

ESMT Annual Forum 2016

“Digitalization. Responsible strategies for business and society”

ESMT Responsible Leadership Award

Rewarding commitment to activating large-scale change

Heiko Hutmacher, Member of the Management Board, METRO, delivered the laudatory speech for Dr. Sebastian Stricker, Founder of ShareTheMeal.

Heiko Hutmacher opened his speech by describing the extent and impact of world hunger, and how, with the ShareTheMeal app, Sebastian Stricker has applied technological progress to fight hunger. “It is exciting,” he said, “to see a team focused on a cause they believe in and developing an effective solution.”

The ShareTheMeal app, which allows smartphone users to donate \$0.50 - enough to fund a child’s school meal - with one simple click, has been downloaded by more than half a million people. Through a collaboration with the UN World Food Program, this has provided five million meals to school children, pregnant women, and new mothers, globally. Heiko Hutmacher asked the audience to imagine what it must feel like to be one of those people who gets a bit more.

With a background in consultancy and non-profits, Sebastian Stricker developed the idea for ShareTheMeal during a sabbatical at the UN World Food Program, connecting the relative cheapness of feeding one child with the fact that, globally, smartphone users exceed undernourished people twenty-fold. From this, he set about creating a truly mobile, non-profit platform to help people share their meal. Today, 90% of donations via ShareTheMeal go directly to the UN World Food Program, with 10% for operations. Addressing him as a source of real inspiration, Heiko Hutmacher concluded his speech by congratulating Sebastian Stricker on having the audacity to set such a huge goal and seek a solution that can make a real difference.

Seizing the moment to drive social innovation

Dr. Sebastian Stricker, Founder of ShareTheMeal, addressed the forum’s participants after receiving the ESMT Responsible Leadership Award 2016.

Sebastian Sticker opened his acceptance speech by expressing his gratitude for the award and recognizing the efforts of the entire ShareTheMeal team. Receiving this award, he said, was “a very humbling experience.”

The idea for ShareTheMeal originated whilst he was working on social impact, with three memorable experiences from that time he wanted to share. The first was meeting a female doctor in rural Tanzania who ran a maternity clinic, which made a fundamental difference to the lives of the women and children accessing it. The second was visiting a Tanzanian orphanage and seeing the life-long effect of hunger on young children, stunting their physical growth and brain development. The third was, on joining the UN World Food Program, seeing how feasible it is in terms of nutritional science and global food production to solve world hunger - the question is simply how to get the food to the right people. The milestones which turned this idea from a business plan into a reality included raising \$75,000 funding, being accepted onto the UN World Food Program accelerator program, and building the minimum viable product. The ShareTheMeal app launched with excellent press coverage in 2015, stimulating a high number of downloads.

This journey has led him to three main observations. The first is that now is an excellent time to work on social innovation. The knowledge on how to effectively create and measure change is well advanced, making it possible to assess the social return of investments and highlight main value drivers - e.g. investing in school meals rather than general food distribution, feeding children and pregnant women rather than all adults; there is an untapped opportunity to harness technology developed in the private sector for social impact; and the funding infrastructure for social entrepreneurs is getting much better - the launch of the World Food Program accelerator in Europe this July being just one example. The second relates to the importance of team. The ShareTheMeal team, he said, are all committed to being the best social innovation team they can be and is “the most dedicated team I’ve ever worked with.” Sebastian Stricker also directly thanked the World Food Program, without whom, he added “this would never work.”

Sebastian Stricker’s third observation drew his speech to an optimistic conclusion. Change is already happening, he declared, “We are already making the world a better place.” He encouraged people to look beyond bad news headlines to the data on progress towards the UN Millennium Development Goals. “We are making progress. And, social innovation is an essential part of this.”