

The Association of Female Entrepreneurs (Verband Deutscher Unternehmerinnen - VdU) in Southern-Bavaria and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Munich and Southern Bavaria were guests of Dr. Michaela Elbel, partner and founder of the patent law firm PATERIS PartmbB with offices in Munich and Berlin, as part of the popular series of events "Female Entrepreneurs – let's talk".

Petra Göckel, member of the VdU Executive Committee Southern-Bavaria and partner with ADJUVA trust GmbH as well as Elfriede Kersch, Board member of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IHK), responsible for Women in the economy led the entrepreneur discussion.



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VdU: Patent attorneys are predominantly men. Where did your interest and readiness for the long training come from?

M. Elbel: I always wanted to become a patent attorney. I already knew that during my biology studies. I quickly completed my PhD in virology and microbiology and then the path was clear. At the end of the 1990s, I completed my training in a law firm in Munich, then at the German Patent and Trademark Office and the Federal Patent Court. After that I went to the USA. Much of what we see in research, but also in patent law, has its roots in America.



I have always been tempted by self-employment, the independence and the opportunity to be my own boss. The fact that freedom is a little restricted today with around 30 colleagues and employees and a family with two children due to responsibility does not bother me - I make important decisions now together with my professional partners and at home with my husband.

IHK: PATERIS is a family-friendly employer and also offers a lot to make family and career compatible.

M. Elbel: Personally, it is important to me that not only I, but all of us in our team are able to pursue our profession and at the same time have a fulfilling family life. We have part-time office management, home office jobs, fathers and mothers on parental leave and very flexible working hours. We were honored for this many years ago by the Bavarian State Government in the SIEgER competition.

VDU: How does leadership differ if not everyone is present at the same time?

M. Elbel: Communication is crucial. You have to make sure that everyone gets the essential information. This is where modern tools and social media come in handy. Information can be disseminated quickly today because practically everyone is online at all time. I try to be disciplined and really involve everyone. On the other hand, I try not to bother my team with mails and text messages at night.

VDU: You name it - everyone talks about digitization, but also increasingly about block chain and artificial intelligence. Will your profession change?

M. Elbel: I am convinced of that. How exactly nobody knows yet, but I suspect that we will provide less standardized services in the future. The trend is clearly towards tailor-made, very individual solutions. The direct and fast contact to our clients - mainly the owners of family businesses, managing directors, and heads of legal and patent departments of listed companies but also self-employed persons who register their trademarks through us - is becoming more and more important. Our clients are already downloading simple contracts from the Internet. The patent attorney only sees this when it doesn't work - and then we are back to close, personal contact.

IHK: You value the fact that PATERIS is a mixed team and we know from the press that mixed teams are more successful. What makes PATERIS successful?

M. Elbel: I have always worked in mixed teams, and by that I don't just mean mixed age and gender teams. In the USA, where I also worked as a patent attorney, ethnically mixed teams are much more common than here. People from different backgrounds have very different experiences and approaches to complex issues - this helps a lot with tailor-made solutions for our clients.

I have always liked to surround myself with people who have other strengths than me. That was already the case at school - my achievements in math and physics weren't so convincing - I already appreciated contact with clever people back then. In



the end, the overall result is always important, and everyone in a mixed team contributes to this.

IHK: You encourage women to take on more leadership responsibility. Where does your personal motivation come from?

M. Elbel: I have two sons - they have to see that women have equal rights in all areas of life. That is why I am very much committed to equal opportunities. In addition, I see so many women who work very well, but always let men take the lead in assuming more leadership responsibility. This is because they think they are not perfect for the job, men aren't either. Or there are personal reasons - mostly the family - why women think they can't make it. But that's not true. There is so much support, a good team can do so much and sometimes a woman just has to say: "Yes, I can do this, and I'll do it now".



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