



Steinbeis Consulting Center
Sales Engineering
and International
Business Development



STEINBEIS CONSULTING CENTER

SALES ENGINEERING

AND INTERNATIONAL

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

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THE STEINBEIS CONSULTING CENTER

SALES ENGINEERING AND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The **Steinbeis Consulting Centre Sales Engineering and International Business Development** was founded by Stephan Herrmann at the beginning of 2021 as a company within the Steinbeis Network. The company focuses on these topics:

- **Product and market positioning**
- **Thinking in strategic business units**
- **Practical market research and systematic market selection**
- **Development of international markets in sales and procurement**
- **Company competence check**

STEPHAN HERRMANN

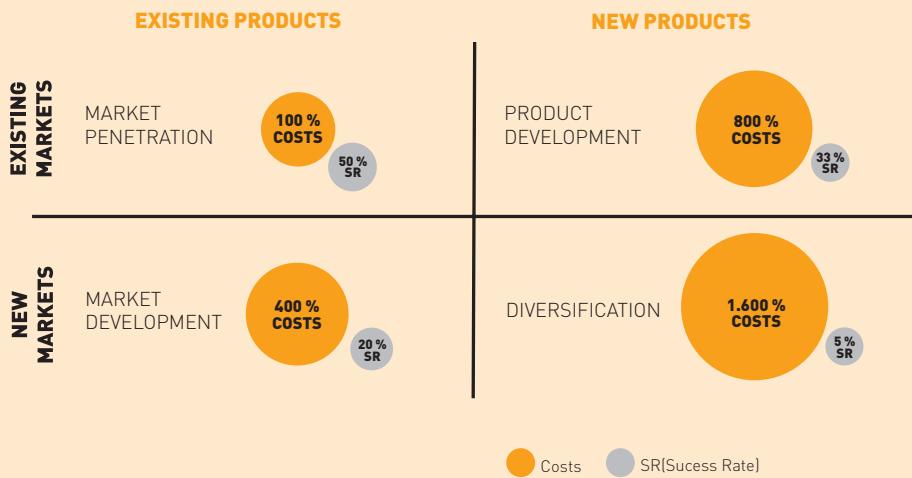
Through his engineering studies in the field of „**Product Engineering**“, postgraduate studies as an industrial engineer in **production and materials management** as well as studies for an MBA in „**International Entrepreneurship**“, Stephan Herrmann has a broad and multi-layered educational background. His professional career has taken him from positions as a sales engineer, key account manager and market manager in technical sales to functions in management and corporate leadership. Since 2003, Stephan Herrmann has been the managing director of a medium-sized company and was also appointed to the board of directors of the international holding company a few years later. Stephan Herrmann's many years of industry experience relate to the **automotive, metal, textile and electrical industries**, where he acquired important market, customer and project knowledge.

For several years, Stephan Herrmann has been involved on a part-time basis as a **lecturer** in the subject areas of „corporate management“, „sales, materials and production management“ as well as in the **training** of „certified sales managers“ and also offers relevant **seminars** on the aforementioned topics.

PRODUCT AND MARKET POSITIONING: KNOWING HOW

Especially in the **technology sector**, business development in industrial SMEs often follows traditional patterns and customer-related opportunities. Very often this is a **successful model**, but the sustainable prosperous implementation of a business model involves a multitude of factors: In addition to **technical innovations**, for example, **international sales** and **management**. And disadvantages often result from being dependent on a few major customers, thus only taking advantage of these limited opportunities, but not of all possible opportunities that arise in international markets. Moreover, a structured, holistic view sometimes is difficult in everyday business practice.

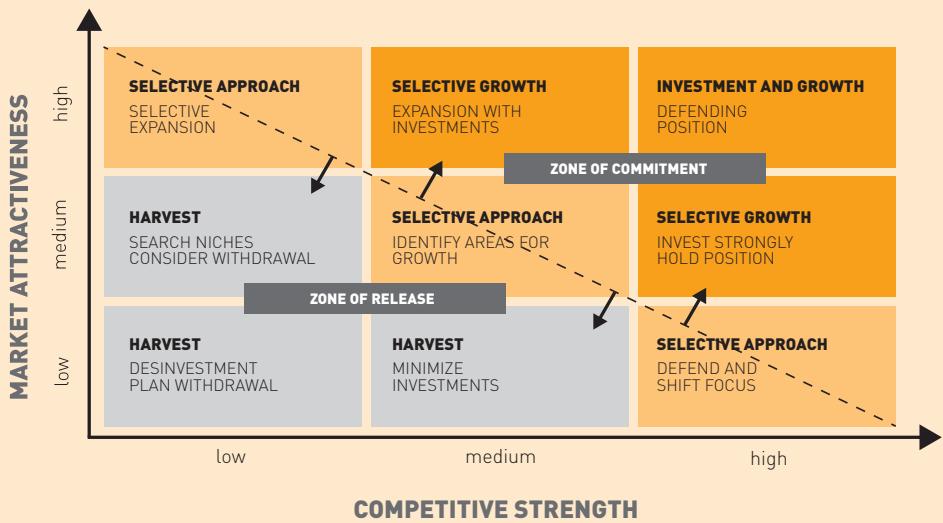
An initial approach to this topic is provided by the **analysis and differentiation** of the product programme in existing and new products and markets.



For example, an important **success pattern** of the „hidden champions“ is that existing products are consistently rolled out to new **markets (applications)** and thus business activities are scaled sustainably. However, it is also conceivable that not all opportunities for effective market penetration are exploited and that larger investments are made „hastily“ for further market and product development. This always represents an additional **cost and resource burden** for the company, and the probabilities of success should be carefully kept in mind.

Continuing these considerations, it is advisable to think in the direction of specific **market, customer and application segments**. Particularly in industrial SMEs, concentration on

technological niches is often an important competitive advantage that can be systematically evaluated and further developed in the future with an in-depth consideration of product/market combinations.



Positioning „**strategic business units**“ as shown in the diagram is particularly important when the company wants to open up new markets with typically limited resources, such as **financial or human capacities**. It is often advisable to plan clearly focussed measures on the basis of the promising business units. The so-called „**norm strategies**“ can provide initial indications for this in operational practice. Viable core competencies will not only consist of technological market leadership, but are usually characterised by entire bundles of competencies.

According to recent **studies**, small and medium-sized enterprises are consciously investing in the development of **foreign business** even in difficult times. The motives for this are improved **market access** in existing markets, the creation of new sales markets or also the striving for an overall stronger **competitive position** of the company on global markets. Companies often lack the necessary capacity to do this, which is why international expansion is frequently accompanied by external service providers.

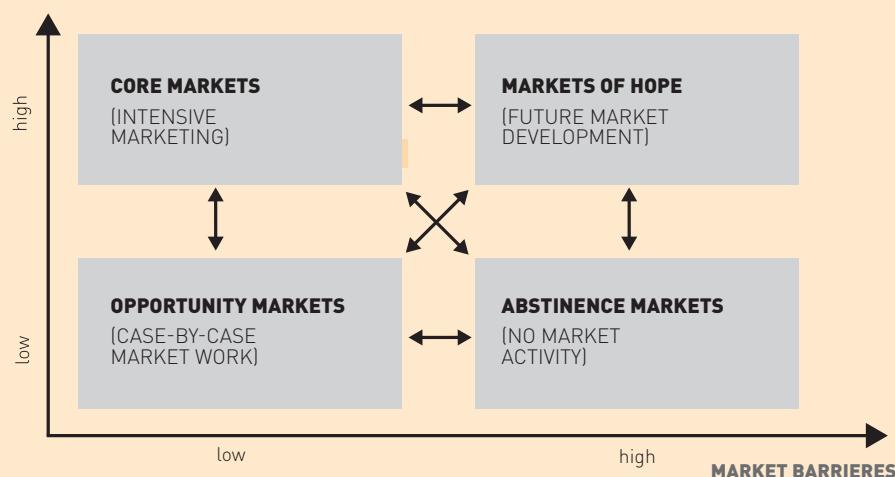
It is precisely with such **services**, as a „temporary sales force“, so to speak, that we would like to support our clients. We motivate our clients to take a look at their own product and market areas, success factors, core competencies and strategic thrusts away from their day-to-day business. We do not see ourselves primarily as consultants, but rather as discussion partners and moderators of this internal process.

A ROADMAP FOR YOUR MARKET DEVELOPMENT

In small and medium-sized enterprises, the option- and experience-based approach often dominates in **market development**. But does this really mean that all potential sales markets are systematically developed? And how do you ensure that a „me-too“ approach doesn't just follow the competition into these markets and overlook **medium- and long-term market changes**? Is it not possible to achieve a much better, strategic market position as a pioneer in a market that is still unknown to the company? If one considers that the development of new **foreign markets** can easily take five to ten years, these are typical questions in a basic concept.

At the **Steinbeis Consulting Centre for Technical Sales and International Business Development**, we therefore advise a (complementary) analytical approach that makes an initial, systematic market selection and, based on this, divides the market into core, hope, opportunity or abstinence markets. Through a **serious assessment** of market attractiveness as well as market barriers, domestic and foreign markets can be well categorised. On the basis of this **market division**, it is possible to use the resources available in the company in a target- and plan-oriented manner as well as with corresponding priority and sustainability on the respective markets or application segments.

MARKET ATTRACTIVENESS



The relevant specialist literature offers a wealth of **instruments and methods** for the internationalisation of companies, but these usually do not meet the more practical requirements of **SMEs**. For this reason, we prefer a **clearly structured phase model** that deals with market selection, market entry, market development as well as stabilisation of interna-

tional activities and even preventive exit scenarios. **Selected instruments** in these phases refer, for example, to the observation of market trends and market changes, the forecast of possible sales and turnover potentials, the business character (Born Global or Stay Local), the 3A strategy, possible market development forms and timing strategies, suitable key driver analyses, the process of international brand building or essential approaches of intercultural management. We pay attention to the **closest possible practical relevance** and the **usability** of the findings.

Even though it is often possible to rely on secondary research sources for market size selection, one should not underestimate the **preparatory and research effort** required for such work. Similarly, many SMEs or even start-ups are unable to provide the management capacity necessary to consistently develop new markets alongside their day-to-day business. As a result, the company cannot adequately exploit the market opportunities that present themselves and/or loses precious time in the process.

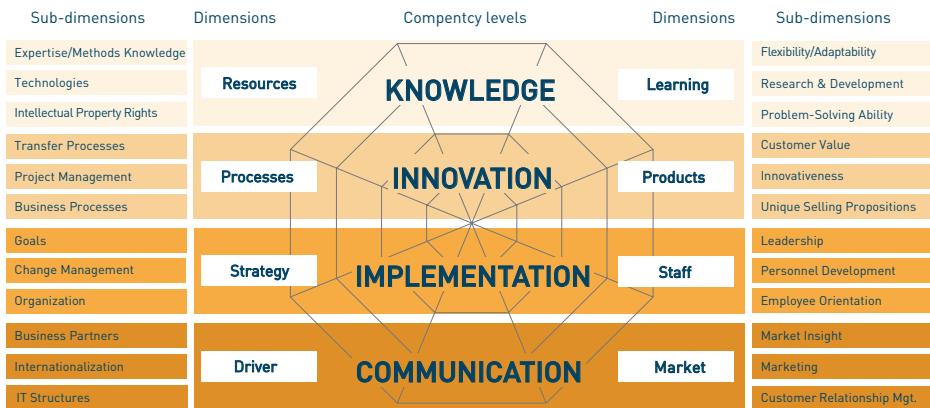
Our task is therefore, on the one hand, to accompany you **step by step** in the planning and conception of your activities. On the other hand, we are also available when it comes to the effective implementation of work steps. In this way, we can support our clients' sales capacities flexibly and in line with their needs, for example when it comes to qualified market research or initiating contacts and setting up international sales structures. We address both **German-speaking SMEs** that want to intensify their foreign business and also **foreign companies** that are looking for a market entry in Germany or the D/A/CH region.

Traditional forms of distribution are no longer effective to the same extent and, as a result, international market access is becoming more difficult. **„Digitalisation in sales“** therefore not only refers to internal processes, but is also increasingly focused on the customer level. For this reason, we also deal with topics such as the design of your internet presence, search engine optimisation, customer journey, lead generation, etc., which we are happy to accompany for you - if necessary with the involvement of suitable experts.

THE STEINBEIS CORPORATE COMPETENCE CHECK: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES AT A GLANCE

The **Steinbeis Corporate Competence Check (UKC)** is a scientifically based instrument for the holistic analysis of corporate competences that has already been applied and multiply tested in practice. It helps you to systematically record and analyse the competencies available in your company. You will find it a valuable support to evaluate your organisation's own strengths and to identify possible challenges and potential for improvement, even in a sector comparison.

The procedure is based on a software-supported **collection** and **evaluation** of your company-specific initial data concerning the relevant competence areas of „knowledge”, „innovating”, „implementing” and „communicating”. These **competence levels** are broken down in structured questionnaires to further, practice-relevant dimensions and characteristics.



You want to take the **practical test?** Here you will find more information and a free quick check: <https://steinbeis-ukc.de/>. As an evaluation, you will receive a profile evaluation of your company, which clearly shows the respective „performance”.

The first concrete benefit for you is that to date there are around 1,000 companies in the Steinbeis database and you will probably also find corresponding „**benchmarks**” in your sector. If you expand the group of participants in the UKC study, you will also receive an internal comparison of whether the management and technical staff are in line with the goals and assessments of the company management.

We consider the **Corporate Competence Check (UKC)** to be a good, optional „entry tool” to create a basis for joint consulting and service projects. Through the simple application, the comprehensive content and methodological foundation, both sides gain access to further, trusting cooperation. Of course, the UKC can also be used as a separate, stand-alone service. Even the examination of the specific questions leads one or the other entrepreneur to deal with certain topics. Therefore, the evaluation will also provide you as an entrepreneur with valuable impulses for competence development.

STEINBEIS - A STRONG NETWORK

The non-profit **Steinbeis Foundation** for Economic Development forms the umbrella of the Steinbeis Network, in which around 1,100 companies offer cross-sector research and development, consulting and expertise as well as competence-based education and training. Around **6,000 experts** currently contribute their expertise to the practical transfer between science and business.

The studies and expert reports they produce provide a basis for **decision-making** in entrepreneurial action: they analyse existing processes and solutions, point out new paths and evaluate alternative courses of action. Steinbeis studies stand for expertise, experience, quality and trust among companies, credit institutions and capital providers or public institutions. Steinbeis experts act as a flywheel between created knowledge and industrial application. Their problem solutions and new developments substantially increase the competitive strength of companies and secure them an **edge in global markets**.

Steinbeis companies operate as **economically** and **entrepreneurially** independent units and are flexible and demand-oriented to meet the requirements of their customers. Fair costs, speed and quality, but also confidentiality and liability as well as efficiency in the services provided are a matter of course for Steinbeis. With a strong national as well as international network of affiliated companies, Steinbeis is today one of the world's leading service providers in **knowledge and technology transfer**.

CONTACT

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