



“It is a give and take – be part of it even if you have the feeling that you cannot contribute anything.”

Doris Schuppe

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1. How would you describe COWOXU Mallorca, S.L and your role in your company?

Doris: In September 2014, together with my husband Rainer we founded COWOXU Mallorca, S.L. in Spain. The owner-managed company is based in Santanyí, a small town in the southeast of Majorca. COWOXU Mallorca offers IT services and consultation as well as seminars and training courses on computer, software, Internet and social media topics. In May 2015 COWOXU Mallorca started a boutique coworking space under its own brand Rayaworx. As one of the founders I am responsible for Marketing and Communication; I am the Community Manager at Rayaworx.

2. How did you get the idea to create COWOXU Mallorca, S.L?

Doris: I was previously based in Munich / Germany and a part-time coworker of Munich's first coworking community combinat56. When we spend our holidays in Majorca, I was in need of a workable Internet connection for an urgent project. But the hotel connection was too unreliable to get the job done in a short time.

Well, I searched for a coworking space in Majorca and found some in Palma – nothing outside the periphery of the big city. So I thought why not bringing coworking to this area, starting a coworking community for locals and travellers alike? You know, in Munich, our motorbikes had to stay in the garage for a couple of months because of freezy winters. In Majorca we can ride our bikes much longer.

3. What is the most interesting part of your job?

Doris: The variety. Every day is different, because often the people who cowork with us change from week to week. I love meeting new people, and it fills me with joy when we can offer a pleasant place at the fiber optic connection and in our coworking community.

4. What or who inspired you to take the step into self-employment?

Doris: My former boss at CompuServe. She worked all her life as an employee and lots of years in management positions. When she started to work self-employed, I had the opportunity to experience this very closely. We talked a lot about the changes and uncertainties, but above all about the many freedoms that self-employment entails. And so I was prepared when the opportunity for professional autonomy arose.

5. Has it always been your dream to establish your own business? If not, what was your original plan for your work-related future?

Doris: I always went where Internet and online business began to play an important role. That was my career navigator. I studied natural sciences, and the possible professions were very blurred at that time. Therefore I was more or less open to all variants, be it self-employment or employment.

6. What are your personal strengths and how did they help you on your professional journey?

Doris: I can put myself in other people's shoes and help them choosing from the colourful bouquet of digital communication tools what supports their goals best. The discovery of new developments in the digital world has always gone hand in hand with the passing on of this knowledge to people around me. So many people got what I can do and some offered me corresponding options in the course of my career.

7. What kind of advantages do you see in self-employment?

Doris: Since I was employed for a long time, I can say it very precisely: The freedom to divide my working day as I need it. On the one hand I am not a morning person, and on the other hand it is enormously conducive to my productivity to take breaks. This is (still) difficult to reconcile with many working time requirements in companies. In the meantime I have been living in Spain for almost five years. Here it is normal to have an extended siesta during the day because of the heat in summer – I love it. By the way, if you have a family, you will have the wonderful side effect of having lunch together.

8. Are there any mistakes you made others could learn from if they want to create their own business too?

Doris: I learned from starting my first business together with someone who has completely different expectations and values for a team. At that time I was little prepared for the new situation of self-employment. I felt enormously insecure and uncomfortable, therefore I entered into a close cooperation, although my feeling was that it didn't fit. Self-employment taught me a lot to pay attention to small signals. Because in the end it is up to me, and only up to me, to free myself from unfavourable situations. My recommendation is to tackle the independence alone or to try out the team interaction thoroughly before it gets serious. Today I know that I can ask for and find supportive people to help me grow into new challenges – especially since I've been working in coworking communities. This takes away the fears of a solo foundation.

9. What is the challenge of founding as a couple?

Doris: Coming back to my recommendation regarding founding as a team: You have already gained a lot of experience how you work as a team and therefore know where new challenges may await you. As a couple, it is important to be able to switch off from professional tasks and requirements. In any case, it is very practical to be able to spontaneously discuss a solution to a professional problem. And I think it's very healthy that we talk to each other or to other people about many other topics in our private time and not just about business.

10. Does it make any difference that you are an entrepreneur in Mallorca in comparison to Germany?

Doris: Well, here I am a foreigner, and at least at the beginning I could not fall back on any longtime acquaintances who could help us with their knowledge. On many topics we had to rebuild our network so that we could get valid statements. A big help in Spain is the so-called 'Gestoria', which takes over many official business requirements. Well invested money if it is a well functioning Gestoria. Recommendations are very important when choosing the right service provider. On Mallorca, tourism and seasonal business play an important role - especially outside Palma. Our business environment is changing more frequently than in Munich, where we used to live. Cooperation partners also give up their activities from one year to the next without prior notice. Here it is much more important to be flexible.

11. What are your plans for COWOXU Mallorca, S.L in the future?

Doris: We went to Mallorca with three missions. Mission one: We create a place where it is nice to work and relax, so that also solopreneurs can have a holiday. For a tourism that is more sustainable, as travellers immerse themselves in the foreign environment and culture over a longer period of time. Mission almost completed.

Mission two: We show that rural areas have a high quality of life and can be a wonderful place to live for digital professions with today's technologies. Mission still in progress.

Mission three: We bring new digital career strategies into the minds of parents, teachers and young people. Mission in progress. You see, we still have some work to do.

12. Is there any advice you would like to give entrepreneurs-to-be?

Doris: Do it! Find new connections in advance, like in a coworking community in your area. Participate in their events. Join associations like e.g. Digital Media Women, webgrrls or –if you are an expat– InterNations and attend their networking events. And I'm not saying go there and collect business cards, but be there to establish real connections to real people. I myself profited and profit from the mentioned federations. It is a give and take – be part of it even if you have the feeling that you cannot contribute anything. You can: With fresh ideas, unbiased opinions, or knowledge about new digital tools.

Interview: Maike Pastunink

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