**Transcript Markus Poschenrieder - Leistungs Lotse**

April 9, 2025, 09:00AM

**Brandon Ching (0:08)**  
Can you please briefly describe your background and what led you to start your company?

**Markus Poschenrieder (0:14)**  
Right, I'm Markus. I'm originally a lawyer, graduated in law, and have an MBA. I worked in international law firms before on the legal side of business development. Two years ago, actually, we founded Leistungs Lotse for quickly and comprehensively applying for social benefits in Germany.

**Brandon Ching (0:39)**  
And how did your previous experiences shape your approach to entrepreneurship?

**Markus Poschenrieder (0:46)**  
Probably it's a very forensic approach that I have, simply because the profession brings it with it. I think that we have, I would say, a strong compliance focus, and we very much shape our company according to the regulations in this field. But we also try to bring in some new innovations on the other side, and that is what my CTO tries to bring in as much as possible within the strong legal framework that we have in Germany.

**Brandon Ching (1:20)**  
Yeah, and what’s the core mission of your startup?

**Markus Poschenrieder (1:25)**  
To make social benefits more accessible.

**Brandon Ching (1:29)**  
OK. And has your mission evolved due to any external influences, including political factors?

**Markus Poschenrieder (1:36)**  
Not really. The mission stays the same, just how we approach it, I would say.

**Brandon Ching: (1:44)**  
OK. And how did the political climate surrounding the German general elections in 2025 influence your business decisions?

**Markus Poschenrieder: (1:52)**  
It changed strongly because there was a large political focus on social benefits, particularly on the citizens’ allowance in Germany, the so-called “Bürgergeld.” We saw that there was change coming in the sector of social benefits. It's primarily also the authorities and the communes who already need help in this sector, and they will need more help because these changes are creating more bureaucratic barriers and efforts for the communes. This is why we are now focusing more on communes than directly on customers.

**Brandon Ching (2:34)**  
Yeah. And what role did uncertainty around political developments play in your decision-making?

**Markus Poschenrieder (2:42)**  
It played a huge role because we’re following the negotiations around the coalition in Germany very strongly, but there are a lot of uncertain terms in those negotiations. We don’t really know in which direction they’re going, or we know that there are parts that we already know won’t be implemented in reality. That’s why we’re trying to deal with this leeway that is opening there as well as possible.

**Brandon Ching (3:17)**  
And did you implement any risk mitigation strategies to prepare for any policy shifts?

**Markus Poschenrieder (3:24)**  
Yeah, we simply go the way of least resistance for now, focusing on those authorities where we know the struggle will stay the same. For instance, in the parts of living allowance and social aid, not much is changing, or at least the foreseeable changes are things we can implement very well and quickly.

**Brandon Ching (3:52)**  
And what sources of information do you rely on when making these decisions?

**Markus Poschenrieder (3:59)**  
On the one side, we rely on lobby groups. We're part of the Startup Association (Bitkom), and we get briefed regularly about ongoing negotiations. We're also trying to participate actively in that as best as we can. On the other side, we rely on legal commentaries where we get updates on the legal situation. So what are the courts deciding on one side and what is the government doing on the other side.

**Brandon Ching (4:33)**  
And have you actively engaged with policymakers or advocacy groups regarding startup policies?

**Markus Poschenrieder (4:40)**  
With policymakers, we are on the way actually. We have a call with someone from Bitkom next week, I think, around the topic of digitalization of authorities and administrative tasks. We’re also participating in an event focused on coalition negotiations in May.

**Brandon Ching (5:08)**  
OK. And have you faced any challenges when engaging, or have you encountered any opportunities?

**Markus Poschenrieder (5:17)**  
At the beginning, it was challenging for a startup because startups generally don’t have a big voice. People simply don’t know you. But now, we’ve been around for a while and we’ve been very active, so people recognize us. We more and more see that they say ah, we heard of you before. So yeah, why don't you join this community? Why don't you join this group? Why are you not coming in in this policymaker group or have a little presentation here and there? So we are shaping our name and as we are doing that, we are growing more influent... influential as big word, but we grow more influential in that sense.

**Brandon Ching (6:07)**  
How do you perceive the role of entrepreneurs in shaping political discourse and influencing policy?

**Markus Poschenrieder (6:14)**  
It’s very important to have a lobby. For instance, the Startup Association has a very strong lobby in Germany and is actively involved in policymaking. However, for our sector, particularly in the GovTech space, there’s not a big lobby. We rely on others like Bitkom, but the startups in this sector communicate a lot with each other. We all know each other and we always say we need some political influence because we’re trying to shape the administrative services and solutions of tomorrow. But on the other side, we don’t have that influence yet. So that is missing a bit at the moment.

**Brandon Ching (7:07)**  
And do you believe startups should actively engage in politics or remain neutral?

**Markus Poschenrieder (7:14)**  
No, I think we should actively engage in politics. We are working together with stakeholders all the time. We work with communes, see their problems, we see what’s possible, and try new things out. We’re always challenging boundaries and trying to see where the barriers are, and how they could be shaped differently. So for instance, I think the approach we have nobody from a governmental perspective tried before, so we know exactly how these and these changes in the legislation would be super would be absolutely perfect digitalize social benefits. But nobody has approached it that way, and it's legally completely possible. So I think it would make sense if we would be heard a bit more.

**Brandon Ching (8:13)**  
Looking back, do you believe the elections had a lasting impact on your business strategy?

**Markus Poschenrieder (8:19)**  
Definitely. The elected party, the Christian Democrats, had a very strong stance on social benefits, which they’re trying to implement and which are already agreed upon in the coalition papers. This will have an effect on us, and we calculated with that, so we’ve already mitigated the risks for that anyway simply by not approaching these types of social benefits.

**Brandon Ching (8:53)**  
And what are the most significant lessons that you learned from navigating this political landscape?

**Markus Poschenrieder (9:02)**  
Try to get a voice as soon as possible when you really have something you need to advocate for and try to find a lobby. If there’s no lobby, try to create one. You always need to work together with others to get your voice heard, because at the beginning, nobody will listen.

**Brandon Ching (9:27)**  
So if you could propose a policy change to benefit startups in Germany, what would it be?

**Markus Poschenrieder (9:34)**  
More unification. The existing legislation creates a lot of silos across Germany. More unification for instance, when it comes to definition of income, when it comes to definition of, is it a household? Is it a demand group which how they call it in in citizens alliance for instance? It's very yeah, a lot of silos, a lot of different terms. Although they pretty much mean the same. So unification would be key for digitalization and also for making it easier for people to understand.

**Brandon Ching (10:14)**  
And what barriers do you see in implementing these changes?

**Markus Poschenrieder (10:32)**  
These are legislative changes, so in the end, they must be done by the legislators and regulators. It’s not easy because the structures that exist grew historically and have been around for many years. The whole system has developed around it, and so it means a large change for the administration. But if they really want to transform the administration in terms of digitalization, these changes are absolutely necessary and inevitable.

**Brandon Ching (11:14)**  
Do you think these changes are blocked just because the system has been built up this way over many years, or are there any other personal benefits for politicians or others that might be standing in the way?

**Markus Poschenrieder (11:34)**  
Actually, no one’s benefiting from this at the moment. It's really like basically, it grew over such a long time and there is a bit of a personal note in many political parties that they simply say we don't want to make it too easy for people to apply for social benefits. Some politicians have this opinion  
 But on the other hand, it’s a very typical German mindset, “it has been this way for the last 30 years”.

**Brandon Ching (12:09)**  
Do you have any final thoughts on how politics and entrepreneurship intersect?

**Markus Poschenrieder (12:21)**  
One thing maybe. Particularly when new regulations are coming out. For instance, they are an opportunity for working in regulatory sandboxes and so on. So, to create a bit of an environment where people can test out new solutions, we're seeing this with AI now, for instance, that we have the new AI coming into force and giving us a lot of regulations, particularly companies working in the sector of AI see this risk assessments that the AI brings with it. How do I perfectly or how do I correctly assess the risk of my AI for stuff like this? More regulatory sandboxes and more opportunities where I can simply try myself out as a start up or also as a mid sized company. If you ask me. That would be extremely helpful because there's a large uncertainty in the sector at the moment, for instance. This is just one example of it. So more regulatory sandboxes, more opportunities to try out new things before regulation comes into force.