



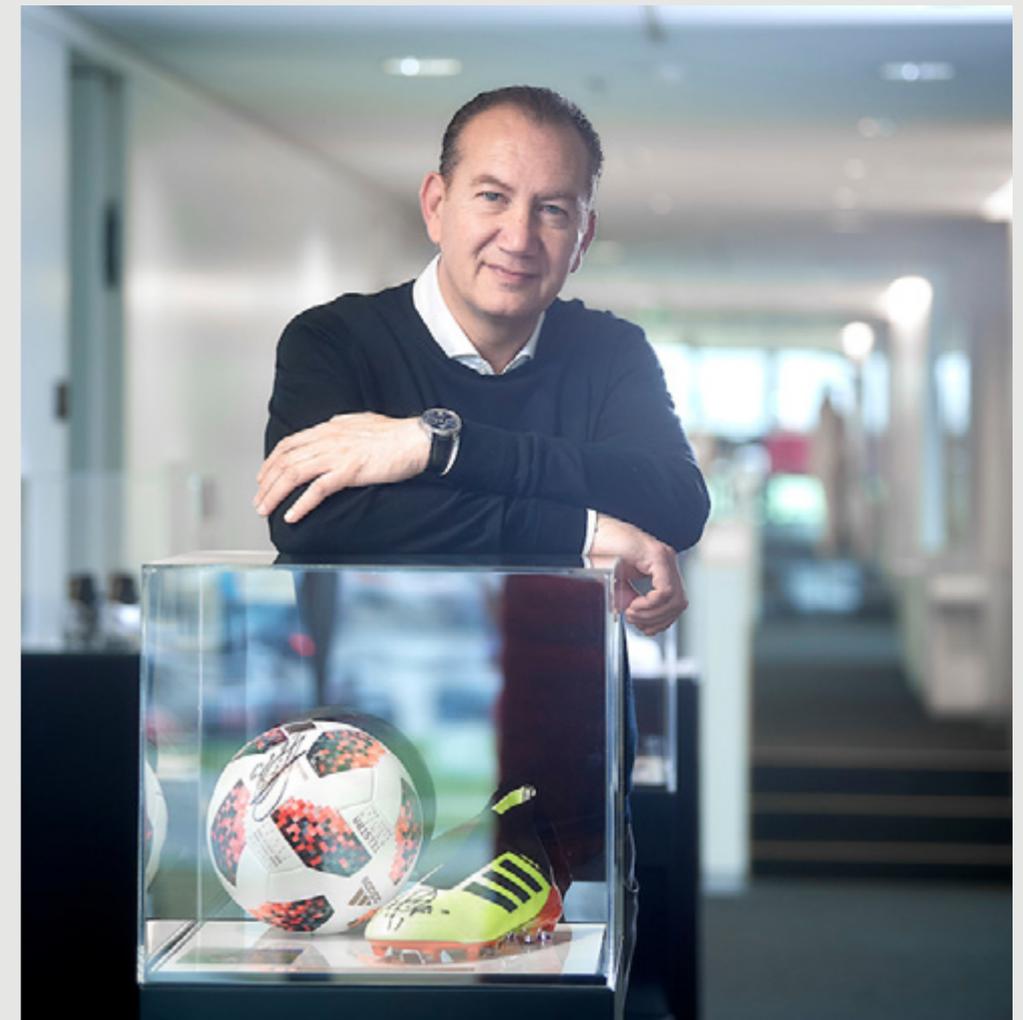
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# LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES FROM STEVE EVERS CEO, INTERSPORT

Spencer Stuart's Sally Elliott interviews Steve Evers – CEO, IIC - INTERSPORT International Corporation GmbH – and discusses insights he learned about his team and his own leadership during COVID-19, a pivotal moment that leadership teams ignore at their peril.

**During COVID-19, how have you been communicating what you stand for - the purpose, vision and values of Intersport?**

We already needed to adapt before COVID. The pandemic has just increased our urgency to accelerate the process. Obviously, everyone has been focused on short-term survival and liquidity. But I have kept repeating that our long-term goals and objectives will always remain the same. Our purpose lies in creating value for those that depend on us. We are a retail service company at the beating heart of sports. Our vision and our mission haven't changed. We still aim to be the world's most loved sporting goods destination. And our mission continues to be to serve local sports enthusiasts. Meanwhile, our core values remain: to be collaborative, passionate, solution oriented, to have respect, trust and integrity, and to be responsible and service-oriented. Our strategy is the right one, despite the circumstances.



**What's worked well when it comes to managing your people, your team and your resources?**

I really believe it's important to make sure everyone knows the goals and objectives of the company and their individual roles and responsibilities. For me personally, this meant learning to manage the outputs instead of being involved in operational matters. It's important to trust your team to deliver. I'm really blessed to have great people around me who fight like lions to serve and protect the company.

Another thing that has worked well is using a balanced scorecard methodology which we began a year ago. Benchmarking performance internally creates peer pressure, which is a great motivator and accelerator for achieving results. A lot of our people have a sports background and our environment is very competitive! For example, the captain of the Mexican Olympic volleyball team is one of our product line directors. With these types of personalities, you just need to light the fire and they go!

**How do you engage and energise your teams to go the extra mile?**

It has been very important to have frequent staff and director meetings. We created many occasions to get in touch with our people all around the world - all through technology. There are many platforms that offer amazing experiences as we're hosting meetings with 300+ people in a virtual room. During those meetings, I tried to be consistent in my messages and encourage everyone to keep challenging everything we do.

I believe it's important to be really intentional about what we focus on. Anything that gets attention grows and improves. So, creating moments to show what's important and to recognise good work and make that visible is key. Also, it is very important to be clear about expectations. If you don't tell people what you expect from them, it's very difficult to measure and to give feedback for improvement. In situations of underperformance, feedback is especially critical.



**COVID-19 has introduced the need for a completely new level of agility. How are you adapting to this constantly changing context? What adjustments may need to be made for the longer term?**

The good news is that we were already in a mindset of constantly adapting to the fast-changing world we operate in. Sports retail is a highly competitive business, and we are used to dealing with very strong competitors and the strategic brands who have a huge direct to consumer focus.

Our Intersport brand is the main commonality that unifies us across all our markets around the globe, which is why it receives our continuous investment and attention. Last year we went through a huge exercise to redefine our brand platform. The Intersport brand straddles many different business models, maturity levels, consumer preferences and ownership structures, which means that our main challenge is to improve the execution of our global strategy across the 60+ countries we operate in. What differentiates us is our physical footprint of over 5500 locations around the world, but the benefits of this can only be realised by connecting at the point of sale in every store and market, gathering data and insights to continuously fuel better business decision-making and improved efficiencies. And we are challenging ourselves to do all of this while becoming more digitally savvy. Our job is to connect the dots and to unlock potential.

**What advice would you have for leaders of retail businesses right now?**

I think if I'd have to choose one thing, it would be to constantly challenge everything you do. Reevaluate your value proposition for the consumer. Think consumer and not product. Yesterday's success is no guarantee for the future.

**What's the one thing you've learned about leadership over the last few months?**

It would definitely be this: the role of a business leader – in fact any leader for that matter – is to create a sense of safety, care and belonging. I've learned that energy in the team is the primary driver of success. So, energy should also be a KPI that is closely monitored.

**How will you look back on this pandemic?**

I look back on it so far with mixed feelings. On the one hand, it has been terrible. Being locked down, with all our stores closed, and supporting our people around the globe under huge stress – both business and personal – was extremely challenging. But I do believe we come out stronger. And this is the main thing to remember. We got through it, we learned, and we will come out stronger.

