

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Questions to Mr Marc Zander, Africon CEO

By Patrick Nelle, Forbes Afrique

1. Can we start with a brief presentation of Africon ?

Africon GmbH is a consulting firm with sole focus on Africa. Over the past 6 years we have consulted more than 45 clients on their Africa strategy. Our clients are SME but also multinational companies like DHL or Infineon. With our representations in Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana and Tanzania we help companies to reduce costs, risk and time when setting up their business in Africa.

2. How do you view the prospects of business between African countries and Germany in the coming years ?

At the moment, the business between Africa and Germany is still largely behind other countries e.g. China, France or the UK. However, I do see a tendency of German companies being more active in Africa before. We as Africon know that 23 out of the 25 DAX companies in Germany are already active or work on their Africa strategy. Just last month's Volkswagen kicked off their assembly plant in Kenya and Bosch decided to increase their presence. I therefore do see a growing interest of German companies in Africa and also the German Mittelstand has started to look at Africa. We also see a new tendency of business in Africa by German companies. For example one of our clients is in the business of chemical distribution and will in future coordinate the chemical distribution for some large conglomerates in Africa.

3. German business in Africa is clearly focused on a few African nations...Don't you think that it's a weakness for German businesses ?

The African continent has 54 countries and I do not see a weakness in concentrating the business in a few countries who show the largest potential. Especially for smaller German companies it is key to select the best markets in Africa and to start step by step. The key question for our clients is: What is my chance to win in a particular market?

4. What is the attitude of German investors when it comes to deal with Africa ?

German investors are still cautious about investment in Africa. This might be due to various reasons being political instability, lack of control and not enough managers who would be willing to work on Africa. On the other side we do see that large German organisations have decided to invest in Africa or currently look for opportunities.