

Press release

Berlin, November 3, 2023

Champions in transition: CEO dialogue event and book presentation highlight the global importance of German and European SMEs

Yesterday's CEO dialogue on “Leading Global Champions” brought together 200 CEOs and chairpersons of internationally active family businesses at ESMT Berlin. They engaged in discussions with leading German politicians such as Federal Minister Wolfgang Schmidt, head of the Federal Chancellery, and Carsten Linnemann, deputy party chairperson, Secretary General, and head of the CDU's Programme and Policy Commission. The primary focus was on the successful development of hidden to global champions.

The Federation of German Industries (BDI), Egon Zehnder, and ESMT's Hidden Champions Institute (HCI) jointly organized the event. The CEOs in attendance emphasized their desire to further globalize their companies to consolidate their position in the worldwide market. Speakers included Christiane Benner, chairperson of IG Metall, Siegfried Russwurm, president of the BDI, and Julian Nida-Rümelin, deputy chairperson of the German Ethics Council. As part of two panels on the topics of “Strategy & Governance” and “Digitalization & AI”, CEOs and experts discussed future priorities for the companies' management. These included representatives from companies such as Heraeus, Freudenberg, AGCO Fendt, Kion, Siemens, Blanc & Fischer, and others.

During the event, Jörg Rocholl, president of ESMT and director of the Hidden Champions Institute, also introduced the new advisory board. With Ayla Busch, co-CEO and co-owner of Busch SE, Steven Althaus, CEO of the Grenzebach Group, and Jörg K. Ritter, senior advisor, the HCI advisory board is made up of experienced entrepreneurs.

New findings from the book “Leading Global Champions - The CEO Book”, which was published in October, were also presented at the event. The book was written in collaboration with CEOs and chairpersons of leading hidden and global champions, Egon Zehnder, BDI, and ESMT. It explains which critical success factors are important for the future management and further development of internationally active companies and which co-managers will be needed in the future.

“We have realized this book together with over 50 leaders who are at the top of global champions,” says Jörg K. Ritter, one of the co-editors. “The CEOs have not only provided answers but have also developed numerous new questions that will be important for the executive education programs at ESMT in the future,” says Jörg Rocholl.

Detailed information about the Hidden Champions Institute can be found [here](#).

About ESMT Berlin

ESMT Berlin is the highest ranked business school in Germany and top 10 in Europe. Founded by 25 leading global companies, ESMT offers master's, MBA, and PhD programs, as well as executive education on its campus in Berlin, in locations around the world, online, and in online blended format. Focusing on leadership, innovation, and analytics, its diverse faculty publishes outstanding research in top academic journals. Additionally, the international business school provides an interdisciplinary platform for discourse between politics, business, and academia. ESMT is a non-profit private institution of higher education, accredited by AACSB, AMBA, EQUIS, and FIBAA, and is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion across all its activities and communities. [esmt.berlin](https://www.esmt.berlin).

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