

Application as CEO, Managing Director, VP Sales / Marketing / Communications - with comprehensive expertise in AI, digitalization, and transformation

Dear Sir or Madam,

as an executive leader holding a Master of Arts degree, I bring over 20 years of management experience in the professional services sector—with a strong focus on higher education and media—including seven years as an Executive Board member. My core expertise lies in holistic corporate governance and strategy, brand development, and successfully steering complex transformation processes across turnaround and growth phases. My commercial responsibilities encompass full P&L ownership, financial controlling, and budget allocation for corporate entities generating up to €30 million in annual revenue with multi-million-euro operational budgets. I strategically align this executive experience with deep expertise in process digitization, digital sales architectures, B2B and B2C commercial sales, as well as brand management, marketing, and corporate communications.

My key areas of responsibility and proven track record—primarily across ProContent, FOM University of Applied Sciences, and the International School of Management (ISM)—include:

- Direct leadership of up to 9 direct reports and 30 employees, alongside managing networks of approximately 180 external subject-matter experts
- Sustainable annual personnel cost reduction of 15% achieved through process optimization, workflow digitization, and strategic AI integration
- Strategic IT infrastructure realignment and introduction of modern CRM and AI systems, driving an annual cost reduction of 40% (Transformation & Digitalization)
- Digital Sales & E-Commerce: Systematic build-out of digital B2B and B2C sales channels, delivering an immediate revenue increase of 23%
- C-Level Key Account Management, driving growth rates of up to 300% at ProContent
- International Sales Management: Strategic market penetration across Asia, Southern/Eastern Europe, and LATAM, operationally backed by overseeing more than 100 B2B and B2C trade fairs annually
- Post-Merger Integration (M&A) of an external education academy, establishment of B2B sales operations at ISM, and multi-campus expansion to six locations (scaling student numbers from 1,400 to 3,600 with growth rates up to 18% p.a.)
- Strategic Brand Management: End-to-end brand development and successful execution of complex rebrandings and global brand transitions (e.g., ProContent, ISM, EVO)

Leading strategic, enterprise-wide initiatives across all organizational levels and engaging in board governance have honed my negotiation and stakeholder management skills. Teams, colleagues, and external partners value my strong solution-oriented mindset and commitment to service excellence. My leadership style is characterized by clear, proactive communication as a true peer, paired with rigorous goal orientation. Furthermore, I am accustomed to making high-stakes, data-driven decisions and executing them decisively. In addition to my native German, I am fully fluent in professional business English.

Sincerely,

Daniel Lichtenstein

APPLICATION



AS CEO, MANAGING DIRECTOR VP SALES / MARKETING / COMMUNICATIONS

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

- Executive Leader with 20+ years of leadership experience, including 7 years as an Executive Board member
- P&L responsibility of up to €30M p.a., with a leadership span covering up to 9 direct reports, 30 employees, and 180 external freelancers
- Extensive expertise in corporate steering, brand development & management, as well as traditional and digital sales (B2B/B2C)
- Proven track record in building scalable business models and executing strategic realignments across turnaround and growth phases
- End-to-end process digitization and strategic integration of AI solutions to drive significant efficiency gains and process automation
- Deep experience within complex corporate structures, including subsidiaries, M&A transactions, and joint ventures
- Confident stakeholder management at the sensitive intersection of business, public policy, and C-level leadership

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Revenue Growth & Scaling:** +200% B2B revenue (+300% key accounts); multi-site expansion from 1 to 6 locations, scaling customer/student numbers from 1,400 to 3,600 (12% to 18% p.a.)
- **Cost & Efficiency:** 40% annual cost reduction through IT restructuring and AI integration (e.g., -75% reduction in content production cycles)
- **Digital Sales & B2B:** +30% digital B2C customer touchpoints, top-line growth driven by building CRM and e-commerce architectures, M&A of an external academy, and establishing B2B sales operations
- **Funding & Capital Acquisition:** Annual securing of six-figure third-party funding (EU, philanthropic foundations) for strategic financial backing

PERSONAL DATA

- Daniel Lichtenstein, née Rott
- Born March 14th 1972, in Essen
- Divorced, two children (17 und 14)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

09.25 bis 04.26 **Director of Educational Innovation & Development**

FOM Hochschule für Ökonomie und Management gGmbH, Essen

1,500 employees, €220m total revenue, private university of applied sciences

Responsibilities:

- P&L & Department Setup: Strategic personnel and budget development for a new business division (reporting directly to the shareholder).
- Business Development & Digital Sales: Lead responsibility for establishing digital business areas (distance learning), including the development and implementation of digital sales concepts.
- Go-to-Market & Lead Gen: Development of scalable lead generation processes for CAC optimization; development of AI-supported workflows to increase efficiency in the portfolio.
- AI Integration & Customer Journey: Deployment of strategic AI solutions in support and service to optimize the digital student/customer journey, including discussions with Google.

Achievements:

- Development and implementation of an AI agent in collaboration with the IT department head to automate content creation for learning materials; reduced the production cycle by 75%.

Reason for leaving: Mutual separation due to differing strategic views.

03.22 bis 08.25 **Freelance Lecturer**

FOM Hochschule für Ökonomie und Management gGmbH, Essen

in the departments of Online Marketing, E-Commerce, Sales Management, CRM.

02.19 bis 08.25 **Managing Director, Executive Board Member**

ProContent gGmbH, formerly ProContent gAG, Essen

11 employees, €1.5m total revenue, further education academy/adult education/media

Responsibilities:

- Disciplinary leadership of 9 employees (direct reports) and 180 freelancers/coaches.
- Total revenue responsibility, six-figure budget.
- Overall P&L responsibility, margin recovery, restructuring of the program portfolio.
- Strategic Corporate Management & P&L:
 - Overall commercial responsibility for financial management.
 - Annual budget planning.
 - Reporting to the supervisory board and shareholders.
 - Realization of a sustainably profitable corporate strategy.
- Holistic Brand Rebuilding: Implementation of a new brand strategy.
- Consulting & B2B Services: Strategic consulting for mid-sized publishing houses regarding digital transformation (focus on editorial processes, marketing, and digital sales).
- Establishment of a highly converting e-commerce platform for market expansion in B2B/B2C.
- Implementation of AI into business processes to sustainably reduce personnel effort and costs by 15% p.a.; end-to-end digitalization of the entire sales cycle.
- Securing financial stability through the annual acquisition of six-figure third-party funds and sponsorships (e.g., EU, State Chancellery of NRW, foundations).

Achievements:

- Brand & Revenue Growth: Successful brand rebuilding and massive expansion of the B2B segment (increased key accounts by 300%, segment revenue by 200%). New client acquisition included Düsseldorf Airport, Targo Bank, Audi, WDR, Brenntag, etc.
- Significant reduction of personnel and operational costs (cost advantage: 40% p.a.) through radical process optimization, the targeted use of AI solutions, and restructured IT.
- Digital Scaling: Increased digital B2C customer contacts by 30% through consistent change management, conceptual digitalization of the education portfolio, and the introduction of systematic CRM processes.

Reason for leaving: Poached by the management of FOM.

02.18 bis 01.19 **Head of Communications, Press Spokesman (interim)**

Universität Witten/Herdecke gGmbH, Witten

550 employees, €40m total revenue, private university with several faculties and institutes

- Strategic Repositioning: Development and implementation of a university-wide brand and communication strategy to sharpen the profile – details upon request.

05.11 bis 01.18 **Head of Marketing, Communications & Sales, Member of Management Board
International School of Management gGmbH, Dortmund**

150 employees, €32m total revenue, private university of applied sciences with further education academy

Responsibilities:

- Disciplinary leadership of 29 employees, including 7 direct reports.
- Annual revenue responsibility of €30m, seven-figure budget responsibility.
- Direct reporting line to the shareholder and executive management.
- Decentralized Multi-Site Management & Matrix Organization.
- Sales Expansion, M&A & B2B:
 - Scaling from 1 to 6 locations, market entry in new target regions for sales.
 - Post-merger integration of an external educational academy into the university structures.
 - Strategic rebuilding of B2B sales.
- Digital Sales & Marketing: End-to-end digitalization of all marketing as well as B2C and B2B sales processes (performance website, automated CRM & controlling, lead-nurturing mailings) and digitalization of the letter shop and educational offerings.
- Transformation & Scaling: Strategic guidance of the transformation from a single-campus organization to a multi-campus university.
- International GTM / "Global Brand & Language Transition":
 - Transition of communications to English.
 - Establishment of online marketing and controlling structures for global sales.
- Creation / expansion / exit of study programs and study models (full-time, dual, etc.).
- Conception and management of over 100 B2B/B2C sales events annually, supported by digitalized automation workflows.

Achievements:

- Revenue & Product Innovation: Continuous revenue increases through the introduction and conceptual digitalization of innovative study formats (full-time, part-time).
- Massive Scaling Growth: Increased student numbers from 1,400 to 3,600 (avg. +12% p.a.) through location expansion and data-driven digital sales structures.
- Global Market Expansion: Penetration of target markets in India, China, Eastern Europe, and Latin America, as well as the establishment of converting international sales networks.

Reason for leaving: Poached by a headhunter.

10.09 bis 04.11 **Head of Editorial TV & Online Video**

FUNKE-Mediengruppe (Media production company), Essen

6,000 employees, €1.2bn total revenue, publishing and media company

- Project management for the setup of a TV and online video production unit, as well as the conception and implementation of all editorial processes – details upon request.

Reason for leaving: Elimination of the editorial department during restructuring.

07.05 bis 09.09 **Head of Corporate Communications, Press Spokesman**

Energieversorgung Oberhausen AG, Oberhausen

470 employees, €220m total revenue, energy supply company incl. joint venture

- Executive board communication, responsibility for all internal and external communication, and lead support of the transformation – details upon request.

Reason for leaving: Poached by former Managing Director/Supervisor.

01.04 bis 06.05 **Editorial Traineeship, Degree: Editor**

Radio Essen Veranstaltergemeinschaft e.V., Essen

Moderation, news presentation, editorial content creation

FREELANCE ACTIVITIES DURING AND AFTER STUDIES

1993 bis 2003 **Freelance Journalist:** i.a. for FUNKE-Mediengruppe, Bundesliga.de (German Football Association), Radio Schleswig-Holstein, Antenne Bayern, Radio Essen, Radio NRW

EDUCATION

1993 bis 1999 **Master of Arts (Magister Artium):** Theater, Film and Television Studies; Linguistic and Communication Psychology; Modern History; Ruhr-Universität Bochum
Incl. semester abroad in Vancouver, Canada

1982 bis 1991 **University Entrance Qualification (Abitur):** Burggymnasium Essen

MILITARY SERVICE

1991 bis 1993 Contract soldier for two years with foreign deployment
Supreme Headquarter Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), Mons (Belgien)

SPECIALIZED SKILLS

Language Englisch, business fluent (written and spoken)

Further Educ. 2015: Systemic Consultant (University of Cologne), 4 months
(Excerpt) 2024: Use of AI in editorial offices/communications for content creation, 1 day
 2024: Various AI tools, EU AI Act, Ethics of AI use, 2 days

IT Excellent user skills in Microsoft Office, CRM (MS Dynamics, HubSpot, Pipedrive), CMS (Joomla, WordPress, Typo3), AI (ChatGPT, Gemini, Gamma, Notebook, Perplexity, ElevenLabs, Midjourney, Canva), video and audio editing systems, editorial systems.