

Accenture Life Sciences
Patient Inspired. Outcomes Driven.

LEADING IN LIFE SCIENCES

**Advancing future
female leaders**



INTERVIEWER: Tell us about your role at Accenture and within the life sciences industry.

PETRA JANTZER: My name is Petra Jantzer. I am a Managing Director at Accenture, working out of the Zurich office. My roles in Accenture are two-fold: One - I am leading one of our largest global life science accounts as the so-called Global Account Lead. And my second role is that I am leading our R&D life science work across Europe. I speak three languages: German, English, and French. English is particularly helpful since work, of course, is only in English. I've become an HBA luminary last year, which is an award for business women in the life science industry that have more than 20 years of business experience, but who are also investing in young colleagues, in young talent, to foster these young talents and help the next generation grow. I have been recently nominated the president for the Advance - Women in Swiss Business board, which is an organization that focuses on creating the pool of female leaders in the next generation in Switzerland, and for all the blue-chip companies that are located in Switzerland.

INTERVIEWER: What was your inspiration and drive for your career in life sciences?

PETRA: If I think about my own career, what got me into science was that my parents put me in a school with a focus on natural sciences and math, just because I was good at it, and didn't sort of take it away because I was a girl. So just raising the kids in an unconstrained way. And the interest in natural sciences and mathematics needs to be sparked during school already. After school it's almost too late. If girls don't develop the interest while in school, or if they are being told math or science is not for them because they are girls, that creates all the damage that we see in the workforce and in the industry later on.

INTERVIEWER: Tell us about the first career-defining opportunity you were given.

PETRA: In my career, I would point out two very senior sponsors in my previous company that really gave me the stage to work with the most senior executive team, the board, on topics that were in my area of expertise, R&D. They stepped out entirely, they trusted in me that I could do it, and they gave me the opportunity to work directly at these super-high and senior levels.

INTERVIEWER: What have been your biggest career milestones and accomplishments so far?

PETRA: The most important stations in my professional life was, I started off with a degree in molecular biology followed by a PhD in tumor immunology. I then decided after my PhD to spend a little bit more time to finish a patent, again also in the molecular biology area. After finishing the work for the patent, I decided to get a little bit closer to the industry and joined the consulting industry. During those almost 20 years now, I have primarily worked in the life science area.

INTERVIEWER: Tell us about the non-profit association you founded.

PETRA: Advance is an organization where companies come together around a shared cause. And the cause is to help women advance in their careers. Our member companies cover 500,000 employees in Switzerland, which is about 10% of the workforce. So it has been a fantastic success and an enormous growth, and with companies coming on board at that rate, it is a topic that's important: Important for Swiss business, but also important for Swiss society. We want to give advance even more visibility. We want to connect with policymakers and politicians to really have a discussion about why it is so difficult in Switzerland, from an infrastructure perspective and from a societal perspective, for women to advance. Even keeping women in the workforce is quite difficult.

Secondly, we want to continue working with the companies, but we do want to push up the connection of the companies to the Executive level and engage with CEOs directly. We want to do this because we think this topic deserves even more visibility and even more share of voice in the public debate.

Lastly, one of the goals that I really want to drive forward is to have very clear measures of impact. How do we know that we are making progress? We have very good indicators for progress, but we really want to be able to demonstrate to the business leadership that an investment in the topic truly has a positive effect on the business.

INTERVIEWER: What mentoring advice do you have for female leaders?

PETRA: Mentoring is nothing that is a sidetrack to normal work. Mentoring and sponsoring is something that's a very integral part of what I do every day. It starts with really understanding what the strengths of people are, and with helping them build on their strengths. I never mentor on one particular strength. I think the important thing is to understand what people are good at, and to help them succeed on that basis. The other important thing of mentoring though, is to not shy away from the tough conversations. If somebody is struggling with a topic, if somebody is not developing the right skills, or not investing enough to take the next step despite their potential, you need to have a conversation to help them overcome. And that sometimes feels really uncomfortable, because you have to give negative feedback. But that is very important for people to succeed, learn from their mistakes, and reflect and develop further.