

REINVENTING Innovation

BY / BECCA BROADDUS

n German, the word for “job” is “Beruf.” It literally translates to “calling,” but if you ask Gordian Braun, people tend to forget about that part.

“A position shouldn’t be just a job, it should be a calling,” he said. “I like to reinvent myself constantly. I can do that with all topics around entrepreneurship and innovation.”

Braun, who is from Germany and works in Berlin, went down a traditional path after high school—pursuing a business law and business administration degree at the prestigious University of Mannheim in Germany. It is his biggest regret.

“I was so busy doing both parts of business administration and business law, I didn’t have any time to be creative,” Braun lamented. “Being creative is what differentiates between being normal and being innovative.”

After completing his degree, he made a decision he wouldn’t regret. Braun headed to the U.S. to study entrepreneurship. He received his master’s degree in entrepreneurship from the University of Florida and followed it up with an MBA at Baylor University.

“It’s a character thing,” Braun answered, when asked why he decided to pursue entrepreneurship. “You recognize it early on. You’re always the person who is different. I was always the guy who tried to understand both sides. I was the one doing things differently than everyone else. That’s one thing innovators have. They’re constantly seeing things differently and seeing how you can make things differently.”

He started his first company, a third-party vendor that connected wedding videographers with engaged couples, when he was still in high school. His next venture, during his undergraduate studies, was a record label. If you ask him, those were his “companies for learning,” since they taught him how to build and run a business. His most recent start-up, Locana, was founded during his time in Florida. The company was an online marketplace for local companies—sort of a regionally focused, Amazon-type website with access to goods from nearby mom-and-pop shops as well as national franchises.

Although he’s not currently self-employed, Braun maintains his entrepreneurial spirit at his new gig as head of growth and business acceleration at CleverShuttle. CleverShuttle is a German startup that aims to optimize and change transportation, so it’s more efficient and sustainable. They do so with an on-demand car pooling service, similar to Lyft or Uber, but with company-owned, electric vehicles. Prior to his time at CleverShuttle, he worked for another Berlin-based transportation company, MOIA, directly out of Baylor.

“I never wanted to leave America, but [when I got the offer from MOIA], it felt right to do something really crazy and go to Berlin,” he said. “I’ve never lived here before. I like the challenge to create something completely new that no one can imagine.” For now, Braun is happy where he is.

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“If at some point another opportunity comes around the corner, we’ll see,” Braun said. “My overall goal is to be happy and to never look back and regret what I was doing. Since the Florida decision, Baylor and Locana, I don’t regret anything. I do not only not regret anything—the opposite. I loved pretty much everything I experienced and did. That very well reflects with my different life plan. All I want to do is be open for what’s coming and reinvent myself again.”

He has one definitive, tangible goal, though. He wants to move back to the U.S. with a Green Card.

“I love America,” he mused. “I felt more at home there than I ever did in Germany, and my biggest dream is to come back some day.”

GORDIAN BRAUN
MBA '16

HEAD OF GROWTH AND
BUSINESS ACCELERATION
CLEVERSHUTTLE
BERLIN, GERMANY