



CEIBS Zurich Campus Embraces CSR

■ By Lukas Tonetto

Fifteen year-old Elena Gerber* is not the type of person you would expect to find on the campus of a business school. She's in secondary school and then it's off to vocational training – still years away from being old enough to join the top business

executives typically found on the CEIBS Zurich Campus, the Zurich Institute of Business Education. But Elena is planning ahead.

To prepare herself for the real life professional world of adults, she took

the opportunity to meet specialists from InnoPark, a coaching company for highly qualified jobseekers. This was during the Zurich Institute of Business Education's fourth in a series of biennial workshops that bring together youngsters – like Elena – and experienced professionals for a frank discussion on the future world of work. The workshop Elena attended, held on March 27, 2018 was moderated by Coach Anja Herde and participants sought answers to questions including: What can we learn from each other? What can we expect from the working world of tomorrow? How can three generations work together in the future? These gatherings are part of the CEIBS Zurich Campus' broader corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts.

In addition to these cross-generational workshops, the Zurich Institute of Business Education's strong commitment to CSR is also reflected in its PRME accreditation (Principles for Responsible Management Education). The PRMEs seek to establish a process of continuous improvement among institutions of management education to develop a new generation of business leaders capable of managing the complex challenges faced by business and society in the twenty-first century. The Zurich Institute of Business Education-initiated CEIBS Corporate Round Table (CCRT), where selected Swiss and international companies meet and define their responsibilities to the wider society, fits in well with

these objectives. The CCRT's focus is on the role that executives should play; and discussions take place against the backdrop that corporate citizenship has become a prerequisite for company success.

"Sustainability, a central aspect of CSR, also concerns risk management. If you want to run your business safely, look ahead," says CEO of Zurich Institute of Business Education Dr Philipp Boksberger. "Numerous investors expect socially responsible behaviour from companies today, and many markets are already regulated. Thus, it makes sense to be proactive."

For companies and individuals who share this view, CEIBS Zurich Campus offers global elective programmes (part of the CEIBS Global Executive MBA) that have a clear focus on these issues. For example, in the global elective module on Sustainability, lecturer Margaret Flaherty focuses on how companies address key sustainability challenges while creating new opportunities for suppliers. The world's problems – including scarcity of resources as the global population grows, and social gaps – make it imperative to rethink the way in which businesses are run.

Another study module that is entirely committed to the ideals of CSR – though its name gives little indication of this – is "Governance, Integrity & Compliance". Lecturer Thomas Scheiwiller, who teaches Global EMBA course participants from China,

Africa and Europe in this module, emphasises that compliance today goes well beyond the legal aspects. It includes demands from the market, for suppliers to treat employees well, and demands to comply with environmental standards that can even exceed local legal requirements. "Compliance has to do with corporate social responsibility in all these areas, and vice versa," he notes. "Today, there are three distinct ways of motivating companies to take appropriate steps: through laws (must), through the market (should) or voluntarily (could)."

Gone are the days, explains Scheiwiller, when only the consumer goods industry or food companies knew the importance of CSR. Today, even the financial sector has shown a high level of interest in being socially responsible. "Without entrepreneurial behaviour that is shaped by CSR, financial service providers will no longer be able to run their business successfully. Thus, through our focus on new industries, we also anticipate the business risks of the future in our teaching here on the CEIBS Zurich Campus," Boksberger explains.

"CSR is more than a trend. It is a mind-set that will not vanish. Today, the drivers of CSR are the millennials – and Generation Y, like 15-year-old Elena. They cannot imagine a world in which companies do not assume their social responsibility," he adds.

**Name changed to protect privacy.*