

Dear Steven Ballmer,  
dear friends and guests,

it is my great pleasure and honour to welcome you all  
tonight and to introduce our special guest, Mr. Steve  
Ballmer, CEO of Microsoft Corporation.

He is leading one of the most successful and most  
valuable companies of our times that has over the last  
two decades shaped its industry, the way we work and  
live and most our businesses like no other.

When we met in Seattle the last time you explained me your visions of the digital decade to come. This was five years ago and so many things have changed.

The internet has become the leading tool of the knowledge society and I am very proud that we are a partner of Microsoft Network MSN with FOCUS Online here in Germany.

Therefore, when Jürgen Gallmann, Managing Director of Microsoft Germany, raised the idea of having Steve Ballmer amongst us, I was very happy to give a dinner in his honour.

And tonight we have a most distinguished network of leaders from business, media, politics and academia.

I thought what is the common story of this community?

- is it on the search of excellence which defines leaders?
- is it on the transatlantic partnership and global brands?
- is it on connection, exchange and collaboration?

As media we play an important role in today's society, we are seen as fourth power – think of the recent federal elections. Media create audiences, they are agenda setters and shape images. We are aware of this role and responsibility.

Another part of a media company – besides power and agenda setting – is to connect people and create platforms of mutual attention. This is the magic of events as our coming together in this fotostudio where ELLE and INSTYLE do their fashion shootings.

These elements have been our business since the invention of the printing press, 500 years ago. And since then communication technology has ever accelerated and enhanced our lives, has multiplied knowledge and connectivity.

Yet the digital revolution was accompanied by a digital media explosion. People have entered a new digital and mobile lifestyle. Disintermediation is fundamentally changing the way we trade.... People have more options than ever.

In this decade the economy of attention emerged that has created a parallel market system: the market for attention, where people build brand and image values, and through media they are able to transfer and monetize this values.

Media creates these market places of attention through media brands. These are platforms with their own emotional software.

On our latest research, we could see that around our media brands people build communities in which they trust. They enter this community by paying 2,50 € up to 6 €. This happens every week, every two weeks or every month.

This is a kind of new membership which reaches in our company more than 49 Million people a month. That is nearly 50 % of the German population and this reach we also have in other countries like in Turkey and Russia.

Through new and interactive media – websites, blogs,  
MSN Messenger – we can now build media  
communities and activate readers. Media communities  
are defined by shared interest and emotional linkage.  
Content becomes context.

I was impressed when the manager of MSN Germany has shown the MSN Messenger 2 weeks ago. I learned that more than 5.000 people download this communication tool in Germany every day.

Likewise the online media and advertising market has clearly taken off. We think that the combination of media brands, communication technology and communities creates enormous potential.

The period which we witness over the last 15 years can only be compared to the period of Renaissance 500 years ago. Thomas Friedman has wonderfully and most clearly explained the impact of digitalisation and globalisation in his book “The World is Flat” which you know. And Microsoft is a key driver of this age.

Let us have a toast on our dear special guest tonight, Steve Ballmer, and on this wonderful community and dinner here in Munich.