
Making values count



INTERVIEW

_ROLAND MATT

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“Culture is not something that can be decreed from on high.”

Roland Matt has been the LLB Group’s CEO since 2012. He learnt the banker’s trade from the ground up and recalls the “fantastic time” he had as a novice handling cash in the bank’s “engine room”. He is convinced that the entire structure of a company stands and falls with its culture, which is why the modern bedrock of this venerable institution is its system of corporate values.

Mr Matt, the LLB Group currently has more than CHF 70 billion of assets under management and enjoys exceptional ratings that put it into the premier league of European financial institutions. How did you work your way up to the top?

I remember my first day on the job very clearly. I started in the currency-counting vault. My first task as an apprentice was to flatten banknotes by hand – the cash would come in dog-eared and had to be straightened out so the notes could be fed back into the ATMs. There has been only one direction of travel throughout my entire career: progressing from the back office to the client-facing front office. I have never had any concrete career goals though. My top priority has simply always been to give my absolute best to the task at hand.

So you have gone from sorting banknotes in the basement to serving as CEO of the oldest banking institution in Liechtenstein?

A person who mentored me for years once told me: “Roland, you first have to grasp the fundamentals before you can be let loose on customers.” He was right – I had to understand what was going on behind the scenes, how the nuts and bolts of banking worked. Witnessing cash sorting first-hand was an extremely educational experience for me back then.

You always give 100% yourself. How do you manage to instil this mindset in 1,250 colleagues?

Personally, I think values are crucial. They reflect the soul of a company. We try to embed our values deeply in our

organisation and to live by them. Doing this establishes a clear vision and strategy that allows the staff to see the big picture and feel a part of it.

I think it’s one of LLB’s strong points that we always focus on our common objectives and leave our personal interests at the door. Standing by your word creates trust and is part of the culture.

What specific values are you talking about?

Integrity, respect, excellence and visionary spirit. Our vision is: “We set standards for banking with values”. Never losing sight of these values and working on them constantly is an essential element of day-to-day leadership and of the firm as a whole.

Hand on heart, do you actually manage it?

Culture is not something that can be decreed from on high. It has to be worked on over time. I think transparency and a culture of dialogue are vital strengths. These are two qualities we like about Ergon, too, by the way. We work very hard on our mindset – the invisible part of the iceberg, as it were. It’s up to every individual to decide for themselves what their contribution to the bank’s success will be.

What challenges do you see here?

The most difficult decisions are always those that involve people. Selecting the right candidates for a committee or for managing a team, for instance. Making such choices often requires considerable courage.

“I don’t think being a manager, per se, stacks up to much.”

What milestones can you look back on?

For me, the absolute highlight was putting my executive team together in 2012, collectively drawing up the strategy and then implementing it consistently and rigorously, in extremely challenging times. That experience forged an excellent team spirit and I would not have wanted to miss out on it, even if not everything turned out as we expected.

Tradition and innovation – how do you reconcile these two polarities?

By being open to new things every day of your life, taking on challenges and not resting on your laurels. I am convinced this is the way to go. These days, you always have to be looking to the future and bringing new ideas to the table. A manager will only come out on top if they are able to get people behind them, pulling together on shared projects and goals.

Everyone is supposed to be replaceable nowadays, and yet LLB and Ergon’s partnership has lasted 20 years.

The two firms are very similar in terms of their

culture and approach. The collaboration with Ergon is vitally important to us. Together, we have been driving the bank’s digital transformation forward.

How do you achieve excellent results as a manager?

I don’t think being a manager, per se, stacks up to much. What really matters is whether you can motivate people to be loyal and give their all in pursuit of a common goal. The key is to get your team excited about the firm’s vision and targets. Real power is the ability to generate momentum and pull others along with you.

What plans do you have for the future?

We will continue consistently implementing our five-year “StepUp 2020” strategy and will be drawing up our new strategy this year in which we lay the groundwork for our future plans. I am highly motivated and look forward to shaping the LLB Group’s future. />

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