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BLOGPOST Locating in Germany and “Made in Germany”



How do the eyes of the world see Germany as a (business) location? Germany Trade & Invest ([GTAI](#)) is Germany's economic development agency, seeking to promote Germany as a business location worldwide. [Andreas Bilfinger](#), Head of Corporate Communications, talks to us about Germany's image, “Made in Germany” and the COVID pandemic.

news aktuell: To be brief, GTAI is marketing Germany as a place for businesses to locate. In what areas is GTAI active as an organisation and what projects and missions are you pursuing?

Bilfinger: We are promoting Germany around the world as a business and investment location. Our objective behind marketing Germany as a location and recruiting investors is clearly to convince foreign companies to settle here and create jobs in the country. In addition to marketing Germany as a location and recruiting investors, we are standing behind the export industry, promoting it with free information about markets around the world - hence our name Germany Trade & Invest (GTAI). Ultimately, the overriding mission is to strengthen Germany as a business location and to create and secure jobs.

news aktuell: How is Germany currently seen in the world as a business location?

Bilfinger: As before, quite positively. The quality Made in Germany promises is still highly regarded. The seal Made in Germany is worth a great deal. This goes hand in hand with reliability, punctuality and keeping promises. We live under a constitutional government with an administration that functions well and is not corrupt. What we Germans take for granted and sometimes find rather boring is extremely critical for foreign investors. They find it attractive and something not normally seen in the rest of the world. Besides, Germany is Europe's largest market, located right in the middle of the continent. We place a high value on the interaction between business and science and Germany is also among the world's top science locations.

Of course, there are a lot of skilled workers here, and I can go on and on. With regard to the COVID balance sheet (for lack of a better term), other countries perceive Germany in a much more positive light than its own citizens do. The rest of the world naturally took notice of how the federal government handled the pandemic, how it propped up the economy and has weathered the crisis quite well. Biontech's success was quite good for Germany's image, too, even though the general public outside Germany tend to think of Pfizer having actually “invented” the vaccine. For us, as business promoters, it is crucial for the pharmaceutical industry worldwide to notice this enormous success associated with Made in Germany. Biontech, along with other companies, have demonstrated Germany's sustained outstanding performance in the sector.

news aktuell: An important keyword here is “location marketing”, that is, promoting Germany as a location for doing business. How do you go about this specifically? What communication tools are you using to anchor a positive image of Germany's business environment abroad?

Bilfinger: With the “[Germany Works](#)” campaign, we have created an umbrella brand under which we ourselves, but also, for example, economic promoters for the federal states, chambers of commerce abroad or embassies abroad can and do advertise for Germany. We are also running advertising campaigns in certain target countries under this brand and holding webinars together with chambers of commerce abroad. Hopefully we will soon be able to hold face-to-face branding events again. The idea behind it all is relatively simple: Germany is a fantastic brand, so we should take advantage of it.

news aktuell: How specifically are you tailoring the tools, campaigns and activities to the national market or group you are targeting?

Bilfinger: Of course, we are examining closely where we can best reach people and how we need to address them. What sectors can potentially bring in the most investors, that is, which of them does the German market the fit best? Naturally, the know-how from our investor recruitment experts here in Germany - and our international network - provides us with a lot of assistance in this regard.

news aktuell: What are your greatest communication challenges at the moment? How have you experienced the last eighteen months of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Bilfinger: Of course, the pandemic has dominated all the headlines in the last several months. Hardly anything else was discussed. The travel restrictions were certainly an enormous problem. Face-to-face conversations and visiting potential sites were and are a key part of the work done by our colleagues in investor recruitment. Events outside Germany, talks and visits to trade fairs are incredibly important. Without the ability to travel, none of this can take place. This was and is true for GTAI and for potential investors as well. Besides, there was the extremely difficult macroeconomic situation that first had to be overcome and still has to be in some cases. So much for the negative aspects and effects.

What is positive is how "digital communication" has ultimately worked and is continuing to work. Videoconferencing, webinars, digital trade shows and hybrid events are now the global standard. Of course, this did not happen from the outset, when it was clear that Germany was not exactly a pioneer in digitalisation. Ultimately, however, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a surge in digitalisation internationally - with associated challenges, but most of all it has brought new opportunities. Everyone is certainly looking forward to face-to-face events again - the term was hardly known to me before COVID-19 struck - and to having normal conversations. Nonetheless, video conferences and similar tools are going to remain a part of our lives where they make sense. There is one point I forgot to mention. COVID-19 has definitely shown us at GTAI that working can be much more flexible than was previously thought. Offices will continue to exist, of course, but their role and size will certainly change. In future, flexible times at different locations will certainly be the norm.

news aktuell: How do you measure the success of your PR and marketing efforts?

Bilfinger: We have several indicators. They range from mentions on the Internet and page visits, to the number of people participating in webinars. Ultimately, measuring success is certainly one of the incredibly huge challenges in marketing and communications.

news aktuell: In your view, has the demand for reliable information increased in recent years?

Bilfinger: I think that demand has increased. That is actually good news. Yet I get the impression that even professionals are finding it difficult to identify reliable information as such, given the multitude of communications channels and the immense breadth of information available. GTAI has a robustness due to its credibility and the high quality of its products - i.e. information. Digitalisation is enabling us as an organisation to reach out to an incredible number of people. Unfortunately, this is true for other companies and people, too. So the big challenge is to be perceived as reliable, and neither boring nor dull. Or even to be noticed at all. In the end, the aim is to sell information, i.e. to prepare it in the most interesting way possible, to make it consumable and at the same time to appear reliable and credible. This is not so simple.

Interviewed by: [Martin Marsmann](#)

This article was originally posted in our blog:

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