



CHRISTIAN BEHRENDT:
DON'T WAIT FOR OPPORTUNITIES.
CREATE YOUR OWN!



There are people who can give a lot. They don't speak in general terms, each of their words carries meaning. Throughout the interview, I thought I was taking a life lesson. "Don't wait for opportunities. Create your own!" - these are the words of Christian, which is the guiding spirit of the whole interview.

01_ CHRISTIAN, YOUR CAREER IS EXCITING AND DIVERSE. WE CAN FIND OUT A LOT OF DETAILS FROM YOUR BIOGRAPHY, THOUGH I WANT TO START THE INTERVIEW WITH THIS QUESTION – INTRODUCE YOURSELF BY WORDS WE CANNOT READ IN YOUR BIO. WHO IS CHRISTIAN BEHRENDT?

I would introduce myself as a researcher and practitioner in the field of creativity & technology. With everything I am doing, I am trying to push the boundaries a little bit – testing and demonstrating how creativity continuously is redefined in our ever-changing world, driven by tech innovation, mobile platforms and social media. In my opinion, this is the best time to be creative as we, the creatives, now have the chance to establish new principles and rules for these new and unexplored playing fields!

MY ADVICE: GET INVOLVED AND DON'T LET THIS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY PASS!

02_ AND WHAT DO YOU DO AS A 'HEAD OF CREATIVE INNOVATION' AT GOOGLE?

In my role, I am leading a group of innovative brand experts, storytellers, content creators and creative technologists. Together we are working at the marketing and brand innovation arm of Google.

I believe that Creativity & Technology can make Magic for brands and their audiences. Helping them re-invent their way of marketing and sometimes even their whole business model - helping them stay relevant in the future.

From Problem to Prototype, our team works with the senior stakeholders from Google's biggest clients to develop world-class creative that changes the game of the industry. This either can be inventing a Virtual Reality experience for a brand like Red Bull, or empowering fashionistas to create personalized fashion designs with the help of machine learning.

03_ TELL ME ABOUT THE MOMENT WHEN YOU SAW YOURSELF IN CREATIVE, DIGITAL MEDIA AND MARKETING? WHAT MADE YOUR CAREER CHOICES?

My mother had a strong influence on my career decision, as she taught me drawing, painting and storytelling quite early in my childhood. From when I can remember, it was obvious that I want to become a creative professional. It just took a little while to figure out what exactly. Which even now is hard to tell, as our job-titles and areas of

working are constantly changing. So, to be honest, I might still be in the process of 'figuring out'.

04_ TELL ME ABOUT A KEY MOMENT IN YOUR CAREER THAT TAUGHT YOU A LESSON?

In my early years, I had been working as a Product Marketing Manager for one of the biggest independent music labels, when one of the artists I previously worked for signed a deal with Sony Music – the best major label at that time. In their negotiations the band said to Sony Music, they wanted me as their Product Marketing Manager! This was my one shot to get into the mayor league, but I was worried that people would find out that I am a fraud, as I did not have any business school background like all the others. So, I said to myself 'F*** it! Just do it your way and enjoy the ride while it lasts'. With that attitude and confidence, I was able to bring my first single-release into the Top 3 charts and make it the most successful domestic single of the year. I think that was quite an influential moment in my career, which taught me to always believe in yourself.

05_ THIS QUESTION IS OFTEN ASKED, THE ANSWERS ARE ALWAYS DIFFERENT, BUT STILL - WHAT IS CREATIVE FOR YOU? WHAT DO WE NEED TO TURN ORDINARY IDEAS INTO EXTRAORDINARY AND STUNNING PROJECTS...?

I think the most vital thing is to not fall into the 'leadership trap', where you only oversee work and delegate to your teams, while getting more and more distant from the actual work. Especially now, with a whole generation that is growing up that is more curious, demanding & impatient than other generations before, it is crucial to

know how to reach and engage these audiences. For that you always need to stay up to date and sharpen your sword. And that only works with constant testing, experimenting and creating.

06_ FAILURE IS THE BEST LESSON TO START ALL OVER AGAIN. WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST FAILURE THAT CHANGED YOUR VIEWS AND ATTITUDES?

The failure of the music industry to adapt to change many years ago changed my view in a very painful and life changing way. Meaning, I learned what 'Digital Transformation' can do to an industry, when the industry does not prepare and adapt to a new technology landscape that creates a more impatient and demanding consumer. As mentioned, that industry was the music industry many years ago and the driver behind the technological change was the invention of the MP3 and Napster. During the peak time of that digital transformation, I was Head of Marketing for Dance and Urban at Warner Music in Germany and saw my marketing budget vanishing week by week. And instead of researching new user behavior and developing new innovative ways to sell music, the leaders of the big major music labels decided to invest more energy into suing people with lawyers. And we all know where that ended. Luckily, I decided to change the course of my career that time, adapt to the change and learn how to create digital products and services that people love to pay money for – instead of needing to illegally download them. So, to come back to your question, I think the broader failure of the music industry taught me a deep lesson to never stop adapting to change.

07_ YOU ARE NAMED "ONE OF ADWEEK'S WORLDWIDE TOP 10 CREATIVE MINDS IN DIGITAL ". WHAT DOES THIS TITLE MEAN TO YOU?

For me a big title and the recognition you get through awards generates trust and gives access. What I mean with that is, for example winning at Cannes helps you sell your future big ideas in one of your next client meetings, which is what every creative wants – help your idea get made and fly! But as we all know ‘You are only as good as your last piece of work’, which also means with trust and access also comes a shitload of responsibility!

08_ YOU HAVE ACHIEVED A LOT, AND YOUR CAREER HAS PEAKED A FEW TIMES ALREADY. BUT YOUR BIOGRAPHY INDICATES THAT YOU WILL NOT SETTLE BUT AIM FOR THE NEXT PEAK. WHAT IS YOUR NEXT GOAL?

My goal is to keep up the spirit, stay open and meet as many inspirational people and potential collaborators in the field of culture, business, creativity and technology to make magic happen together!

09_ WHAT WOULD BE YOUR ADVICE FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE NOW OPENING THE DOOR OF CREATIVITY AND DIGITAL MARKETING?

Don't wait for the big briefs and great opportunities. Create your own! You have more access to tools and platforms and potential collaborators than ever and there are countless problems that want to be solved through creativity and technology. So, don't wait and say 'The right brief hasn't hit your desk yet.' Get out there and start creating!

10_ FINALLY, THE TITLE OF YOUR BOOK IS 'OH MY GOD WHAT HAPPENED AND WHAT SHOULD I DO?'

TAKE A LOOK AT YOUR LIFE, CAREER, AND ANSWER YOUR OWN QUESTION.

I would say: Stay hungry. Don't get too comfortable. And continue to play around with all the great new toys we creatives and brand marketers have to play with. I'm a bit like a kid that refuses to grow up ☺ I just want to build the most amazing sand castles in the universe together with people that share the same values and believe that creativity and technology can make magic happen. And most important: Don't forget to have fun along the way.