

CROSSING BORDERS – CHRISTINA QUENSEL

In the international biotech hub Berlin, the Campus Berlin-Buch (CBB) is growing to become the beating heart of future innovation. On the biomedical campus, scientists from all over the world work on the future of medicine. Christina Quensel – CEO of the campus – tells us all about the CBB, her journey and her vision for campuses and tech parks around the world.

A biotech campus with

the vibe of Berlin



What does a day in the life of the CEO at CBB look like?

“For me, every day is a new adventure. There are so many dimensions to our campus. It’s really a mix. It’s my responsibility to think about the future of the CBB and how we want to pave the way for healthcare innovations. My job is truly diverse: politics, administration, negotiations with the district government, public relations, and, especially, education.”

“Art can be a way of presenting science, to show people what it’s all about.”

Why education, specifically?

“Because I personally experienced the impact education can have on the course of your life, and the course of it. I studied Biotechnology, worked on my PhD in the pharmaceutical industry, and as a postdoc at the Max Delbrück Center here on campus. And later, I switched to an administrative role as scientific referent to the scientific director of the Max Delbrück Center. I learned a lot during this period and nowadays, I’m experiencing the benefits of this scientific background in my role as the CEO of the Campus Berlin Buch GmbH, the operator of the Biotechpark and the campus. When I was asked to take on this role in 2015, I didn’t have to think too long and immediately said ‘Yes!’”

What convinced you to take on the opportunity?

“At Berlin-Buch, more than 3,000 employees work for 70+ companies. Our Biotechpark has around 31,000 sqm of office and laboratory space, with large research centres and huge clinics. Seeing all these dimensions come together is something really beautiful – and facilitating and nurturing this community is what matters most to us. That’s why the companies on campus lack nothing. Employees can get coffee, go to the fitness studio or enjoy one of the outdoor exhibitions. This way, the biotech companies on our campus can find new collaboration partners in an approachable and personal way.”

Okay, we get it: connection and collaboration are important. But what sets you guys apart from other campuses?

“What’s really unique to this campus, is the vibe, energy and background Berlin as a city brings to the table. Berlin is the beating heart of bioscience and innovation and the city with the most international students in Europe. You can live here without speaking any German. We have three huge universities and lots of non-university research institutions. It also brings many highly educated, international, and motivated people to campus.”

“The city also greatly supports science and innovation. One example is the yearly Long Night of the Sciences where everybody can participate in experiments, get in touch with scientists and learn about current groundbreaking research. It allows us to introduce a broader audience to what is happening in terms of science in Berlin.”

Why is it that you consider Berlin to be the beating heart of bioscience and innovation?

“In Berlin, we work together. Many of Berlin’s biotech/life science players meet regularly. We have developed a good level of collaboration. We discuss the future of medicine together. That way, we can make the most of it. Many companies work competitively, but in Berlin, we are opening up and always try to find one another. For example, we have access to the largest University Hospital in Europe. So, Berlin offers high potential for open communication: you can quickly discuss innovations with the right people. We quickly know if an idea can really work or not.”

How does your campus reflect the city’s open attitude?

“We are an open campus, which means that everyone has access to our campus. We believe that in order to make a lasting impact, we have to openly share and transfer knowledge and work together – these are our core values. What’s more, we explore new perspectives of science and innovation through art. I think art can be a way of presenting science,

to show people what it’s all about. We have many statues and original paintings on campus – thanks to our strong ties to the art community within the city. And because everybody can visit the campus, everyone can come and enjoy our artworks.”

What about the future – any big plans coming up?

“The pandemic made it very clear that innovation is necessary and needs space to develop further. Also, it pointed out that biotech is more important than ever – as an area of expertise where we learn more about the combat against and prevention of future pandemics. That’s how the idea of the BerlinBioCube came about. In this new building of about 14,000 sqm, we are creating even more space for startups in biotechnology and medical technology. We will ceremonially open the building on 11 October 2023. It will be the next step in the development of our biotech park and a great first step for future innovation in the city.”

What does the future of innovation mean to you?

“To me it’s all about people. I like to think of campuses as a melting pot where scientists and entrepreneurs come together and bring the knowledge from science to patients even faster. People need each other to cross borders and make change happen. And our community facilitates that melting pot. With its food courts and parties, this is the best place for meeting each other and interacting. That’s where we discuss our work and make valuable connections with the right people. For example, to review innovative ideas or find the best collaboration partners. Only when we work together, we can push medicine forward.”



Dr. Christina Quensel
CEO of Campus Berlin-Buch GmbH