

REINHOLD MESSNER, MOUNTAIN CLIMBER

South Tyrol native Reinhold Messner climbed his first 3,000-meter mountain at the age of five. Many first-time feats would follow, and he would secure his premier place in Alpine history books by climbing all fourteen 8,000-meter peaks without additional oxygen. But the desire to set records was never what motivated Messner, now 70. Instead, the purist in him was drawn by the isolation and harmony with nature. He hiked across the Gobi Desert, and skied across the Antarctic and Greenland. When doing so, he deliberately rejected modern aids such as satellite phones or high-tech equipment. In addition to his excursions, the geodesist has written around fifty books plus articles for major periodicals, and together with his Messner Mountain Foundation he is working to protect mountain peoples worldwide and promote their concerns.



“Whenever I have encountered major difficulties in my life, I’ve gone a step further, as though there weren’t any obstacles or problems. This motivation is what drives me to never let up, but instead to always try to be a little better—and not only in mountain climbing.”

MARIA SHARAPOVA, TENNIS PLAYER

Originally from Siberia, Russian tennis ace Maria Sharapova first attracted attention at the age of six when Martina Navrátilová discovered her on a scouting tour in Moscow. The following year Sharapova moved with her parents to Florida. There she started training under tennis guru Nick Bollettieri, who was impressed by the ambition, self-discipline, stamina, and powers of concentration already present in the young girl. She started playing professionally at 14, although for reasons of age was only allowed to enter a limited number of tournaments. Now 27, she has won 36 titles—including five Grand Slam tournaments—and topped the world rankings for a total of 21 weeks. Sharapova also works for IMG Models—the largest photo model agency in the world—and has founded her own line of candy, called Sugarpova.



“One of the most fulfilling and challenging things about the game of tennis is the personal responsibility that comes with the sport. Discipline, hard work, and a continuous drive to improve affect your game and are the main factors that contribute to overall success.”

TAKING IT ALL IN

What exactly goes into outstanding performance? A well-thought-out approach and perfect execution from the initial idea and its development all the way through to completion. An eye for the big picture and a drive for perfection are what lead to superior performance. This is what the experts at Porsche Consulting call “operational excellence.” And such excellence is not only to be found in industry. Here, on the pages of this magazine, distinguished women and men share their path to excellence.



AUTO BILD / M. MEINERS

WALTER RÖHRL, RALLY DRIVER

He's nicknamed “the tall guy.” Although the “the greatest” or “the best” might be even more apt. In Italy, rally driving legend Walter Röhrl (67) was voted the best driver of all time in 2003 by one hundred drivers, co-drivers, and motorsports journalists surveyed by the magazine *Rally-Sprint*, and racing experts in France named him “Rally Driver of the Millennium” in 2000. Fitting acknowledgement for an unparalleled career that has included two drivers' world titles, a European championship, and countless individual victories at world championship races as well as overall rally honors. Röhrl was a four-time winner of the Monte Carlo Rally alone. Formula One star Niki Lauda described his driving style as “genius on wheels.” A successful skier as a young man, Röhrl transferred a lot from precisely that sport to racing. “You've got to plan for the curves correctly and drive into them at the right time,” he says, “without too much correcting, sliding, or pushing after the fact.”

“I've always been addicted to perfection, not speed. When I enter a curve I want to take it on the ideal line. When I succeed in doing something perfectly, I'm almost necessarily very fast as well. Excellent performance comes from operational perfection.”

W. Röhrl

BRIAN JOHNSON, MUSICIAN

AC/DC has been a rock 'n' roll icon for decades. With singer Brian Johnson (66), this Australian band has delighted millions of fans worldwide. With booked-out world tours and sales of over 200 million albums, AC/DC has set records in numerous categories. In addition to all of his work for the band, which was voted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2003, Johnson still finds time to celebrate his passion for automobile racing in a very special way. As well as racing himself, he has been hosting the British TV show *Cars That Rock* since the beginning of the year. He also writes books and is planning something eagerly awaited by the hard-rock world: a new world tour and a new album.



“We rock, we roll, we have fun, and it all looks so easy. Of course, what goes on behind the scenes is a very different story: a team of 85 working in unison with the band and each other. Lights, sound, visual, and pyrotechnic effects—they must be in complete harmony. The precision of the crew behind each show is vital to the end product. But most important of all is that you must love what you are doing.”

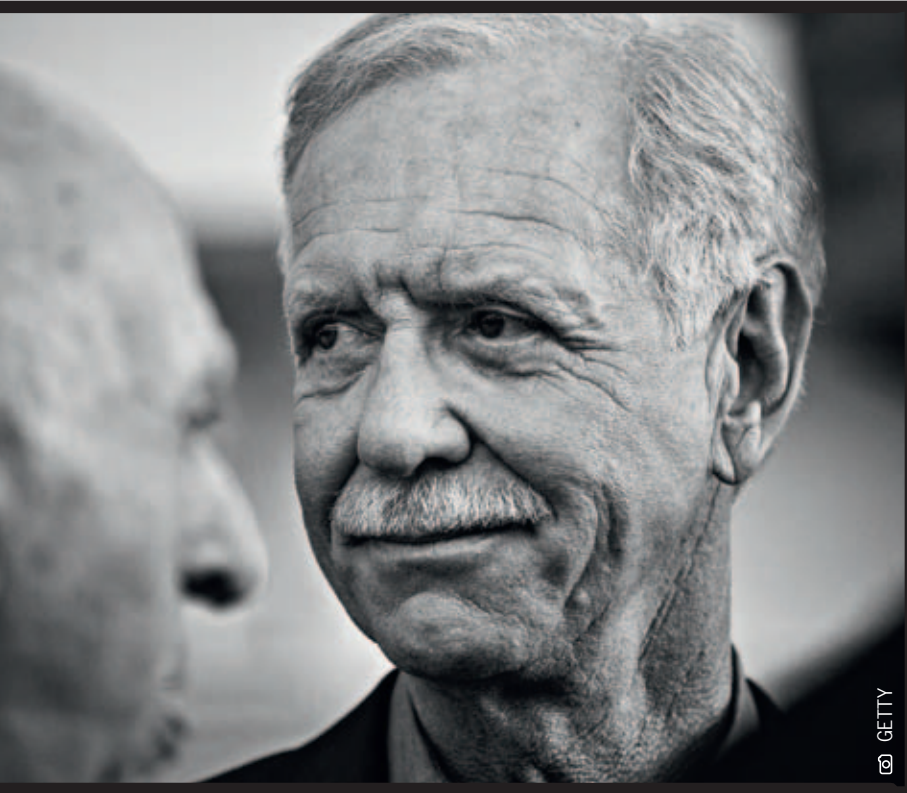


“My audience expects perfection. For that I need discipline and stamina. The months of preparation lead up to this moment when everything has to be flawless. The applause is not just the reward for all of the effort; it also challenges me to become even better.”

ANNA NETREBKO, OPERA SINGER

When the young Anna Netrebko sang the role of Donna Anna in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at the Salzburg Festival on a July evening in 2002, the audience broke into frenzied applause. The Russian soprano then embarked upon a triumphal march across the stages of the world's great opera houses. She opened three successive seasons at New York's Metropolitan Opera alone, and *Time* magazine put the “reigning new diva of the early 21st century” onto its legendary Time 100 list of the most influential people in the world. Critics have called her “Audrey Hepburn with a voice” on account of her dark, even intonation and her confident stage presence. Anna Netrebko's CDs and DVDs have topped the charts worldwide—and a new milestone for the 43-year-old singer is Deutsche Grammophon's first complete recording of Verdi's *Giovanna d'Arco* with her and Plácido Domingo, from a live performance at the Salzburg Festival in 2013.



**CHESLEY SULLENBERGER, PILOT**

US Airways pilot Chesley Sullenberger (63) had just milliseconds to make a momentous decision on a cold Thursday morning. On January 15, 2009, he landed his approximately 77-ton Airbus A320 on the icy waters of the Hudson River in New York. An emergency water landing! Shortly after the plane took off from LaGuardia Airport, it struck a flock of birds, which put both engines out of commission. The plane's drastic drop in altitude made it impossible to either return to LaGuardia or to continue on to nearby Teterboro Airport in New Jersey. With radio contact gone as well, Sullenberger's masterful feat of flying saved 155 people from certain death. Photos of the Airbus on the Hudson River were immediately sent around the world on Twitter, reaching millions of people within seconds.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Sully'.

“My team and I had 208 seconds from the engine failures until the emergency landing in the Hudson River. Those seconds crystallized 40 years of striving for excellence, teaching leadership and team-building skills, and lifelong learning—which allowed us to be so successful that day.”

LORD NORMAN FOSTER, ARCHITECT

No one has made such an impressive mark on the world as the British architect Norman Foster. The glass dome on the German parliament building in Berlin, the Chek Lap Kok Airport in Hong Kong, the Carré d'Art museum of contemporary art in Nîmes: many of his imposing works have become landmarks of their cities. Foster (79), a qualified pilot with an ascetic streak, has always set new standards with his works yet never suppressed what was already there. A view of the big picture is important to him, coupled with respect for the qualities of the past, the possibilities of the present, and the consequences for an uncertain future. One secret of his success is the ability to learn from key moments. "Every time that I've flown an airplane, visited a steel plant, or observed a car mechanic at work, I've learned something new that I can apply to buildings," he says. Today he runs architecture offices around the world; he has won around 100 national and international competitions and received over 600 awards for his excellent designs. Born into a working-class family, he received a very personal honor from the Queen in 1990 upon being knighted. In 1999 he took the title Baron Foster of Thames Bank and was made a life peer.

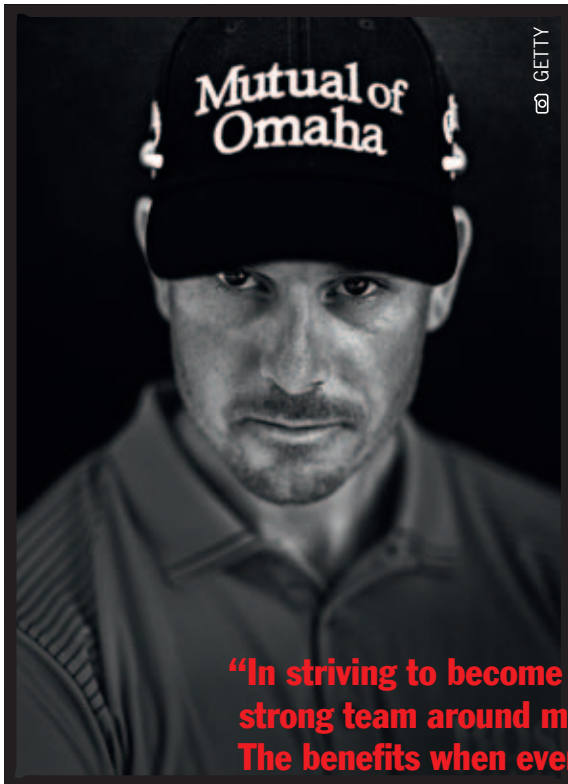
"Each project is unique. None is like the other. You start over again from scratch and follow the specific rules. Despite all specifications and adversities, only an architecture that is sensitive to the culture and climate of its place, combined with environmental sustainability, is a product of that holistic way of operational excellence thinking."



KATY HARRIS

HENRIK STENSON, GOLF PRO

Swedish professional golf player Henrik Stenson could hardly have fallen any further. After climbing as high as fifth in the world rankings, he wasn't even among the top 200 anymore in early 2012. What had looked like a picture-perfect career now appeared to be over. But anyone who wrote off the 38-year-old Swede back then was in for a surprise. Stenson reorganized his team. He found a new caddy, brought back his old mental coach, hired a manager, and took on another physiotherapist. No stranger to hard work, he drew up a meticulous, self-disciplined plan—both for his game and his mentality—and succeeded in doing what no professional golf player had ever done before. In 2013 he won both the FedExCup on the American PGA tour and the Race to Dubai on the European tour, and advanced to the number one spot in the world. His reward for a year of near-perfect golf amounted to around 19 million dollars.



GETTY

"In striving to become the best player possible, I utilize a very strong team around me, whom I trust one hundred percent. The benefits when everyone works closely together are enormous, and give me the space to concentrate on my job."



“My team and I develop designs for the future with the greatest respect for the past. We focus on the essence while taking every detail into account. The most important thing, however, is to never be satisfied with what you’ve achieved.”



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MICHAEL MAUER, PORSCHE CHIEF DESIGNER

No pencil is safe when he's around. Michael Mauer (52) often starts sketching at the breakfast table. His drawings are usually of sports cars, for that is his métier. In the 1980s he studied automobile design at Pforzheim University. And since 2004 he has directed the design department at Porsche. As chief designer, Mauer is responsible for all of the model series and is charged with taking innovative directions while at the same time remaining true to the core of the Porsche brand. His work is marked by a predilection for minimalism and clarity. Just a few of his lines will reveal a characteristic form, which then becomes the focus. But artistic leeway also needs to take numerous framework conditions into account. “To me, operational excellence means that we produce excellent results within specified periods of time,” says Mauer. “Every design has to be feasible and fit precisely into the production processes. Porsche brings together everyone involved at an early point in time in order to prevent mistakes from even arising.”

Mauer