

"We draw a lot of strength from enthusiasm"

Adventurer Bruno Baumann is known for striking out into the unknown. In this interview he talks about pushing the envelope in the desert, the intuition of cerebral individuals and the value of failure.

INTERVIEW: PATRICK STEINEMANN

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You performed a solo crossing of the Gobi Desert in 2003. What drove you to undertake such an extreme expedition?

Human nature is naturally inquisitive, and we like to push the boundaries. I had had 20 years of expedition experience before that particular venture, and the desert had, for me, become a place of learning. It was my desire to do something that no one else had tried that persuaded me to master this particular boundary.

A venture of this nature is frequently associated with uncertainties. What is the best way of dealing with them?

My experiences have taught me to recognise my weaknesses. We have to regain a feel for interpreting obstacles correctly. That's the only way to decide whether more energy is needed to complete a venture successfully, or whether it's a complete change of strategy that's required.

Very few people try their hand at pushing the envelope the way you have. Are we generally too timid?

We often baulk at change. The media, too, like to keep feeding our fears. Meanwhile, insurers encourage us to exclude all risk. Both are absurd. We have to learn how to lose control in a targeted way. This helps open up new possibilities and new ways of thinking.

Although mistakes are part of our daily reality, in the desert they can prove fatal.

Failure tends to be seen in a negative light. However, on my tours I've come to realise just how valuable it is. You cannot anticipate everything. Seen in that light, failure is an interim step that brings with it the benefit of know-how and identifies the crunch points.

For you, "change is the only constant". Where do you find the energy to keep moving?

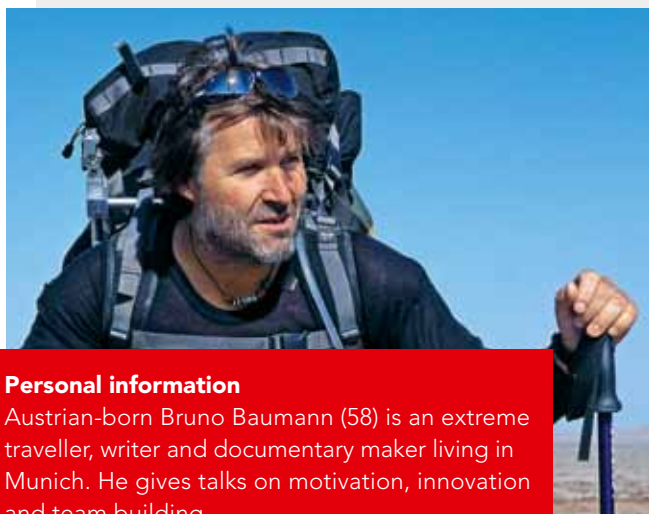
Because our will is limited, we need visions to help us reach our objectives. If we then underpin these visions with emotional images, that's when we can see what's possible. At that point, you can draw an immense amount of strength from the enthusiasm for a project and generate excitement in others.

In our world, so much is regulated and defined. Intuition and instinct are left by the wayside.

It's true, we are becoming more and more cerebral. That said, in certain situations – like in the desert – when the head is no longer able to decide on a course of action, it becomes useless. At that point you're guided only by emotional stimuli – only intuitive knowledge enables us to do what's right at the right moment.

You like to keep your pioneering spirit alive. What are you planning right now?

My current project, "Roads of Dialogue", is all about transferring knowledge and culture along the Silk Road. The historic Silk Road represents a series of successful exchanges between communities and cultures that go beyond the economic dimension to embrace all relevant areas of human coexistence.



Personal information

Austrian-born Bruno Baumann (58) is an extreme traveller, writer and documentary maker living in Munich. He gives talks on motivation, innovation and team building.