

**Speech by Dr. Claudia Emmert, Director of the
Zeppelin Museum in Friedrichshafen
On the occasion of:
WCFDavos - Zeppelin View 2016**



Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,
Welcome to the discussion forum “Zeppelin View”
at the Zeppelin Museum!

When Count Zeppelin decided to construct airships in 1890, he probably did not foresee that only a few years later he would be establishing the “Silicon Valley” of his time in Friedrichshafen on Lake Constance. Moreover, despite the fact that the German Emperor called him one of the “stupidest of all South Germans”, his ships of the air became **the symbol** of imperial Germany.

The catastrophe of Echterdingen in 1908 – after its landing, a storm tore the airship LZ 4 from its moorings; it caught fire and burned out completely, which triggered a huge Zeppelin craze throughout the empire and inspired people to donate over 6 million Marks, about 40 million Euros. It also led to a mass production of memorabilia of all kinds! The Zeppelin as a cult object – ashtrays, cocktail shakers, coins, and many other souvenirs were decorated with the airship motif or even shaped to resemble airships. Materials from crashed airships were treasured like relics.

Upon receiving the people’s donation, Count Zeppelin immediately went about diversifying his young start-up. He founded the *Luftschiffbau Zeppelin GmbH*, the *Zeppelin Stiftung*, the *Luftschiffmotorenbau GmbH* (which eventually led to the establishment of the *Maybach Motoren GmbH*, and later on to the present-day *MTU*, that is to say, the *Rolls-Royce Power Systems AG*), and the *DELAG*, the *Deutsche Luftschiffahrt AG* (German Airship Travel Corporation) in 1909. The nucleus of the Zeppelin concern had been created.

In doing so, Zeppelin laid down the foundation stone for the economic success of this city and the surrounding region early on. To this day, worldwide concerns such as *ZF*, the company resulting from the *Zahnradfabrik Friedrichshafen GmbH*, which was founded in 1915, *Airbus* (from which the *Zeppelin Lindau GmbH*, then *Dornier*, and later on *DASA* evolved), *MTU*, and the *Zeppelin GmbH* (which grew from the *Zeppelin Metallwerke GmbH*) are located in Friedrichshafen. During the time after 1918, the concern comprised about 50 daughter companies. Today we would say: competency clusters.

Hiring Hugo Eckener in 1905 also enabled Count Zeppelin to pave the way for turning the Zeppelin into a worldwide brand. A symbol of the times which still has a strong emotional impact even today! Journalist and media expert Eckener used spectacular test flights, stunning photos and films, and classy fashion to promote the Zeppelin airship and to turn it into a trademark.

Furthermore, Eckener brought about something that only few are able to achieve very rarely: a complete reversal of the Zeppelin's image. During the First World War, the airships had become **the epitome** of airborne terror directed against civilians. After the war, Hugo Eckener was able to change the image by transferring the LZ 126 to the USA in 1924, establishing the Zeppelin as an ambassador of peace all over the world. Over the next years, Eckener continued to develop the Zeppelin's reputation with spectacular voyages.

In 1928 was the first flight across North America, in 1929 the Orient voyage, also in 1929 the flight around the world, and in 1931 the Arctic journey. From 1931 onwards, there were scheduled post-passenger and freight transports from Friedrichshafen to Rio de Janeiro. The Zeppelin had become global.

However, Count Zeppelin also owed his success to the fact that he was able to win the most progressive minds of the day for his enterprise: besides Hugo Eckener, he also collaborated with Ludwig Dürr, Karl Maybach, Alfred Graf von Soden-Fraunhofen, Alfred Colsman, and Claude Dornier. All of them were at the Count's service.

There is still a lot to be learned from the history of the Zeppelin concern. It is a story about successes and failures, about continued efforts for innovation and disruptive renewals. It is a story about the importance of the right choice of personnel, about openness and trust, flat hierarchies, and global communication. And it is a story about marketing and advertising.

The Zeppelin is cult – to this day. And today you, dear ladies and gentlemen are convening at a museum which pays homage to the exemplary evolution of the Zeppelin airship – and illustrates its ongoing significance.

I wish you an inspiring time at our museum and thank you for your attention.

Thank you for your attention!

Dr. Claudia Emmert