

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION



Image: Karin Fiedler for GEZE GmbH

Brigitte Vöster-Alber has been the CEO of GEZE GmbH since 1968.

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Brigitte Vöster-Alber has been at the helm of GEZE for 50 years

Courage and foresight secure the company's success

On 1 July 2018, Brigitte Vöster-Alber, the Chief Executive Officer of GEZE GmbH, celebrates her 50th anniversary with the company. Since 1968, she has been at the helm of the company which employs around 3,000 people worldwide and is one of the leading suppliers of door, window and safety technology, automatic door systems and building automation. She has always remained focused on the future, and has never shied away from making tough yet necessary decisions for the company that have successfully borne fruit.

50 years of leadership = 50 years of progress

Brigitte Vöster-Alber took over at GEZE when she was just 24-years-old, following the death of her grandfather, Reinhold Vöster, in 1968. Since then, she has boosted and continuously expanded the corporate strategy, the product portfolio and international business. Today, the company increases its growth rates with production sites in China, Spain and Serbia, 31 subsidiaries, and numerous sales representatives. At the same time, the research and development sector has also expanded under her aegis. In 2017, GEZE invested 13 million euro in the construction of a new state-of-the-art development centre at the Leonberg

headquarters. A total of 28.8 million euro has been invested here over the past few years, a clear commitment by the businesswoman to both the site and to the “Made in Germany” quality mark. The company also continues to invest in foreign subsidiaries, and strives for the highest possible quality standards. GEZE is therefore a global player, but remains a company which is steeped in tradition, 100% family-owned, and therefore able to grow rapidly on its own.

Courage pays off

Over the past half a century, Brigitte Vöster-Alber has hardly shied away from making difficult – and sometimes unpopular – decisions. A major turning point was the separation from the much-loved – but no longer profitable – ski division in the 1980s. This created new capacity with which to focus on modern door and window solutions, and to further expand the export division. Openness, and the courage to adopt new approaches, are also reflected in the latest developments. Under Brigitte Vöster-Alber's leadership, the company is now forging ahead with intelligent building networking, taking into account current trends such as the Internet of Things. Lastly, and importantly, the company survived the 2008 financial and economic crisis unscathed with Mrs Vöster-Alber in charge. In 2009, GEZE invested 29.6 million euro in expansion activities. “You can achieve great potential by remaining active even in times of trouble,” says the GEZE CEO.

“Businesswomen are still not visible enough”

When Brigitte Vöster-Alber was appointed CEO of GEZE, there were hardly any women in positions of leadership. “I knew what it meant to be made the sole chairperson of a family business following the untimely death of my father,” says Vöster-Alber. “I had to find my way and assert myself in a man’s world.” Businesswomen were seen as anomalies, but there are certainly more of them around today. However, according to Brigitte Vöster-Alber, there are still too few women in the boardroom. Traditional values and clichés still come into play, for example balancing family with a career. She has always promoted this at GEZE. At 29%, the current proportion of women in managerial positions at GEZE is exceptionally high, and has increased by around half in recent years. There are also a lot of women among the company's young talent, and 23% of the company's trainees and students are female.

Great honours – great commitment

For Brigitte Vöster-Alber, entrepreneurship has always been coupled with social commitment. She inherited this attitude from her grandfather, building on it to ultimately be awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in 2009. In 2013 – the year of the 150th anniversary of the company – she was granted honorary citizenship of the town of Leonberg.

An accolade which had also been previously awarded to her grandfather, Reinhold Vöster. In 2016, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation honoured Brigitte Vöster-Alber with the 'Preis Soziale Marktwirtschaft 2016' (Social Market Economy Prize). "She is the driving force behind the goals of the family business, and the guardian of its values. She is also a fine example for a broad entrepreneurial vision, the capacity for innovation, and takes a high level of responsibility for the company's employees, the wider society, and the environment," said the jury in its statement. In addition, she received the Business Medal of the state of Baden-Württemberg in 2016. It is awarded to people and companies who have rendered outstanding services to business in Baden-Württemberg.

Regarding society, children's aid projects such as the Stuttgart-based 'Olgäle-Stiftung für das kranke Kind e.V.' (Olgäle Foundation for Sick Children) and the child welfare organisation 'Plan International' are close to the mother-of-four's heart. Sponsored activities relating to art, culture and sport are also of great importance. As an animal lover, Brigitte Vöster-Alber is particularly enthusiastic about horse-riding and would actually rather have studied veterinary medicine. As she celebrates her anniversary, spending time with her horses and dogs is an important escape from her life in business. Just like her grandfather used to do with her father, she leads the company in constructive collaboration with three of her four children (one of her daughters chose to become a doctor).

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About GEZE

The GEZE brand stands for innovation and for top quality products, processes and services. GEZE is one of the leaders in the global market and it is a reliable partner worldwide for door, window and safety technology products and systems. No matter what the requirements of a building are – GEZE implements optimum solutions and combines functionality and security with comfort and design. GEZE door closers open up numerous technical and visual possibilities. Every day, millions of people go through doors equipped with the overhead door closers from the TS 5000 series and enjoy the comfort of automatic door systems, e.g. the Slimdrive range. Barrier free door and window systems provide greater comfort, not only for people with restricted mobility. The glass systems and fitting solutions for the attractively designed sliding systems are the ultimate in design aesthetics. GEZE also offers a wide product range in the field of window and ventilation technology. Complete "intelligent" smoke and heat extraction solutions (RWA) and a comprehensive selection of door systems for RWA air supply solutions are also available for preventive fire protection. GEZE's safety technology includes escape and rescue route solutions, lock technology, and access control systems. The GEZE building management system provides an overview of a building's entire technical facilities. With its systems expertise, GEZE creates coordinated system solutions which combine individual functional and safety requirements in one intelligent system. GEZE product solutions have received numerous awards and can be found in renowned structures all over the world. The company has a global presence with 31 subsidiaries, 27 of which are outside Germany, a flexible and highly efficient sales and service network, and more than 3,000 employees. In the 2016/2017 fiscal year, GEZE achieved a turnover of over 406 million euros.

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