

A SPACE FOR THINKING

An open coffee bar occupies a prominent place at the Porsche Digital Lab in Berlin. It facilitates the rise of new ideas. Here, with a view of the River Spree, software specialists and engineers from the sports car company work together with colleagues from MHP, an IT consultancy. They also collaborate with start-ups, tech companies, and scientists from around the world. Their mission is to turn major concepts like big data, machine learning, microservices, and cloud technologies into practical applications for Porsche.

Boris Behringer (born in 1974; photo below) founded a number of start-ups after earning a degree in economics. In 2001 he joined Porsche AG, where he has worked in IT, sales, development, and production. He now heads the Digital Lab.

Why does an engineering-based company like Porsche need a Digital Lab?

Boris Behringer: We are acquiring technologies that make our products and company rise above the competition. Digitization means we have to look well beyond our usual horizons. And we have to be quick about it. A lab that works largely independently of company headquarters is very well suited for this purpose. Its team enjoys greater latitude. In return, each member bears responsibility for the results we achieve.

Why Berlin?

Berlin is a unique place in Europe—cosmopolitan, affordable for start-ups, and home to an expanding tech community. We're part of the network and are forging contacts with future partners, also in an international context.

Does an open working space remove mental barriers too?

Creativity doesn't appear on demand. Architecture and interior design can support it, but the space alone won't change anything. What's key is how you work together. No rigid hierarchies—instead, close links to start-ups, research institutes, and technology partners, plus the chance to engage in uncomplicated ways with experts from all parts of the company.

Does openness now trump confidentiality?

We have to be very receptive to ideas from outside. And we seek to be an attractive partner for innovators. Confidentiality is crucial in many areas, but not in the early stages of our IT development process. Here, we need to take an open and interconnected approach.

