

Press Release

Interview with Tim Ole Jöhnk

On the opening of the

Northern Germany Innovation Office Schleswig-Holstein | Hamburg in San Francisco

Kiel / San Francisco / Silicon Valley, August 28, 2018

Our man in Silicon Valley: He was born and raised in Schleswig-Holstein, grew up and went to school in Kiel. Now, at the Northern Germany Innovation Office Schleswig-Holstein | Hamburg in San Francisco, he will be responsible for networking Schleswig-Holstein companies with local companies.

WTSH: Tim Ole Jöhnk, how did you as a genuine Kieler suddenly come to the twin town of San Francisco?

Tim Ole Jöhnk: To put it in three words: a love of adventure paired with study, work and finally marriage. I moved to the U.S. in 2014 and earned my MBA (Master of Business Administration) in Oregon. At that time, I wanted to study in the U.S., especially on the west coast. In Oregon I found the ideal conditions: a good and nevertheless affordable university with close contacts to the business world. However, I didn't get a work visa after graduating in 2016 and so I moved to Silicon Valley because I had figured I would find better job opportunities there - fortunately I was right. Then everything simply came together: My wife, who is currently doing her doctorate at Stanford, and I got married, I found a great job in the venture industry and suddenly Kiel and San Francisco became twin towns.

WTSH: And now you are working for Schleswig-Holstein in Silicon Valley and are responsible for the networking between companies here and there. Mr. Jöhnk, to start - very quickly - five terms: What are the typical cardinal virtues with which you can describe the work of companies in Silicon Valley?

Tim Ole Jöhnk: Curiosity, risk-taking, the delusion of grandeur, collaboration, and hard work.

WTSH: And all this can then be found in agile management structures and in a certain mindset. At least that's what we always talk about when we talk about companies in Silicon Valley. Can you briefly describe what this actually means?

Tim Ole Jöhnk: A good friend and mentor of mine likes to say that Silicon Valley is full of weirdos. Every founder has the next big idea, every founder believes that he or she will change the market - as Uber, Amazon and Google have done. 99.9 percent will fail, but that doesn't bother anyone. You just try again. And the 0.1 percent that actually make a difference then contribute to this phenomenon "Silicon Valley" again. You just think on larger scales. What strikes me again and again is the energy

and the will that surround everything and everyone. When you come to the office at 8:00 in the morning and go through the day with the team, you never get to hear "that won't work anyway". There is an understanding that the limits of what's possible and what's not are not defined in advance in a team meeting. Instead, you simply try. If it fails, then that's the way it is. And no one would say "I told you so". This does not mean that people here are naive - it is simply a matter of not restricting one's thoughts right from the start. I also notice that many companies motivate their employees to think beyond their actual job description. The keyword here is "ownership". If I notice something that could work out better, then it's my responsibility to change it.

WTSH: What can entrepreneurs here do to adopt this mindset without copying it?

Tim Ole Jöhnk: First of all, they should be curious and open-minded. And it takes time and patience to find the right factors for yourself and to integrate them into your own system. It is therefore important that every innovation process is supported by the management. I would argue that 90 percent of the benefits will only become visible in the long term. This is also the reason why innovation teams are sitting on such hot seats. On the one hand, it is quite clear that innovation and disruption cannot simply be purchased but must be developed. This can take a lot of time and money. At the same time, business goals must of course be met in the short term. But if managers have to fear for their seats because they have not yet come across a new great business model within the first two quarters, then this paralyzes the possibilities. However, if management supports and exemplifies this long-term strategy, then these teams will dare to take a risk.

WTSH: It is your task to provide companies in Schleswig-Holstein with elements of the Silicon Valley innovation system. How do you intend to do that in concrete terms?

Tim-Ole Jöhnk: In 3 steps. First, through trend and tech scouting: I am closely associated with Silicon Valley - through companies, venture capital firms, universities, start-ups and accelerator programs. The office partners can now focus on certain industries or technologies - let's say, for example, blockchain technologies in ocean freight. I then provide an overview of developments on the market - who is currently researching the topic, which companies have invested in whom, where is the development going? I can then also network the individual participants and help them to establish contacts. Secondly: Experience Silicon Valley: This is achieved either through annual delegation trips or through lectures, webinars and individual trips. The aim is to give the partners the opportunity to experience what I am reporting about and either to make new contacts or to expand existing ones. Such a delegation trip can be about different things, depending on the requirements. Either we are talking about a kind of introductory event with visits to the big companies like Google, Facebook or Plug and Play. The participants should return home with the energy they have experienced here. It is my hope that this will lead to the desire to deal more intensively with this innovative environment. For companies that have already been to Silicon Valley more often and/or already have contacts, it is more a matter of insight and direct contact and the content-related discussion with companies and universities. Here, too, I support them in identifying the right content and getting in touch with the respective actors. And thirdly: Silicon Valley is, as is well known, the birthplace and success factory of many start-ups. Around 40 percent of the global volume of venture capital funding comes from a two-mile radius around Sand Hill Road in Menlo Park. I would like to help founders to connect with this business environment. In addition to traditional venture capital, there are many other resources, such as accelerator programs, incubators and other types of mentorship. I see my task as being a central point of contact for young companies who want to find out what opportunities are waiting for them here.

WTSH: Tim Ole, what will your working day look like in the future?

Tim Ole Jöhnk: The early morning will be dedicated to the exchange with Germany. As you know, there is a nine hours' time difference. So there will certainly be at least two days a week when I will be available much earlier. In the morning I take care of the research, planning for delegation visits, general office tasks and other ongoing projects. Otherwise I'll be traveling a lot around the San Francisco Bay area. This area stretches for about 90 kilometers (San Francisco to San Jose). My task is to build the network, to have as many contacts in all companies and organizations as possible and of course to make Northern Germany visible in the system. So I will make myself available at a lot at events (conferences, hackathons, meet-ups, socials) and make contacts. I find it exciting to be able to

wear many different hats. I work with SMEs, government agencies, startups and universities. Each of these aspects has its own tasks, challenges and uniqueness.

Responsible for this press release: Ute Leinigen | WTSH Wirtschaftsförderung und Technologietransfer Schleswig Holstein GmbH | Lorentzendam 24, 24103 Kiel | Germany | Phone +49-431 66666 820 | Fax +49-431 66 66 6 769 | Email: leinigen@wtsh.de | www.wtsh.de