

INTERNATIONAL SPOTLIGHT



Susanne Caspar
CEO of Linnea SA

Susanne Caspar is the current CEO of Linnea SA, a Switzerland-based manufacturer of active pharmaceutical ingredients and natural botanical extracts. This year marks Linnea's 40th anniversary manufacturing high quality natural botanical ingredients like Bilberry, Ginkgo Biloba, Red Clover, 5 HTP, HMR Lignan™, Vinpocetine, Vincamine, and Butylscopolamine for use in the pharmaceutical, cosmetics and dietary supplement industries in over 70 countries, including some of the most trusted finished product producers in the cannabinoid industry.

Under Susanne's leadership, Linnea has also paved the way in research, standardization, and providing a pharmaceutical-level of quality of cannabinoids. Linnea was the first company worldwide to get a GMP certificate for a Cannabidiol (CBD) extract in 2016. She is excited for Linnea to be contributing positively to the growth of the emerging global cannabis industry.

Linnea Cannabinoids has been focusing primarily on delivering non-psychoactive cannabinoids like CBD and Cannabigerol (CBG). Their CBD is available as a GMP-certified full spectrum extract and a 99% pure isolate. Their standardized GMP-certified full spectrum CBG extract is available for the pharmaceutical, food and cosmetics market and their CBG 99% pure isolate is available for food and cosmetics, for the pharmaceutical market is under development.

Susanne was born in Bochum, a city in North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany. At an early age, she fought to attain a higher level of education and whilst doing so realized that she enjoyed deliberately inserting herself into so-called male domains. In university, she was told by classmates that she would end up leaving university to become a wife and mother. However, Susanne used such experiences as fuel to further motivate her to fulfill her ambitions and dreams.

As she entered the workforce, it was cemented that society has a certain idea of what is expected, not just professionally, but in terms of personality traits of women in power versus men. Women are expected to, among other things, be caring and nurturing. These are traits that are not initially expected of a manager in a company and can be perceived in a man's world as weakness, where more male-expected traits like assertiveness and decisiveness are required. Nevertheless, Susanne quickly climbed the ladder of the industry from an entry level in the marketing department of a pharmaceutical company. She went through a classic career in pharmaceutical marketing and acquired the tools for more demanding tasks in the C-Suite. Prior to accepting the role of CEO at Linnea, Susanne held prestigious positions in various

pharmaceutical companies including Whitehall-Much (now Pfizer), Merck Darmstadt, Steiner Arzneimittel and Schaper & Brümmer.

Women have to work harder than men to get into leadership positions. At one point early on in her career, she recalls having to jump through a number of ridiculous hoops in an interview process and later learning her male counterpart going for the job did not have to do anything extra. Throughout her career as an executive in a male-dominated profession, Susanne found she often had to prove herself to be smarter and better than the men in the room. However, there was also a balance to attain. Women who are assertive, strong leaders can lead to being perceived as unfeminine and too power-oriented. Whereas, the same actions in men would be respected.

Susanne's advice to women who want to have a powerful career in general and in the pharmaceutical and equally male-dominated cannabis industry, is to hold back any natural resentment of the male leadership style and focus on seeing the power struggles that occur as playing the game. To play the game, you have to know the rules of the game. If you play by your own rules, it will be difficult.

Another way to think about it is this: If you want to order something in a foreign country, you should know the proper terminology for it and not insist on your own. If one thinks of the "man's world" today as another language, problems learning and using the "new vocabulary" eventually melt away. She considers this approach as a way to change one's attitude without giving up on personal values. You cannot work independent of established rules and structures. It is only by accepting them as a foundation and adapting that you can be in a position to create new rules.

Susanne firmly believes that women should lift other women up whenever possible. She understands that being in positions of leadership and power can best be leveraged by empowering other women and changing the inherent male dominated culture from the inside. For this reason, Susanne is a mentor in a female network called Healthcare Frauen in Germany. In this program, a successful business leader like herself sits down for 2 hours a month for a year with a young woman who wants to "move up" and use her skills to improve the healthcare system. They discuss, among many topics, how to assert themselves in a predominantly male environment and structure, getting to know male rules of the game, practicing and mastering them in order to change structures internally. They are urged to use their femininity and female values and competences instead of hiding them. 🌱