



NORBERT SZYPERSKI, 1962, GERMANY

Founder and CEO, InterScience - Partners of Scientific Research and Entrepreneurs

At a time of great discord in his country, just after the Berlin Wall was constructed, German Eisenhower Fellow Norbert Szyperski arrived in the U.S. in 1962 on his fellowship to bridge worlds between science, government, and business. That today every mayor in Germany can spell the word ‘incubator’ is thanks in large part to Szyperski. More than 50 years ago, when the prevailing wisdom was that entrepreneurs should take their chances in the market, he disagreed. Believing that new business ventures deserved active support, he and his colleagues at the University of Cologne developed programs to promote entrepreneurship. That group was ultimately responsible for launching 65 enterprises, including Germany’s first venture capital undertaking based on the U.S. model. Szyperski was personally involved in a number of those start-ups and still sits on the board of a few. He is modest about these accomplishments, and was quoted in the McKinsey Company’s magazine *McK Wissen*, as saying “I simply get the right people together with the right ideasThe rest then happens by itself. You’ll see.”



Szyperski is also an expert on information technology, especially its role in business development, the focus of his fellowship in 1962. Based on his research at the University of Cologne, he has written extensively on IT as a tool for management decision-making, still relevant today. One of the major themes of his program was finding ways to resolve the social and economic challenges of automation. By establishing and maintaining relationships with universities and researchers, Szyperski has been instrumental in connecting the worlds of computers and engineering to share ideas amongst industry, business, and government.

Szyperski has actively encouraged cooperation between German and American scientists. The international perspective he gained from his fellowship strongly influenced him in 1988 when, with IBM executive Ronald Kay, he co-founded the International Computer Science Institute (ICSI) in Berkeley, California, an independent, non-profit institute that promotes international understanding through visitor programs and collaboration among researchers. Szyperski maintains that many Germans pursue their post-doctoral programs at Berkeley, with a rate of more than 70% returning to their home countries to bring their energy and knowledge back into their own communities, similar to Eisenhower Fellows. In 2004, ICSI gave Szyperski and Kay its first Distinguished Service Awards. Another bond with the U.S. has been Szyperski’s support of EF, as a member of the German nominating committee and as the founding president of the EF alumni chapter.

Today, Szyperski continues to work with researchers through the business research group Innovative Technologies at the University of Cologne, as well as with InterScience, a small consulting firm he founded in 1990. He has worked with firms in the Ukraine, as an advisor to an Indian software company, currently advises BAND, an angel investor group for young, innovative start-ups in Germany and is a member of numerous boards relating to entrepreneurship and regional development.

In October 2004 the president of Germany personally awarded Norbert Szyperski the Commander’s Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, a fitting recognition of a distinguished career.

Leaders bettering the world around them.