



As consultants, we are exposed to many things in the course of our work. This makes our job exciting, and provides us with valuable new insights. One experience in particular has left a lasting impression: in the French city of Toulouse, we recently saw what it means to use consummate decision-making skills to master extreme situations that can suddenly arise. We walked from the briefing room of the Airbus headquarters directly across the apron of the airfield and into the cockpit of the Airbus A380 for a test flight of the world's largest passenger plane. In our talks with company pilots, it became clear that their unusual job requires skills that can also be helpful for running companies. And to judge by accident figures and aircraft reliability, commercial aviation is one of the most robust systems there is.

There are many reasons for this. One is that errors and their causes are rendered transparent for all involved so that everyone can learn from them. There are also clear inter-

national standards for communications. Moreover, pilots generally know the limitations of their flight equipment. Systems are tested to the core before they are used. Clearly defined procedures are in place if an engine should fail or a touch-and-go landing is required. In the air, one may have only minutes or seconds to respond correctly, so these procedures are practiced regularly.

Back on the ground the following question arises: What can business and industry learn from aviation? Do company decision makers truly know where the breaking points of their systems lie? What means do they have at their command to cope with steep drops in demand or booms in the market? How flexible are their structures, strategies, and processes, and how well are their employees in fact prepared for unusual situations? There are many questions but no easy answers—especially in light of the increasing level of complexity in all sectors.

In this issue of our magazine, we show you how companies from a wide range of industries

are dealing with these questions. You can read, for example, how a maker of men's suits offers individual, high-quality products at favorable prices—while at the same time eliminating unnecessary complexity—thanks to a modular matrix manufacturing system. Another interesting example of how to run companies in a flexible manner is the integrated demand and capacity management system that is used and further developed on a continuous basis by Porsche AG. We hope that these success stories will inspire and help you meet the vicissitudes of daily life.

May you enjoy the pages of this issue, and may they bring you many new ideas.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eberhard Weiblen". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a light-colored background.

Eberhard Weiblen
President and CEO
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