

Season I "Interview with Sports Executives": Anna Hellman, Director of ThinkSport

These are series of short three-question interviews with experts in the sports industry conducted by [Gautier Vasseur](#), Partner at Pedersen & Partners, to gain insights into strategic governance and human capital issues of sports organisations.

Anna Hellman has been working in international sports for twenty years. After having managed SportAccord Convention, she is now Director of ThinkSport, a network based in Lausanne which connects sports-related expertise from different sectors, including sports organisations, academia, businesses, and public authorities.



ThinkSport aims to develop the eco-system in Lausanne dedicated to the sports industry - what is the main motivation behind this initiative?

There is a unique concentration of different organisations and individuals linked to sport around Lausanne. Our mission is to bring these different people and sectors together in order to facilitate progress in sport – in Switzerland but also at international level. The challenge is that sport is not formally categorised as an industry sector; hence many sports organisations tend to operate in isolation and can easily miss opportunities for collaboration and development. We want to change this in a constructive way.

The sports sector is rapidly transforming into a highly capitalised business with a global reach; how does that impact sports organisations and their governance?

The impact is significant. Traditional sporting bodies need to adapt their governance and risk management strategies at a pace that matches these developments. Their leadership faces increased competition from the private sector as well as high scrutiny from public authorities, the media and the public. The time is opportune to look for external expertise and new partnerships in order to tackle these challenges and remain relevant.

Diversity has become a cornerstone of good governance and risk management - a common practice for traditional business corporations. Do you see this trend happening in the sports industry?

Yes, some sports organisations have already opted for this direction, others are taking longer to initiate change due to their traditional structures. But as everything around us is evolving at a fast pace, I believe it is inevitable to increase diversity within the governance structures of sports organisations and bring in new expertise to help keep international sports organisations competitive and innovative. I think this will come organically as we help connect the dots within the ecosystem.



Gautier Vasseur is a Partner of Pedersen & Partners, based in Geneva. He is a multicultural Executive Search professional who has completed over 500 Senior Leadership, Board and Supervisory Board level assignments in more than 40 countries. Mr. Vasseur has been with Pedersen & Partners since 2003, developing the firm's growing presence across CEE, Russia/CIS and APAC based, at different times, out of Prague, Moscow and Shanghai offices.

Mr. Vasseur was an international-level professional athlete before embarking on business career. While pursuing his athletic goals, he received an MBA from the INSEEC Graduate School of Business and later completed a Specialised Master's in Inter-Cultural Management from EMLYON Business School. In addition to his native French, he speaks fluent English and can communicate in German, Russian and basic Mandarin.

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If you would like to conduct an interview with a representative of Pedersen & Partners, or have other media-related requests, please contact: Anastasia Alpatcova, Marketing and Communications Manager at: anastasia.alpatcova@pedersenandpartners.com