

“Fostering a Great Place to Work”

The focus on human centricity and the global nature of Gebr. Heinemann entails a heightened focus on its employees and the company culture.

Gebr. Heinemann’s People & Culture approach aims at strengthening the cooperation and cohesion of the group, taking into consideration its global and cultural influences while, at the same time, valuing human centricity as the core of everything. Ché Lewer joined the Hamburg headquarters in September 2023 to head up the division formerly known as “Human Resources.” Over the past seven and a half years, Ché has assumed various senior Human Resources leadership positions at Heinemann Asia Pacific and Heinemann Australia.

Ché is a truly global citizen: born in Johannesburg, South Africa, she has lived, studied, and worked in various countries, including Switzerland, Bangladesh, the Philippines, the USA, Thailand, Australia, and – most recently – Singapore. With extensive HR experience in the hospitality, retail, and travel retail industries, she brings an international mindset to Gebr. Heinemann in Hamburg.



What constitutes the unique global group spirit at Gebr. Heinemann and sets the company apart?

Ché Lewer: As a global business, we are incredible operators with exceptional outlets, offering impressive services and assortment mixes across various categories. However, what sets us apart is our people and our culture. We are truly unique and the Heinemann DNA is visible across the globe. We are united despite our geographic borders, which is evident in both the good times and the bad. I feel privileged to be part of the business and to further amplify the culture and team spirit at Gebr. Heinemann.

Which approach are you taking in People & Culture to bring Gebr. Heinemann’s vision of being the most human-centric company in global travel retail to life?

Ché Lewer: First of all, we need to enhance our global mindset, taking into consideration local, regional, and global nuances. We have to be closer to our businesses and understand the heartbeat of our organizations and our people. Moreover, as a global business, we need to elevate our multicultural community by increasing synergy, knowledge transfer, and the exchange of best practices. We have to be progressive, agile, diverse, authentic, and human in our interactions to be the best we can be. At the company headquarters, we need to provide a global platform in order to achieve this.

How exactly does Gebr. Heinemann support its employees to be impressive, as the company promises in its value proposition?

Ché Lewer: Our aim is to ensure that we empower our team members with the tools, skills, and resources to connect with travelers and our customers in a personal and authentic way. We need to stay up-to-date with the latest trends, technologies, and changes in customer mixes and shopping patterns to ensure that we can also upskill our employees and recruit, engage, and retain the

right people with the right skill set and mindset. A heightened focus on people development and engagement at all levels is key.

How do you convey the uniqueness of Gebr. Heinemann to attract and retain talent?

Ché Lewer: Our focus is on creating an attractive workplace where team members feel comfortable, connected, engaged, and valued. We want to foster a great place to work where people crave to be a part of our business – be it at the corporate office or our retail and logistics warehouses, either locally, regionally, or globally. Roles will change in the future, and we need to be ready. We have to ensure that we are evolving with the times and are digitizing and simplifying our ways of working, where applicable. We need to have the right talent on board who are willing, able, skilled, and flexible to develop in order to support our growth journey at Gebr. Heinemann. Moving forward, we can further enhance our partnerships with airports and cruise companies to create attractive workplaces, despite rotational rosters and unsociable working hours. We need to position ourselves more effectively in the market. This enables us to enhance our talent attraction and sourcing channels and to build a sustainable talent pipeline for today and tomorrow.

How is it possible to implement a global strategy – given the different political and cultural circumstances across the group?

Ché Lewer: A one-size-fits-all approach does not work. There are clearly differences in political and cultural preferences across the globe, but our guiding principles unite us. Therefore, we also need to be willing to adapt to differences in culture, since diversity, equality, inclusion, and belonging are at the core of everything we do.

At the end of the day, we are all doing our jobs for the same reason: to move Gebr. Heinemann forward, to be successful, and to enjoy coming to work and doing what we do. As a result, we will need to adapt and be flexible at times, but being

respectful and demonstrating trust in our interactions is crucial, as we are all different – and this is the beauty of working for a truly global organization like Gebr. Heinemann.

What does the future of collaboration look like within Gebr. Heinemann’s global group of companies?

Ché Lewer: We need to continue enhancing our ability to exchange and collaborate as one group of Heinemann companies, which will require us to further improve our communication, tools, resources, and digital platforms. However, we are certainly on the right way. Two good examples are our global quarterly town hall meetings, where team members across the globe can reach out to our Executive Board, and our global career pool, where team members can exchange ideas, network, and share best practices. We need to create more opportunities like these, bringing us much closer together because this is where the golden nuggets lie. Being Heinemann ambassadors and role models for the organization is what we should all aim to be. We should strive to demonstrate our guiding principles and exhibit behavior that supports collaboration, global knowledge transfer, and the overall Gebr. Heinemann team spirit.

Ché Lewer, Vice President People & Culture
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