

A rewarding journey

Kirsten Rehmann has spent the past 19 years working her way up the career ladder at the airline and ticket distribution company Hahn Air. Having taken on the role of CEO at the start of the year, Regional International speaks to Rehmann on this achievement and her plans for leading the company into the future.

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Can you tell us a bit about your career and what led you to this role?

I have been with Hahn Air almost two decades now. Back in 2003, I joined the company when Hahn Air was still a small start-up with a brilliant business idea. Equipped with a diploma in international business administration with the majors tourism and travel, I started as sales and marketing executive. We were only a handful of people in the beginning and as the company grew, I was fortunate to expand my knowledge of aviation distribution by holding various different roles. Hahn Air's distribution solutions for airlines made the company advance to market leader and, over time, our portfolio grew to more than 350 partner airlines.



As Director of the Airlines Business Group, I was able to support this development by acquiring partner airlines from French speaking markets in Africa and other regions. Later, I moved to the position of Chief Commercial Officer and, in 2012, I joined the corporate management alongside the owners and founders of Hahn Air, Hans Nolte and Nico Gormsen. I am so grateful that they gave me their trust and support and prepared me well for the responsibilities of a future company CEO. In January 2022, I took over the responsibility for the company's affairs, the global business, as well as operational and strategic planning. Hans Nolte and Nico Gormsen will remain closely connected to Hahn Air in their role as owners.



What initially interested you about the industry and what continues to inspire you day-to-day?

Like everybody working in the airline industry, I have always been fascinated with travel. This fascination grew even more when I started to frequently visit Africa as part of my role in our Airline Business Group. This special love for Africa continues to this day. In addition, I am extremely proud to lead the Hahn Air affairs, as I believe that we provide an important missing link in airline distribution: We connect airlines of any size with travel agents in 190 markets and thereby close distribution gaps for our partners. With our solutions, airlines can sell tickets in markets that they would otherwise not be able to reach through indirect

distribution. As a result, we provide millions of passengers who book through travel agencies with additional travel options. In a nutshell: we connect any airline to the world of indirect distribution, thereby enabling travel to the most remote destinations of this world.

Where do you see the company expanding or focusing its efforts in the next few years and what excites you the most about where the company is headed?

Hahn Air has always been closely monitoring the development of the market, looking for new technologies and distribution opportunities for our partner airlines. The pre-COVID years have been seeing dynamic changes, for example with the advancement of new distribution



Author: Kirsten Rehmann,
Hahn Air



capabilities. However, the global pandemic has dramatically slowed the progress and has left many market players behind. Especially smaller airlines that were struggling for survival are now more than ever dependent on smart, cost-efficient solutions.

Over the past 20 years, Hahn Air has built an unparalleled connectivity to all distribution and payment systems. In the future, we will leverage on this technology infrastructure, as well as our expertise in ticketing, global payment and distribution strategy to offer alternative and additional retail channels. At the same time, we believe in the importance of GDS sales and will continue to offer our partner airlines reliable access to more than 100,000 travel agencies around the globe. Just recently, we have enhanced our product portfolio with a PSS solution to enable airlines to obtain all components of a successful distribution strategy from a single source.

While I am very excited about the future of the travel industry and all the possibilities it holds, we also need to address a serious issue. The travel industry, like any other industry, needs to take responsibility for its impact on the environment and find sustainable solutions. We have recently formed a partnership with veritree, a technology platform enabling reforestation projects. We committed to planting 150,000 mangrove trees in Kenya and Madagascar. While we realise this is only a first step, we want to contribute to a more sustainable air transport in the future and we are therefore also looking into solutions for our travel agency and airline partners. It is our clear goal to offer carbon compensation options for flights distributed through Hahn Air in the future.

What are your values as a company leader?

I believe in teamwork and I am very fortunate to have a wonderful team at Hahn Air. Many colleagues have been with Hahn Air for a long time already and I am looking forward to shaping the next chapters of Hahn Air together with my team and build future-orientated distribution solutions and ticketing services for our airline and travel agency partners.

As a female leader in aviation, do you hope to inspire more women and girls to enter the industry?

The aviation industry is very much aware of the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. That's why IATA is currently driving the 25 by 2025 initiative where airlines commit to increasing the percentage of women in executive roles to at least 25%. Hahn Air is proud to support this initiative. Personally, I would of course be very honoured if I can inspire other female talents to take up a career in aviation. And speaking as a mother of a ten-year-old girl, I can only hope that we are quickly moving towards a future where gender does not define (or even limit) what you can achieve. 🌍