests with New York steaks. At least not until a well-known Hamburg TV chef sent three ambitious tinkerers into the Gruner + Jahr kitchen last year. They presented the prototype of the "Beefer" to Spielhagen, who didn't hesitate for long, and a few months

later, the first “Beefers” labeled with the “Beef” logo were being offered in the magazine. “We quickly sold 600 units, and ‘Beef’ gets a share of the revenues, which means a nice bit of extra income for us,” says Spielhagen.

One of the first “Beefers” customers, incidentally, was Spielhagen himself, who secured the prototype. The man is – no surprise – an avid BBQ enthusiast and can talk with devotion for hours about steak and meat specialties from around the world. “Meat is easily the most interesting food. There’s not an awful lot to say about a carrot,” says Spielhagen. This does not mean that he and his magazine advocate the uncritical consumption of meat. On the contrary: “Eat less meat, but the best. And treat food as appreciatively as possible. After all, an animal had to die for you,” says Spielhagen, summing up the “Beef” philosophy.

The “Beefers” also has symbolic value for the editor. It proves “that ‘Beef’ is no longer just a print magazine, but has long since become a really strong brand.” Spielhagen believes this is of key importance for further growth, because the magazine alone, at least in Germany, will soon reach its limit. “For instance, I don’t believe that we should be upping the bimonthly publication frequency to monthly anytime soon. Reading ‘Beef’, should be something special – that’s part of the concept.” He can, however, envisage special editions. The first special issue will be published this fall to mark the fifth anniversary of the magazine, but he sees much greater opportunities with the “Beef” brand in other areas.

The Editor-in-Chief

*... has since also released the first
“Beef” app, “Grill Me!”*





The "Beefer"

*Every steak lover's dream
– available in stainless steel
and for €849.*

In fact, that is exactly what Spielhagen and his team are currently working very hard on. There are already some tangible results to report: In May this year, the first “Beef” app, “Grill mich” (Grill Me!) was published, with both free and paid content. A dedicated, high-quality “Beef” book, a kind of steak bible, will be published in time for the Frankfurt Book Fair. Working together with a Berlin-based production company, a pilot episode for a “Beef TV” documentary has been produced for a men’s channel, limited editions of a “Beef” gin and a “Beef” wine as well as their own barbecue herb blends, have also been offered. And finally, “Beef” is developing an international presence. A licensed French issue is already on newsstands, and negotiations are apparently under way with a U.S. publisher.

The fact that Jan Spielhagen is able to develop magazines and lead them to success is also shown by the example of the young “Chefkoch Magazin,” which G+J launched last year with content based on the G+J cooking portal Chefkoch.de. Unlike “Beef,” “Chefkoch Magazin” is aimed at a much wider audience and is significantly less lavishly produced. “‘Beef’ is certainly more creatively ambitious, but ‘Chefkoch Magazin’, is, strategically, extremely exciting,” says Spielhagen, adding that the German market for this type of recipe magazine is huge and very competitive, with about 30 existing titles. However, due to its connection with the strong Chefkoch.de brand, Europe’s biggest cooking portal, the magazine has the potential to draw level with the market leaders.

Basically, Spielhagen says the development of new magazines is “not rocket science.” His recipe for success is: “Define the target group, find a topic, develop an approach and get cracking. This works and can quickly produce decent results.” He says the creativity essential to such a process can be planned and organized. “You need people who love to be creative, and have to give them the room and the necessary trust and confidence. The success of ‘Beef’ is a team success.”

Spielhagen and his team regularly give themselves this room. Once a year, the editorial team goes off together for three days, to Sylt or Berlin, for example, to discuss upcoming themes and new ideas, away from their daily work and, above all, free of scheduling constraints.

“This is the only way to create big, new things, to think out of the box, and come up with ideas for new magazines and journalistic approaches. During these days we brainstorm our way to the focus topics for all the issues of the coming year. When we get back to the office, the issues just have to be packaged. Other key requirements for creative work are a sense of humor, mutual generosity in the creative process, and a stage on which people feel comfortable letting their imaginations run free.”

To actually develop an entirely new magazine, says Spielhagen, you really only need three people: “One who knows the subject matter and takes care of the text. One who has the right pictures in his head for the visuals. And one who’s in charge – everything else you can bring in from outside. But whether you’re talking about a men’s cooking magazine, a recipe magazine or a high-end women’s magazine, all creativity aside, one thing above all is essential for the success of a project: enthusiasm. And Spielhagen and his team have loads of it. “Making ‘Beef’ is something special for the whole team,” says the Editor-in-Chief, smiling at his favorite kitchen appliance. The “Beef” boss not only uses his “Beef” at home, but the 800-degree barbecue has even found a place in the big G+J kitchen, where many recipes for various food magazines are developed – just as “Beef” has found its place among all the other G+J magazines.

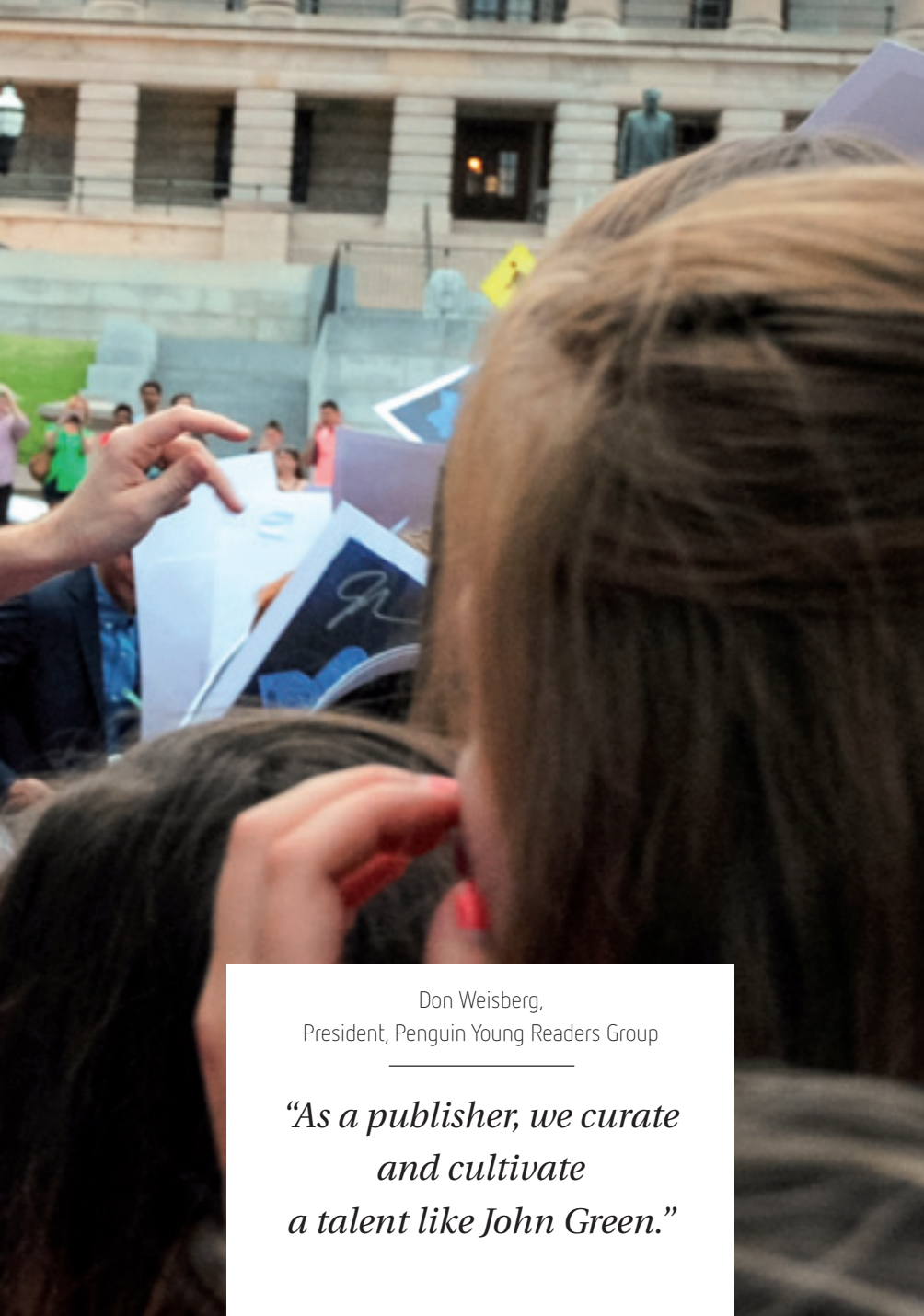




A meaty brand

Gin, spices and BBQ implements sold under the "Beef" label.





Don Weisberg,
President, Penguin Young Readers Group

*“As a publisher, we curate
and cultivate
a talent like John Green.”*

Space And Time For Authors



Ten million books sold. Number one for over 25 weeks on the “New York Times” bestseller list. Millions and millions of followers, friends and fans tracking – or rather, celebrating – the author on social media. Sold-out “readings” reminiscent of performances by rock stars. Literary awards all over the world. Cheering critics who, like “Time” magazine, recognize the author’s “damn near genius,” or, like the “New York Times,” call his book a “triumph.” All these facts speak for themselves – and they outline the success story of a great book: “The Fault in Our Stars” by John Green.

It is in fact an exceptional book: the love story of two teenagers suffering from cancer, told in beautiful, clear language. But how to turn this kind of material into a (worldwide) bestseller? Is that even possible? asks “Süddeutsche Zeitung” among others, and proceeds to supply the answer: “John Green makes it possible.” However, one might like to add, beyond his own creative powers, it requires those of his publishing house. This was the topic of our interview with Green’s originating, U.S. publishers: Don Weisberg, President Penguin Young Readers Group, and Julie Strauss-Gabel, Publisher, Dutton Children’s Books. She discovered Green long before he became a star.

In 2005, Dutton Children’s Books, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers Group in the U.S., published “The Fault In Our Stars” author John Green’s debut novel, Looking for Alaska – it had been acquired for \$8,000. It didn’t become a bestseller at first, nor did his next few books – why did the publisher continue to believe in Green and keep publishing him?



Don Weisberg

*On his love for children's and YA
books in all their variety*



Julie Strauss-Gabel

*On her work with John Green –
and how it all began*



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U.S. \$ 12.49



Don Weisberg: Though *Looking for Alaska* was not an instant sales success, it was a book that universally captured the attention and admiration of our entire publishing division. John had many in-house advocates. His editor, Julie Strauss-Gabel, was the true champion. The book quickly gathered accolades from multiple booksellers, and was sold by our rights department to a growing list of translation publishers. It went on to win a long list of awards, including the Michael L. Printz Award for Young Adult Fiction, the top industry accolade for Young Adult (YA) titles. John Green and his books have been a focus and a priority for Penguin from the very beginning. He was undeniably an author of exceptional talent, enjoying immediate critical success and having huge commercial potential. There was never hesitation about acquiring new books. Our job as a publisher is to curate and cultivate talent. There was never a doubt that we were playing a long game with John's breakout potential.

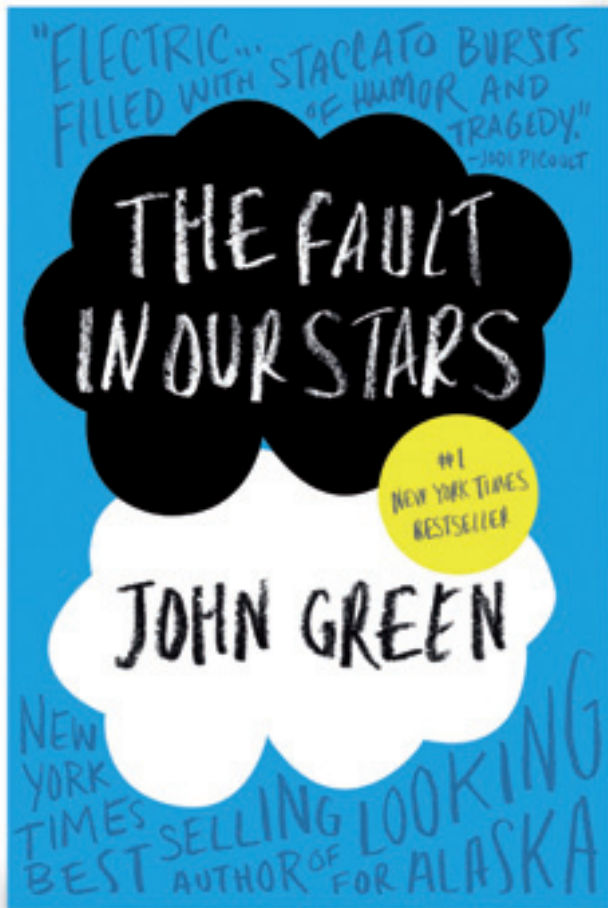
*What makes his books so special? Did the publisher anticipate a success like that of *The Fault In Our Stars* early on?*

Julie Strauss-Gabel: John Green has been a cornerstone talent on our publishing lists since *Looking for Alaska*. Though no one quite imagined a future that included a 10-million-copy international blockbuster, there was never a moment when John's talent and potential weren't clear to Penguin and to the industry. We knew *The Fault in Our Stars* was a special book the moment we read it, and we wanted to do everything we could to build early awareness about the book among not only John's existing fans, but also the widest readership. When John announced the title in June 2011, promising to sign each copy from the first print run, the book shot up to #1 on Amazon and BN.com that same day. That huge volume of interest so far ahead of publication, with no cover image and no manuscript, inspired us to move the publication date up by six months. The first print run was set at 150,000 copies, and John spent six weeks signing tip-in sheets for each book.



150,000 Books

... had to be hand-signed by John Green after a casually made promise. It took him six weeks.



Trending Innovation

Initially seen as daring, the cover design completely devoid of pathos or romance has now become a standard.

Is there a special form of creativity that sets John Green apart? Perhaps in the way he addresses his audiences through his books, as well as on other channels?

Julie Strauss-Gabel: John is – and has always been – a visionary. He has long been fascinated by the potential of new ideas and the promise of what's coming next. His interest in the world that brings such texture to his novels is the sibling to his interest in the world that gives him enthusiasm for new media frontiers. None of these things are cold prospects to him; they are all about people connecting. The creativity he brings to projects is the creativity he brings to everything in his life.

Don Weisberg: Over the past seven years, John has developed an incredibly large and devoted online following. He has 2.47 million followers on Twitter, 1.5 million likes on Facebook, more than 1 million followers on Tumblr, and his YouTube overall views reach 1.6 billion. The roots of his online community are the readers and librarians who were his earliest fans. John's online engagement has never been a stunt, or designed to boost book sales. It's just something he loves. Of course, the growing strength of that community has played an ever-increasing role in the popularity of his books. That core group of fans who were interested from day one has grown and grown. We knew that, working with John, together we could build exponentially beyond, for example, the 150,000 copies that his bestseller *Paper Towns* (2008) had sold in its lifetime by late 2011. But the success of *The Fault in Our Stars* bears out what we have always known about the biggest book successes: it is a book readers want to share.

Does the publisher support and coordinate these online activities – or did it perhaps play a part in initiating them?

Julie Strauss-Gabel: Penguin's greatest success with John's online profile began when we played to our greatest strengths and let John play to his greatest strengths. In an online world where authenticity truly matters, only John can speak in a real and truthful way about his work to his fans. We do not seek to force or manipulate that. When we embraced that fact, we became much better partners for John and his

books. We amplify and support. And we focus on the channels that are our own expertise, not his. Doing these things together with, and in complement to, him has made a fundamental difference.

Don Weißberg: One of Penguin's goals with *The Fault in Our Stars* was to create innovative book events with John that felt authentic to his existing fan base. We partnered to create a tour that featured book readings and musical performances. Traveling in a *The Fault in Our Stars*-branded bus with his brother, Hank Green, John Green visited 18 cities and met with over 11,000 fans in three weeks in 2012. Each ticketed event was held in a large venue, with an independent bookseller on board to coordinate book sales. Wherever possible, the events were livestreamed so that fans could be part of the experience from their own homes.

How did Dutton turn a good book initially into a bestseller in the United States, and then into a mega-bestseller? What is the importance of a publisher in this context?

Julie Strauss-Gabel: Dutton and the Penguin Young Readers Division have partnered and grown with John and this book. We have never walked away, or moved on. As interest and opportunities evolved, we were there. After the strong launch, rave reviews, ever-growing media interest, and continued presence on the bestseller list, it became apparent that we still had tremendous opportunities for growth ... We plotted key events throughout the year to continue bringing *The Fault in Our Stars* to a broader audience. By the end of 2012 the title was on numerous "Best of" lists, most notably "Time" magazine, which selected *The Fault in Our Stars* as the best fiction book of the year across all categories – adult and YA.

Don Weisberg: But the end of a successful year didn't slow us down. Our strategy of never letting go led us to start thinking about an anniversary event for *The Fault in Our Stars*. We took a bold and unique step by holding a major, unprecedented celebration at Carnegie Hall in New York. "An Evening of Awesome," a variety show with John and Hank

Green headlining at the world-renowned auditorium, was announced in late November 2012. Buying tickets that ranged from \$25 to \$40, fans helped the show sell out in a matter of days, and the announcement ushered in a new wave of media for John and the novel in January 2013. Knowing that the majority of John's fans would be unable to travel to New York for the Carnegie Hall event, Penguin partnered with Tumblr to create livestream meet-ups throughout the country. Over 200 events took place at bookstores and libraries, allowing thousands of fans to watch the Carnegie Hall livestream with their fellow "Nerdfighters". The event – and the unbridled enthusiasm of the community – was instrumental in capturing the attention of the team at Fox that would eventually greenlight and release the hugely successful film adaptation of *The Fault in Our Stars* in June 2014.

Julie Strauss-Gabel: Penguin has also been creative in its support of John Green's publishing around the world. Since *Looking for Alaska*, John has enjoyed a broad and successful international track both critically and commercially. We sell the foreign and translation rights to John's books. From its earliest days, our subrights department aggressively positioned *The Fault in Our Stars*, even when there was no manuscript that could be shared. Existing partnerships were strengthened and many more countries added, bringing us to the current record-setting list of 47 publishing partners around the world.

Where – using The Fault In Our Stars as an example – does the key creative achievement in the creation of such a book lie? In the idea, the story or the writing?

Julie Strauss-Gabel: For John, and for *The Fault in Our Stars*, all of these things involve creativity. John talks candidly about his own creative process, about the years it took him to find the voice with which to talk about illness and loss, a subject that has always been important to him. It took a long time for the right story elements and themes to come together, and a lot of patience for him to recognize when things weren't yet where they needed to be. The execution of that – plot, dialog, thematic development – all involve creativity ... both in the



A Dream Team

Author John Green and actress Shailene Woodley, who played his main character, Hazel Grace, in the movie – with a skill that moved even Green himself to tears.



inception of each element, and in the ways those elements balance against each other.

*How important – or how appropriate, even – is creativity in the case of a book that is as realistic as *The Fault in Our Stars*?*

Julie Strauss-Gabel: Very. While the book is grounded in reality, and while illness is a serious and all-too-real truth for so many people, the challenge of telling a story that captures that experience (for readers who have no personal experience with those facts, as well as for people who know it inside-out) requires exceptional creativity and ingenuity. The craft of telling the story of these fictional characters in a way that has inspired millions to care so deeply for them – and the topic – is art and craft at its best.

What role does the publisher play in this creative process?

Julie Strauss-Gabel: John and I have been working together since the beginning, in 2003, and on everything he has published. Ours is a fluid, trusting, collaborative process that involves a long-term dialogue about the many elements that go into the final books. This happens differently at every stage, but involves conversations, written developmental edits, specific line edits, short textual conversations, online chats, etc.

Could you please give an example?

Julie Strauss-Gabel: When it came time to create jacket art, we explored many options, including somewhat more traditionally romantic, photographic images. Penguin had faith in my push for a more bold, graphic design with clouds that bore no immediate connection to the book's content but would work on multiple platforms like books, screens, etc. at a wide variety of sizes and would appeal to the broad readership the book deserved. That graphic direction has become a new standard on the YA (and adult) shelf and the handcrafted lettering, the clouds, and the bold blue have become intrinsically linked to the book and the film. This is a book almost everyone remembers after the visual impression. Those seemingly disconnected clouds have now become iconic worldwide.

An author must be creative per se in order to create good stories. How creative must (or may) her or his editor and publisher be?

Julie Strauss-Gabel: As an editor, I don't believe my job is to tell my authors what or how to write. My job is to work together toward a unified goal. Understanding what that shared goal is – thematically, emotionally, etc. – is the first stage in actually getting there. Our creative collaboration is about translating our emotional goal onto the page and shared with a reader we will never meet. The words must do the work. It's about author and editor being sincere and honest and without ego in the way we try on ideas and face the challenges of elements that aren't working to our standards. It's also about sharpening every detail. As an editor, I think the revelation in a manuscript often comes in the revision process, when creative and unexpected answers to problems transform a book into something truly special ... or cause the creation of something entirely new to the story. My job is to think critically about work I love and to help the author take risks in order to realize something even better than what's already on the page.

What – quite generally – does creativity mean to you as a publisher of books for children and young adults?

Julie Strauss-Gabel: I think in many ways creativity for me mirrors John's own advice: Listen. Honor. Innovate and risk. You have to respect and understand the books and the business and its conventions and incorporate that knowledge into moving forward. You must (must, must) respect the young readers you serve. You have to be ready to try new things, but new things that feel appropriate and honest – a means to a common goal – not just to be somewhere first without context or content. I have to listen to my authors and their stories and protect them while also giving them every opportunity in the market. I have to trust and collaborate. You don't get the most creative result without that trust ... or by just handing people what they think they want. People need to be inspired to do their best work, even when that means there's no immediate satisfaction.

In summer 2014, "The Fault in Our Stars" celebrated its highly successful box-office debut in movie theaters around the world.

Don Weisberg: One of the reasons we love working on children's books is the diversity of content. Every book is different and we enjoy taking a book and being inspired to create for it a marketing and publicity campaign that will resonate with readers.

How does Penguin (Young Readers Group) in its role as a company and publisher, give you and the authors the necessary room for creativity?

Don Weisberg: We have to serve our authors as authors, encouraging and supporting them to live up to their potential. Give them time to do their best work. Push them to be their best. Be honest. Listen and adapt. Admit when convention doesn't work and find a new solution. And we need to give them not only the space to write each book, but the time and space and longevity to develop as writers and authors. Like we have with John, we have to nurture true talent for as long as it takes, and then take it to a new and different level when we have achieved the first set of goals we set for ourselves.



BASED ON THE NEW YORK TIMES #1 BEST SELLER

THE
FAULT
IN OUR
STARS

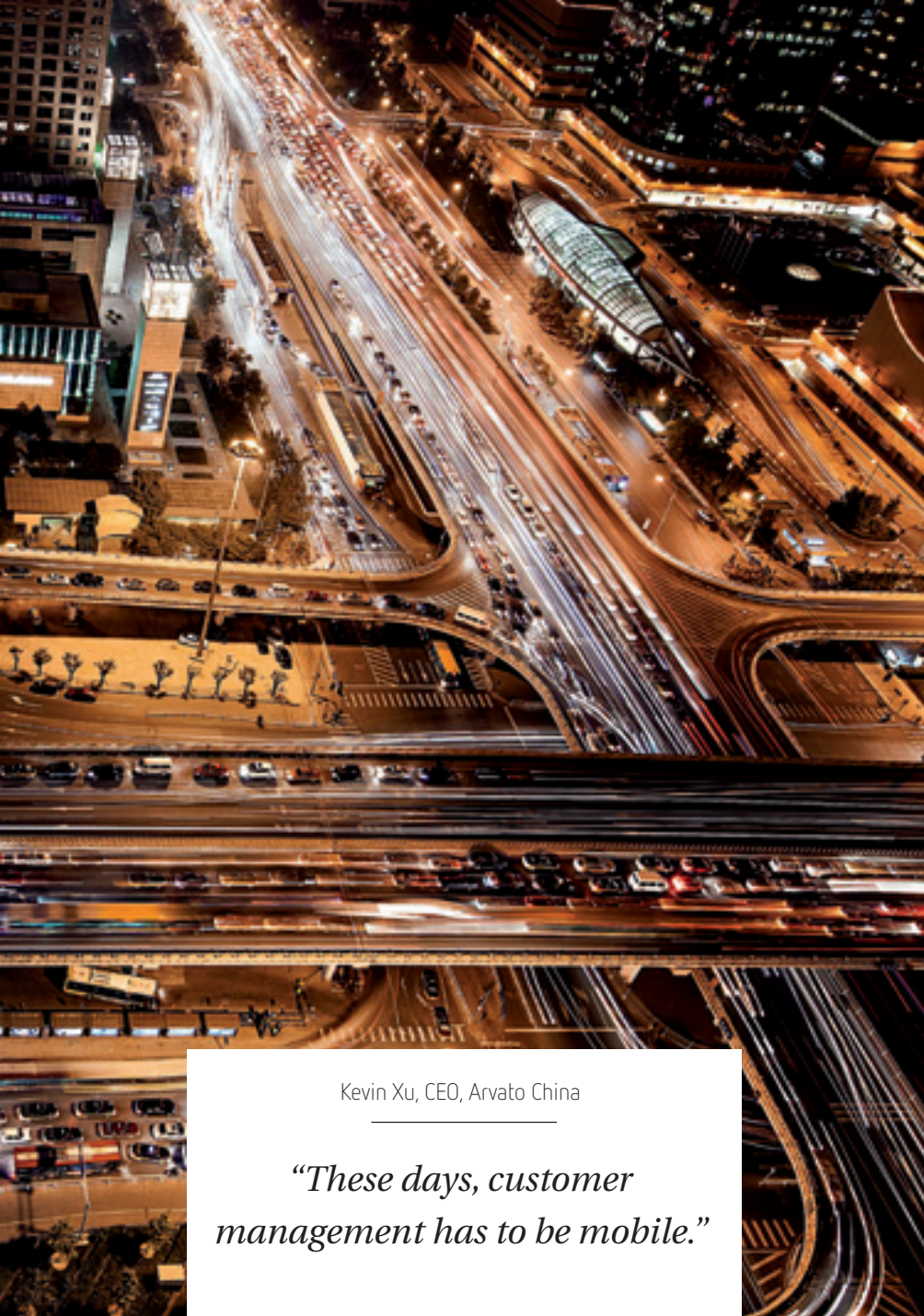
ONE SICK LOVE STORY

JUNE 6



<https://www.netflix.com/title/80095291>





Kevin Xu, CEO, Arvato China

“These days, customer management has to be mobile.”

Good Ideas For A Fast-Paced Market



If you want to not just survive but grow in the market, you have to be good at what you do, have the right idea at the right time, and be able to quickly put it into action. Arvato has long followed this credo with its activities in China. In recent years, the group has seen increasing success, especially in the mobile services sector. “In January we were the first company in China to be honored with an ‘Innovation Award’ by L’Oréal, one of our major clients,” says Kevin Xu, CEO of Arvato China, in an interview held in the avant-garde style “Nhow” hotel lobby in Berlin, shortly after this year’s strategy meeting of Arvato’s top executives. Jason Ni, Senior Business Director at Arvato China, sitting next to Xu, adds: “Arvato is not only able to keep up with the fast pace of the Chinese mobile market, but takes advantage of it by offering tailor-made products faster than our competitors.” To achieve this, the development, planning and budgeting phases are kept as short as possible, he says.

It is this speed – coupled with the concentrated power and experience of a multinational group of companies – that has enabled Arvato to grow in China. Creative mobile solutions for customer management and sales and marketing support have been developed for cosmetics and fashion companies, and, recently, even for a major insurance-industry client. Arvato now offers custom-tailored solutions for clients in seven industries, and makes them available in branded form to optimize the clients’ contact with their customers. Whether for SMS, MMS, search engine-optimized mobile websites, in-app advertising, QR codes in newspapers or magazines, chats or telephone hotlines – the smartphone serves as a central communication platform. Arvato ensures that users can learn about new products, receive information, or just buy a product on all channels – ideally with one click.



Kevin Xu

*On Arvato China's success
in the field of mobile services*



Jason Ni

*Arvato China's Senior Business Director
focuses on being able to offer custom-tailored products
faster than the competition.*

“You have to remember that the past three years haven’t just seen a digital transformation in the sense of more and more new technological options,” says Xu. He points out that the intensity of smartphone use in his country has also increased substantially during this period: 94 percent of people in China use their device at home, 85 percent while they are out and about, and 76 percent in stores. Sixty percent of Chinese mobile phone users use their mobile phone’s search function every day, 70 percent to search for information about a product. “The nature and frequency of communication between manufacturers and their customers have also changed dramatically. Not least thanks to social media, consumers are now virtually in constant contact with companies everywhere – and are addressed individually during this contact,” says Xu. Finally, consumers themselves and their expectations about companies have also changed. “Arvato’s job is to help companies meet these expectations. So customer management has to work closely with social media – and must be mobile,” he adds with some pride. “Not every provider is readily able to respond quickly to technological improvements and changes in customer behavior – let alone being able to provide all the related back-end services.” For example, unlike many of its competitors, Arvato also has extensive offline capabilities, for example in product distribution.

Xu says that Arvato’s biggest advantage is that it doesn’t have to design a new solution from scratch for each customer, but can adapt innovative, continually fine-tuned solutions to the individual needs of customers from a given industry. “To me, creativity means not simply trying to repeat a success,” says Xu. “But neither does success just happen by itself. To achieve success, you should be able to build on something you’ve created in the past.” And Arvato has a lot of this in its databases.

“For example, developing an app isn’t difficult,” he says, and highlights the difference from start-ups that are also fighting for contracts in the attractive Chinese mobile market. “But linking customer management with a B2B approach is a big challenge, and Arvato’s integrated approach is pretty much unique in the marketplace.” Above all, Arvato China doesn’t just wait for customers to get in touch on their own initiative. “We need and have the courage to pursue new ideas without first asking our customers for a budget. Instead, we introduce ourselves to them



Always Online

60 percent of China's smartphone owners use the search feature daily – most of them to search for information about a product.

with a new solution already in hand. “For example, after a technological innovation has been launched, our teams develop a prototype as quickly as possible, go to an existing or potential customer and demonstrate the product before quickly launching it on the market,” explains Jason Ni, who still sees potential for speeding up the process even further. He says the aim is to enter into mutually beneficial strategic partnerships with customers.

“Arvato has gathered a wealth of customer management experience in a variety of such partnerships,” says Ni. For instance, in China, Arvato has long managed the customer services of major airlines – from paper tickets and computer bookings to mobile services. On the other hand, a telecommunications company has now completely converted its customer communication processes to mobile services. “We’ve gained a lot of information from all of these business relationships, including through regular dialog with our key account managers. This information has been very helpful in developing our mobile services,” says Ni. “It’s important for us to know what customers want and on what channels – what we call touchpoints – we can best get in touch with them about what topics.” He says the idea is to constantly keep an eye on these touchpoints and further develop their functions and “look and feel” – and of course to feed them with information that consumers find relevant in order to generate the desired feedback, for example, in the form of orders.

Word about Arvato China’s growing commercial success has of course long since spread widely, not just among major customers, but also in-house. It was no coincidence that Kevin Xu was asked to present his booming business to interested executives from many countries at the important Arvato meeting. “Our experience can be very valuable for our sister companies – not only in China or Asia, but also in many other countries,” says Xu. And the pace of development is to be accelerated even further: Xu says that a Chinese “Innovation Center” has existed since the middle of 2011, where an initially small team developed mobile solutions. As demand increased, the team expanded to around 30 employees before the center was absorbed back into the existing CRM business unit at the end of 2013. Currently a small central team is still working on developing next-generation solutions. Kevin Xu expects that these will be of interest to the international market as well, and will be introduced there. “China

Kevin Xu and Jason Ni plan to further accelerate Arvato's booming business in China.

is now one of the leading nations in terms of smartphone usage,” he says. “This is an especially good place to identify trends and develop services to match them.” Add to that the dynamics and favorable wage structure of the Chinese market and the abundant availability of qualified and motivated skilled workers.

In his view, smartphones will replace the use of computers for e-commerce in the near future. As a result, companies will have to increasingly step up their mobile communications – something for which he says Arvato and its customers are very well prepared. He adds that television will also increasingly develop into an important e-commerce “touchpoint,” with viewers getting information about products and ordering them during TV programs. Xu believes “telematics” linking cars to the Internet represent another future pillar of mobile customer management. “People are on the go and want to communicate and consume wherever they are. We will continue to adapt our existing solutions to meet these emerging requirements,” says Xu.







Rachel Cook, Account Manager, Coral Graphics

“Ideas are crucial.”



Creativity Is A Competitive Factor



Most people initially associate the concept of creativity with fields such as literature, film or music that would be inconceivable without creative output. But creativity can be found in many fields. It is one of the key factors that enable companies to stand out from a crowd of competitors. For example, cutting-edge printing companies such as the Bertelsmann subsidiaries Mohn Media and Be Printers are constantly developing new services to offer their clients as many services as possible from them, thereby creating a closer customer relationship. It takes a lot of experience, know-how and, not least, a good measure of creativity to do this: essentially, to be able to identify and meet the customers' needs even before they articulate them. "Creativity is a clear competitive advantage for a printing company," says Rachel Cook, account manager at Be Printers' Coral Graphics printing plant in the United States.

Creativity was and still is necessary for a project that Rachel Cook manages and which is a good example of a service resulting in a happy customer and new revenue. It involves orders for Humana, a U.S. health insurance company with over 13 million customers and one of the country's three largest health insurers. Humana is a longstanding customer of Coral Graphics, especially as both companies are based in the same place: Louisville, Kentucky. But thanks to the initiative of Coral Graphics, what began with simple print jobs for informational material has now grown into a highly complex, multi-stage project that has brought the Be Printers subsidiary double-digit millions of dollars in annual revenues – and that serves as a model for other major clients and projects.

"It's a relationship that has grown steadily over the years," says Cook. Originally, the business relationship existed only with Humana's Enter-



Rachel Cook

*On the importance of creative output at a company
that stopped being "just a printer" long ago*



Humana Headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky (USA)

Today, Be Printers creates a number of communications measures and tools for the U.S. health insurance provider.

prise Print Management department. “Today Coral Graphics prints a variety of materials for Humana, from flyers to directories of those doctors, clinics and pharmacies that cooperate with Humana at the places where their respective insurance customers live.” Coral Graphics now also handles orders of such materials placed by the insurance company’s customers and partners. In addition, the Be Printers subsidiary organizes integrated email communications campaigns, packages, and ships information material in various combinations to insured people, partners and insurance agents, and manages the necessary data for all these measures. “We now have two employees here in Louisville as well as one at our site in Dallas, Pennsylvania, who support Humana full-time – not to mention the many colleagues in production who are involved with Humana,” says Cook.

But how is it possible to build up such a large services business from a small print contract? “Our creativity and ideas were particularly crucial in the business relationship with Humana,” recalls Cook. “At Humana and similar major customers, we face very tough competition, so we need to be able to respond to our customers’ demands and needs with new, suitable solutions – on a regular basis.” However, she points out that another critical success factor for this is the customer’s confidence in Coral Graphics’ ability to be able to solve the complex challenges that arise. “The Coral team has worked long and hard to develop the foundation of trust that is in place today,” says the account manager, adding that she is in daily contact with various Humana employees and departments to ensure that Coral Graphics understands the details of each project.

Cook says that creativity comes into play, for example when it comes to developing the most effective and simple solutions possible for Humana. “Be Printers has strong resources in traditional manufacturing, as well as IT. The challenge is to mesh the IT and manufacturing resources together so that we can deliver simple solutions to complex requirements.” Cook sees creativity as the ability to understand what the client wants, intelligently leverage all the resources available at Be Printers to deliver results, and make the process as simple as possible for the client. She also emphasizes that the customer needs to create an atmosphere that supports creative work.

The years of hard work, and the many creative ideas for new services, as well as a trusting relationship with the customer at every level, have all paid off in the case of Humana. “Humana challenged Be Printers to provide creative solutions and have rewarded us with additional business as a result of our successes,” says Cook. Today, Coral Graphics is one of the insurance giant’s five major printing and fulfillment service providers. “And we expect this relationship will be ongoing.”

The account manager feels Humana can serve as a model for other projects. “We’ve learned so much from our success with Humana,” she says. “Now we’re constantly looking for partnership opportunities within the healthcare segment to use what we have learned for other customers as well.” And successfully so: Carol Graphics recently began working with Passport Health Plans, another large healthcare company in Kentucky.









Marta Díaz, Publisher, Flash

*“Creativity is a
team sport.”*

And In The Meantime I'll Read ...



Readers and writers alike regard the short story as one of the most beautiful and intricate forms of literature. Many great writers have tried their hand at it, and some have produced their best work in this form. In the Spanish-speaking world, beyond its literary import, the short story has recently gained an entirely separate digital significance. Thanks to the trade publishing group Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial and its digital platform at mientrastantoleo.com ("In the Meantime I'll Read"), short stories serve as a first introduction to digital reading and e-books for many readers.

Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial and the Spanish-language book world have set out on their own unique digital path. Instead of following the methods used in countries such as the U.S., U.K., or Germany, where the e-book market is already significantly larger and has its primary concentration on full-length e-books, colleagues in Spain and Latin America began by focusing entirely on the literary power of the short story. But how did this idea come about?

"In 2011 we dealt extensively with the question of how to get our readers excited about digital reading," says Marta Díaz, publisher of Flash, an imprint that publishes digital short stories exclusively. She has her office at the Grupo Editorial headquarters in Barcelona, as do Xisca Mas, publisher of the digital nonfiction imprint Endebate, and Irene Fortes, who, as Product Manager of Contenidos Digitales, oversees Grupo Editorial's digital projects. At the time, says Díaz, the publishing group exhaustively discussed a wide range of ideas and models. Many were considered, but not acted upon, she recalls.

This approach corresponds exactly to Marta Díaz's idea of creative development. "Creativity is a team sport," she says. "Some ideas take



Marta Díaz, Xisca Mas and Irene Fortes

*On building the digital short-story
platform Mientrastantoleo*

Mientrastantoleo offers selected short stories for commutes and other occasions.

time. You have to play around with them, keep discussing them with colleagues.” She says this is best done in a relaxed, positive atmosphere. “The process involves a lot of thinking and discussing, some kidding around too.” This lets another factor come into play as well, one that is particularly important to Irene Fortes: spontaneity. “To me, creativity means the opportunity to be spontaneous – and to have the time and space needed to put into action the ideas that arise.”

Publisher Díaz says that no idea, whether arrived at spontaneously or through long deliberation, is too crazy to be discussed or given a hearing. And the idea of entering the e-book market with short stories probably did seem a little crazy in the beginning. Of course, Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial’s publishers and digital experts didn’t hold their discussions in a vacuum in 2011. “We had studied the book market in Spain in great detail,” adds Fortes. At the time, the digital market in Spain was still in its infancy, she says. The first owners of e-readers and tablets had been looking for content for their devices to try out this kind of usage, but without overinvesting financially. “We wanted readers to get accustomed to the new e-book format while also offering them high-quality texts – both classic and contemporary – and all at a fair price,” Fortes recalls. The classic literary forms of the essay and short story easily fulfilled these requirements.

The upshot was that in June 2011, Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial began by launching *Endebate*. Under the slogan “10,000 words to understand the world,” *Endebate* offers texts by well-known and prolific authors and journalists about current events, discourses, and developments. “*Endebate* gives us a way to quickly offer our readers additional information and opinions on major current events and



issues, and also presents an opportunity to bring classic authors such as Thomas Mann, David Grossman or Ryszard Kapuscinski more accessibly to a general readership,” says Mas. “This is achieved mainly because our nonfiction publisher Debate has ties to the well-known and relevant authors whose voices carry significance in the public conversation.”

The Endebate offer was well received by readers in the digital world, and soon Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial extended its digital offerings of short texts to include fiction. In May 2012, the publishing group launched Flash, a selection of new and classic short stories. “I love short stories, both as a publisher and as a reader,” says Flash publisher Marta Díaz. “In today’s society, where many people lack the time for longer reads, they are an excellent way to discover new and exciting authors, genres, and works you’ve never heard of before.” The Flash catalog includes internationally beloved authors such as Mark Twain, Margaret Atwood, and David Foster Wallace, as well as illustrious names from Spanish-language literature like Paloma Bravo, Ana María Moix and Félix J. Palma. In September 2013, the offer was supplemented by the launch of a third digital imprint, Enclave, which publishes advice and self-help short texts written by the best-known experts on these topics.

Last year, Grupo Editorial went a step further: After the successful launch of Endebate, Flash and Enclave, the publishing team was looking for ways to present all of the publishing group’s digital short stories, essays and short texts with contributions by authors from Spain and Latin America on a single, online platform that would appeal to readers. “We wanted to create something special, something that stands out from the typical publishers’ online catalogs,” says Díaz. Once again, there were many discussions and ideas, and a lot of creative brainstorming before *mientrastantoleo.com* was born. “The name itself, ‘In The Meantime I’ll Read,’ illustrates the site’s concept: It’s all about short texts, and the current trend of reading texts bit by bit during short periods of time – on the bus, on the train, or on your break,” explains Díaz.

One special feature of the platform that was launched in December 2013, is the creative rationale behind how the content is categorized. “We deliberately avoided breaking them down by classic genres, such as

crime or thrillers, and instead try to offer readers categories that match their 'emotional' state of the moment," says project manager Irene Fortes. This basic idea of an "emotional" categorization, along with an analysis of the existing types of text, resulted in categories such as "Live a love story," "Laugh out loud," "Travel to other worlds," "Know history" or "Feel every word."

Beyond its psychology-centric approach, mientrastantoleo.com features an exceptionally wide selection that reflects almost the entire Spanish-speaking literature world. In addition to authors from Spain, Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial publishers in Mexico, Uruguay, Chile, Argentina and Colombia also contribute their works. The platform's internationality is also reflected in the composition of the team. The twelve colleagues who look after mientrastantoleo.com together with their regular jobs are based in Barcelona, Madrid, Mexico City, and Buenos Aires – and in this way create a unique presentation. New texts from the various publishers and countries are almost completely and automatically integrated into the platform. "This part in particular was labor intensive, so we're especially proud of it," says Fortes.

Today many world-famous names, classic and contemporary authors, international and regional writers alike, are found on mientrastantoleo.com. They include Stephen King, Glenn Cooper, George Orwell, Pere Estupinyà, Marian Keyes, Paul Preston, Alice Munro, Paloma Bravo, Juan José Millás, Guillermo Ortiz, Ana María Matute, Santiago Roncagliolo, and Jordi Soler. "They are the bestsellers on our portal," says Irene Fortes. While mientrastantoleo.com itself is not a virtual bookstore, it links to digital wholesalers such as Amazon, Apple, and Google. More than 65,000 texts have already been downloaded this way. "And 25 percent of all first-time visitors to mientrastantoleo.com come back," says the project manager.

The authors love this project even more than the readers. "Publishing short stories in print is challenging; the market for them is small," says Endebate publisher Xisca Mas. "Our platform suddenly opens up the possibility of more easily publishing and marketing these texts – and the authors are only too happy to try it." This is especially true for writers from Latin America: In the past, it was extremely difficult for



Bestselling authors include Stephen King, George Orwell, Pere Estupinyà, Marian Keyes, Alice Munro and Paloma Bravo.

them to publish short stories for the Spanish book market. “Now we’re even seeing authors – including many well-known ones – approaching us with short stories they wrote long ago, but had no way of publishing because of their format,” adds Díaz. “They recognize the opportunities mientrastantoleo.com offers them in promoting their works and attracting new readers.”

So while mientrastantoleo.com, is fast becoming one of the most important digital reading sites in the Spanish-speaking territories, Penguin Random House colleagues in Barcelona are back to thinking, discussing, and sometimes kidding around. They’re already planning – and in some cases implementing – their next major projects. This month saw the launch of megustaescribir.com, a self-publishing platform where authors can post their manuscripts and have them rated by other authors and readers. Other potential projects address the possibilities of digitization in the field of illustrated children’s books, revolve around audiobooks, or deal with the expansion of brands with licensed merchandise.

And in the meantime, when there is no new project pending? “In the meantime, I’ll read,” says Marta Díaz with a smile.







Johannes Kückens, Head of Digital Magazines, "Geo"

*"Working together for
the whole."*

Creativity From Motivation – And Vice Versa



Anyone who has dreamed of climbing a Himalayan peak but then shied away from the cost and effort involved, has a convenient, cost-effective and also rather impressive alternative: the lavish reportage in the corresponding issue of Gruner + Jahr's "Geo." Plenty of fabulous, large-format photographs and lots of graphics and information boxes enrich the exciting and informative stories about the highest peaks in the world. The digital version covers the subject even more impressively than the print magazine, because the "Geo" and "Geo Special" iPad apps take full advantage of the multimedia possibilities – executed at the highest level of creativity in editorial and design.

Specially produced video clips, 360-degree panoramic pictures, interactive graphics and maps, unique top-quality photographs, and audio files with sounds and audio versions of major reports: the "Geo" editorial team enriches the e-magazine with amazing extras – much to the delight of its readers, who give the monthly digital editions top marks. "The editorial team really enjoys developing and producing additional content for the app, too," Johannes Kückens, Head of Digital Magazines and Special Products at "Geo," tells us at the G+J headquarters in Hamburg. "It's precisely because my colleagues have an overview of the whole product that they can free up their great creative potential with great results – and this in turn ensures a high degree of motivation," Kückens concludes.

There is a learning process involved in the internal procedures, and in the use of the technical features that have made the "Geo" apps such exceptionally popular digital reads on the German market. "Before the launch of the 'Geo' e-zine we gave a lot of thought to our readers'



Michael Wiesemann and Johannes Kückens

*On the long journey from major print magazine
to innovative app*



Taking a Bite of the Big Apple with "Geo"

20,000 downloads at eight euros each - No other "Geo" app has been downloaded as frequently as the New York special.



Trademark

*The app combines the quality of the acclaimed magazine
with lots of innovative, interactive content.*

expectations,” says Michael Wiesemann, Head of Digital Publishing at G+J Digital Products. “It quickly became clear that we needed to offer more than simply a replica of the print magazine.” This in turn raised the question of what additional content and features should and could be offered. “Because while there are hardly any technical limits, the digital content that goes beyond that of the print magazine needs to be procured or produced month after month,” says Kückens. “And of course cost plays a major role in this connection. Essentially, the costs need to be in a reasonable proportion to the benefit,” explains Kückens, and he points to the growing but still numerically small proportion of users of digital editions.

And so the video clips might consist of film sequences that a photographer of a “Geo Special” reportage brought with him or her. An editor at head office in Hamburg uses the appropriate technology to create an exciting compilation – perhaps supplemented with free footage from

The makers of the printed magazine think about - and produce - extra content for the app right from the beginning. However, much of it cannot be transferred one to one.

an open archive. To commission a separate camera crew to go out into the field would be far too costly, he says. The same goes for audio reports: “Geo” authors and editors simply record themselves reading the stories. “In this way, we create real value for the app – at manageable expense and with the creative involvement of the whole team,” says Kückens.

The writers or editors aren’t the only ones who get to read the articles for the recordings – interested colleagues from the picture desk and other staff who have a knack for reading out loud may do so, too. “For one, this is charming and feels authentic, as many readers have told us,” says Kückens. “Secondly, it underlines an idea that is hugely important for the future of our work: We need to think beyond genres and areas of responsibility, and work together for the whole.” He says this requires an openness on the part of editorial staff about using technical tools and the associated software. However, given the manifold possibilities, happily, there is great enthusiasm for exploiting this potential, he says.

Kückens points out that one prerequisite is to think about whether and to what extent multimedia elements can be used, right from the time an idea is born. “Subsequent, secondary research unnecessarily increases production costs for app extras.” The expense required to create the most appealing and user-friendly digital layout for a multimedia story being told also has to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, as a customized version of the Adobe Digital Publishing Suite (DPS) software is used to automatically insert a large part of the article





BOKO HARAM

BOKO HARAM

layouts of the print “Geo” issue into an e-magazine template – a solution that was developed specifically at Gruner + Jahr. As Michael Wiesemann explains: “This makes it possible for us to produce high-quality digital magazines while also working efficiently.”

If, however, a story is to differ from the standard form, the “Geo” experts have to lend a hand in order to insert or fully use technical features. In the case of the Himalayas, for example, extras include the 360-degree views of the giant snow-capped peaks, and videos filmed at an altitude of 7,000 meters.

The number of users, among other things, confirms that the carefully apportioned expenditure is worth it: Each month, an average 10,000 “Geo” iPad issues are downloaded. A highlight was the “Geo Special” New York app, which has already sold more than 20,000 copies at eight euros each. It was chosen as iTunes’ “Travel App of the Year” in 2011. The good user reviews in the iTunes store and emails from readers directly to the editors also speak for the quality of the apps: “We get numerous emails with positive feedback, but we especially enjoy the reviews in the App Store, which could hardly be better,” says Kückens, adding that many users also make suggestions about what information should be added or which features need to be fine-tuned.

“We’re very grateful for such pointers,” says Wiesemann. “They show how intensively our readers engage with our apps, and help us to optimally align the digital magazines to their requirements and usage habits.” The editorial team itself is on a “digital journey” to even more

Quality by the Page

Johannes Kückens and Michael Wiesemann transfer the magazine’s high journalistic standards into the digital domain.

advanced technological features, content and graphical innovations, so to speak. “It’s a journey we will never complete,” says Kückens, referring to the principle of ongoing development, which includes thinking about how the exciting digital “Geo” content can be used for other channels or devices such as smartphones – currently the apps are only available for the iPad. “It would be possible, for example, to compile a package of audio files and offer them as an audiobook app,” says Kückens. In handling all of these topics, the “Geo” editorial staff works closely with their colleagues at G+J Digital Products, and especially with the Mobile Unit’s digital publishing team. “Our team pools the entire company’s expertise for product development in digital publishing, and supports the editorial desks in developing digital magazines,” says Wiesemann. To optimize this exchange of ideas, Johannes Kückens and the Art Director of the “Geo” e-zine spend part of their time working directly for the Digital Publishing team.

The “Geo” editorial team is also in close contact with the “Geo” television format at Arte and with Geo Television, Mediengruppe RTL Deutschland’s new pay-TV channel launched in May. Even G+J colleagues in China consulted Michael Wiesemann’s team in developing their new, digital “Geo” range. “Ultimately, this content and these formats increase the value of the unique ‘Geo’ brand, which stands for high-quality journalism,” says Wiesemann. The declared goal is to retain existing readers, win new ones and increasingly cater to the group known as “digital-only” users, he adds. By sometime in 2015, most of the printed magazines are to have a digital counterpart. “We are well on track for this,” declares the head of Gruner + Jahr’s digital publishing activities.





"Travel App of the Year"

*In 2011 the New York app was chosen as
"Travel App of the Year."*



Michael Siedenhans, Editor-in-Chief, Medienfabrik

*“Talking to Pelé is like
touching the Holy Grail.”*



Creative With A Passion



Diligence, knowledge, craft” – not exactly the kind of response you would have expected to the question of what creativity means to him, but it arises precisely from Michael Siedenhans's long years of professional experience as a journalist: “Flashes of genius are nothing like a stroke of lightning. The best ideas don't fall from the sky; they are the result of experience and development.” There's no question that Siedenhans, who is in his late forties, has had a lot of creative ideas himself at the Arvato subsidiary Medienfabrik Gütersloh, and that they have resulted in creative projects and products. Today he is responsible for the content of major customer and staff magazines as Editor-in-Chief of Corporate Communications – and for Medienfabrik's sports communications, often on behalf of FIFA, UEFA, DFB and the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB). Creativity is particularly important here, because Medienfabrik doesn't have to score just with the client, but also on newsstands, where competition is rough indeed.

Ten years ago Medienfabrik ventured into the arena of sports communications. Michael Siedenhans's big moment had come. A graduate of the prestigious Henri Nannen School and a former political correspondent in Bonn, the amateur soccer player, coach and enthusiastic Borussia Dortmund fan returned to his native Eastern Westphalia and joined Medienfabrik in 1998. In 2004, Managing Director Stefan Postler and department head Ansgar Büngener set up the Sports Communications business. From the very beginning, Michael Siedenhans supplied the ideas for content. At the time, the whole country was looking forward to celebrating the soccer World Cup in Germany two years later. Medienfabrik would fuel this World Cup fever considerably. It recognized the opportunities of the sports event that would go down in history as Germany's fairytale



Michael Siedenhaus

On having a creative passion for sports and journalism

summer, and became FIFA's official print licensee. In other words, every official print product for the 2006 World Cup came from Medienfabrik or, under license, from other Bertelsmann companies: stadium magazines, soccer books, match schedules, calendars, illustrated books, posters, retrospective books, audioplays – all of it produced at Bertelsmann.

Or even at the stadiums themselves. “At the time, beyond the editors in Gütersloh, we had teams in the stadiums, and reported live, produced and distributed from there,” recalls Siedenhans. Because this worked out so well, Medienfabrik remained or became a partner to FIFA, UEFA, DFB and DOSB. Siedenhans and his team covered the European Soccer Championships in Austria and Switzerland in 2008, the Summer Olympics in Beijing 2008 and London 2012, and the Winter Olympics in Vancouver in 2010, and most recently in Sochi 2014. Medienfabrik is always on location when the best athletes in the world test their skills, working through the nights in the catacombs of the Deutsches Haus (German House) at the Olympic Games or in the soccer stadiums. “But at times like that, the overnight hours spent don't matter,” says Siedenhans. “It's pure passion – for sports and for journalism.”

There are also unforgettable moments – especially the encounters with sports heroes, with icons for entire generations. For instance, Siedenhans still remembers every detail of his first meeting with Pelé: “For a sports-loving journalist, talking to him is akin to touching the Holy Grail. It was in December 2004 at the Leipzig Fair, where Pele was making an evening appearance for ‘Wetten dass.’ I had a 30-minute interview with him, together with three other journalists, and eventually asked him about his weaknesses. He fell silent, then said no one had ever asked that before. Then he said, maybe it's heading the ball. But he didn't want to go into it.” Pelé didn't hold it against the interviewer. Together with Ansgar Büngener and Franz Beckenbauer, who had also come to the show rehearsals, they kicked a few balls around the hall. They met again a year later. “Pelé had met every pope alive during his lifetime in person. That was important to him, and so he wanted to meet the newly elected Benedict XVI. “That was in 2005 at World Youth Day in Cologne. Pelé flew in.” Rainer Calmund organized the audience, and Michael Siedenhans was there. “I was supposed to interview him for the official World Youth



Communication on All Channels

*When the world's best athletes step up to compete,
Medienfabrik is there to cover it –
in Beijing, London, Vancouver
and Sochi.*



Olympic

When the five rings are flown, the Mediensfabrik team gets ready for its own Olympic feat of producing news in and for the Deutsches Haus.

Day magazine, which was produced by Medienfabrik – but in the end the great Pelé was just too tired. So we sat together on the train to Frankfurt Airport and just talked.” Just like that. With Pelé.

For Michael Siedenhans, encounters like this have occurred repeatedly – and of course they are a constant source of inspiration and creativity for his job, although he doesn't exactly attach the greatest importance to inspiration: “I consider creativity as ‘accomplishing,’ from the Latin origin of the word, *creare*,” says Siedenhans. “For me, creativity has to do with hard work and craft. And you do need quite a large knowledge base as a foundation for developing creativity in the first place.” Of course, creativity also requires the right platform, he says. “It's not just about having good ideas, but above all about putting them into action.”

He says Medienfabrik gives employees like himself the space to do this, and that at Bertelsmann widespread “tinkering and thinking” are an important prerequisite for becoming creative. “But,” the journalist adds, “we actually need a lot more courage for creative experiments, because in the digital world, every day new ideas for new media arise – but very few people know the right path to the digital future. I wish we could act as a research lab even more often,” says Siedenhans.

He still primarily expresses his own creativity through words. “Because I'm still a journalist and always will be,” he says. “I want people to recognize that a text was written by me; that it's a ‘Siedenhans.’” That is why he makes an effort to hone his writing, giving it the right, unmistakable tone, as he calls it. Readers were treated to this tone once again in two issues of “Countdown” magazine in the lead-up to the World Cup in Brazil. Medienfabrik first published “Countdown” in 2004 to get people in the mood for the World Cup in Germany. The editorial team has always taken a slightly different approach to writing about the “beautiful game.” “The then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who later became Pope, wrote a guest article, and another piece we did was about the world's highest-altitude soccer pitches, such as in the Andes,” recalls Siedenhans.

Last December, the first of two issues of “Countdown” for the current World Cup appeared, with a print run of 150,000. It presented the groups, teams and stars, as well as interviews with coaches and soccer heroes. A few weeks before the world's foremost soccer tournament kicked off,

a second issue was published with everything soccer fans need to know during these crucial weeks of the year. “My highlights from the latest issues are articles about the soccer legends Uli Stein and Giovane Élber, who gave the inside stories of their long soccer careers during interviews in Bielefeld and Hamburg.”

Once the final whistle was blown in Brazil, Medienfabrik’s “Count-down” once again became history – until the next European Championships or World Cup. But Siedenhans and his colleagues won’t be bored. Siedenhans trains Medienfabrik’s apprentices and interns to be creative writers, among other things. He’s always in the thick of the action when the company is developing new products to win bidders. And he’s responsible for the content of other customer magazines, one of which is his other great passion: “Revolverblatt.”

Since 2011, the free magazine for crime fiction fans – of which Siedenhans is one – has been distributed in bookshops across Germany, Austria, Switzerland and South Tyrol. Exciting and varied, it introduces new and classic detective novels, runs interviews with authors, and reports on news from the detective-novel scene. Murderers, criminals, crime scenes, courtrooms, detectives and suspects are the ingredients of good detective stories and also of “Revolverblatt.” One special feature is that real professionals are involved in its production: profilers, police officers, psychologists and pathologists. And though a crime writer or a pathologist may not be a Pelé, Siedenhans always draws fresh inspiration for his own creative work as a journalist from interviews with them. “Every person has an interesting and exciting story to tell, which can inspire curious journalists to new, creative ideas. Meeting these people is what makes my job so appealing.”





Issue of Champions

Just a few days after the German team's triumph in Brazil, the special Champions issue of "Countdown" was published out of Gütersloh.





Bernd Reichart, CEO, Vox

*“We always ask ourselves:
What’s next?”*

The Idea Is Just The Beginning



Whether it was once “Ally McBeal,” later “Das perfekte Dinner” (Come Dine With Me) or now “Sing meinen Song – Das Tauschkonzert” and “Shopping Queen” – Vox was and still is the German TV channel that dares to try new things and sets trends rather than chasing them. This is part of its identity and its promise to viewers. To deliver on it, a channel needs creativity, and lots of it, over and over again. “Creative work begins with the idea – but it doesn’t end there,” says Vox CEO Bernd Reichart. “The crucial thing is to adapt an idea in a way that fits perfectly with the channel and its viewers.” This is also true for “Shopping Queen,” a format that originally came from Turkish TV, but was then so thoroughly developed and reworked by Vox that it now only has one thing left in common with the Turkish original – the idea. After all, “Vox doesn’t want to be a ‘playback channel’ for TV formats collected and purchased from around the globe,” says Kai Sturm, Chief Editor and Head of Entertainment at Vox. In our interview, Sturm, Vox CEO Bernd Reichart, and Anne-Sophie Larry, Head of External Productions at Groupe M6, discuss the creative work of a channel using the example of “Shopping Queen” and the sister channel M6’s French offshoot, “Les Reines du Shopping.”

Not only is the creative path from idea to finished product a long one, it is also not always straightforward. It requires passion, an eye for detail, and the courage to take risks and to drop something if it isn’t working. When Bernd Reichart and Kai Sturm now look back down the path to “Shopping Queen,” they think of skepticism and failures, but also of enthusiasm, experimentation and ultimately dream ratings.



Kai Sturm, Bernd Reichart, Anne-Sophie Larry

*On the Franco-German project
"Shopping Queen" / "Les Reines du Shopping"*



The Brand

*“Shopping Queen” stands for compelling
TV entertainment and useful shopping advice.*

The story of “Shopping Queen” began in 2010 at the television trade fair in Cannes. “A small, unknown Turkish marketer presented a format there called ‘Shopping Monsters,’” recalls Kai Sturm. “We discussed the Turkish program back and forth at that time with the team and concluded that we would pass on it. It didn’t feel right for German television or for Vox. To be honest, we didn’t know how we were supposed to take a 90-minute shopping trip and make it even halfway entertaining.”

Six months later – and this was a creative coincidence in retrospect – the production company Constantin Entertainment came to Vox with this very Turkish TV format as a program idea, unaware of its history. But, once again, the program makers weren't convinced right away. Only a hitherto almost unknown man in the television business would first succeed in doing this: a fashion designer whose enormous talent was immediately revealed in front of the camera. In an audition tape for the possible shopping program, Guido Maria Kretschmer showed everyone what he and the show have come to stand for over the past two years: authenticity, humor, warmth, wit and originality. The Vox executives were convinced that, with him, a shopping format could work.

But a lot of work would be done on the format before it went on the air. Only the third pilot actually made it onto the screen. "All that is part of the creative work of a channel," says Kai Sturm. "It takes time before a good idea finally works to the extent that we can show it to our audience," he says, adding that this includes playing with the length of the program. It has to match both the format and the broadcasting slot. For instance, the 90-minute Turkish format was compressed into a suspenseful 60 minutes that Vox airs Mondays to Fridays at 3:00 PM – the ideal time slot for "Shopping Queen."

Each week at this time on five consecutive days, five women compete to eventually become the "Shopping Queen" of Cologne, Berlin, Munich or another city. Job interviews, birthday parties, meeting the mother-in-law, femme fatale – each week the contestants are given a new theme for which they have to create a matching "look." Speed is as important as creativity, because they normally have a 500-euro budget and just four hours before their fellow contestants pronounce judgment. Kretschmer's comments about the shopping behavior of the candidates have long since achieved cult status. And the show has conquered the hearts of its mostly female audience: As many as a million people have watched the styling documentary at a given time.

But who is this man who now adorns front pages, gives full-page interviews in major newspapers, and is now regularly seen in other TV formats? He is a fashion designer, an entrepreneur, the founder of his own label, and – since "Shopping Queen" – a German TV celebrity.

With natural ease and a lot of heart, he has become a guarantor of style for millions of women. Viewers love him. “50 percent of the program’s success is probably down to Guido Maria Kretschmer,” says Bernd Reichart, adding that Kretschmer has become the face of the program. To have found and developed him is one of the most important achievements that have sprung from the close teamwork between the production company and the channel.

What Kretschmer is for Vox and the German audience, Cristina Cor-dula is for the French sister station and its version of the show, “Les Reines du Shopping.” “As a former haute-couture model, Cristina is a true fashion expert,” explains Anne-Sophie Larry, Head of External Productions at M6. “In addition to her expertise, she also has an enormous amount of charisma. Her very personality successfully communicates the subjects of ‘Les Reines du Shopping’ to the viewers.” Naturally, the show’s environment and timeslot also play an important role. M6 broadcasts “Les Reines du Shopping” in access primetime – very successfully, with as many as 1.3 million viewers daily. “Like Vox, we are a channel that lives by its close proximity to the audience,” says Larry. “And this arises from the fact that we create room for optimism, creativity and dreams in our viewers’ everyday lives, which is why ‘Les Reines du Shopping’ is such a perfect fit for M6.” Nevertheless, M6 also doesn’t merely take on formats without adapting them. “When we move into already familiar territory, we always try to slightly change the style of the format,” explains Larry. “We adapted the ‘Shopping Queen’ format with the help of our creative team, but also reworked some features so that the French women who watch us would like it.”

“There’s been a close, creative exchange of ideas between Vox and M6 for years,” adds Kai Sturm. “When top formats such as ‘Shopping Queen’ or, before that, ‘Das perfekte Dinner,’ with which our close relationship began, work nicely in one country, we can find our bearings very well based on this success and assess whether an import or export could be worthwhile.” He says this works particularly quickly with Vox and M6 because they have similar audiences. “The idea is to share creativity, compare notes and jointly experiment with it,” says Sturm. A passion for program making, he continues, is the common



From the Catwalk ...

... straight into the shopping cart.
"Shopping Queen" is all about wearable fashions.



Stylish

Many women dream of being dressed by Guido Maria Kretschmer, whether on camera or on the screen.



denominator within RTL Group and also the basis for any creative output on TV. “Formats originate from an idea, and every idea needs vision, euphoria and enthusiasm,” explains Vox CEO Bernd Reichart. “There always has to be someone on the team who is fired up about an idea and makes it their own.” Without this, he says new programs could not be developed, nor even new ideas that are as surprising and original as the audience expects. Reichart knows that this means that sometimes things can go wrong: “Ideas might not work out, but that’s the nature of the business, and this nature gives us the best possible stage for creativity and experimentation.” A stage that the sister channel M6 also uses – despite the associated risks. “In program development, we work closely with sociologists to make sure we take social relevance into account,” says Anne-Sophie Larry. “But no matter how many precautions you take, there’s always a risk in launching innovative formats such as ‘Les Reines du Shopping.’” And yet, she says, this is part of the channel’s DNA and also part of the success that M6 has enjoyed over the last 27 years.

Bernd Reichart and Kai Sturm also confirm that the “Shopping Queen” project requires passion and courage. While there had been programs about cooking, crafts, renovating, travel, and decorating, the trending topic of shopping had not yet reached the German TV landscape. “We dared to try something new here and were rewarded for it – the format is doing exceedingly well,” says Sturm. But why is that? In “Shopping Queen,” the channel tells the audience a story that appeals to women of all ages, he says, adding that the show has a high relevance for everyday life, which makes it authentic, genuine and close to the audience. “‘Shopping Queen’ acts like a service that gives women advice on how to dress smartly – in an entertaining setting,” explains the Head of Entertainment. He says the fact that the participants are free to develop their own creativity is crucial to the program’s success. A constellation that combines the candidates’ creativity on the one hand and that of the channel and the production company on the other is uncommon, he says. “Our editorial team provides creative input in the selection of the participants and the theme. The candidates in turn demonstrate their own creativity and originality in choosing their outfit and their runway appearance.”

However, a channel cannot rest on the laurels of a format's success. "In the television landscape you have to be constantly innovative and creative to stand out from the competition and develop your own identity," says Anne-Sophie Larry. "Creativity and new ideas are the two engines that drive the development of a channel." A creed that also applies at Vox. "Our development pipeline has to be full of new projects at all times, because you always have to think: What's next?" says Bernd Reichart. But where do the numerous ideas for new formats come from, if not straight from a trade show as in the case of "Shopping Queen"? "There are many ways to get new ideas: regularly monitoring market trends, international networking, sharing and brainstorming with colleagues, including at the RTL Group level, pitches from production companies, interpreting of audience feedback daily, or developing a concept based on a well-known TV personality," explains the Vox CEO. He adds that monitoring, i.e., a systematic observation of the market, is an important instrument not only to discover creativity but also to assess it.

In any case, the assumption that a channel like Vox mainly broadcasts off-the-shelf products is completely false. In fact Vox produces or commissions 70 percent of its formats itself. Its successful formats include "Mieten, kaufen, wohnen," "Grill den Henssler," and "Der Hundeprofis" with Martin Rütter, as well as "Prominent!" featuring the columnist Constanze Rick. "Vox really only has movies and U.S. fiction series as 'ready-mades' in the program," says Reichart. Especially when buying rights to formats like "Sing meinen Song – Das Tauschkonzert" or "Shopping Queen," he says, the channel alters crucial details to give the show a whole new format, because the program makers know that creativity is more than the idea; it is constant practice, if not work. "The creative process doesn't end with the idea or even with its first weeks on air. The creative work requires constant fleshing out, and re-charging with new life." It is an indispensable, ongoing process if you want a format to run successfully for several years, says Reichart. Ideas have to be thought through, fine-tuned and extended.

This is true for "Shopping Queen" as well. For instance, the men's or mother-daughter specials were creative experiments, just like "Guido's



Good Advice

Cristina Cordula used to be a catwalk queen herself; now she hosts "Les Reines du Shopping."

Shopping Queen of the Year” to keep the format vibrant. “It’s like you’re surfing a wave you want to keep surfing, but the dynamics and power of movement must be maintained,” the program makers agree. Even the many seemingly small elements – graphics, narrator, sound, editing – that make a program successful, but which the audience often does not notice, are crucial for the composition of creative output. For example, the “Shopping Queen” voice artist, Einslive radio presenter Thorsten Schorn, brings his own form of wit to the show. “The overall constellation of the many technical details, the content, and Guido Maria Kretschmer as the expert are exceptional and make the format unique,” says Reichart, who knows that “even the best ideas will flop if the creative process doesn’t work.” To prevent this, Vox and M6 work very closely with the production companies. “The exchange of ideas with the production companies is very intensive from the start,” explains Anne-Sophie Larry. “Especially with the creative aspects of a format, because they play a key role in a program’s success.” She says that the role of M6 is to ensure that all thoughts and ideas during the concept development phase culminate in a format that fits with the channel’s identity. “Ultimately, we want the viewers to perceive the format’s novelty and at the same time be able to tell it’s an M6 program with their eyes closed.” This process requires a high level of teamwork, which plays a major role at Vox, too. “There can only be close cooperation with the production companies if there is mutual trust,” says Reichart. “As a broadcaster, we pursue the same goal as our partners: to make successful, attractive television. In working to achieve this goal, we are very grateful for creative input, because only the interplay between the production companies and our editorial team can ultimately turn a clever idea into a brilliant format.” A format that, like “Shopping Queen,” may have 500 episodes under its belt but still looks so fresh that no one would doubt that it will still be part of the Vox identity even after another 500 or 1,000 episodes.



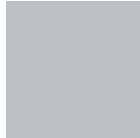
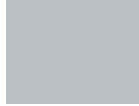
Creativity Means Co-Creating

Creativity is the ability to create something new – at least that’s one of the many definitions of the term. In a global company like Bertelsmann, creativity is occurring constantly, across all divisions and at all levels. Mapping this creativity and making it visible is not always easy – but in the age of social media, almost everything that happens at RTL Group, Penguin Random House, Gruner + Jahr, Arvato and Be Printers leaves a trail across the social networks. Bertelsmann Corporate Communications attempts to pool these tracks from the Bertelsmann digital world with the Bertelsmann Social Cloud, which brings together all of the Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and YouTube channels hosted by Bertelsmann’s many companies, formats, brands and holdings.

“It all started with the idea of creating more visibility for Bertelsmann’s digital activities, to highlight the broad spectrum of our offerings,” explains Karin Schlautmann, Head of Bertelsmann Corporate Communications. “With the new social cloud, we have created a site of unprecedented topicality, diversity and transparency. The wealth of channels alone makes it clear how deeply our businesses are already anchored in the digital world, and how actively they make use of their opportunities.”

The importance of social media has increased significantly in just the past two years – a fact that is reflected in the sheer number of Bertelsmann channels. While at the Management Meeting 2012, there were presumed to be around 300 channels, by the time the Social Cloud was launched, there were already 2,000, and now there are more than 5,000 channels with 514 million followers (as of July 2014).

But social media is also becoming more and more important because the relationship between producers and consumers has changed. There is an increased need for creativity – the consumer actively participates in



Karin Schlautmann

*On new forms of creativity that are expressed in the
Bertelsmann Social Cloud*



@ThomasRabe

Bertelsmann's CEO is one of the few top executives who are active on Twitter.

a creative process and gives the results a personal touch, because creativity means co-designing processes. The technical term for this is “prosumering,” a combination of the words “producing” and “consuming.” The demarcation between the two is increasingly disappearing as users no longer merely wish to consume things, but want to interact with the producers and contribute their own product ideas and suggestions. And their creativity knows no bounds.

A good example of this new “prosumering” is StyleHaul, the multi-channel network for fashion, beauty, fitness and lifestyle on YouTube, in which RTL Group and Bertelsmann’s BDMI fund have direct investments. Founded in 2012 by Stephanie Horbaczewski, former manager of the U.S. fashion-store chain Saks Fifth Avenue, the company has quickly evolved from a trendy medium for fashion bloggers into a highly successful multi-channel network in the field. The secret to its business model: StyleHaul not only offers its users content from other YouTube users, but adds in self-produced content and “authentic” clips from YouTube stars. Interest is huge: StyleHaul currently has over 34,200 video channels in more than 60 countries, with more than 170 million YouTube subscribers (as of July 2014). The videos are commented on, shared and further disseminated. The creativity of StyleHaul bloggers is limitless – for instance, they show their ever-growing fan base everything from makeup tips and their latest shopping haul to hairstyle ideas, their favorite recipes and birthday gifts. It is not unusual for a YouTube video to receive more than 2,000 comments, so consumers are obviously keen to interact with their YouTubers. StyleHaul gives both sides the right platform for it.

If you browse the Bertelsmann Social Cloud you will also find Facebook pages for deceased Penguin Random House authors, including the Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez. These pages are maintained by Penguin Random House and have a large following. Posts consist of quotes, photos and links to articles relating to a given author or their books. Followers of these pages discuss the books and exchange opinions and book recommendations. In a similar way to StyleHaul’s YouTube channels, the Facebook community actively participates here and takes the opportunity to enter into dialog, for example, with other Gabriel García Márquez fans. The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, the authors Oscar Wilde, Nobel Prize for literature laureate Thomas Mann, and the

Social media opens up entirely new dimensions for creativity, too – especially interactive ones.

writer and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir all have their own profiles on Facebook, to name just a few examples. In this way, creativity becomes immortal, and interest in its fruits remains very much alive.

The Facebook pages and Twitter profiles of presenters who are very much alive, such as RTL's Chief Editor Peter Kloeppel, are also often found on the Bertelsmann Social Cloud. The popular news anchor's posts are a mixture of private and professional topics. He shares photographs, e.g. of himself jogging or watching soccer shows in his spare time, sends greetings at Easter or Christmas, or shows himself in a relaxed carnival atmosphere with colleagues. But he may also announce important topics on that evening's "RTL aktuell" news program – sometimes in text form, sometimes as a video. This is well received by his followers: His posts are shared, liked and commented on. "RTL Exclusiv" presenter Frauke Ludwig is also very active on Facebook and has more than 142,000 fans (as of July 2014). She not only regularly posts photos with celebrities or selfies (portraits of herself taken with a smartphone), but also actively involves her fans in "RTL Exclusiv." Followers are regularly asked for their opinions on her outfits during the show. As a result, they feel involved, as they can contribute to "Exclusiv." Gifts, such as handbags, scarves and T-shirts from the show, are also regularly given away. The social media channels are used to turn viewers into an integral part of making "Exclusiv." This is an example of how traditional media are mobilizing the interest and creativity of their users.

The YouTube gaming network TGN, owned by the online video company Broadband TV, provides a very different example of Bertelsmann's creativity. TGN describes itself as "the network for gamers by gamers." Here, too, it is evident that today's users no longer want to merely consume, but want to get involved. For one, TGN offers gaming fans the opportunity to watch videos on which other gamers show games, share their experiences with various online games, or present new games and solu-



tions. For another, TGN partners can upload their own videos to the TGN network. TGN thus offers accelerated audience growth for its own videos and channels. Inside knowledge, contact to lots of other gamers, successful YouTubers and fast support make TGN a network where like-minded people meet. TGN's figures are impressive: 1.7 billion monthly video views, 200 million subscribers and 17,000 partners – and the numbers are rising. Creating immediacy and input is a task shared by all subscribers and users on the TGN network. A constant creative exchange between producer and consumer is part of its success.

Today, new messages arrive nearly by the second in real-time on the Social Cloud from a wide range of Bertelsmann companies and editorial teams around the world – from TV and radio broadcasting and production companies, book publishers, magazines and online portals, from the services sector, music and the international startup scene. At any given moment, news is being announced somewhere, video clips are being posted online, author chats are being hosted, or tweets are being posted about programs currently being aired. The channels can be searched according to various criteria, for example filtered according to type of media (books, radio, magazines, services, shows and TV) and topic (e.g. fashion, cooking, motor sports, science, etc.). The users decide which channels to search and which languages they want to include in their search results. “It's impressive how much creativity you see every day when you surf the Social Cloud,” says Karin Schlautmann. “Creativity also means opening up new media and opportunities. The Social Cloud shows impressively how Bertelsmann companies around the world do this.”

The list of creative social-media examples from the Bertelsmann world is limitless, with new offers added almost daily, and it will be exciting to see how the communication between consumers and producers continues to develop. The rapidly increasing number of channels and followers underscores that there is still a lot of momentum happening in social media. The Bertelsmann Social Cloud is an ideal tool for monitoring and tracking these changes.





Social Cloud

The Bertelsmann Social Cloud pools more than 5,000 channels with 514 million followers.

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Karin Schlautmann

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Gütersloh

Contact:

Bertelsmann SE & Co. KGaA
Corporate Communications
Carl-Bertelsmann-Strasse 270
33311 Gütersloh
Phone: 05241 80-2368
Email: benet@bertelsmann.com

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