

Götz Werner

Born on the 5th February 1944 in Heidelberg, Germany, Götz Werner has led, and continues to lead a full life. For 35 years he was head of the company DM, a large drugstore chain. Since 2003 he has been the head of the Institute for Entrepreneurship at the university of Karlsruhe, in south west Germany. In addition he is founder of the initiative “*Unternimm die Zukunft*” – meaning “take on the future” – a project to raise awareness about and to make feasible, the introduction of the basic income, also known as the citizens’ income.

His business career began with taking over the family drugstore business, but it soon went bankrupt. After working for various other drugstore companies in Karlsruhe, he set up “DM” – short for “Drogerie Markt” – simply meaning “drugstore”. The chain became international when his former rowing partner opened up an Austrian branch, and today the company employs over 30 000 people in Germany and has more than 100 outlets. The extraordinary success of the firm has made Götz Werner one of the top 100 richest men in Germany, with a fortune of around £1 billion. He is in his second marriage and has seven children.

Werner ran DM in an unusual and progressive way, following the principle of “*Dialogische Führung*” - “leadership through dialogue”. With a strong interest in anthroposophy, he stresses the need for cooperation with his employees, and sees them as ‘assets’ rather than ‘costs’. He opposes bonuses on the grounds that they foster mistrust in companies, but he did reward employees whose departments had met or exceeded their targets with extra payment.

Ever the philanthropist, Werner supports various cultural and social projects including the establishment of centres and shelters for street children in Alexandria, free music lessons for children. Most importantly, with the establishment of the movement “*Unternimm die Zukunft*” and his openly advocating the basic income in Germany, Götz Werner is striving for a fairer society in which all citizens are given an income of around £1000 per month by the state, enabling the population to be freer in their choices and more creative in their pursuits. He believes people should only do work which is useful to society, for which they are qualified and which gives them a sense of self fulfilment. Currently this is impossible for millions of people because they depend on their jobs for their income. It is precisely this relationship between work and pay that Götz Werner seeks to revolutionise.

This impressive list of engagements has made Werner a popular figure. He attracts large audiences wherever he gives talks, and he has become known for his progressive thinking and success in business.