

Corporate Responsibility at Bertelsmann

Faces of Responsibility

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Responsible

Marie-Luise Kühn von Burgsdorff,
Head of Corporate Responsibility &
Diversity Management

Project Management

Thomas Hajduk,
Manager Corporate Responsibility

Design and Production

TERRITORY CTR GmbH

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Contact

**Corporate Responsibility & Diversity
Management**

Phone: +49 (0) 5241-80-75021
responsibility@bertelsmann.com

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Recruiting Services
www.createyourowncareer.com
createyourowncareer@bertelsmann.com



BERTELSMANN

The Bertelsmann Essentials

Our Origins and Shareholders

Bertelsmann was founded in 1835 by Carl Bertelsmann. It remains a privately-held company with the majority of shares donated to a not-for-profit foundation – the Bertelsmann Stiftung.

Our Sense of Purpose

To empower, to create and to inspire is the purpose of our work. This provides direction to our managers and employees and informs our relationship with customers, partners and society at large. It guides all of our work as an international media, services and education company.

Our Essentials

In a rapidly changing world, how we do things has never been more important. Our core values guide everything we do. Strong individually, it is how Creativity & Entrepreneurship work together that makes them powerful and true to our Bertelsmann culture of participation and partnership.

Creativity

Creativity is vital to us. We celebrate and nurture creativity: encouraging the critical and imaginative thinking that challenges convention and unlocks opportunity. Our minds are open and curious and we encourage and develop the passionate pursuit of fragile ideas. We know that experimentation is part of the creative process and that innovation best serves our customers and markets. Diversity is crucial. We actively seek out different viewpoints and encourage communication and collaboration.

Entrepreneurial freedom provides us with the vision and courage to take risks, the decisiveness and perseverance to get things done, and to be accountable for our actions. Because we act responsibly, we can be proud of our entrepreneurial achievements. We never lose sight of our customers. Mutual respect and trust between every colleague and partner is crucial. Collaborating makes us all stronger. We invest in our people, empower them and provide fair working conditions. We're mindful of the impact we have on society and the environment, and we seek to make a positive difference.



Entrepreneurship

Dear Reader,

With our ideas for media, services and education, we inspire our customers – worldwide, day after day. The foundation of Bertelsmann’s success story has always been our core values of creativity and entrepreneurship. And based on a culture of partnership, these values empower everyone in the company to get involved and help shape the future of our business.

Our corporate culture is embodied in the people we choose to work with and how we support them: People who use their freedom to act and do so responsibly. Our colleagues are curious. They question the status quo and, in recognizing opportunities, take them! Some use digital platforms to learn independently. Others commit themselves to work for equal rights or tirelessly track down the facts to avoid fake news. The diversity of their engagement is what makes our corporate culture so vibrant.

On the following pages we’d like to introduce you to some of those colleagues. They tell us what motivates them to take responsibility. And while they come from a wide variety of businesses and functions at Bertelsmann, they share a corporate culture that inspires everyone to make their contribution every day. Theirs are only some of “the faces of responsibility” at Bertelsmann, but their stories illustrate the commitment of many others. Let yourself be inspired by these personalities!



Your Immanuel Hermreck
Chief Human Resources Officer of Bertelsmann

BERTELSMANN



Content

3 Foreword

Immanuel Hermreck, Chief Human Resources Officer of Bertelsmann

5 Creativity, Entrepreneurship and the Initiative of the Individual – The foundations of cooperation

6 Who We Are

Responsibility has many faces

8 What Drives Us

Our colleagues on the issues that motivate them

12 #learning

Data Science – Learning for the Future

What Alexandra Kraft learned at the Udacity Data Science Scholarship Program

Disadvantage, Prejudice

Why fairness is so important to Jan Altersten

18 #diversity

Discovering New Perspectives

Why Marcus Koring took part in the Bertelsmann Exchange Initiative

Enrichment for All

What Ingrid Höver is working toward with the be.queer network

24 #begreen

Green Thumbs Up

How Arjun Sharma got his team involved in climate protection

Serial Environmental Action

How the UFA Green Team implement sustainability

30 #truth

Detectives Tracking Down the Truth

What drives RTL Group's Verification Team to authenticate images and stories

True or False?

How the Verification Team confirms images and stories

Creativity, Entrepreneurship and the Initiative of the Individual

Trust, freedom and responsibility-taking in collaboration have shaped Bertelsmann's identity.

The small religious publishing house, C. Bertelsmann, founded in Gütersloh in 1835, has become a global player seven generations later. Today, Bertelsmann's business areas include media, services and education. In every phase of its development, the company has faced technological innovations and changes in markets and user habits, and it has mastered new challenges. A key success factor in this history of creativity and entrepreneurship is a corporate culture based on partnership: Trust, freedom and responsibility-taking in collaboration have shaped Bertelsmann's identity until today.

This corporate culture goes back to Reinhard Mohn (1921–2009), who took over the management of the family business in 1947 in the fifth generation. The post-war founder laid the foundations for the rapid rise and expansion of the publishing house. With his convictions, Mohn stood in the tradition of his ancestors and their care for employees. He anchored the traditional values of partnership in Bertelsmann's corporate culture.

"People are at the center of all our operational considerations" – these were the words that began Bertelsmann's Code of Principles, which as early as 1960 laid the guidelines for "working and collaborating in our company on the basis of equity and mutual respect." In addition to the principles of corporate governance, opportunities for advancement and the distribution of profits, Mohn also committed himself to the "initiative of the individual," which he identified

as the "company's strongest force." For this, he said, "independence and freedom to make decisions are indispensable prerequisites."

Today, as in the past, Bertelsmann offers employees freedom and trusts in their creativity and entrepreneurial spirit.

Bertelsmann has always been guided by its demand for participation and cooperation based on partnership – and it still is! The people in this magazine are ambassadors of Bertelsmann's corporate culture, and their stories of commitment exemplify the "initiative of the individual" in the 21st century. The issues of responsibility that affect Bertelsmann and its employees today have changed and developed just as much as the economy, society and the company as a whole: Bertelsmann is growing faster, becoming more digital, more international and more diversified than ever before. Employees shape change and assume responsibility at their workplace and beyond. And today, as in the past, Bertelsmann offers them the freedom they need to do so and trusts in their creativity and entrepreneurial spirit. #



Responsibility at Bertelsmann has many faces.



#responsible

What drives colleagues to act responsibly?
The reasons are as diverse and distinct as
the world of Bertelsmann.



More Than Just a Job

For Veronica Valerio, social commitment is an important part of her professional and personal life. As Manager of Corporate Giving, she and her colleagues are responsible for identifying and processing Penguin Random House U.S.'s financial contributions and book donations to causes that are aligned to the company's brand purpose. "It's great to be able to support worthy causes and give something back to our communities," she says. To mark the celebration of its fifth anniversary last summer, the publishing group invited all its employees worldwide to donate books to an institution of their choice. Valerio – as well as thousands of employees around the globe – embraced the opportunity enthusiastically: Her own donation went to "Behind the Book", an organization dedicated to helping New York students from poor families. In all, the company distributed more than 72,000 of its books worldwide. "That was a fantastic campaign, and I really enjoyed promoting it to my coworkers. I'm proud that so many caring people at Penguin Random House participated."



Veronica Valerio,
Penguin Random House, New York, United States



Olaf Pack,
Arvato Supply Chain
Solutions, Gütersloh,
Germany

Clearing the Way for Inclusion

"No matter whether you're dealing with wheeled suitcases, bulky luggage or a wheelchair – no one needs barriers," says Olaf Pack, head of Arvato Supply Chain Solutions' construction department. He volunteers with "Inclusion Action Plan," an initiative that aims to improve accessibility for people with disabilities in working life. "Identifying and avoiding barriers at an early stage benefits all future users of a building. I'm a big proponent of building with foresight so that no one is unnecessarily obstructed."



Philipp Cabron,
Arvato Systems,
Rostock, Germany

Avoiding Trash

"Unnecessary things have always bothered me," says Philipp Cabron. The 26-year-old is training as an IT specialist for Application Development at Arvato Systems in Rostock. He takes care not to generate any unnecessary plastic waste: He doesn't use plastic bags or product packaging that cannot be recycled. "That's why I'm also supporting the 'be green Day' campaign at Bertelsmann – I'm already looking for ways to raise awareness about plastic waste among my coworkers."



Nadja Hereitani,
RTL Group, Cologne,
Germany, and
Alexandra Harrop,
Gruner + Jahr, Hamburg,
Germany (from left)

Opening New Perspectives with Trust

“Taking time for other people and supporting them in their development is a great way to give something back,” says Nadja Hereitani, HR Manager at Super RTL. She volunteers as a mentor in Bertelsmann’s cross-divisional mentoring program, in which experienced managers share their knowledge with junior staff, and in return benefit from the younger employee’s skills. Her mentee is Alexandra Harrop, Publishing Manager at Gruner + Jahr. From their very first meeting it was clear that they were on the same wavelength. What’s more, they’re both open to new perspectives and willing to communicate them. Sometimes it’s enough simply to ask the right question at the right moment to stimulate a thought-provoking impulse. “This works very well for us because we had a deep mutual trust from the very first moment,” says Alexandra Harrop. Despite the physical distance between Cologne and Hamburg, they take responsibility for each other – with Harrop sometimes playing the ball back to help her mentor find the right answer.

Thinking Outside the (Lunch)Box

Once a month, Oliver Fehling, 53, is busier than usual. That’s when he gets together with children from Hamburg’s Lokstedt district to cook. “I want to teach them how to cook with fresh ingredients, because children need good food, not just fast food,” says Fehling. His culinary efforts also focus on integration, as the children come from all walks of society and numerous nations. Cooking together provides a place where they can talk and play with other youngsters. “This works very well: Everyone helps each other; there’s never been a fight, and everyone goes home with a smile.” Fehling, who works in production at Gruner + Jahr, came up with the idea in 2009. The facilities are provided by the community group, “Anstoß” (Impetus), with Fehling initially covering the costs himself. Gruner + Jahr publishing house began providing financial support in 2013, and two of Fehling’s colleagues now join him in the kitchen. “I think it’s important to think outside of your own box. To see that there are people who may not be so well off, and to take action,” he explains. “You get so much back... A Russian brother and sister who started coming in 2009 still stop by – even though they’re now both studying elsewhere. I couldn’t possibly wish for more recognition!”



Oliver Fehling, Gruner + Jahr, Hamburg, Germany



Bianca Brummel,
Arvato Supply Chain Solutions,
Gütersloh, Germany

Fitness for Colleagues

“Exercise keeps you healthy. That’s why, in addition to my family and career, I take the time to give classes for colleagues in Bertelsmann’s company sports program,” says Bianca Brummel, Assistant to the Human Resources Director at Arvato Supply Chain Solutions. “I want to help them stay fit and healthy.” She has experienced how good exercise can be for you: An exercise course at Bertelsmann helped her get rid of her back pain. “A wonderful experience that I’d like to make possible for my coworkers as well!”

Making A Difference with Education

To open future prospects for underprivileged children and youth, Bertelsmann’s Brazil employees support various educational projects and non-governmental organizations. Among their efforts, they paint and read with children and support students as mentors. Viviani Miras, Executive Assistant at the Brazilian Corporate Center, is among the program’s volunteers. She is always looking for new ways to help, organizes the on-site visits, and enthusiastically pitches in on projects. She feels it’s important to get involved: “If each of us shares some of our knowledge and skills with other people, we can really make a difference.”



Viviani Miras,
Bertelsmann Brasil, São Paulo, Brazil

The Udacity Data Science Scholarship Program

“This is the first time I studied using an online platform. One of the most important insights was how much I can achieve through self-motivation. Obstacles are only in one’s mind.”

Alexandra Kraft, “stern” editor, Gruner + Jahr, Hamburg, Germany



Data Science – Learning for the Digital Future

Data is the fuel of the digital economy and our knowledge society – and a real challenge for media creators. A responsibility that “stern” editor Alexandra Kraft is aware of, and happy to tackle.

Large volumes of data are the basis of ever more business processes. Interpreting that data correctly will become a key to success for companies in the long term and is increasingly impossible for individuals. Media professionals and journalists then play a special role as communicators of knowledge, a responsibility that “stern” editor Alexandra Kraft is well aware of. Participating in the Udacity Data Science Scholarship Program – part of an extensive advanced training initiative from Google, Bertelsmann, and Udacity – Kraft dealt intensively with the collection, interpretation, and visualization of data, also known as data science, already considered among tomorrow’s essential digital skills.

Out of the comfort zone

“I’m totally curious and constantly need new challenges,” says Kraft. These include traveling and learning new languages. But the personal curiosity driving the editor to constantly learn and broaden her horizons is only one of the forces that motivates her. Kraft, who has worked for “stern” for over twenty years, including four years in the U.S., is also driven professionally. “Journalism is changing enormously and I don’t want to be the dinosaur in the editorial office, ignorant of the latest developments.” When she learned of the Udacity Data Science Scholarship Program, Kraft quickly seized the opportunity, even if it forced her out of her comfort zone. Reflecting, she says it was a bit like when she was still at university studying German literature, politics, history



Easy access, independent learning: Alexandra Kraft has learned to appreciate the advantages of the Udacity online platform.

and Spanish and went immediately from an internship to starting an apprenticeship at “stern”. “It was an opportunity you don’t say no to. “stern” is the Champion’s League.”

The entire editorial team now benefits from Kraft’s newly acquired skills and knowledge. “My colleagues are also very interested. And now, when it comes to data evaluation, I can make more of a contribution.” As a science journalist focusing on health, finding topics and checking news and facts are Kraft’s bread and butter. “Take internet hype, for example,” she explains. “It’s easier for field veterans like us to recognize such things anyway, and now I can identify them even more easily using original data.” Because hype often originates through carelessness and when people don’t want to pass up on the headline-grabbing story. Now she is also better at evaluating and analyzing data leaks like the Panama Papers, she says. “I’m sure that I now know exactly what data I can use and how to process it.”

No fear of the future

As a knowledge communicator, it is also Kraft’s responsibility to clearly and concisely communicate data and findings to readers using software such as Excel and Tableau, which were also used as part of the program’s learning content.

And how does she manage to fit this in with her work-life balance? Relatively easily, Kraft assures us credibly. “You just manage somehow, partly because you get support from mentors if you have any problems with the content.” Kraft says she found the digital learning of mainly video content with limited text especially helpful. “This is the first time I studied using an online platform. One of the most important insights was how much I can achieve through self-motivation. Obstacles are only in one’s mind.” The online platform allowed Kraft to easily integrate the learning content and study time into her daily routine. “Every minute counts. It was often just ten or twenty minutes, but sometimes several hours at a time, like when we had to deliver our projects.” The connection to a large online community and the lively exchange with other students more than made up for the lack of an offline presence. Kraft also feels that she found friends all over the world, advising anyone interested: “Don’t be afraid of the amount of time involved!” #

The Data Science Scholarship Program

The Udacity Data Science Scholarship Program is part of an extensive continuing training initiative from Google, Bertelsmann, and Udacity with the aim of training IT experts. The program teaches skills for the digital working world.

Udacity is an online learning platform for people looking to begin or advance their career in the technology industry and offers Nanodegree programs with a focus on professions in software development, data science, digital marketing, and artificial intelligence.

More information about the scholarship program and Bertelsmann’s diverse learning content and formats can be found on the Bertelsmann University website:

→ www.bertelsmann-university.com



Alexandra Kraft: “Through the program I made interesting connections all over the world.”

#learning

“Lifelong learning is more important for Bertelsmann than ever before. Innovative learning formats and digital learning enable a new learning culture at Bertelsmann, one that is characterized by quality and flexibility. Bertelsmann University ensures that employees and managers can acquire exactly the skills they need for their work, now and in the future.”

Steven Moran,
Chief Learning Officer at Bertelsmann

Disadvantage, Prejudice

Unconscious biases have not only personal, but business consequences as well.

Fairness is important to Jan Altersten. He is particularly concerned about ensuring equal opportunities for all. He’s Swedish after all – and his views match the stereotype nicely. It’s the less obvious prejudices and cognitive patterns, however, that Jan Altersten speaks out against – as a person and as a manager. “With a bit of reflection, everyone will discover unconscious biases in themselves,” says the 44-year-old. “For example, I start my day very early. But others, who may not start until 9:30 a.m., also do excellent work of course. I’m more aware of that today.” He feels that managers in particular have a responsibility to constantly question their own attitudes. Not as a way of “improving people,” or because unconscious cognitive thought patterns are harmful per se: After all, they do help us find our bearings in the world and reduce complex information. Rather, the critical point, explains Altersten, is that “you need to become conscious of the unconscious.” Because if an unconscious bias is not identified and sufficiently considered, it can lead to distortion and misjudgment. And that can impact and damage the business.

“Unconscious tendencies sometimes prevent us from recruiting the best people and making the objectively best decisions for the business,” says Altersten. Acting on this sense of responsibility, he took part in an Unconscious Bias Training developed by the Corporate Responsibility & Diversity Management department in cooperation with Bertelsmann University. The training teaches strategies for dealing with one’s own blind spots. Altersten now has a better understanding of the mechanisms that influence his decisions and wholeheartedly recommends the training with its open discussions that penetrate one’s own comfort zone. “I was positively surprised at how candidly even sensitive points were addressed and that we didn’t waste our time on the obvious.” Because one thing is clear to him: “Just because we have an eye on the obvious things like gender, skin color,



Jan Altersten,
President of Arvato Financial
Solutions B2C Finance & Nordic
Debt Collection, Stockholm,
Sweden

religion and sexual orientation in our prejudices, we have by no means arrived at the end of the journey. If we think we have, we’re lying to ourselves.” Not least because the bias of “distortion blindness” itself ensures that one considers oneself to be unbiased. That’s something Jan Altersten is familiar with, too. “I had done some soul-searching and thought I was pretty free of biases. But during the training I was forced to dig even deeper.” And now situations come to mind which he would have handled differently in retrospect – and knowing what he knows today.

Now Jan Altersten serves as a multiplier, carrying the message into his organization: in a personal blog, through organized training sessions for managers, and by developing appropriate indicators in cooperation with HR. Through small, everyday things as well: “I for instance always replace the word ‘he’ with ‘she’, when we’re talking about customers or managers in general – but without making a big deal of it.” In this way, Altersten is raising awareness on his team, and setting a good example as well. “It is the responsibility of the individual manager to create an environment in which prejudices and biases – even unconscious ones – no longer play a role. Only if we create an atmosphere where everyone can excel will we realize the full potential of our teams, and then the financial results will follow. As will our contribution to a more equal and dynamic society.” #

The Bertelsmann Exchange Initiative

“It’s great to broaden your horizons. But the Exchange Initiative didn’t just open new perspectives for me – I was also able to take the know-how I acquired during the exchange back to my team.”

Marcus Koring, Global Procurement Systems & Processes, Corporate IT, Rheda, Germany





The Bertelsmann Exchange Initiative

Since 2016, the Bertelsmann Exchange Initiative has offered employees the opportunity to gain new experience. They can apply to switch jobs for up to twelve weeks to gain insights at another Bertelsmann company anywhere in the world.

The prerequisites for participation in the Exchange Initiative include at least two years' work in the Group, a benefit for the home and host companies, the necessary language skills and, of course, a high level of self-motivation for broadening one's horizons.

→ www.createyourowncareer.de/en/career/
→ www.bertelsmann.com/diversity

Opening Up New Perspectives

The Bertelsmann Exchange Initiative empowers employees to gain new experience, share their knowledge, and broaden their horizons: Employees can work at another division for up to three months. Marcus Koring seized this opportunity, learning a lot in the process.

A spontaneous pop concert in an open plan office is not exactly "business as usual," even at a company like Bertelsmann. But that's exactly what Marcus Koring experienced – for a moment – when he swapped his usual job for one at BMG in Berlin for twelve weeks: "The Canadian musician Elise LeGrow visited the team and sang for us during our lunch break – right next to my desk," he says.

Koring is a data expert. He works for Corporate IT at the Rheda site, in the procurement department, which negotiates IT framework agreements for the entire Group. He combs through the IT landscape in search of ways to save costs. He is also in charge of sourcing analytics, collecting and analyzing vast amounts of data to find and review opportunities for optimizing processes.

A new environment

When he learned of the Bertelsmann Exchange Initiative, it was clear to him: "I want to go for it." His motive was strong: "I like to get to know new things and really need variety. I think it's excellent that Bertelsmann gives its employees the opportunity to temporarily work in another division and broaden their horizons." Koring, who is from Bielefeld, likes to get new perspectives from time to time. He had already done so during his studies working for several months at domestic and multinational companies, getting to know cities like Bremen, Stuttgart and Hong Kong. "On this exchange, however, it wasn't so important for me to go abroad. I was far more interested in getting to know new tasks in a new environment," says the 37-year-old. Koring spoke to his supervisor, who gave the green light and helped him to find a suitable department – in this case IT manager Sebastian Hentzschel's team at BMG. Koring applied in spring and was quickly accepted. But there was still quite a lot to organize: arrangements with the HR departments, work transfers to his colleagues in Rheda – and of course looking for an apartment, which he found in Prenzlauer Berg district. After all, Koring wasn't just going to Berlin for a meeting, but moving there for three months.

At the beginning of August, Koring had his first exchange day at BMG and spent the following weeks producing a report on the IT support there. A classic controlling task with lots of numbers – perfect for the analyst.

Marcus Koring:

"The exchange opened new perspectives for me."



New team, new perspectives

His assignment in Germany's capital, however, involved not just routine matters – quite the opposite. "Sebastian Hentzschel and I had talked on the phone several times beforehand. Everything was well organized, and my colleagues gave me a very nice welcome – but the business intelligence tool they used was new to me," says Koring. The focus of his work was also different from his usual job: "Every Bertelsmann unit has its own character. At Corporate IT, as a central function, we tend to work strategically. At BMG it's all about the operative business. But because of the great working atmosphere, I quickly found my place in the new team." He garnered many new impressions on the personal side as well. "Of course, I'd been to Berlin before. But you get to know a city quite differently if you live there and are really in the middle of it. Even if it's only temporary." This is one reason Marcus Koring recommends the Exchange Initiative to all colleagues. There are other reasons too, of course: "The exchange opened new perspectives for me. The challenges colleagues in the other department face, the tools they use," he says. "It was really impressive to see how efficiently the BMG team works."

New knowledge to take back to the team

Today, Koring benefits from the know-how he gained about the business intelligence tool he used in Berlin. "This first-hand knowledge is very valuable for my colleagues and me because we are constantly evaluating tools and systems to see whether they are good for the entire Group." And Koring had something else for his colleagues when he returned: a big thank you for their support. He was only able to do part of his normal work from Berlin; the rest was done by the team in Rheda. "Of course, we had to make sure that my regular job was getting done. This wouldn't have been possible without my colleagues. It was by no means a matter of course that they took on new, not to mention additional, tasks at such short notice." But since his colleagues knew that the whole team would benefit from Koring's new expertise, they actively supported him and his exchange. #

#diversity

“We want diversity on all levels and in every aspect, and it is my hope that the diversity of our businesses will be reflected in the diversity of people working for us.”

Thomas Rabe,
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Bertelsmann
Chief Executive Officer of RTL Group

“We look forward to applications from people who can contribute to the diversity of our company. The variety of our employees’ experiences and perspectives makes Bertelsmann more creative and more innovative.”

Immanuel Hermreck,
Chief Human Resources Officer of Bertelsmann



Ingrid Höver,
Project Manager,
Arvato Systems,
Cologne, Germany

Enrichment for All

A workplace environment where everyone feels welcome – that’s what Ingrid Höver is working towards with the be.queer network. What motivates her? And why is diversity so important for companies?

Ms. Höver, you are a core member of be.queer. What motivates you?

I live in what one calls a rainbow family and have a son with my wife. From my own experience, I know how exhausting it can be when you can’t talk openly about your personal life. Thanks to my family background, I can identify very well with some of the topics and can share my experience and offer helpful tips.

How do you advocate and promote diversity?

Diversity in action also means that all employees, managers, customers and business partners feel welcome regardless of their sexual orientation or identity. Bertelsmann’s first cross-divisional employee initiative, the be.queer network, was founded in May 2017 precisely to promote this diversity. The aim is to initiate a dialog on LGBTIQ issues within the Group; to raise awareness; reduce insecurities and prejudices, and eliminate fears on both sides.

How do you work to achieve these goals?

The activities are carried out by a core team that currently has 20 members. There are regular meetings and workshops where we discuss important topics and develop communication kits, such as information flyers or, as in this year, advertising material for Christopher Street Day (CSD). We collaborate closely with our HR colleagues, works councils and company social services. And, of course, we are available to any colleagues who have questions.

What have you already achieved with be.queer?

We’ve managed to bring the LGBTIQ issue to the forefront within a very short period and had a positive reception. One highlight this year is that we’re taking our campaign public for the first time and prominently presenting our message at CSD. What I would like to emphasize as a highlight, quite independently of the work we do, is the German law introducing a third gender option on birth certificates.

What’s so important about that?

From my own experience, I know about the personal struggle with sexual orientation, and it costs a lot of energy. That’s why this is real progress: not forcing people to define or describe themselves as something they can’t identify with and not driving them deeper into conflict. Arvato Systems was one of the first companies in Germany to include the third-gender option in its job listings – even before it became legally required. I’m really happy about that!

To what extent does a company generally benefit from diversity?

Many studies have shown that an LGBTIQ-friendly corporate culture is seen as an indicator of an overall open corporate culture. When diversity is put into action, it’s a demonstration of the appreciative way people deal with one another. And a respectful working environment contributes to employee satisfaction, loyalty, and empowerment. So, in sum, the activities of the be.queer network also make the employer more attractive. #

The “be green Day” campaign

“The smog and the trash in New Delhi are alarm signals. I use every opportunity to make an active contribution to nature conservation and climate protection.”

Arjun Sharma, Human Resources Manager, Penguin Random House India, New Delhi





in environmental quality has Arjun Sharma worried: "These are alarm signals. I use every opportunity to make an active contribution to nature conservation and climate protection."

Creative ideas for World Environment Day

And with that in mind, in the summer of 2018, Sharma enthusiastically advocated for World Environment Day at his company by calling on colleagues to take an active part in Bertelsmann's "be green Day" campaign. "Some were skeptical at first, saying they didn't have time," he says. "But then, suddenly, attitudes changed. Individually they became aware that if everyone did their small part, the effort as a whole could have a big impact." This gave rise to a host of creative "be green Day" ideas, including a paper dress installation made from books that were no longer used – now exhibited in the publishing house's reception area – as well as a lecture from environmental activist Perna Singh Bindra.

Sharma. For example, plastic bottles at the offices have been replaced with Penguin branded glass bottles. And paper certified by the Forest Stewardship Council is now used in book production. "These measures show that our commitment to the environment has increased. They also make us a more attractive employer – especially with millennials." They may also be inspired by how Sharma gets to the publishing house every day: with the commuter car pool with three colleagues to save money and reduce air pollution – because even the little steps count. #

"My favorite projects were The Blooming Diaries and The Plant at Your Workplace," Sharma says. Blooming diaries, really? Yes, there is such a thing: Every employee at the Penguin Random House offices in India now has a notebook that, once full, is planted in a pot of soil. As the special paper decomposes, it sprouts flower seeds. With The Plant at Your Workplace project, employees sponsor and care for a plant. "These two particular projects sharpen awareness for sustainability, recycling and water as a precious resource in everyday life," says the HR manager, who looks after two fiddle-leaf fig plants in his office and repeatedly tells his family about them: "My mother thinks it's so great that she is sponsoring two of them now herself."

Awareness has increased

An increased awareness of nature and the environment has affected both the HR manager's private and workplace life: "You really sense this in conversations between colleagues. There's a greater consciousness. Everyone wants to take on more responsibility and thinks about how we can make Penguin Random House more environmentally friendly together," says

Green Thumbs Up!

Environmental protection begins with small steps. But how do you get an entire team excited about it? In New Delhi, HR manager Arjun Sharma at Penguin Random House India knows how.

Arjun Sharma has fond memories of his childhood. "I grew up in a very lush and leafy region. The air was still fresh and clear." Today, the 30-year-old human resources manager at Penguin Random House India lives in New Delhi, where many days the sun barely penetrates the smog and a population of 15 million produce an estimated 17,000 tonnes of trash every single day. The decline

The "be green Day" campaign

Every two years, in many parts of the Bertelsmann world and all over the planet, Bertelsmann employees organize local activity days under the umbrella of the Group-wide "be green Day" campaign. With a wide range of projects and campaigns on topics such as energy consumption, climate-friendly nutrition, waste avoidance and recycling, they set an example for protecting the environment and combating climate change. These activities are visible to all employees on an interactive "be green" world map, creating an incentive for them to participate in the campaign themselves.

→ www.bertelsmann.com/environment



HR manager Arjun Sharma motivated his colleagues to actively participate in the "be green Day" campaign

The paper dress installation made from books no longer in use

#begreen

“Bertelsmann is committed to environmental and climate protection. This is reflected time and again in the various initiatives taken by our colleagues in the divisions worldwide.”

Immanuel Hermreck,
Chief Human Resources Officer of Bertelsmann

“Used laptops, notebooks and smartphones are not trash. Through our cooperation with AfB Social & Green IT, used hardware gets a second life. That protects valuable resources and provides jobs for people with disabilities.”

Matthias Moeller,
Chief Executive Officer of Arvato Systems
Chief Information Officer of Bertelsmann



Katja Bäuerle,
Producer at UFA Serial Drama,
Potsdam, Germany

Serial Environmental Action

The UFA Green Team works to promote sustainable action in front of – and behind – the camera. They do it voluntarily and out of conviction. Team member and producer Katja Bäuerle talks about the team’s work.

Some things aren’t laughing matters to Katja Bäuerle. One of them is the plastic waste generated by using disposable cups during filming. “On *Gute Zeiten, schlechte Zeiten* (GZSZ) alone, we used to throw away as many as 4,000 cups a month,” says the Berlin native, who is in charge of long-running TV series for UFA Serial Drama. To remedy the situation, she and three other colleagues volunteer with the UFA Green Team, which she co-founded in 2014.

As a producer, Bäuerle knows the daily routine of filming well and speaks from experience: “Daily series are especially good for trying out improvements and then transferring them to other productions. For example, the UFA Green Team campaigned for banning disposable containers from locations. Now, the teams of the long-running TV series *Unter uns*, *Alles, was zählt*, and *GZSZ* drink from stainless-steel bottles and reusable coffee cups engraved with names. Guests and extras can borrow bamboo cups on location.

That is just one success the team has notched up. There are others: Scripts are only printed out on request, the company car fleet is gradually being con-

verted to e-cars, studio lighting has been converted to LED technology, and more and more water filter systems are being installed in the office buildings – the list of measures is long. The team may be small, but it has excellent connections because its members work in different departments across the company.

But the Green Team doesn’t just work for change behind the scenes. “Our work products are seen by millions of people every day. We take advantage of this to show examples of environmentally conscious action without moralizing,” says Katja Bäuerle. For instance, the bakery in *Unter uns* has done away with disposable paper bags and replaced them with fabric bags. But Bäuerle is most pleased when the work of the Green Team motivates other UFA employees to take action themselves. The team wants to show that it isn’t all that difficult to live more sustainably. “We’re not eco-professionals,” she says. “Everyone can give the issue a little thought and act more consciously. We’re convinced that when you add up the small steps there can be a significant impact. We are also involved in a nationwide film industry network, dealing with larger, more long-term topics such as certification and green consulting training.” #

User-Generated Content Verification at RTL Group

“It’s our aspiration as journalists to find out the truth.”

Andreas Greuel, Head of the Verification Team at infoNetwork, Cologne, Germany



Detectives Tracking Down the Truth

They meticulously work to verify whether images and news stories are genuine and factually accurate. What drives the producers, editors, and reporters on RTL Group's User-Generated Content Verification Team?

Munich July 22, 2016: In the Olympia shopping mall, an 18-year-old student opened fire, killing nine people and seriously injuring five more. Photos and video allegedly showing the victims and suspected attacker go rapidly viral online. A news editor at RTL Television checks the user-generated content and its primary sources. The result: Two thirds of the pictures don't even show the Munich shopping mall, but malls in England and South Africa. And the first snapshot of the alleged attacker? It shows YouTube comedian Sam Hyde, not the Munich perpetrator.

Verified facts build trust

This fact-checking, carried out on the initiative of an individual employee, marked the birth of the User-Generated Content Verification Team (Verification Team). At its inception in 2016, the team consisted of ten men and women committed to verifying the authenticity of images and news carried on social networks. Today, the virtual team is made up of

75 volunteers from across the RTL Group. They are producers, editors, network reporters and media documentalists – like Sergej Maier, who says he “simply enjoys” using digital tools to check the facts “because it helps you deep-dive into a topic.” Producer Robert Clausen shares Maier's enthusiasm: “Like a detective, you're always looking for facts.” Content Manager Juri Biekehör, who works at the New York bureau of *Mediengruppe RTL Deutschland*, cites additional reasons: “I've expanded my skills and learned how to use new tools – all new and useful knowledge. That's a terrific experience.” His Cologne colleague, Stephan Große, is driven by something else: “Researching is my passion,” he says. And Florian Gerick sums up what probably goes for the entire team: “It's my aspiration as a journalist to report factually and honestly. That's the only way to build trust.” But facts are often recklessly jeopardized in the digital world. Today, anyone can use a smartphone to disseminate photos or videos on the internet – and mislead the public with false claims. There are reasons for this: “It's so easy to make emotionally



Robert Clausen, Florian Gerick, Andreas Greuel, Sergej Maier, Stephan Große and Marco Flick (from left) belong to the RTL Group's Verification Team

How to become a member of the team?

When the Verification Team was founded in 2016, only *Mediengruppe RTL Deutschland* employees at the Cologne location came forward to participate. The idea then arose to recruit and train colleagues from across the RTL Group to carry out the verification process. Today, specialist group leader Andreas Greuel visits the other RTL Group locations to train interested parties in one-day workshops. International course participants are included in the growing virtual team and notified of verification tasks by e-mail.

charged declarations on Facebook, Twitter, etc., these days that, at first, the authenticity of the content isn't even questioned,” explains Andreas Greuel, who heads the Verification Team. The consequences are daily disinformation such as fabricated reports, errors or direct lies – in brief: fake news. But Greuel, whose full-time position is Head of the Verification Team at infoNetwork, doesn't really like this term: “If a claim is demonstrably wrong, it should be described as what it is, namely a fraud, a manipulation, or an error.”

Accuracy is the best advertisement

The number of requests to the Verification Team from editorial offices across the RTL Group is increasing. That's why Gruner + Jahr's *stern* magazine is on board as a cooperation partner. Since summer 2017, approximately 25 editors, mainly from the online division, have been actively supporting the research and helping to thoroughly and reliably check the submitted content. The Hamburg-based magazine then passes the gained knowledge on to its readers. “The fact that we make our research processes and results available in a transparent manner has been welcomed and has strengthened confidence in our daily work,” says Mortiz Dickentmann, SEO Editor at *stern.de*. “So far, our assessments have been correct,” says Greuel. “Our accuracy is our best advertising.” Over the past two and a half years, the team has processed between 500 and 600 inquiries. “Essentially, we check every request.” Among them, a video supposedly showing Thai divers rescuing children from a cave – they were actually French divers

carrying out a training course. Other checks include an alleged letter of confession, a bomb explosion in front of the American embassy in Beijing, and even a celebrity's lip implants.

Say, for instance, *Punkt 12's* editorial staff submits a request. It is forwarded by email to the entire Verification Team and processed by a member who has the time or is particularly interested in the topic. For former tennis reporter Florian Gerick, it's sports; for Russian-speaking Sergej Maier, it's news from Russia or Ukraine; and for New York colleague Yuri Biekehör, it's U.S. breaking news. “We usually need about two hours to provide a corroborated, verified assessment of images, videos, or news,” says Greuel,



Florian Gerick and Marco Flick (from left) examine and verify images and news content for RTL Group programming.

True or False?

How the verification team ensures that content is genuine: The verification process for user-generated content



who not only leads the team but also trains its members. "Sometimes it can take longer, however." Any RTL Group employee can become a member of the Verification Team. "The most important prerequisite is having a lot of curiosity," says Greuel, describing the job's requirements. "You should also have a good understanding of technology and good spatial imagination. Also, you need to be able to put your personal opinions to the side." Robert Clausen explains why the last point is so important: "For starters, we don't believe anything – no matter what the source! We focus only on what we're looking at in the image or video and question everything: from the weather to the time, to the shadows, the clothes, the buildings, and the street signs." Then the reverse search for the primary sources begins. All available online tools are used for this purpose. "We can have as many as 30 tabs open on our screens during research," says team leader Greuel, "and if we still can't find the answer, we call an expert."

Editors appreciate the added value

Such research involves an extensive effort – and for good reason: "Everyone in the team is aware of their great responsibility because our interpretations, assessments, and research influence program content and thus, our viewers," explains Greuel. It can even happen that pre-produced or scheduled broadcasts are cancelled if the footage's content cannot be verified. But that, of course, is precisely what the editors appreciate, "because for them we serve as backup and first responders, so to speak, in assessing the veracity of news and stories." The Verification Team's work has triggered further impetus: "Public attention to user-generated content on social media has increased enormously – especially in the case of viral stories." Maybe that's why the Verification Team is

"Everyone in the team is aware of their great responsibility because our interpretations, assessments, and research influence program content."

Andreas Greuel,
Head of the Verification Team at infoNetwork,
Cologne, Germany

so important for the solidarity of the editorial teams within the RTL Group. "No one wants to broadcast news that isn't correct. If it does happen, it creates a problem not only for the journalist and the editorial team, but possibly for the entire industry. This awareness makes everyone on the Verification Team happy to contribute to avoiding it." And this is only possible because the editorial departments have recognized the huge value added by the team, says Greuel. "They give their employees the necessary freedom to work in our team. Otherwise, none of this would be possible." #

#learning

#begreen

#keep
moving

#perfect
match

#giveback

#inclusion

What's your hashtag?

#

#less
waste