

## #Gisler Protocol: Fight the stereotypes

Two women launch the Gisler Protocol and shake up the advertising industry. Nina Bieli and Annette Häcki from the Jung von Matt Limmat agency talk about heroic men and mouth-dead women.

Anna Kohler -  
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Have launched the #Gislerprotokoll: Agency Communication Manager Nina Bieli (left) and Annette Häcki, Executive Creative Director of Jung von Matt Limmat.

Anna Kohler: First of all, for general explanation. What is the Gisler Protocol, Nina Bieli?

Nina Bieli: The Gisler Protocol is an initiative for a more multifaceted portrayal of gender in advertising. We have it around Women's Day on March 8, 2021 launched and called on the entire Swiss agency industry to join in. This has worked. The Gisler Protocol is growing and thriving.

You both work for one of the most renowned agencies in Switzerland. Have you swept your own front door?

Annette Häcki: We looked at countless commercials and cases, including our own. The result was sobering.

That bad?

Häcki: Yes, so bad. Role clichés galore, many relating to men and women. It has to be said: Diversity is, after all, a huge field. So that our protocol doesn't get watered down, we focus on the multifaceted representation of gender. It's about language, how do we talk. It's about who we work with and what we show. We have worked out concrete



rules with the Gisler Protocol. But it's not about pointing the finger at others, but about doing things better together.

Have you met with approval from the male guild?

Bieli: Absolutely. The point of the Gisler Protocol is to raise awareness. And not about "women versus men. The wealth of facets that society offers is not reflected in advertising. That's a fact. We didn't have to discuss much there. What there has certainly been, but not necessarily only from men, is the question of how such an initiative looks to the outside world. But here, too, we are convinced that the initiative is being understood correctly: We see it as a great learning process;

thus the whole loses the educational character.

Häcki: Sure, there are bound to be a few quips about the Gisler Protocol. But we take that with humor.

Bieli: After all, the Gisler Protocol is not a doctrine.

Häcki: And it's not just about women. Men are also portrayed in a stereotyped way. For example, the dorky father who always does everything wrong.

"Given the relevance and timeliness of the topic, it was immediately clear that we would support the initiative." - Aroma

Why Gisler protocol?

Bieli: The word protocol has meaning and signals: We are serious, also about implementation. And Gisler, because the protocol is named after Doris Gisler. She used to be very active with her advertising agency Gisler & Gisler and, among other things, designed and implemented the campaign for women's suffrage from 1969 to 1971. Thus, she is one of the pioneers for the topic. We asked Mrs. Gisler if we could use her name. She was very pleased.

You wanted to do that from the beginning with other agencies together. Why?

Häcki: It's more important to us to make an impact than to make our mark.

What are the key points of the Gisler Protocol?

Bieli: The first point concerns language, in the written and spoken word. How do we speak, how do we speak inclusively? Then it is the representation, what images do we show? Are the same stereotypes reproduced over and over again? And we sensitize our customers, but also external partners.

You have examined over 50 films and campaigns, and the Bechdel test has played a role in this. What can one imagine by this?

Häcki: The Bechdel Test is a test to identify stereotyped portrayals of women in films. Films are tested on the basis of three questions: The first is: Are there at least two women in the film who have a name? If no: test already failed. The second question is: Do the women ever talk to each other? If no: failed. If yes, we go one step further. And then the third question: when they talk to each other, do they talk about anything other than men? It's so blatant how many films fail there, even huge Hollywood productions. The entire "Lord of the Rings" trilogy, for example, fails completely.

Together you have your own Test developed, based on the Bechdel test. This has something to do with of a potted



plant.

Häcki: One problem is that the women in commercials are often not important. We swapped out the women with potted plants and looked at what that does to the story of the spot. We looked at a lot of spots from the last five years. In a great many, we could easily replace the woman in the spot with a potted plant and the spot continued to work as before. That's brutal.

And in no way forms the real Life off.

Häcki: Exactly. In real life, we're further along than in advertising, and that's what bothers us. We're lagging behind.

"In our profession, we have the opportunity to make diversity present with stories; text and images should reflect that." - Open Up

How do the commissioning parties react to the Gisler Protocol?

Häcki: Very open and positive. The fact is: Our clients don't demand clichéd campaigns. Often it's us as agencies who present clichéd ideas in advance. And often no one objects - because it has always been the case that "he" drives the car and "she" enjoys the yogurt. At the end of the day, of course, we are guided by the needs of our customers. But we try not to start off in such a clichéd way. That helps.

Nina Bieli, you are the communications manager with Jung von Matt Limmat. What feedback do you receive?

Bieli: Very good, fortunately. And also relatively much. There is a lot of feedback from the agencies that have joined the Gisler Protocol.

Which ones are there?

Bieli: They are KSP, Serviceplan, Wunderman Thompson, Aroma, Maxomedia, Liip, open up, Ogilvy, Newsroom Communication, Feinheit, Kingfluencers and of course all Jung-von-Matt agencies.

How did you contact and promoted the Gisler protocol?

Bieli: We linked everyone on LinkedIn and Instagram. This is how exciting conversations have emerged.



(Illustration: Silvan Borer)

How would you describe the development describe since you have been using the protocol from the baptism?

Häcki: Internally, we already sense a lot of movement. People are reflecting, much more so than in the past. It's important to address things when they come to your attention. Every person in the agency is allowed to do that without being punished. We share this responsibility and have taken it upon ourselves to look.

Bieli: Our mindset has changed. We speak in a more differentiated way both internally and externally.

"Our agency is committed to increasing diversity and equality through targeted initiatives." - Wunderman Thompson

You launched the Gisler Talks. Are these moderated by you or is each time a different agency on the train?

Bieli: It's a challenge cup, so to speak. All the agencies involved organize a Gisler Talk at some point. In virtual and physical meetings, we plan the talks and everything else that can arise from the Gisler protocol.

You talk about it in the Gisler Talk, that role stereotypes are still firmly are anchored. You have prototypes worked out, so that one can Clichés quickly grasped and reconsidered. What are they?

Bieli: Among men, for example, there's the "one funny guy," very popular, often a comedian. That's also a theme, women who are funny often don't have it so easy. And then there are three men who are on the road together. In Switzerland, sometimes it's a German-speaking man, a French-speaking man and an Italian-speaking man, and they have fun together. Then there's "A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do," the cliché that the man sweats, the man creates, the man drives. And then there's the "mansplainer": when an advertisement calls for a person with expertise, it's very often a man.



Häcki: As soon as you need someone with expertise, then you get a man. And he saves or explains. And these are mostly men 50 plus. Women 50 plus don't appear in advertising at all, not even as a cliché. Maybe once as a grandmother, but then they're older again.

How do the prototypes look at the Women out?

Bieli: When it comes to stereotypes for women, there are three that are very common. One is the caretaker. She takes care of the child, the dog or a calcified coffee machine. That, for example, can also be women over 50. But funnily enough, it doesn't happen that often. Because she is either the mother or the grandmother. Then the quiet connoisseur who eats her yogurt. And then - something that fortunately doesn't happen so often anymore - the robber. The one who just goes somewhere

lolls and looks beautiful.

Häcki: With these categories, i.e. prototypes, you can actually already cover almost everything. If we take a close look at the caretaker, for example. She cares, she can't really talk, and she likes to be shown in profile because she has to take care of something. And the quiet bon vivant can't talk either. The pure speech share of women in advertising is very small.

Now when advertising really how do consumers perceive the changes? and consumers? Whether that triggers resistance?

Häcki: I don't think you should underestimate people's openness to more diverse images. And: Often, you first have to cross a threshold for something to really stand out. Non-clichéd depictions will definitely attract attention because they are not often seen in advertising.

"We help shape the public image of women and men. Therefore, we have a responsibility to avoid stereotypical role models." - Maxomedia

How did your CEO Roman Hirsbrunner reacts? Was he there from the beginning?

Häcki: We had a clear plan that we proposed to him. And Roman fully supported it. We feel an extremely strong sense of trust. He and the entire management are behind it. That helps a lot, of course.

You now have your head in the Wind held and it blows. And you are measured against the Gisler protocol. That is, when Jung von Matt puts out a commercial that doesn't "clean", then you will find something to get to hear. The bar hangs up high in any case.

Häcki: That's guaranteed to happen to us sooner or later. And then it's like, "Hey, Jung von Matt, what are you doing?" But we think that even if you don't do everything perfectly, you can still get on your way. We're working on it. And if a woman sometimes silently enjoys her yogurt, it's not so bad either, because hopefully it's no longer like that in every single yogurt commercial.

Bieli: It is simply the mass that makes something a cliché. The fact that it is sometimes like that is life.

How can you imagine the process internally in concrete terms? A new campaign is being created at Jung von Matt. Where are Gisler stumbling blocks everywhere?

Häcki: The most important moment is really the beginning. Because that's where a lot of things settle, and then it stays the same until the end.



So it actually goes with the creation.

Häcki: Exactly. But it can still be corrected almost to the end. There's still a lot you can do, at the latest until production. There should be no gender police to whom you have to submit everything before it goes into production. And that's not only the case in advertising and communication with the distribution of roles. When I stand in front of a concert poster and see only men in the lineup - that's noticeable.

Did the Gisler protocol cause astonishment in triggered by the industry or is the perhaps the beginning of an overarching Agency friendship?

Bieli: That would be nice. It's certainly the case that it's not usually the case that you launch an initiative for the whole industry. Or something where people from the entire industry can participate.

Were there from the agencies, who joined have also already Input?

Bieli: Absolutely. New ideas, plans, possibilities are always emerging in our joint discussions. For example, we put together a set of arguments for inclusive language. At the last meeting, we came up with the idea of putting together a similar set of arguments for inclusive images. This is now in the making. The Gisler Protocol is alive and well. We have left the original points untouched. But so far

no one has felt the need to expand it either.

Häcki: We intentionally started working on the Gisler guidelines in pairs. If too many cooks are involved from the beginning, it dilutes the taste. Now that we have a basis, we are open to expansion.

Actually, you could give an award at some point. The Gisler Award.

Bieli: Sure! There are lots of ideas floating around. So that these are then also implemented, it takes time. But such award themes are of course a great way to award prizes for good work and theoretically also for not so good work. Of course, an independent jury would be needed. That would also do a lot of work to raise awareness.

One would have to perhaps yes also not a new award invent, but could the with an already existing Award include.

Häcki: That would be great. Who knows what the future will bring - we're definitely open. At the moment, however, we are certainly looking at many more agencies joining the Gisler Protocol and gradually making advertising in Switzerland more diverse.

Editor-in-chief Anna Kohler met Nina Bieli and Annette Häcki for the video podcast. You can find the 13th edition of "Off The Record" on the #Gisler protocol here .

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