



“A different kind of thinking happens when you drive – and I need to create more time for that”

Cynthia Hansen, managing director, Innovation Foundation

THE ECONOMIST

Cynthia Hansen has reimagined corporate philanthropy as a dynamic model of social innovation. With partnerships in more than 60 countries, she is constantly on the road.

When Cynthia Hansen left the World Economic Forum in 2017, she was invited to set up the Adecco Group’s first global foundation. What began as an internal wellbeing initiative grew into a blueprint for tackling global challenges. By late 2021, the organisation had rebranded as the Innovation Foundation and rebuilt its governance with diverse global voices. Rather than hoarding IP, Hansen was adamant that this methodology should be shared with the world. “It is a signifier that you’re a bold and courageous company,” she says. “We want to be known for this new model of philanthropy.”

DYNAMIC RESULTS

Collaborations with partner organisations in more than 60 countries have taken Hansen everywhere from Mexico to Korea. “I schedule my travel so that I have enough time on the ground,” she says. “Talking to colleagues and seeing dynamics in action give you more than you can get from simply analysing statistics.”

While long-haul flights and train rides are a regular feature of Hansen’s working life, she treasures time behind the wheel. “When I was driving this morning, I was reflecting on our strategy process and mapping out verticals,” she says. “I wouldn’t have had the luxury to do that if I was madly answering my emails. A different kind of thinking happens when you drive – and I need to create more time for that.”

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