

# TEDx Klagenfurt

## Ein Interview mit Marko Haschej

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*Tête-à-tête with Marko Haschej. The 33 year old Austrian entrepreneur who has been actively trying to reshape the intellectual landscape of Carinthia. He always seeks innovative ideas and loves to combine them in order to find creative solutions for complex challenges. Alongside being the curator of TEDxKlagenfurt, he also co-organizes Silicon Valley Inspiration Tours - a program dedicated to inspire and connect Entrepreneurs and StartUps from all over the world with companies in and south of San Francisco. Marko recently co-founded the Austrian online magazine Helden von heute and he is currently working on his next StartUp called Urban Sync.*

**Tell us a bit about your experience at AAU.**

Well, there's not much to tell. I studied Information Management & Business Administration. I had a great time there. I think the level of education is high and the offers are pretty good at AAU. Although, I feel like I should have left earlier. It's always good to get some experience abroad and away from home and I think I waited a bit too long.

Anyway, after my internship in San Francisco a lot of things changed. Suddenly I knew I have to start something new and eventually I ended up organizing TEDx, I started companies in Vienna and I work on projects all around the world.

**What exactly is TEDx? How do you think TEDx makes a change?**

TEDx is a conference format

that started in 1984 in California. TED stands for Technology, Entertainment & Design and it gathers the world's gre-

timately the world. It is a fantastic community of like-minded people. With that ideas can grow, projects get initiated

# TED<sup>x</sup>Klagenfurt

**x = independently  
organized TED event**

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atest thinkers, change makers, disruptors, entrepreneurs, scientists as well as artist on a stage. The x in TEDx stands for "independently organized", which means we at TEDxKlagenfurt have to apply for a license at TED and with that we are allowed to organize a TED like event in our home town.

TEDx provides a stage to fantastic and often unknown ideas. It gathers people who aim to change their lives, their professional settings and ul-

and change can happen.

**You're from Carinthia but are now settled in Vienna. So why did you pick Carinthia for your project?**

Actually, I still lived and worked in Klagenfurt when we started organizing TEDxKlagenfurt in 2013. But TEDx changed my life in so many ways. After attending TEDActive in Whistler in 2014 I decided to quit my job, I moved to Vienna and started working on things I believe in. One of them is still TEDxKlagenfurt. Everything I do now is because of TEDx.



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Marko Haschej im Interview

The thing is, Carinthia is my home. I grew up in Eberndorf, went to school in Klagenfurt and I spent most of my life in the southern part of Austria. I am happy to be able to give back and to contribute to the development of our country.

**What ignited the spark in you to bring TEDx to Klagenfurt in particular?**

The idea was born by a few dedicated young people at Slowenischer Wirtschaftsverband. TED's concept was still unknown and far from popular in our area. But those guys set the goal to bring inspiration and new ideas to Klagenfurt.

The funny thing was, I didn't even want to be part of the team first. My friends approached me in April 2013 and asked me to join their team. Back then I felt I had already too many projects, but after the first meeting I was convin-

ced and happy to become part of this amazing idea and project.

**What goes into preparing such a large scale event?**

Well, a lot of work and time, obviously. You need a team with a broad set of skills, high commitment and a greater goal that drives us. Without having higher goals for your event and for your region you wouldn't be able to spend thousands of hours on organizing it on a volunteer basis.

**What is unique about this event?**

The interesting part of a TEDx is, there are many different topics and speakers on one stage. It is neither a business conference nor a tech only event. The beauty about TEDx is its diversity. There will be always relevant topics and exciting talks for every attendee at TEDx.

Also, a talk is 18 minutes max. Chris Anderson, the curator of TED, is convinced 18 minutes are perfect to stay focused and not lose attention and at the same time it gives the speaker enough time to present a sophisticated idea to the audience.

But you can always watch the talks later online. All the talks get recorded and published on YouTube. The event itself is far more than just the talks. It is a very unique and inspiring experience everyone should have at least once in his life.

**Why is it held in English? Wouldn't it reach a lot more people if you conducted this in German?**

Well, we are an international event. At this year's event we'll have speakers from 10 different countries. Also, we are close to the Slovenian and Italian borders. One of the main goals of TEDx is to connect



people and language shouldn't be a barrier.

Additionally, I like to challenge people. I know for some attendees it might be harder to follow the talks in English, but only if you challenge yourself you can actually grow.

**Where do the speakers come from and what areas do they usually cover?**

This year we'll have speakers from the United States, Canada, India, Germany, Slovenia, Lebanon, the UK, Australia, Austria of course and more. They all come from different backgrounds. We will have experts in the field of astronomy, sustainability, artificial intelligence, entrepreneurship, technology, exponential organizations etc. But there will be also exciting life stories and artists such as musicians, dancers and comedians. It is a very diverse set of amazing people and you shouldn't miss it. ;)

**Are there any other projects you are working on?**

Sure, in Vienna we have a startup called Urban Sync. It is a mobile app for civic participation in urban planning projects and a communication service for cities and citizens. I'm also a partner and co-host at Silicon Valley Inspiration Tours, which is a program dedicated to inspire entrepreneurs from all over the world by meeting with companies, startups, investors etc. in the epicenter of tech innovation- the area between San Francisco and San

Jose. And because I'm always seeking for new challenges I'm already working on some new ideas and plans. ;)

**Seems like you have a very busy schedule. So, what do you like to do in your off time?**

Well, football was always my big passion. I used to play in a team for many years and I loved it. Because of obvious reasons - my projects & travels - I don't have time for that anymore. But I try to stay fit with running. Funny thing is, most of my ideas pop up during outdoor activities, when your mind is free. I also take my running shoes with me on my travels. And I recently realized, those shoes have already touched ground in countless countries on four different continents.

The second thing, that gives me a lot of energy, is my friends. Whenever I have a minute either at home in Carinthia or at any place else, I love to hang out and spend some time with them. I believe everything you experience in life gains in value if you're able to share it with your friends

**Where do you see yourself in the next 10 years?**

I don't think you can find a good answer on such questions.

First of all, I like the excitement of discovering my personal future and the future of us all. I wouldn't even want to know what's ahead of us. However, I do have clear goals

and I'm working on reaching them soon.

The more important thing is to always pay attention to what happens around us, to identify chances and to make the most out of everything happening to us. Every challenge and every negative experience may be an opportunity in disguise.

**Haha. Alright, let me rephrase it then. What advice would you give to the Marko from 5/10 years ago?**

There are three key messages I would like to share based on my own experiences, on what I have learned from my personal mentors and some very smart people so far.

**#1:** Everything out there was built by people no smarter than you. So, if you have an idea, a dream, follow it. Stop trying and start doing it. It's going to be hard work. You have to be patient! Never give up! And don't let other people interfere with your dreams.

**#2:** You can't connect the dots looking forward, you can only connect them looking backwards. Get rid of your need for control. Trust things are going to work out, trust your gut, and trust your own abilities.

**#3:** At the end of your life, you'll regret the things you didn't do more than the ones you did. Go out there and have fun! Do what you love and love what you do! You only live once.