

Strong performance after Q2: Herbert Diess (Volkswagen) retains top spot in CEO Impact Ranking

- For the second time, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* is publishing the new CEO Impact Ranking compiled by UNICEPTA. Herbert Diess once again takes the top spot, receiving a great deal of praise for his e-mobility strategy even from competitors.
- Ola Källenius (Mercedes-Benz, 2nd place) scores with his luxury-oriented strategy, while Christian Sewing (Deutsche Bank, 3rd place) is concerned about a possible recession
- The war in Ukraine dominates the agenda at BASF and Siemens

Herbert Diess, CEO at Volkswagen, has won the new CEO Impact Ranking for the DAX40, published in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, in the second quarter of 2022 again. The evaluation of the top executives' media impact is based on a UNICEPTA analysis. The media & marketing intelligence company's analysts have recently developed a new, reach-based index score, composed of the weighting factors reception probability, focus, and tonality.

Diess, who is considered one of the most high-profile and incisive CEOs in Germany's leading index, was able to further boost his index score, not least thanks to new record profits. "Volkswagen sees booming profits," was how *Bild* described it. "We are earning more than ever, despite the semi-conductor shortage and supply chain disruptions," the VW CEO is quoted as saying in Germany's most widely circulated paper. His consistent implementation of the e-mobility strategy has even earned him the respect of competitors, with Tesla CEO Elon Musk tweeting that "Diess deserves a lot of credit for moving VW rapidly towards electrification. They're lucky to have him." But this success is also putting pressure on the company. The VW supervisory board expects Diess to quickly put into practice his promise to bring the group on a par with Tesla and Google. According to *Der Spiegel*, the goal is to achieve no less than turn VW "into the largest European software group behind SAP." The decision to enter Formula 1 from 2026 also garnered international attention.

Ola Källenius wants to turn Mercedes-Benz into a luxury manufacturer

At the second quarter of 2022, there are some changes below the top spot: Ola Källenius climbs to second spot. The Mercedes-Benz CEO also gets top marks for his consistent strategy. The Stuttgart-based car company is to become a luxury manufacturer again, as reported by *Die Welt*. "Unlike his predecessors, Källenius is focussed on issues pertaining to market value," analyses *The Wall Street Journal* in an article on the luxury strategy of Mercedes. The company's results back its orientation. While car sales were down 10% in Q1, "high-margin top-of-the-line models such as the luxury-limousine S-Class sold well," wrote *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. The result was a record EUR 5.35 billion in capital returned to shareholders, "more than ever before in the history of the Swabian carmaker," wrote *Focus*.

Deutsche Bank CEO Christian Sewing takes third place. In his function as president of the Association of German Banks, he commented on the current crisis to *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. "In the long run, we all benefit from the balanced budget requirement. But you also have to keep an eye on the respective situation, and then it can make sense to temporarily act a little more flexibly," the paper quoted him as saying. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* also sought his expertise concerning the risk of a recession in Germany. The headline

reads: "Sewing is concerned". The banking executive may also be concerned about a possible class action lawsuit prepared by shareholders, which a US court recently admitted. Asked about the fact that Deutsche Bank took on the now-deceased sex offender and hedge fund manager Jeffrey Epstein as a client, Sewing admits in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* that "it should never have come to that."

Ukraine war dominates agenda at BASF and Siemens

BASF CEO Martin Brudermüller is a newcomer to the Top 10, claiming fourth place after gaining visibility in the context of the looming gas crisis. He does not consider a gas embargo to be the right means of ending the war in Ukraine, with *Süddeutsche Zeitung* writing that "he believes high-tech sanctions to be more effective." He is more specific in conversation with The Wall Street Journal, telling the paper that "there is no way of replacing Russian natural gas in the short term." Siemens CEO Roland Busch takes fifth place. The German DAX giant's exit from its Russian business after 170 years in the country prompted broad international media coverage. The company's digitalisation efforts and a high-profile deal with Egypt to build a high-speed railway system are also feathers in Busch's cap.

The remainder of the Top 10 consists of Oliver Zipse (BMW, 6th place), Markus Krebber (RWE, 7th place), Belén Garijo (Merck, 8th place), Christian Klein (SAP, 9th place), and Werner Baumann (Bayer, 10th place).

For the new CEO ranking, UNICEPTA evaluated around 15,200 articles from German and international print and online sources as well as Twitter, published from April to June 2022. The ranking is based on the results of the UNICEPTA "DAX-Benchmark", which the media & marketing provider uses to keep continuous track of the media presence of all DAX-listed companies and their CEOs, as well as the reception probability, focus, and tonality of media coverage.

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