Mag. Christian Seiwald • President Novartis Austria
Novartis–new skills in the science of lifeLife Sciences: Innovation needs Communication

On working together with Ars Electronica

Companies like Novartis, who stand for positioning Life Sciences on the pinnacle of scientific and technological development, must be creative. They must have the courage to take the unconventional path. Innovation only comes to those who are open to new ideas and who are prepared to initiate change.

Innovation is not an end in itself; there must be a clear purpose. It is by focussing on Life Sciences–the combination of various scientific disciplines and technologies in the areas of medicine, agriculture and nutrition–that Novartis has been able to focus on improving health and quality of life throughout the world.

This task cannot be done by technology alone. Indeed, innovative technologies can only be used to their full potential if they are accepted by society. Healthy competition and market access can only exist when there is an open dialogue over the use of, and the risks involved in new technologies. In short: Innovation does need communication.

Ars Electronica has demonstrated this capability superbly using computer and information technologies. The depth of this topic was recognised early, and through successfully building bridges between science and technology on the one hand, and art and culture with the other, Ars Electronica have not only established a refreshing culture of discussion, they have also facilitated a highly competent encounter with new technology.

Bearing this both experience, and the chosen topics in mind, it was an easy decision for us to accept Ars Electronica's invitation to cooperate with them in this year's symposium. Doesn't the theme Life Sciences push life itself into the foreground? What could be more fascinating, more multifaceted and more pioneering that that?

It is in this spirit that I wish the organisers and participants, two interesting, illuminating and fruitful days of discussion.