
Why the CFO of the **Calida Group** is investing in meeting culture for the long run



About the Calida Group

The Calida Group is a SIX-listed, international textile company from Switzerland. Their focus is on luxury lingerie as well as daywear and sleepwear, which is sold in around 70 countries globally. The rapid expansion of e-commerce (around 30% of total sales) has enabled Calida Group to gain market share during the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. The company employs around 2,800 people.

We would like to thank Sacha Gerber, CFO of Calida Group, for the open, honest, and insightful interview.

If you would like to learn more about the Calida Group, please visit [their website](#).



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Challenge:

In the VUCA environment, CFOs must ensure that their organisations can quickly redeploy resources to meet strategic objectives.

Result:

Thanks to Calida Group's long-term investment in meeting culture, their management team has been able to significantly speed up its decision-making processes.

CFOs today must deliver more than just legally compliant financial reporting. In today's VUCA world, they must use foresight to help their organisations achieve their strategic goals - in the current quarter, but also five years from now. Sacha Gerber, CFO of the SIX-listed Calida Group, a successful player in the international textiles market with 2,800 employees, exemplifies the new requirements of this role. He sees himself as a sparring partner and coach for Calida Group's management team.

In his opinion, the business environment is driven by changing customer needs - for example, in the areas of e-commerce and sustainability - which have been accelerated further during the COVID-19 pandemic. "In this environment, we need to be agile for the long term. That means we have to make decisions quickly and redeploy resources quickly," Mr Gerber said.

During the conversation, he repeatedly points out the strategic and financial added-value of decisions that are made swiftly, but at the same time are profound. He also immediately recognises the link with meeting management: "Meetings play a central strategic role in decision-making." We asked Mr Gerber why his company has made a long-term investment in meeting culture and how it pays off.

Challenging the status quo

During his professional career, the 46-year-old CFO has become acquainted with a range of different corporate cultures. "In many companies, meetings are inefficient time wasters," he says bluntly. The resultant list of shortcomings is long: information is not shared in advance, participants do not prepare, meetings go round in circles, unequal levels of knowledge lead to dissatisfaction, and decisions aren't made. An organisation's meeting culture depends largely on company culture and on leadership, says Gerber. And this is where he sees his responsibility.

Last year, the Calida Group leadership team decided to make a sustained investment in meeting culture. In particular, preparation for formal meetings was perceived as too cumbersome, which prevented efficient decision-making: too many emails had to be sent around, and frequent misunderstandings arose when dealing with different versions of documents. However, promoting the digital mindset also played a central role.

As an increasingly digital company, the Calida Group has the ambition not only to drive digitisation towards the end customer, but also to promote digital

processes internally and to accelerate the corresponding cultural change. This includes creating the right conditions for productive meetings. “This creates added value in the long term,” says Gerber. In support of this ambition, the Calida Group management team decided to implement Sherpany’s meeting management software. According to Gerber, the confidentiality, efficiency, good “look and feel”, and mobile capability made the difference in favour of Sherpany.

Integrate meeting management into optimised business processes

As an advocate of lean management, Mr Gerber places great value on optimised business processes. When it comes to decision-making, he says, the bottleneck is often the same: “Meeting preparation is the be-all and end-all; starting from scratch in a meeting creates wasted time.”

Calida Group's management meeting agenda is created and published in Sherpany with sufficient lead time - along with the associated documents and reports. Participants prepare individually with personal notes and read the minutes of past meetings. Through Sherpany's comment function, they are able to exchange information about the upcoming tasks ahead of the meeting. The integrated task list ensures that decisions made are also implemented consistently.

“The constant exchange with other members during meeting preparation is very important as it ensures we already know the issues. This alignment creates space for in-depth discussions during the meeting itself,” says the Calida Group CFO.

Speed up the decision making process

Thanks to centralised access to all information, the management of the Calida Group can make faster decisions today. The real currency of a meeting is profound decisions.

Individual perceptions of efficiency also play a role in determining the benefits of Sherpany, as executives are often frustrated by time-consuming meetings. "Time is money. When we meet, we want it to be efficient," Gerber says. But what really matters to him as CFO is adding value. How is this added value created - in addition to accelerating decision-making? Mr Gerber emphasises cultural change above all else. Because attitudes and expectations have to change, otherwise digitalisation won't achieve much at all.

Sherpany succeeds in combining human factors with an evidence-based process, and modern technology. "This is how you become stronger as an organisation in this fast-paced, digital market," Gerber concludes.

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