

FOCUS  FIRST®

MERCK

New website and way of working
for a DAX company



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The Merck Group is a multinational science and technology company headquartered in Darmstadt, Germany, with around 53,000 employees and operations in 66 countries.

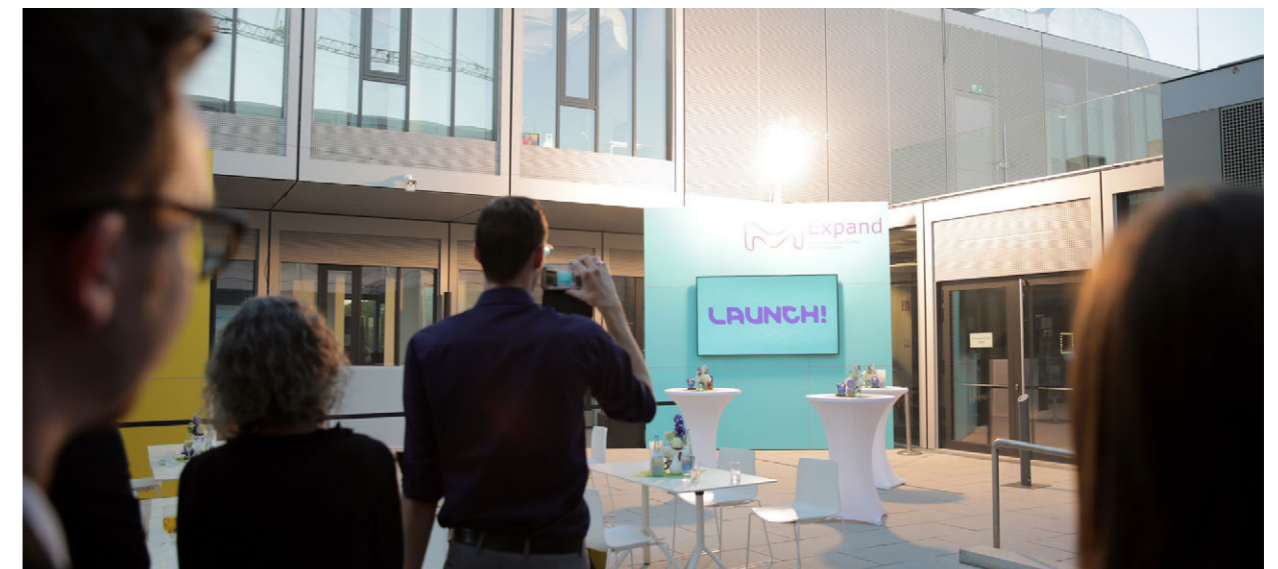
After repositioning the global Merck group, a new website should show this fresh look and make it tangible. As Head of Digital Media, Frank Sielaff was responsible for planning, coordinating, and launching the new website. The project was also seen as a lighthouse project for a change in working methods and project management: From Waterfall to Agile, in other words: away from rigid project planning & execution towards more flexibility in project implementation. As in most companies, website launches are politically sensitive: there is only one homepage, but more departments want to determine its content. Key stakeholder management was, therefore, the key to success. A digital project with over 250 experts and a completely new infrastructure in only ten months. Merck decided to use the PEAK method to achieve the goal on time.

But from the beginning: Merck in Darmstadt had entirely revised its brand identity. The new positioning was intended to illustrate the transformation from a pharmaceutical and chemical group into a global science and technology company. New companies and business fields were added. As a result, turnover increased immensely, the number of locations climbed to 66, and the number of employees rose to 53,000 with 122 nationalities. The problem was that the old brand identity did not really reflect this change. So, repositioning began, and not only that, but also a new global website to convey just that.

Launching a new website for a global corporation is a complex task involving technical, organisational, and communication challenges. Therefore, stakeholder engagement, communication and collaboration are crucial for successfully implementing such a website.

It is vital to involve all relevant key stakeholders in the process from the beginning and to address their concerns and requirements. Stakeholders include the board, managers, internal staff, external partners, customers and suppliers. Through transparent communication and regular feedback, they can get involved in the process and help to identify and solve potential problems early on. „However, this alone is not enough,“ says Frank Sielaff, who is responsible for the success of the project:

„To successfully manage a project on this scale, you not only need the involvement of the key stakeholders - you need a holistic orchestration. That's why Merck chose PEAK“.



Go Live Event, June 2017

Identify, involve and integrate key stakeholders.

And it had to be fast: A digital project with over 250 experts and a completely new infrastructure in only ten months. Everything rises and falls with the right goal and the proper companions: A communication concept was developed based on stakeholder analysis and the identification of key stakeholders. Furthermore, a suitable project branding - is an important step to give the project a face, a heart and a soul. In a „OneGoal“ workshop, all key decision-makers were brought to the same table. And bringing them together at this said table was indeed not easy: the global heads of marketing, the three business segments, innovation, IT, strategy, digital and more, met on a summer morning to jointly set the project vision, define the scope and determine the required resources.

This served as the project kick-off and was a critical success factor. Despite the many competing goals, we managed to provide the project stakeholders with the right people and information at the right time to ensure the pursuit of the common goal. Launching a global website often brings political challenges, as different stakeholders have their own priorities and goals. To overcome these, focusing on open and honest communication was essential to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts. It was also helpful to seek compromises at an early stage.

Through the decisions made in the OneGoal workshop, Frank Sielaff, responsible for the overall success of the website project, was always able to point out when there were conflicts of interest as the project progressed. „It was interesting to see that in the PEAK method, actions were already orchestrated around the key stakeholders at the beginning of the project to mitigate possible conflicts as the project progressed,“ Sielaff underlines.

Monthly focus checks were conducted to promote transparency and regularly inform the Steering Committee about the project's status. These agile and pragmatic timing checks with stakeholders helped to calibrate the way forward - until the goal was achieved.

And it was, with a robust Go Live event: the website was launched in 150 countries, triggered a broad response in the press and social media and won several international communication awards. „A typical DAX project,“ smiles Frank Sielaff, who looks forward to his next challenge.

A portrait of Frank Sielaff, a man with short grey hair, a beard, and glasses, wearing a grey suit jacket over a light blue shirt. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

” FocusFirst has exceeded my expectations on more than one occasion. They take their clients by the hand and navigate them through the transformation well and quickly.

– Frank Sielaff, Head of Digital Media, Merck KGaA

Frank Sielaff has over 15 years of international IT & management experience, primarily in communications. As Head of Digital Media at the science and technology company Merck, Frank Sielaff has been responsible for the Digital Media department within Group-wide Corporate Communications since 2013. Within this framework, he created Merck's global web and social media presence and the global social intranet. He also built up the first Communications Data Analytics Team with the aim of making the communication impact measurable. Previously, Frank Sielaff was responsible for the technology of the websites, intranets, and employee portals in IT.

About FocusFirst

FocusFirst is a boutique consultancy for transformation and strategic change projects.

We are the specialised company in the industry that combines former top executives and an award-winning methodology for accelerating transformation. This unique „double helix“ of capabilities enables us to help our clients achieve results faster and reach challenging business goals. Executives work with us to develop and structure organisations and accelerate transformations. We work with leading Fortune 500 companies such as Merck, Novartis, E.ON and BASF, and established medium-sized companies.

This is us.

Our senior advisors & experts are located in 10 cities within 6 countries, spanning 3 continents. The team has planned, led, and supported international projects in over 30 countries.

We have won 5 awards for our innovation & excellence.

We are a family-owned business. Our freedom and objectivity are not restricted by anyone. We work with those who share our belief that leadership is the ultimate lever for positive change and value creation.

We are on a mission.

When René Esteban founded FocusFirst, he found that too many transformation projects take too long, waste money, and annoy stakeholders – and that there must be a way to accelerate business transformations, sustainably. This belief unites an international FocusFirst team consisting of former top executives and subject matter experts. Today, we are honoured to serve senior leaders across many of their most critical leadership challenges.



All Senior Advisors were former executives and were responsible for international organisations.



René Esteban
CEO, Founder, Senior Advisor



Melanie Esteban
Art Director



David Braga
Manager



David Jeans
Senior Advisor



Katherine Starks
Senior Advisor & Coach



Sandra Cameron
Senior Advisor & Coach



Anthea Heitkamp
Senior Consultant



Thomas Mickleit
Senior Advisor



Canny Little
Senior Advisor



Tobias Heeger
Expert



Anastasia Jakopanec
Marketing & Operations



Carolin Adler
Senior Advisor & Coach



Gerlinde Jayme
Expert



Darius M. Ghiai
Senior Advisor & Coach



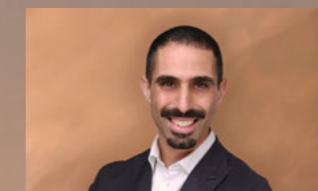
Susanne Ringen
Expert



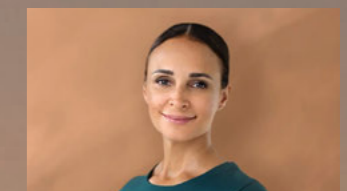
Tim Shaw
Expert



Susann Kunz
Expert & Coach



Ali Boujataoui
Expert



Amina Carter
Expert



Dr. Petra Kring-Kardoš
Expert



Dr. Matthias Finke
Expert

... and many more Senior Advisors & Experts.

Selected references

We are honoured to work with senior leaders at:



1. Building and accelerating the growth of an e-commerce organisation
2. Bringing two teams together after post-merger
3. Holistic realignment of an energy company
4. Building an international marketing team focused on one goal
5. First 100 days of a new board
6. Realignment of the communications department
7. Introduction of global systems (SAP, website, CRM, etc.) worldwide
8. Key stakeholder management of the supervisory board & executive board
9. Strategic communication for global company transformation
10. Introduction of new corporate culture





Transformation success by design...not by chance.

We would be honoured to help.

Feel free to write us
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I am focused.