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SUNGARD ADAPTIV: EXPERIENCE
– JÜRGEN ELSNER, WEST LB

Risk Management
and Operations
Solutions

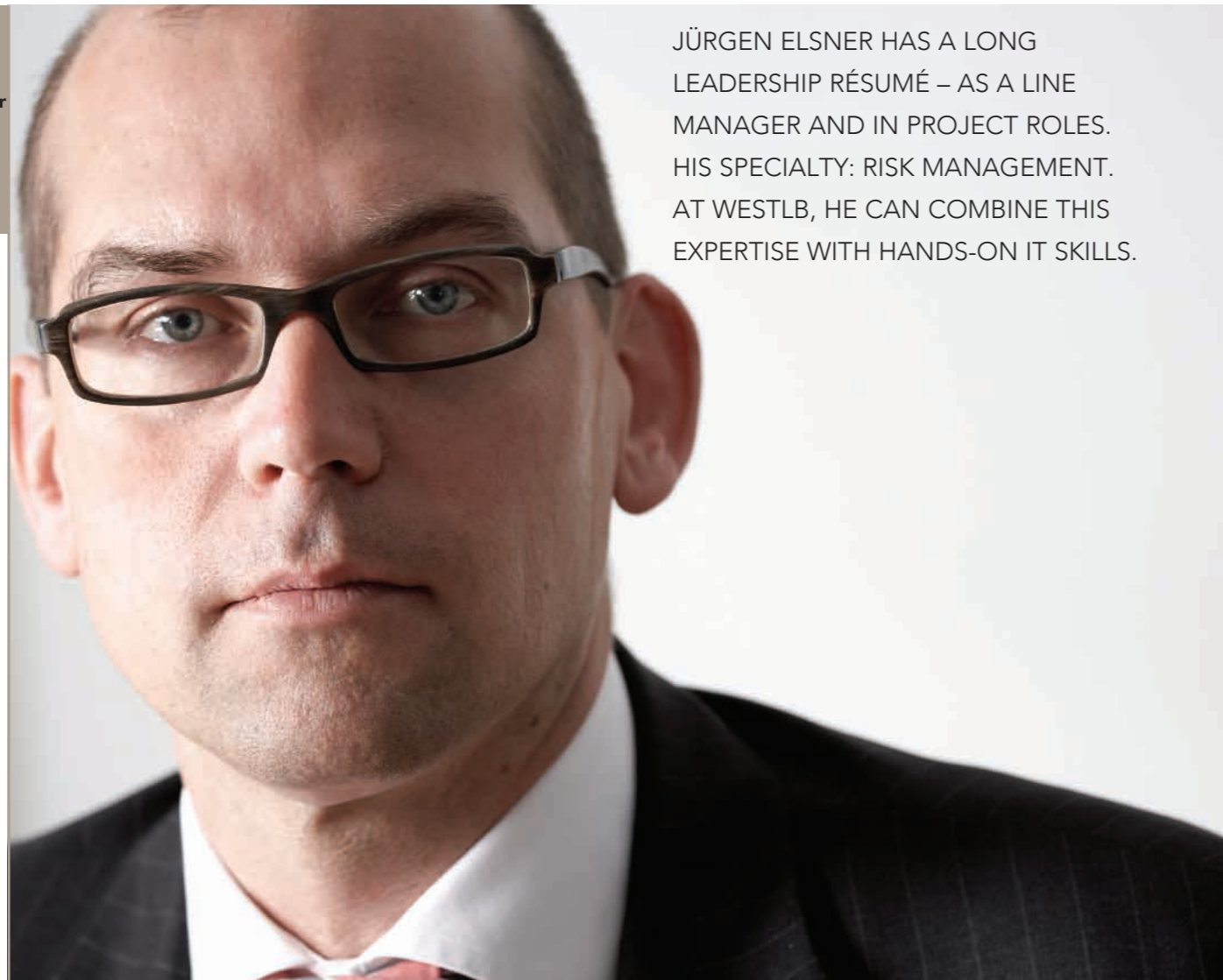
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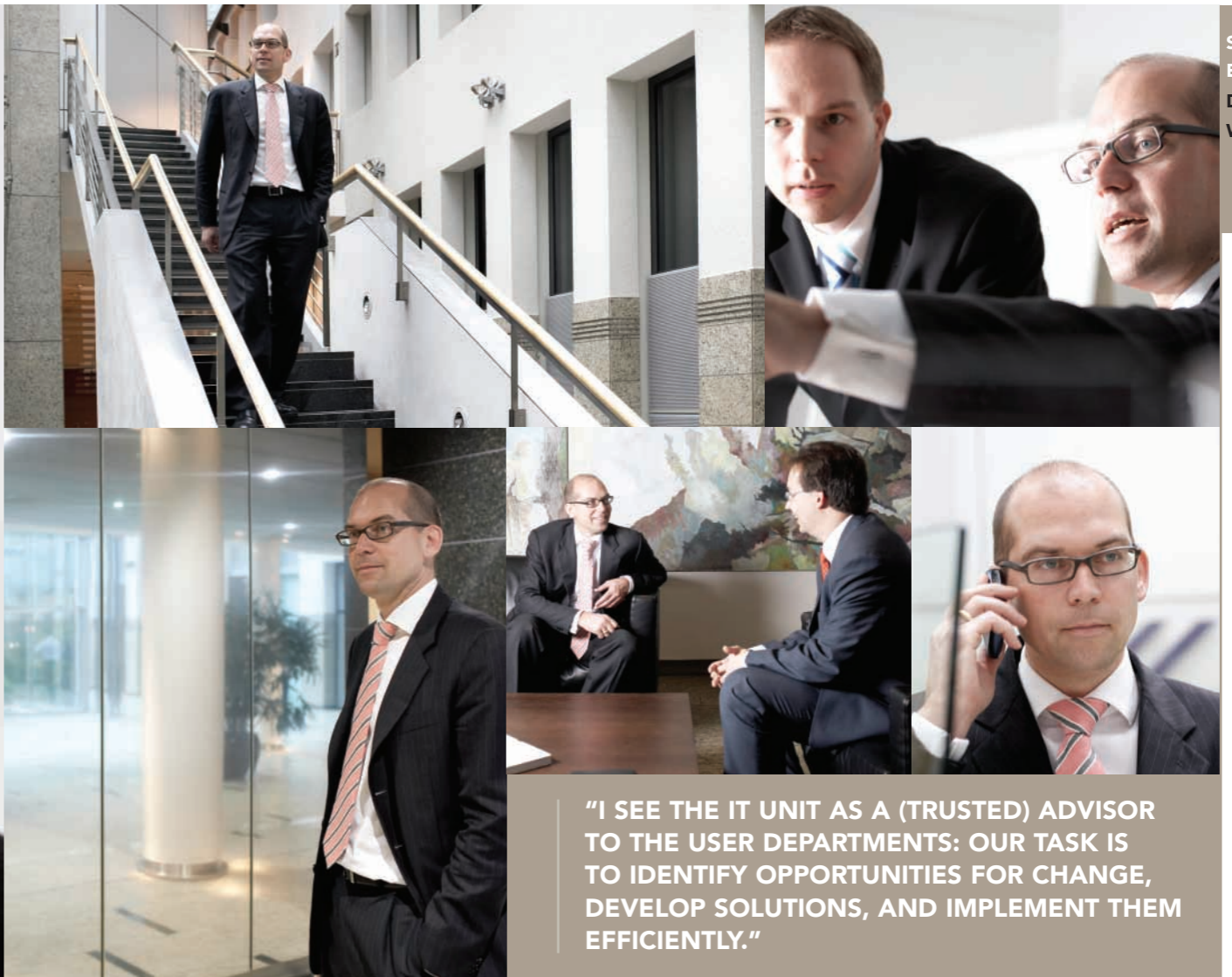
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JÜRGEN ELSNER HAS A LONG LEADERSHIP RÉSUMÉ – AS A LINE MANAGER AND IN PROJECT ROLES. HIS SPECIALTY: RISK MANAGEMENT. AT WESTLB, HE CAN COMBINE THIS EXPERTISE WITH HANDS-ON IT SKILLS.



“I SEE THE IT UNIT AS A (TRUSTED) ADVISOR TO THE USER DEPARTMENTS: OUR TASK IS TO IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE, DEVELOP SOLUTIONS, AND IMPLEMENT THEM EFFICIENTLY.”



EXPOSURE DATA AT THE CLICK OF A MOUSE

One of the highlights in Elsner’s career as a change agent is the Credit Change Program. This is a multiyear, eight-figure project to automate credit-approval processes and track the bank’s exposure to individual clients and at all levels of aggregation.

The seed for this idea was planted not long after Elsner joined WestLB. He noticed that, while the bank tracked counterparty risks in a single, integrated application (SunGard Adaptiv) staff still had to collect and collate information from several different solutions, especially in lending operations.

The logical decision was to use SunGard to track credit risk, too. Elsner developed a strategy, developed an implementation plan and took it on a tour of the bank’s decision-makers. “Part of my job is to market my department and ideas,” he says.

WORK LIFE

LOCATION: “In downtown Düsseldorf, near the Königsallee boulevard.”

COMMUTE: “Around ten minutes by streetcar.”

OFFICE: “I have a sunny office that looks out onto a church.”

ORGANIZATIONAL TOOLS: “I use a BlackBerry that my secretary maintains for me.”

BUSINESS HOURS: “My main business hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. I take weekends off.”

DRESS CODE: “I wear a suit, but the people on my team may dress more casually, as the mood strikes them.”

The budget was approved. Soon, WestLB will be one of the first banks in Germany that can calculate aggregate international exposure to any client in trading and lending at the push of a button.

IT THROUGH THE FINANCE PRISM

Elsner studied business-management, focusing on risk management, in Bielefeld and Vienna. He has a strong background in theory; his doctoral dissertation examined the use of chaos theory to explain pricing trends on equity markets. And he gained his practical experience in risk management at Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt and New York. He went on to UBS in Zurich and was the general manager of a management consulting firm.

His job at WestLB is his first-ever IT-only position. Surrounded by physicists, mathematicians and computer scientists, Elsner is something of the odd man out with his business-management degrees – one who views IT through a finance prism. Over the years, though, he has developed a sound knowledge of IT. It helped that he began with an intuitive grasp of the subject. “I couldn’t possibly develop applications,” says Elsner, “but I know enough to weigh the pros and cons of various solutions.”

MEETINGS FOSTER TEAM SPIRIT

Elsner’s unit comprises around 100 employees and between 60 and 70 contractors. Most work at the headquarters in Düsseldorf, but some are based in London, near the SunGard data center that hosts the bank’s Adaptiv system. Elsner sets up several offsite meetings a year to bridge the cultural and geographical gap.

HOME LIFE

FAMILY: “I am married with two grown-up stepchildren.”

HOME: “I spend my weekends at our house in Kassel, where my wife works. During the week, I live in an apartment in Düsseldorf.”

PASTIMES: “I work out regularly by jogging and going to the gym. I love to go skiing whenever I can. I prefer to spend the rest of my free time with my friends and family.”

VACATION: “I like the mountains and love the sea. My last trip was to the South Pacific, but I am a fan of the island of Sylt and visit regularly.”

CURRENT DREAM: “To tour Europe or North America in a recreational vehicle. I would also like to live in Switzerland again – because of its natural beauty and generally high standard of living.”

While much time is spent on project status reports and business and IT issues, these occasions are really about team-building. Once the presentations and meetings are over, everyone comes together in a casual, informal atmosphere. Team members have plenty of opportunities to get to know one another: at nightclubs, at soccer games or over beers at a local bar. “We could probably share ideas in other ways,” admits Elsner, “such as video-conferencing.” However, he is convinced the face-to-face meetings are good for team morale. “Even today, nothing beats personal contact.”