

Press Info

Who makes legs for a car?

Four wheels reinvented.

Palo Alto, the epicenter of innovation in Silicon Valley. A little out of the way – between a residential settlement and a highway – lies Jerry Bowden Park. Near shaded lawns, where people take their mid-day naps, and a children’s playground with boisterous little Zuckerbergs of the future, suddenly there is “Rrrun!” The concrete sculpture of Californian artist Marta Thoma, firmly anchored here on a pedestal and still driving full-throttle into people’s optic nerves. Her work of art: a car grows human legs from the floor plate and begins to run. My first thought: who makes actual legs for a car – here in Silicon Valley? From Google, we’ve heard of the driverless car, which has already been tested by some courageous people. They were thrilled.

The insurance providers are probably not very thrilled – because where there’s no driver, there’s also no driver’s insurance. And where cars can drive around without drivers, parking lots will also be difficult to navigate in the future. First, garages will be converted to residential or commercial buildings. Disruptive, interruptive, destructive innovation is what they call it. But the legs of the car are not only made by Google, but also in the rural part of Palo Alto. One drives south out of the city, into a slightly hilly, dry landscape. On Deer Creek Road, the view to the right is an idyllic horse ranch. Horses ... horsepower ... perhaps this was the inspiration for Elon Musk (who had previously founded PayPal), when he was looking for a place for his Tesla headquarters in 2003, and found it in direct proximity to Ranch Administrator Giselle Turchet and her horses.

Like Google, Tesla also makes legs for cars – it’s a pioneer in the field of electric vehicles. In the past two years, its annual sales have risen tenfold. His company operates very differently from others. For example, patents: as Musk writes in a blog entry, patents are a thing of the past. He says that new inventions could even be stifled due to the absurdity of patents. The framed patents that had covered one wall have already been torn down. And is the car, after all, still a car in traditional thinking? Since its launch in 2012, the Tesla Model S has not changed on the outside – actually a no-go in this industry, where you have to regularly roll out new designs. However, Tesla sees the car as a kind of “mobile terminal” – comparable to a smartphone or tablet that is regularly updated with new software updates. Continuous improvement while the car is on the road – this is a completely new way of thinking! Google, Tesla – but where are the actual inventors of the automobile? Where are Mercedes, Audi, and Volkswagen? Are Internet companies like Google more agile today in the continued development of the car than the automobile inventors themselves?

Good news: they are there. Bad news: they don't really act in a forward direction. Volkswagen is located in Belmont, Mercedes-Benz in Sunnyvale. Ford – at least the inventors of the assembly line, the minimum wage for workers, and the mass-produced car – are hard to find. Ford's Silicon Valley lab is located at "400 Hamilton Avenue" in Palo Alto – a modern, brick building – but nowhere is there any indication that it's them, no sign of the famous blue Ford logo. But, someone's there, and someone's researching software and materials. At home in Germany, Mercedes-Benz has acted as a trailblazer with car2go, and here in the USA, with "Boost at Benz", they made a stir with a high-class school bus service. But aren't these all just side-show battles compared to the reinvention of the car? The recommendation, "Cobbler, stick to your trade!" – never to re-examine the path taken, never to reinvent itself – could thus become the economic killer of the 21st century. Centuries will be. Not even the artist Marta Thoma needed a cobbler – the feet of her artwork are naked.

About Gerriet Danz

Gerriet Danz has been one of the most recognized experts on innovation and creativity for over two decades. The lectures of this passionate lateral-thinker, multiple startup founder, and best-selling author (CAMPUS/Random House) are as inspiring and unusual as the mix of his experiences. He worked initially as creative director of the international advertising agency BBDO, supporting global players in the development of innovations. His second career led to television: Gerriet Danz developed new TV formats, and even moderated the knowledge game-show classic: JEOPARDY. Motivating, humorous, and practical, he describes in his appearances how companies can create the perfect innovation climate and overcome creativity barriers. "One of the best in his field!" writes *Computer Week*; "It's hailing ideas..." says *GQ*. And *Der Spiegel* asked him, "...what really matters." Gerriet Danz is a visiting lecturer at the Steinbeis Hochschule Berlin, advises the European Patent Office in The Hague, among others, is a member of the German Speakers Association as well as of GSF Global Speakers Federation Toronto, and is a winner of the CONGA Award in the "Speakers & Coaches" category.

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