

THE PROCESS: SASCHA LANG INTERVIEW

Schumetta ([00:00:13](#)):

Well Sascha, thank you so much for being with us today.

Sascha ([00:00:16](#)):

Thank you for having me.

Schumetta ([00:00:18](#)):

Okay, so first question. So I like to kind of just talk about your background, just how you got started in the business and how you came to Miami and anything you want to add in between?

Sascha ([00:00:32](#)):

So from a background point of view, I start as a structural engineering drawer. Yeah, so I did an apprenticeship that's just after high school, back in Switzerland and I start to become or tried to be an architect. But somehow, I was not fully satisfied with this. I was young and I start to travel. I went to the US for six months, Santa Barbara, to California and to start to learn the language, English, obviously at this point. But then going back to Switzerland, went back to work in an architect's office. Again, I was not fully satisfied at that point, in that age, "Is this really what I want to do, searching, is this the right thing?" So I went for a second travel, backpacking through Central America for another six months. Start in Costa Rica, going up and down Central America to Guatemala, El Salvador. But before I left actually, I got an offer to go into a hotel management school. I had this idea somehow because as a young teenager, I start to be a waiter in a hotel on a lake, so-

Schumetta ([00:02:05](#)):

Oh, which one?

Sascha ([00:02:06](#)):

It was the Hotel Seerose in Meisterschwanden. It's on a small lake in Central Switzerland and I worked there for weddings, I worked there on weekends. I really helped them on the big terrace in the summer. And so I was always in this kind of hospitality and I really liked that, to be with guests, be with people, serving food, be a host for events and so on. So somehow, one day I thought, "Why should I not go hotel management school?" So the restaurants I worked part-time, still helping, the owner told me, "I can get you into a hotel management school," because I want to do a one which is not going four years and then going for all the administration part because I had-

Schumetta ([00:02:59](#)):

Because you'd already done it.

Sascha ([00:03:00](#)):

I did it, right. So there was one particular school which obviously, a threshold to get in was pretty high because you need experience in the hospitality before. So you need an apprenticeship as a cook, an apprenticeship as a waiter. So they were actually requesting four years industry experience and he said, "I can get you in there. I can testify that you work for me so many years and you should have a chance to get in." So that's how I end up in the hotel management school in Zürich, Belvoirpark Zürich, it was called at this point. Then from there again, I graduated and I thought, "What I'm going to do? I don't want to go into a hotel either. I want to travel again," so I thought I'd go into South America-

Schumetta ([00:03:53](#)):

I see a pattern, right.

Sascha ([00:03:54](#)):

So I want to go culture, I was always culture thing and so I thought, "I'm not going to look for a job." About all my peers and colleagues at school, they went to the Marriotts, to the Hiltons of the world, all over the globe. I said, "No, I'm not going." However, my roommate saw an advertising for a job of a Swiss hotel company called Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts. They were looking for a project coordinator and she said, "Sascha, this is a job for you." I said, "No, Barbara. I don't want to have the job," so she applied in my name, wrote a CV and send it-

Schumetta ([00:04:37](#)):

So you said no, but she did it for you anyway?

Sascha ([00:04:45](#)):

She did it and she was my roommate in my apartment when I was in the hotel management school and she actually sent this application to Mövenpick. Then all of a sudden, my phone rings and said, "We got your application. Your interest in the company. Can you come for an interview?" And I said, "What? Who is this? Who is talking?" And of course, it was very close to my school in Zürich, so I said, "Yeah, I can come 2:00 the afternoon." And this is how I end up then in design and construction for hotels.

Schumetta ([00:05:06](#)):

Wow. Good thing you didn't hang up when you get the call, "Who is this," right-

Sascha ([00:05:18](#)):

Correct. It was really weird and she even tells me nowadays, "Sascha, you still owe me because your career is based on me sending an application and the CV this company for this job." So I actually got the job with Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts and start doing hotels in, mostly at this time, in Middle East, in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon. I was 25 years old and was traveling intensely, I would say, to Middle East all the time for project, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon-

Schumetta ([00:05:58](#)):

And What were you doing? What were some of your day-to-day responsibilities at this time?

Sascha ([00:06:03](#)):

So I became then really the main design and construction person from the hotel company. So I defined the standards, I defined the space program, I made the briefs for the interior designers. What kind of concepts we would like to have, coordinated architects, engineers, third party consultants, to design and construct the hotel. So I was more or less, I would say the rep of Mövenpick Hotel & Resorts and was very creative because we could really start, define a hotel as per the location. And that brought me into obviously all these cultures and that's how I also got then into a bigger company, which is Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts from Hong Kong, who asked me, "Oh, can you come and open the development office in Middle East for us?" Because they want to expand outside of Asia. Was a very Asian inspired brand.

Schumetta ([00:07:11](#)):

So now, about how old were you when you made that transition?

Sascha ([00:07:15](#)):

31. Yeah, 31, I moved to Dubai, took that job and start to build, design and construction for the first hotels Shangri-La had outside of Asia. Dubai was the first, Abu Dhabi the second, followed by hotels in Oman, a big resort. And because they were all management contracts, so I worked mainly with third party owners, third party consults, so we were just a hotel operator, but we actually defined the standards. Through the contract negotiation, management contracts, we actually also defined the standards, the design.

Sascha ([00:08:01](#)):

And that was a very interesting role because I was really then based in Dubai and travel from Dubai, all over the globe. And also Shangri-La Paris was another hotel, we had one in Vienna which then obviously didn't come through in 2008 because of the recession. But also in London, the Shangri-La London at the Shard tower is a very famous hotel. From this point, then MGM from Las Vegas approach me and said, "Oh, would you be interested to do the same what you did for Shangri-La, for us because we want to expand out of Las Vegas with the hotel brands we have?" The Bellagios, the MGM Grand, the SKYLOFTS, Mandalay Bay, of

course, non-gambling because we were in the Middle East, in the Arab world, so I said, "Yeah, I'm interested," so that's-

Schumetta ([00:09:02](#)):

Okay. So how old were you when you made that transition?

Sascha ([00:09:05](#)):

I'm 36. Yeah, 36, 37. Was seven years with Shangri-La and then I went to MGM, correct. And that was a very interesting time as well because it just went into 2008, 2009. The recessions just started literally and the roles slowed down a little bit on financing all this hotel project. But we kept going, mostly in India and in China at this point. There was the main focus for MGM. And I did this for three years until I received a phone call from Langham Hotels and Resorts, based in Hong Kong and ask me if I'm interest to move to Hong Kong. At this point, I was already married and I had one child and the son was born in Dubai and my wife was pregnant with the second one. And I said, "Are you up for a gig? Should we go to Hong Kong?" And so I moved to Hong Kong for Langham Hotels and Resorts-

Schumetta ([00:10:19](#)):

So was your second child born in Hong Kong?

Sascha ([00:10:22](#)):

The second and the third both born in Hong Kong.

Schumetta ([00:10:24](#)):

Okay, all right.

Sascha ([00:10:26](#)):

Yeah. So then I moved to Hong Kong for another six years working for Langham, also many hotels in the US. So this was a company like Shangri-La, owning a lot of properties, so own and operator. And I like that part most because before, let's say with MGM and with Mövenpick, we had to rely really on third party owners. We didn't have really so much power over the financing, so we always had to convince them to invest in the right architecture, in the right quality-

Schumetta ([00:11:12](#)):

The materials and...

Sascha ([00:11:12](#)):

... the materiality, because it's a luxury brand. But then I been on the owner side, you only had to obviously get your owner over the line about the investment, so you could actually define a

little bit the budget differently. On the other hand as well, you had very clear parameter what the financing boundaries are. So when you start scaling a hotel from a space program point of view up, so you had to really be a little bit more-

Schumetta ([00:11:44](#)):

Mindful...

Sascha ([00:11:45](#)):

Mindful, correct, how you actually utilize the space because it's all about return of investment the end of the day, for the owner and for the company as well. So that brought me to the US for hotel development a lot because the owner had many properties he actually acquired over the years. So he had the Federal Bank in Boston, for example, which was operated at this time as a Hilton and that became then a Langham. But then he made a big move with acquiring 20 floors at the IBM building in Chicago, which was the last building Mies van der Rohe did in the '60s.

Sascha ([00:12:34](#)):

And that was an interesting project because he told me, "Sascha look, with this project, we going to redefine the Langham brand." The Langham comes from London, which is the famous Langham Hotel he acquired, so he had the name. But due to the reason he bought all these hotels like the Ritz-Carlton in Pasadena, he renamed it to The Langham, all the hotels had different design elements. So he wants to create his own brand, his own DNA-

Schumetta ([00:13:09](#)):

Right. So when you're there, you know it's a Langham Hotel.

Sascha ([00:13:14](#)):

Correct. He wants to do, the spa was important for most of the Asian brands, but also then he said, "What is my DNA when it comes to design? What is close to me," himself, and he was a heart surgeon before, as a doctor.

Schumetta ([00:13:33](#)):

A heart surgeon?

Sascha ([00:13:34](#)):

Yeah.

Schumetta ([00:13:35](#)):

Oh, my goodness.

Sascha ([00:13:36](#)):

And he inherited obviously the comp... He actually went back to his company, his family business and he became the chairman of the family business which is a real estate company in Hong Kong. So he said, "I like white." And of course, then all the operators, my colleagues said, "Yeah, but Dr. Lo, you can't do white. White will not last. It will stain." He turned, he said, "I don't care. I like white, I like clean, I don't like dark colors."

Sascha ([00:14:08](#)):

So we actually start creating really a pallet of colors which is infused with a lot of light colors and white plays the central role. And why we actually did that, I think one of the narratives we did when we start to define what is Langham Hotels, it's a British brand, but when you see the British brand, we actually get inspired by the British colonial because especially they used a lot of white then as well. Light colors in the Caribbean, wherever the Brits actually were in the colonial time. So we said, "Okay, so here we have the white," so we start to build a little bit the classic colonial elements into a modern way, so to still have a kind of a balance, but is British heritage-

Schumetta ([00:14:59](#)):

Right, right, right. So it's not just random things, but it actually has a foundation in design-

Sascha ([00:15:04](#)):

So foundation, so when now you go to a Langham, like Boston which is fully renovated now or Chicago, you can see that kind of air, open space, white and art plays an important role, always, art. He was a huge art collector himself. He likes from music to film, culture, art, so art played a very important role. So that actually was an interesting role to create that brand. I was really close with the team, with the marketing team, with the development team, with the CEO, to build that brand for the owner of Langham Hotels.

Sascha ([00:15:55](#)):

When everybody was always saying, "Hey, why don't work in the US because you're so much in the US," he acquired the building in... not the building, a block in San Francisco and he said, "I want to do it with Renzo Piano. I only do it with Renzo Piano." But Renzo Piano said, "No, I only take three jobs per year, no more." So he said, "Sascha, you go to see Renzo Piano and you convince him that he's doing the building for me in San Francisco." And he also acquired a block in Tokyo, he said, "I want to have both by Renzo Piano."

Schumetta ([00:16:30](#)):

So that's two in that year, right?

Sascha ([00:16:31](#)):

So I went Genoa, I went to Renzo Piano and I said to Renzo, "This is the two jobs we want, obviously with you." And at the end, I left Genoa, going back to Hong Kong, at least he's doing San Francisco, but he didn't do Tokyo.

Schumetta ([00:16:48](#)):

Oh, wow, wow.

Sascha ([00:16:52](#)):

Again, this shows a little bit how I traveled through the world and also met a lot of those really genius architects, right. I worked with Rafael Viñoly with MGM, but the project never went through, it was in Abu Dhabi or with Sir Norman Foster, so-

Schumetta ([00:17:13](#)):

Oh, he's my favorite, he's my favorite.

Sascha ([00:17:13](#)):

... so we had a lot of meetings. Obviously also with MGM, we were also looking about these iconic architects, but the owner-

Schumetta ([00:17:19](#)):

Oh, okay. I have a question about Viñoly. Every photo I see, he has on about four different pairs of glasses, so different eyeglasses. So when you met him, I mean, did he have on all those glasses? Usually there were three on a chain, one on his head and then one here on his face, so.

Sascha ([00:17:36](#)):

Right. I mean, he is one-

Schumetta ([00:17:40](#)):

And the biggest smile on his face.

Sascha ([00:17:42](#)):

The meetings with him are probably the most funniest meeting I ever had. I mean, he's not just a creative person, just his sense of humor is incredible and his style. Rafael Viñoly and his style is unmatched. He's just a kind of a person which you just love when you see him, you want to work with him. He's crazy, but he's also full of fun and I think it comes together so well, he so well balanced.

Schumetta ([00:18:12](#)):

Yeah. Every photo I've seen, there's just something in his eyes, it's just everything you said comes through. Okay. So now I have to ask about Norman Foster, so what is your experience with him?

Sascha ([00:18:27](#)):

You're exposed with Norman Foster really, literally just in the concept phase. And then obviously he has a very strong team of architects executing his sketches, his concept. I mean, if you want to see and want to meet a really British gentleman, probably Sir Norman Foster. And the meetings we had with him in his new office building in London, it's really about architecture in a way, he's more an urban-

Schumetta ([00:19:01](#)):

Urban planner.

Sascha ([00:19:02](#)):

... from an urban planner. That's where he comes and he's creating that kind of niche homes in a tower, for example, in an urban city and how we can integrate living, let's say, within one building. So I think the multi-use buildings he's famous for nowadays, building from hospitality to residential, to shopping malls, to parks, integrated into an entire development, I think that's a very interesting thought process because urban planning is a totally different game-

Schumetta ([00:19:37](#)):

Well, and that's part of his background as well because he started out working, I don't know if it was Manchester specifically, but he started out working in the building and planning department before he went off to architecture school. So I think that's always informed how he goes about his projects, rather than, "Here's my design. You have to do it." He's very aware of the process that you have to go through in order to get your final design built, so.

Sascha ([00:20:04](#)):

And it's interesting because my work, my entire life, I would say is 90% interior design and only 10% architecture. And you could see more and more how those kind of lines come together. And you see architects doing interior design or you see interior designers start creating architectural elements and I think that's what the trend started 20 years ago. It's not just a building from outside which gives you one impression, it's actually you want to have it all integrate into the interior as well. So I would actually say it's more driven from bringing the soul outside, than the shell inside.

Sascha ([00:21:03](#)):

I saw that trend coming for, especially when I was in Middle East because back in Middle East you had, for the tourism industry, you create this kind of 1001 dreams that you want to showcase the orient, you want to showcase the Arab elements, so you start to gimmick. Dubai is a great example, they start to gimmick, let's say old buildings into a new way because they want to showcase, let's say the modernism of their heritage. And I think this is when then all of a sudden, you saw the, let's say Arabic architectural elements which vary between, from Morocco, you go to Tunisia, you go to Egypt or you come then over to Saudi Arabia or Oman particular is a very interesting case when it comes to architectural style. But then you see actually how this is transformed into the interior, especially in the tourism industry and this is where people are seeking. They go to Oman and they want to really be in Oman. They don't want to be in Singapore, right. So, I think-

Schumetta ([00:22:18](#)):

Okay, so here's a question for you kind of along those lines. So a friend of mine, she was asked to design a French bistro, this is in LA. And so she presented her designs and they said, "This is great, except it's too French. We want this to be what Americans think a French bistro looks like." So do you ever deal with anything like that, where maybe authentic is too far... or I shouldn't say that. How do you incorporate those sorts of elements in a way that people from the outside can enjoy and understand?

Sascha ([00:23:02](#)):

I think it's particular important when you know your customer segment. So I see that, for example in the cruise industry. The cruise industry, we have our guest segment and where they come from, the geographic area where they come from, for example the US, that defines the style. So what you are describing is, depends on the area and what customer you have, is authenticity the right thing or is it going to gimmick something? So when I'm saying that in the luxury segment, normally you need to be authentic, right. If you go a little more mainstream, you want to give the flavor of Italy or the flavor of France, but you want to be still, in your particular case, maybe more Americanized because you feel comfortable what you know, right.

Sascha ([00:24:00](#)):

But I would say if American travel, for example, overseas to Europe and they go into this beautiful historical city and they are overwhelmed, but all of a sudden they see a Starbucks which has the American look and feel of a Starbucks, they don't feel comfortable, said, "This is wrong." So they want see maybe the Starbucks because they know the brand and they appreciate, let's say the coffee and so on and they're really looking for that, but they want to see maybe sitting in a historical building. And then they feel off if it's Americanized, so you see what I'm saying?

Sascha ([00:24:40](#)):

But on the other hand, if you go, and I think this is really more particular to a certain clientele which maybe are well traveled and also maybe applies a little bit also to a guest segment who is more affordable in regards of where they travel, so I see more in the upper scale area or in the luxury. So you cannot be authentic, especially with the buildings and the building costs nowadays and then you serve pizza for \$3.99 or have a croissant for 99 cents. So you need then a \$7 croissant, but who is going to buy it? So I think it's a balance, especially what is the market you're serving for? And I think architecture, on the hospitality and the interior side, it's all about that. It's actually, what is your guest segment you want to attract-

Schumetta ([00:25:39](#)):

Right, right. And what's the expectation?

Sascha ([00:25:41](#)):

Correct. You cater for them because you want to sell out of, let's say the ultimate vacation, you want to create memory. So I think it comes all about to know your guests, know your market and then you actually design and build according to their needs. But again, I think if it's two star, three star, four star or five star in the hotel, the place to be is very important. Again, I think you want to appreciate, you go to a city, you want to be within the city.

Sascha ([00:26:23](#)):

So if I say, "Don't build Singapore, it's not as a... don't take this wrong. Singapore has been created out of a jungle, they build a city, a modern city, so is Dubai for example. So they have now also found their niche, how they differentiate themselves. But let's say at the earlier stage, they just build a building or create a place which you could easily transform somewhere else. You can say, "Oh, this could be in," again, "San Francisco. This could be in LA." It doesn't have that sense of place. So the sense of place nowadays, I would say, is something people are seeking, more and more. You want to go to Miami and you want to see-

Schumetta ([00:27:05](#)):

You want it to feel like Miami.

Sascha ([00:27:12](#)):

"I am in Miami," right. You want to go to LA, "I want to be in LA," right. And I think that's more and more important as well, not only in the luxury segment, it's everywhere. People travel more, people are exposed with the media, with everything that they see it on TV, they see it in their favorite Netflix series, they see it, right. They have a certain expectation and you need to deliver that.

Schumetta ([00:27:36](#)):

And I'm so glad you said that because I feel like a lot of architecture can be trendy. And so you have like, okay, this becomes a style that's cool and then people are just putting that everywhere. But what makes sense in Norway, doesn't necessarily make sense in Miami. It could be very cool, but when you said, "Just a sense of place," I love to see just when you've got just the feel and the texture and just the materials that make sense for a particular location, as opposed to imposing what is avant-garde or what is next in architecture. It's like, "Well, but where are you designing?" And as you said, "Who is this for?"

Schumetta ([00:28:18](#)):

An example I always use is, back here in Florida, one of my friends is literally an alligator hunter. So that's a totally different type of person, but he has to live somewhere, he goes out to restaurants, he does all of the same things. And so for him, maybe very avant-garde, modern architecture isn't for him, but that doesn't mean he has bad taste. It just means it's different. So then how do you provide something for the different types of people that you come into contact with, so?

Sascha ([00:28:54](#)):

So I think it's a very interesting point because I remember a time when I called that kind of style was industrial chic. So you start to bring in a lot of raw material, you made this... so the restaurants all look stark, all using the wrought iron-

Schumetta ([00:29:13](#)):

And exposed...

Sascha ([00:29:13](#)):

Exposed ceiling. So this industrial chic element is still very relevant nowadays. But the point is, to your point, you don't want to create a restaurant and you come in and you see this element and you feel good, but you think, "Oh, I could be in Oslo. I could be in Stockholm." And where did those trends more or less start, is likely the northern Scandinavian countries for example, or in England. And I think nowadays, it's really again, the balance. You want to have trends. We had the Peruvian trends with the Peruvian restaurants. All of a sudden, so you brought the Peruvians in. You have here well, obviously the Cuban architecture is very important in Miami. So it's still close to the people, but what is the next way? How can you merge it with a trend who comes out of Asia?

Sascha ([00:30:08](#)):

And I think the Peruvian trend was like that. Was a Peruvian restaurant, but was merged with a Japanese concept. So you start to have these more straight lines. The Japanese are very precise. You don't overdo a design as such. You do really clear lines, clear, light materials, real materials. And then you have the crazy net of the calypso dancer and the Cubans and the margaritas. And I think, how you merge that? I think it creates really an incredible story for the

makers of the design because you really start... but it's a thin line as well. You don't want to be tacky. To your point, you don't want to... design should nowadays last the time, should be timeless to a certain extent. You need to love it, you like it, but you can stay there.

Sascha ([00:31:05](#)):

We had a trend in the industry that you actually start cheap by renovating very cheap, so means, I want to have every two years of new concept. We had this time, there's still some brands out there that still follow that trend, said, "Look, I want to give a new dress to my space every two years. So be crazy, be on trend, be the latest and greatest out there, but make it in way that I can rip it off in two years and put the new one in," because the trends coming and going so quick nowadays. But again, in the-

Schumetta ([00:31:43](#)):

Well, and that's a certain market segment, for people who are looking for something, but they want to go to their favorite hotels, but they want it to feel different, as opposed to going to another hotel to get a different experience, right?

Sascha ([00:31:54](#)):

And then of course also the different generations we are having to serve. I think that's nowadays, even the bigger challenge. I'm a Generation X, so I came after the Baby Boomers, so I start to learn or to appreciate what my parents liked. That actually somehow formed myself or my generation. But when you see the newer generation, the younger generation right now, they have any trends on the fingertip. They don't really need to follow what the parents, let's say is teach them for example. Because they find very quickly now, with the social media, their own style-

Schumetta ([00:32:40](#)):

Right. You don't have to wait for your parents to take you on vacation to go look at something. They can just look at it-

Sascha ([00:32:48](#)):

Right. And I think in the old days was, let's say my father, just to take an example, if my father for example, liked Four Season, he takes me every year to Four Season, so I grow up in a Four Season. So nowadays, obviously that's a different story. You have so much more trends that even the kids in the young generations are choosing their own trends because it's so more visible to them than it was at my time. I didn't really know what is left and right. I had to follow my guardian-

Schumetta ([00:33:18](#)):

You're not seven years old saying, "Oh, I want to check out this hotel around the corner," right?

Sascha ([00:33:20](#)):

Exactly.

Schumetta ([00:33:23](#)):

Okay, so next question, how does your background and just where you grew up, how does that influence your work, do you think?

Sascha ([00:33:32](#)):

More on an ethical point, I would say.

Schumetta ([00:33:32](#)):

More on what?

Sascha ([00:33:39](#)):

On an ethical point. When I'm saying that, I think where I come from, it's Switzerland and I think I try to be honest in not only how I work, I think it's also on when designing space. So I think being honest and close to nature, close to... which is even more relevant nowadays with sustainability, I think is something, maybe me as a Swiss, is ingrained. Because we grow up in the nature, we have the mountains, we have the beautiful lakes and everything is clean and proper. And that actually, I would say being humble in the same way, because we have a benefit coming from Switzerland, obviously because small, tiny country, super clean, everybody raves about that, about the brands we have, the quality we have. But we are not that many, so we have the privilege in a certain extent that we are received well in the industry and not only industry, but worldwide.

Sascha ([00:34:57](#)):

If you're Swiss, it opens you some doors. And I think we never had really to prove that we are the best because we just became, in certain brands, the best. If it's the watch industry, it is chocolate, it is... you name or cheese, whatever, any quality. So I think that made us also humble to a certain extent, that we know that this is our only resource we have, we got, is quality. So we have to learn that and to be humble and to build quality from a early stage in our career, because this is all what differentiate us to others in the big, big world. And this is the reputation we have, so we can't lose that because this is the only resource we have, is the work ethics, is the quality we produce. And it comes with a cost, but I think the world adapted to that, that quality costs money and even more nowadays than in the past.

Sascha ([00:36:05](#)):

So is this influencing my work? I would say yes. Being in Switzerland, growing up with even four language, four different parts in Switzerland, helped me a lot culturally. I was always open to all these cultures. You don't have a really a typical Swiss. Even the ones you see, you think they are with the full cloth dresses, but you don't see them anymore. Swiss has always been with all the immigrants we had, became such a multicultural environment. When I grew up, we were with multi-culture, so that helped us as well in so more adaptable to other cultures and religious and races. I would say that's a huge benefit to me as well, because I never had to really go through inclusion to learn it. It just happens. It just happens naturally.

Sascha ([00:37:13](#)):

I think that helps in my work, that's why I traveled. Used to live in Middle East, a totally different culture outside of my culture. Hong Kong for six years, same. Went back to Middle East again to Qatar. Even it's in Middle East or in the Arab world, it's a totally different country with a different culture, to a certain extent, than Dubai was which was, I would say more a modern way. And then obviously to the US, to Miami and look at Miami. Miami is not the US as we have it in picture as well. It's so multi-culture. Probably I'm very privileged to come from Switzerland because you got those kind of values with you naturally, when I grew up in my time.

Schumetta ([00:38:08](#)):

Yeah. It's so interesting you say that because when my mother went with me on a trip to visit Switzerland, I think it was maybe the third day she was there, she said, "People treat you differently here." And I said, "What do you mean?" Because I'm so busy looking at all the architecture, all that stuff. And I said, "Well, what do you mean by that?" She said, "You don't get just the looks and the stares." She's like, "They treat you," and she's trying to think of the word and I was like, "Equally?" She's like, "Yes." And everywhere you go, it didn't matter if you were in a five star hotel or if you were at the train station, just wherever, there was this mutual respect that people had for one another.

Schumetta ([00:38:55](#)):

I remember we were walking down a street and there was a gentleman who he was on crutches. And just even then, the way people treated him, it wasn't like they were trying to get away from him. They acknowledged him and there was just such a respect. It was clear that if he needed help, they would've helped, but it wasn't, "Poor him," or, "Oh, I have to get away from him." It was just so much respect for every human being and she loved it so much. And it was just interesting that she said that because I'd never put into words, other than the chocolate and the cheese, everything. What else is it when I go there because I just feel so good when I'm there and I think that's it. You can just walk around freely and you feel just this mutual respect that's coming from, pretty much from everyone that you're meeting, so that's interesting.

Schumetta ([00:39:58](#)):

To go back to your point about work, I think that that is probably so welcome with the people that you work with because you never know, you have this VP coming in and it's like, "Okay, well what's this guy going to be like?" But when you have someone who is just naturally very respectful on a human level, so it's less about, "Well, what's my title, what the... so you're not doing all of that and you can just get to the matter at hand which is, "How do we create something wonderful?"

Sascha ([00:40:29](#)):

And I think what is also important, maybe to that point, when it comes to the level of quality we actually deliver or Swiss companies deliver is, it starts actually with our education program. Even I traveled around the world and I have now the fortune to send my kids to the best schools, private school, I still believe the educational program we have, especially let's say after high school, if you do an apprenticeship or you do a dual system or you study in university, I think is so unique and is so powerful. And I'm a big fan, obviously from our dual system, when it comes to, even I say myself doing Hochbau Schublade, which is a structural engineering drawer, was a dual system, three days in school... no, three days at work and two days in school, per week.

Sascha ([00:41:25](#)):

So two days in school and then three days in the architect's office working as an architect or get trained as an architect, doing your own drawings. Obviously at this time, AutoCAD just started. But really hand do blueprints. And I think this, in my opinion is so unique to Switzerland in any field of business we are doing. Even if you go into finance, you do this in a system, dual system in a bank, you go to school and three days you are in the bank. Two days you are in school, three days you work in the bank. And I think that's so unique to have that degree and to actually nowadays, you can go even further into the master with that path. I think it's incredible.

Schumetta ([00:42:11](#)):

Well, so when you graduate, you're already a skilled worker, as opposed to now you graduate, now you have to start entry level. Now, now you're kind of learning on the job as opposed to learning the job while you're in school, which makes so much sense to me. So when do you start the apprenticeship program? At what age does that typically begin?

Sascha ([00:42:35](#)):

So that starts, I think after high school, if I take the US term, so with 17. So there are three years or four years, depends on the business. At my time, it was four years to graduate. So you have a degree in architecture, but then of course, if you want to go into the bachelor or into the master, then you go into the university and you build on that, right. Or you continue working in an architect's office and you do it as after work kind of courses, offline... online

courses. Sorry, offline courses, online courses. So I actually started doing as well, so which is, I started actually want to do my master in architecture in University of Zürich, but then I had to stop it because of all the travels and I couldn't really cope anymore. This when I was so young, but I was very eager to get the title.

Sascha ([00:43:43](#)):

But I was focusing again, learning also the hospitality aspect, being a waiter, then going to all the cooking classes in school to get my bachelor in hotel management. Nowadays, it would be a bachelor, my time it was not the bachelor. It's equal to a bachelor, but Switzerland didn't have the bachelor programs at this point and now, is certified as a bachelor. But when I did it, you also learnt really cooking for 300 people. So you start to create your menu and so on, so you had also that part too. The system in Switzerland I feel is so good. As a young person, you are not locking yourself into one path. You learn something which gives you the diversity which then, all of a sudden, you can start, really say, "Hey, I really like that." So with that degree you have or you are, for example in an apprenticeship, you're more an all rounder in that field than the specialists. So it gives you the options then, "Okay, I want to go be a specialist. There's a second education on this path."

Sascha ([00:45:01](#)):

I think that's why it's so powerful. You not select, "I want to do this," and then you are locked into that. And then you are 24, 25, you wake up, said, "I don't like it." And you start all over again on another specialist field. So when I teach something to my kids, I hope they will choose one day, they go and do an apprenticeship in Switzerland. Even they never lived in Switzerland and they know Switzerland from their vacation, they speak the language because we speak Swiss German at home, but they're in the international school environment. But I hope one day, they go back and I hope they could do it, but it's up to them, but I see-

Schumetta ([00:45:46](#)):

How old are your kids?

Sascha ([00:45:49](#)):

12, 10 and 7.

Schumetta ([00:45:50](#)):

Okay, all right. So there's time.

Sascha ([00:45:53](#)):

Plenty of time and I'm saving a lot of money just in case they'll not decide to go back to Switzerland.

Schumetta ([00:45:58](#)):

Yeah. So I was going to ask you along those lines, just listening to your... talking about your love of travel and then hotels. And then to now be with Royal Caribbean, it's sort of like you get to travel and it's a hotel. So it really worked out for you where it's all the things that you love, sort of in one place and that brings me to my next question. So was there ever a moment where you thought, "I'm pretty good at this," or, "I think this is a path that I want to take"? Or was it more one experience led to the next, led to the next, led to the next? Or were you more focused on, "I want to do this thing," and then you moved toward that?

Sascha ([00:46:54](#)):

I think it's maybe more the-

Schumetta ([00:46:59](#)):

Or combination, it could be.

Sascha ([00:47:04](#)):

I didn't know what to do, as I described, right. I did a job, I don't think it's the right thing. I was traveling, "What should I do? Hotel management?" So I think one thing led to the others and I adapted slightly, a little bit because now I'm in cruise industry, I was 20 years in the hotel development world, design and construction. Land-side, totally different game than something which is floating. But I have to say, maybe because I was so open minded, one thing led to the others. But being passionate about what you doing, but be open minded as well, don't lock yourself in, I think was part of my path. I didn't really plan it. I just did what I did right and with passion and if an opportunity arised, I said, "Should I go for it or not?"

Sascha ([00:48:15](#)):

My wife told me once, "Take a list and make all your plus and minus about that job." I never did that list. So I know, but what I'm saying is actually sometimes it's also, you feel it. And I think being in this kind of environment to be... again, being honest, when it comes to design, be honest to yourself, appreciate the good things and listen and be open minded, I would say opportunities arise. And maybe it was luck to a certain extent, but I think you can also path it a little bit with your own way of working. Frankly speaking, if you don't like the job, that's when I quit.

Schumetta ([00:49:06](#)):

Right, right. I love what you said about passion because I think when you are passionate about what you do, like-minded people just sort of come into your world. You don't have to necessarily seek it out or drag it down to come to you. I think just by being your authentic self and being passionate, at least that's been my experience, just opportunities seem to arise from out of nowhere, that are just perfect. It's like, "How did this happen? Where did this come from?" You get recommended for something or your friend creates a CV for you and it sends it to someone because I feel like they see something in you that wants to connect.

Sascha ([00:49:53](#)):

And I think that comes so close to architecture as well, the appearance. Your first sense of arrival, is it from an exterior or from an interior? I feel the most successful buildings in the world always have that kind of openness, so it's approachable. And the moment you start to like it or hate it, you already are, let's say you minimize the audience, right. A colleague once told me, "Sascha, you are so mainstream if you say that." I said, "No." I think the appreciation, again about being open, don't be against, I learned that a little bit through in the Hong Kong or in the Chinese, when it comes to the feng shui kind of architectural style, how you create a space. It's all about wellbeing, about human scale and how you actually feel.

Sascha ([00:50:59](#)):

During my works in India, I have been exposed to vastu, which is the Indian style of feng shui where you create, where is the water, where is the drain, where you can have, for example, fire. So for example, where is the stove for a restaurant? Is it in a particular area? Or where is the sewage plant going? The sewage pipe going? So this is vastu. It's not religious. It's just when you think about, it became, "That's natural. Why would you do this in another way," you start to ask. So it's just kind of a building code which has been generated over generations or in centuries, about the wellbeing of a human person. Of course, you need to adapt to the time. You cannot lock in something what was right in the 18th century, it doesn't mean it's right nowadays.

Sascha ([00:52:00](#)):

But the point I was making is actually, you see a building which has that character or a space you go in, this character and it's actually approachable. I think this is what the hospitality is. You don't want to close out people. If you want to have a museum or something and you would create something, a space where, let's say there's a speakeasy door to get in and you want to have that digital world experience, it's a totally different story because you are seeking for that moment, right. But that's why I think this is, especially in creating space, now is even more important in the cruise line industry I'm doing because you go on a cruise, you go on a ship and it's different than going to a city. I'm going into this hotel and I'm going to stroll out and find that fantastic restaurant which is five blocks from here or you go to Brickell City Center or you go to Downtown or you go to Wynwood and you go on the ship, you're on the ship, that's it, right.

Sascha ([00:53:12](#)):

And this is where I'm so fascinated about, that's why I choose to go into this industry, is how you create the moment. For example, especially the brand I'm working on is, we deliver the ultimate vacation for three generations. So we have my kids, myself and let's say my parents' age. So how do I create a space for 10 days, everybody goes home and says, "Wow, I want to go back. It was the best, amazing vacation had ever"? Three generation, three different needs and you are on the ship. Of course, you have shore exposures, but you're-

Schumetta ([00:53:53](#)):

You're there.

Sascha ([00:53:53](#)):

You're still there, right. And I think this is where architecture comes and creating space so important because you need to find the balance to keep everybody happy. And you have to find, for the three generations, you need this kind of niche areas where they can also be maybe for their own. Because I cannot give my three kids, for one week, on a ship to my parents because they would drive nuts. So the point is, how we create that so everybody has this kind of balance and you're not exhausted because you want to have the ultimate family vacation?

Sascha ([00:54:38](#)):

And again, this is totally different than the land-side, where you create an address, the place to go, but you still had space with... I think the trend that was also in the hotel industry was you want to belong to the neighborhood. So you want to work with the local barista man, you want to work with your local beer brewer. You want to be part of the neighborhood as a hotel. The restaurant is the address, people come in and mingle with the hotel guests and with the locals and so on. And I think that's again, creating a space in a city environment or in a location. In a ship, it's different. So why, in the cruise industry, you go on a vacation on a cruise in the first place? What do I going to expect?

Sascha ([00:55:38](#)):

And brand I'm work is actually, of course destinations are important, the ports are important, so you go to these fantastic... you go to Rome, you go to Valencia, you go to Cyprus, to the Greece islands and so on. It's fantastic, but the end of the day, you still have a ship and people come back to you because of that ship, right. Because everybody can go and travel with another ship and another brand into this destination, so why they come here? And I think innovation and architectural is so tremendous important in the cruise line industry and that's why I'm so happy where I am right now. It's-

Schumetta ([00:56:21](#)):

So I was reading that designing for cruise ships, you're basically just designing for earthquakes because there's just so much motion. So how does your structural engineering background play into your design process?

Sascha ([00:56:35](#)):

I think the engineering background comes in about more creating the space as such. Thinking as an engineer doesn't always help in the architectural design, but it sometime helps me to balance off again... I think what is the biggest difference to the land-side, shore-

side we call it, to the marine and the cruise industry we are in, we build a ship which is self efficient. That means we generate our own power, we generate our own sewage plants, we generate our waste systems, we have laundry obviously, we have everything. We create our own water, we have reverse osmosis, so the drinking water. We are not bunkering water, we actually create water as we cruise. And then of course, the sewage and the sustainability is the number one focus in our industry because we want to be sustainable. And so you create your own, somebody was saying it's a floating city, right. And that's actually really true because you self efficient. You are totally on your own. And the engineering part... Please go.

Schumetta ([00:58:02](#)):

So you have your guests that come, but how many people on the ship sort of live there, as far as are working on the ship-

Sascha ([00:58:11](#)):

The crew.

Schumetta ([00:58:12](#)):

Yeah, the crew, at any given time?

Sascha ([00:58:15](#)):

So it depends on the brand, on the guest, let's say crew ratio. So depends, again on the market you cater for. It's like the same on the hotel side, are you having a butler or you don't have a butler. You have housekeeping three times per day or you have only two times per day or you have it one time per day, so it varies. I would say in general, the brand I'm catering for is approximately a quarter staff, three quarter guests. So you can imagine we have ships, there are cater for 7,000 passenger, so you have literally another 3,000 on crew or 2,500.

Schumetta ([00:59:03](#)):

I mean, they essentially live on this ship?

Sascha ([00:59:06](#)):

So here's the thing, we are not only designing space for our guests, we also have to design space for the crew. And the crew is important because it starts in the cabin where they have their cocoon, where they can go back and can go on a FaceTime or can do with their family. Our crew is international. I don't know how many nationalities we have, but a ship can have up to 100 nationalities just having on crews, depends on the size of the ship. So they are all connected to all over the world, but then they also mingle with their colleagues. So we create their own pub, their karaoke room, their own, of course canteen where they get the food, but then we have also their leisure facilities-

Schumetta ([00:59:57](#)):

That are private for them?

Sascha ([00:59:58](#)):

Just for them. With their outdoor deck where they can be, their own bar-

Schumetta ([01:00:03](#)):

So they don't have to feel like they're on duty all the time?

Sascha ([01:00:07](#)):

Correct. We are very focusing on this for years that, for example, we want to give... they serve in that beautiful bar in one of the open decks, drinks the whole day long to their guests and then they go back and have that kind back of the house bar, that's not what we are doing. We want to create, we call it the space the same, the name. For example, if we have a Schooner Bar, we also have a Schooner Bar for example, we call it Schooner Bar for the crew. So we are using the same material, using the same design, so-

Schumetta ([01:00:45](#)):

So it's not making them feel-

Sascha ([01:00:48](#)):

Downgraded. We want actually uplift them because this is very important. Depends on their level on the ship, they can be up to three months on a ship before they have breaks and they go home to see their loved ones, right. So-

Schumetta ([01:01:09](#)):

You want it to be a great experience for them?

Sascha ([01:01:14](#)):

It's the oldest saying in the industry, if the staff is not happy, the guests will not be happy. Especially in an environment like a ship, you have to do maybe even an extra mile to keep them happy because they don't have that after work beer, down the road in a local pub-

Schumetta ([01:01:33](#)):

Right, they're still there.

Sascha ([01:01:34](#)):

They're still there, still there, still in motion of the ship. I think it's our teams who are handling, just the crew, is doing a tremendous job. That's why we are recruiting so many, even after the pandemic. They were eager to come back.

Schumetta ([01:01:55](#)):

Right, right. Because it was such a great experience.

Sascha ([01:01:57](#)):

Great experience.

Schumetta ([01:01:58](#)):

Now, you were telling me earlier that you tend to travel one week out of the month to go... so explain to me kind of just what your process is now as far as building new ships and where you do your design work versus where you actually do the construction?

Sascha ([01:02:15](#)):

Right. At Royal Caribbean, we worked before big shipyards who are building the ships. So they are all in Europe, so they are in Finland, Germany, France and Italy. I am on Royal Caribbean International brand which are the biggest in the world. The Oasis Class is built in France, in Saint-Nazaire and a new ship class, which is the first-in-class coming out in a year, the Icon of the Sea is built in Turku, in Finland. So when we do design, when we create the white paper ship or a new in-class, we actually be the design is really heavily centered in Miami because this is where the brand is, this is where we have the operation team. So its design is, I would say Miami-centric for the brand. The moment you start building, you actually become construction-centric, so the center of gravity is moving to the construction side because this is where the outfitters are, this is when the builders are, this is where the shipyard is.

Sascha ([01:03:40](#)):

So right now, we are in the last 18 months to actually build Icon of the Sea, so construction starts. We had the keel-laying in just two months back, so now it starts rebuild, so that building blocks and the blocks get lifted and the ship get assembled in such a way. So it's now everything is focusing now more there. So it's quality control, it's design coordination meetings with the outfitters, is reviewing mock-ups, reviewing samples to make sure to substitute materials, which is more and more a big issue due to the supply chain shortage of materiality, you don't get it on time.

Sascha ([01:04:29](#)):

Because ship building is really timely, precisely measured because behind, is just another one coming, right. So the shipyards are building, there always slots and you actually get the slot to build your ship, that means you need to deliver on time all your design for the design team at the shipyard to build their engineering drawings because the ship is built in steel, so everything is steel. When I came to this company, when they interviewed me, the chairman of

the company asked me, "Sascha, how much do you know about ship building?" I said, "Frankly speaking, I didn't know that steel is floating."

Schumetta ([01:05:10](#)):

Right. Seems too heavy, right?

Sascha ([01:05:12](#)):

So that's how much I know. So learning that, to see how precise the time slots are and all these deliverables and submittals on design is so relevant to the shipyard, that's a tremendous undertaking from a project management point of view. Because we have dozens of architects who are creating space for us, right. So they are doing land-side, they are big names in the design world and they create with their understanding, if they design, that's why we hire them. But then you have to make that design shipshape. So we have to make sure that it meets all the codes, then when I say codes, even materiality in the marine world is different than the specification on land-side.

Sascha ([01:06:11](#)):

So we have to find them and I go back to the substitute of material, we maybe specify material in the US and then all of a sudden, that material is not available, as I am all certified in the European market. But this is the closest we get. And sometimes you could imagine the bandwidth is like this. It's rejected, find again. So that's why at the moment is, we do not build the ship, this is the shipyard. But we have to make sure that from a design quality point of view, that we can really guide all the outfitters, all the turnkey partners which own by the shipyard, not by us. We are the owner of the ship, but the shipyard building for us, that we actually guide them and give them the right instruction and also approve. Because once it's built, it's takes more to redo than you do it actually on land-side. Land-side you just knock the wall down, say, "No. Okay, we do it again. Put the stucco on again. It's not good." Once the stucco is on the ship, it's there.

Schumetta ([01:07:18](#)):

So you-

Sascha ([01:07:19](#)):

And if you have to change it... sorry, I interrupt you, but if you have to change it, then all of a sudden, the times lap.

Schumetta ([01:07:26](#)):

It's a crisis, right. Well, I was going to ask you, so when you deliver the plans to the shipyard, that's it? There's no coming in and saying, "Oh, I'm just not feeling it. We want to change this, change that"? It's pretty shipshape, as you said, but when you hand those plans over-

Sascha ([01:07:47](#)):

That would be the ideal world, but we design a ship which is going into a market five, six years from now, if you start. So a lot of happens in these five, six years. So we are in a very competitor field. We are talking here 3 to I think 350 big ships are on the globe. So it's a very small market right now or when it comes to quantity of big cruise ships. There are not many out there if you compare to the hotels, right. So innovation is something which is so close to us in the design, but also from technology, engineering point and so on. So I would say two main driver right now we have in the designing a ship, it's innovation plus sustainability.

Sascha ([01:08:47](#)):

So if we talk about innovation, innovation can be taken as I said, in technology can be taken in... but also taken into trends and about how you create a ship. So when I'm saying that, when we issue drawings, there will be changes because we want to adapt, we want to maybe say, "Oh, by the way, we have this new thing we want to try, let's do," we call it the wows, the W-O-W, the wow. So the wow comes in very late, so maybe we have to redo a space. And of course, this is not very well received by the shipyard. And because they feel really, engineering-wise, "You will submit at this state, we built the ship. You come back when we give you the key." That's not happening, that's not happening and this is not what... and of course, then we have to find the way.

Sascha ([01:09:47](#)):

Nowadays, I would say since the pandemic, when the pandemic started, I think what is another big driver of changing, let's say design, is the costs. The cost and the supply chain itself. Material went out of the market, companies are not there anymore or you don't get it because it's from a part of the world you can't get the supply anymore. The war in Ukraine is putting another burden on the supply chain, especially in ship building. We build the ship out of steel. There's a lot of steel coming from Ukraine or companies in Poland, they produce in Ukraine because we are a European-centric when it comes to ship building. So now, we have to find other resources, we need to maybe adapt the design due to the reason that the cost went tremendously high, they exploded. We don't use the word, but we need to value engineer to a certain extent. So that means maybe is also going simplify certain detail after you submitted already because the contractor doesn't get the material or the price for the material is sky rocking high.

Sascha ([01:11:12](#)):

So if something was aluminum or is... can we find something else because aluminum has tripled the price? And we are talking here, so much quantity in such a short time that we try to help them as well, to help them with solutions, how can we overcome? Because the last thing we want is they go out of business because if they go out of business, we can't finish the ship or it's delayed. We call it a three party, it's a three party collaboration. It's between the owner of the ship which we are, the ship build which is the yard and the third one is our supply

chain, so we work close with them. When I say supply chain, is really the builders which are contracted by the shipyard. Because they are small business, they are because they're very specialized what they do. So if they do marine world, they are unlikely doing something else. So we need to help them as well and we can only win together.

Sascha ([01:12:13](#)):

And I think that's what is very unique in this industry compared to where I have before, is that cooperation and trust between the partners because it's a small world, end of the day. I don't want to say, but on shore-side, I have to be careful what I'm saying, but if you're not happy if the main contractor, fire him, get another main contractor. So you don't have that kind of selection on the marine world. So I think the level of collaboration is there. That's why we as an owner, we go really literally, I'm going monthly a week, personally as a VP, but my teams, all the venue coordinators of the ship, of the different areas, they go there maybe for two weeks, three weeks.

Sascha ([01:13:07](#)):

I even have somebody now placed over there, working, from the architectural design, who is just there. I asked in my team, "Who would like to live in Turku?" And she said, "I'm going," and I said, "Okay, Holly. Fantastic go," so she's there. In our site office, we have colleagues which working very closely for us, who are doing more the execution side. But again, they're not the new build architectural teams like I have in Miami. These are more than the engineers, the executor, they are more project manager with the contractors. So the aesthetic is in Miami, the building is in Turku or in France or in Italy or in Germany and we just go there and really collaborate until the end. We are very on top of the game with them. We are very hands on, I would say, super hands on. You want to make sure the quality is right and that means we need to help them sometimes to articulate the design as well, right-

Schumetta ([01:14:15](#)):

Right, right. Okay. I once asked a colleague, if you could give a young architect or designer one piece of advice, what would that be?

Sascha ([01:14:23](#)):

Be open minded. Don't lock yourself in, be open minded.

Schumetta ([01:14:29](#)):

Yeah. That's a theme that I've been hearing throughout this whole conversation.

Sascha ([01:14:33](#)):

Be open, open minded.

Schumetta ([01:14:36](#)):

And then last one, this is something that's been really important to a lot of the architects and designers that I've got to know, especially during the pandemic, so how do you balance work and family life?

Sascha ([01:14:54](#)):

I think we learned a lot through the pandemic, right. I think since then, I can balance much better in regards of literally come home and spend time with the family. The pandemic taught us that somehow, because always-

Schumetta ([01:15:15](#)):

How were you before the pandemic compared to now?

Sascha ([01:15:18](#)):

Restless, working like crazy, couldn't switch off the work, planning already the next trip, I was traveling around the world. Try to balance, especially my private life over a weekend. And during the pandemic, all of a sudden, you drop off your son for soccer or your daughter for ballet. And all of a sudden you think, "Oh, that's cool. I spending time." And I think now the world changed. I think the corporation in the world, everybody realized how much more family value comes into, also how more ease yourself are doing work because you have that balance, you're not that restless person anymore, right.

Sascha ([01:16:12](#)):

So I think if the pandemic taught us something, I think is being closer to the family and I appreciate the good part of social, being together and I think nobody wants miss that anymore. And we have a policy in the company that no more meetings after 5:00. 5:00, everybody needs to leave the office. And we as leaders, we try really to enforce that. At 5:00, I go out of the office and I see people there said, "Hey, out," in my way of working with them saying, "Hey, you get out, go home," right. I see much more the performance raised, that people are more balanced, so.

Schumetta ([01:17:02](#)):

Yeah, I think prior to the pandemic, there was this sort of badge of honors, "Oh, I'm so busy. Oh, and I was working 12 hours today," was kind of like, "Oh." And that is no longer seen as a good thing which I think is wonderful. Because the question was always like, "Are you busy? Are you busy? Are you busy?" Not, "Are you happy? Are you fulfilled? Are you enjoying life?" Those were never important questions and I think they have become so important now.

Sascha ([01:17:33](#)):

And I think people really start to value life differently and-

Schumetta ([01:17:39](#)):

I mean, even little things like, I noticed in a lot of email greetings, it's "I hope all is well," and that wasn't the case before, was just, "Happy Friday," and then you've got to go on. But now because things are happening and I think we've just become more truly connected in a way where we had all of our devices and everything before, but now it really is, "How are you?" Because there could be something going on-

Sascha ([01:18:12](#)):

Just having the first talk somebody, coming in the office and all of a sudden, "Hey, can I hug you?" You have culture like they don't give you a hand shake right now, they still give you the elbow. But you get them there as well. Maybe there will be a day when you can hug them as well-

Schumetta ([01:18:28](#)):

No, I remember my first post-pandemic hug. It was actually a surveyor friend of mine who's Swiss. And so we met on this job site, it was like, "Eric," he's like, "Schumetta." It's like, "Oh my gosh, I'm actually hugging a person." It was so nice because we just took it for granted before and I had not seen him in person for a year and a half. I went from seeing him all the time to, okay, now he's on the phone, now he's on this screen, to here we are again. It was a lovely, lovely moment.

Sascha ([01:19:00](#)):

Think we appreciate small things which we took for granted all of a suddenly and I think family is part of this. "How is your family?" "Oh yeah, they're great." But now if you ask somebody, "How is family?" He comes up with, "Oh, yesterday he had a soccer game. It was amazing." All of a sudden, you have those experience life and you don't want to miss it anymore, you want to be there. And I think that's how I balance. I think the pandemic actually helped, not only me, many people to start really balancing work-life in a healthy consolation.

Schumetta ([01:19:31](#)):

Yeah, yeah. Well, I think that is a great way to end this segment, so thank you very much for being with us today.

Sascha ([01:19:31](#)):

Thank you.