

AmCham Germany Appoints First Diversity Champion

Bianca Bourbon, member of AmCham Germany's Board of Directors and General Manager of Coca-Cola Germany, will serve as the Chamber's first Diversity Champion. She was appointed by President Bernhard Mattes on the proposal of the Diversity Working Group. As Diversity Champion, Bianca Bourbon will be a special representative for diversity and inclusion (D&I) on the Board of Directors and will be acting as a spokesperson for external communications.

▼ *How do you view the diversity and inclusion efforts at AmCham Germany so far?*

△ AmCham Germany has taken important first steps towards addressing diversity and inclusion, (D&I), both internally and externally: signing the diversity charter 'Charta der Vielfalt', efforts and measures of the Diversity Working Group, the Corporate Responsibility publication on D&I, kicking off the Young Professionals initiative or the Women's Luncheon at the Transatlantic Business Conference in 2015. These are great measures that should motivate all of us to continue our efforts at AmCham Germany.

▼ *Which opportunities and challenges do you see regarding D&I?*

△ I believe AmCham Germany has great potential when it comes to diversity. Be it for instance the speakers at our events or the member companies' representatives. Currently, both areas are still largely male-dominated. For example, out of 62 members on our Board of Directors, only nine are women. At our Annual Membership Meeting in Leipzig in April, participants were asked which aspects AmCham Germany should emphasize more. The majority responded that we should increase our efforts to attract more women and younger people. Though diversity is by no means just about gender and age, those traditional diversity aspects are a good starting point.

▼ *How do you think AmCham Germany can benefit from D&I?*

△ As an international organization, AmCham Germany will benefit from more diversity at all levels: With panels bringing together a diverse range of perspectives, arguments and issues, our events and discussion culture will become even more interesting and constructive. The work of the Policy Committees could gain a creative impetus and greater credibility. AmCham Germa-

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ny's attractiveness for members and potential new members might increase and we are setting AmCham Germany on a sustainable track for the future by positioning it as a modern, forward-thinking organization.

▼ *What do you hope to achieve as AmCham Germany's Diversity Champion?*

△ One prime task is to raise awareness. It is my aspiration to positively influence the way the Board of Directors addresses the issue. I would also like to improve AmCham Germany's public perception as an organization that actively approaches D&I and implements necessary steps in order to diversify its structure. I expect that, rather sooner than later, diversity will be thoroughly incorporated into the organizational structure and culture in a way that makes the position of a Diversity Champion redundant. In order to achieve that, we all need to work together.

▼ *Can you share your experiences regarding diversity during your career?*

△ When I first started my career at Coca-Cola in Romania right after the collapse of communism, I was amazed by the variety of people working there who came from all over the world and had very diverse – professional – backgrounds. Coca-Cola was like a melting pot. At Coca-Cola

I learned that, if you want to grow professionally and personally, you have to move and leave your country at some point. My first position abroad was in Vienna, where I experienced a different dimension of diversity when working in a developed market for the first time. I was astonished by the lack of female colleagues, the majority of women stayed at home once they had children. Up to now, I have worked in several different countries, which requires adapting to different lifestyles and working cultures. This is not always easy, but I enjoy new experiences and challenges. Today, I am a member of the Global and the European Women's Leadership Council at Coca-Cola. We advise the Board of Directors on strategies for the advancement of women and we work closely with other committees, covering different aspects of diversity at Coca-Cola.

▼ *How are diversity and inclusion linked?*

△ Diversity and inclusion are strongly linked: Diversity is not just about numbers and figures, about reaching a certain quota or filling positions with a diverse range of people. It is crucial how leaders leverage diversity, how they use and include the different skills and opinions available to them. Diversity is not an end in itself, but – managed correctly – diversity drives business results, promotes innovation and gives you a competitive advantage. ■