



ATTACHMENT TO THE 15-YEARS-NEWS RELEASE

**CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF VISIONAPARTMENTS:
AN INTERVIEW WITH FOUNDER, OWNER, AND CEO ANJA GRAF**

How did you come up with the idea for VISIONAPARTMENTS?

In my early years as an entrepreneur, some friends and I ran a model agency and I was always searching for furnished rooms for our international models. Good ones were hard to find – most were either too expensive or had furnishings that were just too ugly – so I decided to take a quick trip to a charity shop, pick up some things, and start decorating rooms myself. When a number of well-known companies suddenly started ringing me up and making enquiries, I had an epiphany and the idea was born.

What were the rooms for your models like back then and how does a VISIONAPARTMENT look today?

The flats for the models were quite small and spartan – they really only offered the most basic furnishings. Each was also a bit of a hodgepodge, so there was no common theme tying them together.

These days, VISIONAPARTMENTS feature tailored living concepts with a focus on architecture and design, as well as on high-quality materials. Our guests can choose from a variety of dimensions and styles to meet their particular needs. And no matter what they choose, a prime urban location is always included. Our flats offer everything our clients need to live comfortably, including a fully equipped kitchen. They only need to take care of their daily requirements.

What was it like getting VISIONAPARTMENTS off the ground as a 21-year-old?

I've always been a woman who doesn't shy away from anything and is prepared to take certain risks. Even as a child, managing small business was great fun for me – and it gave me the chance to earn my first pocket money, of course. I could tell that being my own boss was my calling.

Would you ever have imagined having so much success – you now have around a thousand flats in eight destinations – in just 15 years?

No, not in my wildest dreams! It is great to look back on everything that has come together over the years, though.

You've handled a lot of the business yourself up to this point, but writing this success story probably wouldn't have been possible all on your own. Looking back, whom do you owe a special thank-you?

I owe a great deal of gratitude to my partner at the time, who supported me with the capital I needed to get the whole business rolling. I'm glad that he's still an active member of the company. I'd also like to thank my parents, who were there to help when it was time to finance our first property. That said, my father didn't do so because I was his daughter; he's an experienced businessman who recognized the potential in my idea. I



should mention Credit Suisse, as well – they opened their doors to me and listened to my ideas after quite a few other banks had turned me away with a smile. They're still one of our strongest partners when it comes to property financing today. Last but certainly not least, a huge thank-you to all the employees who have been by my side all these years for identifying with our brand and providing all kinds of valuable inputs.

What's your personal recipe for success?

I think it's important that you rise to the challenges that present themselves and always keep learning. So far, I've also been able to get over failures relatively well and never given up. A positive attitude, discipline, and dedication are some of the character traits that have helped me in building the company, as well.

How do you balance a successful business with family life? (Editor's note: Anja Graf has four children.)

I try to keep myself organised and have plenty of support I can count on, both professionally and privately. At home, my partner handles everything from A to Z with the help of our nanny. In terms of the business, I now rely on more than 120 employees – including our newly formed management team – to shoulder some of the load and teach me new things all the time.

You grew up in Switzerland, but you currently live and work mainly in Warsaw, where you direct the VISIONAPARTMENTS support centre. What's it like there? Do you ever get homesick?

There's not much time for that (laughs)! I've really settled into the Polish capital, and since my family also live there, there's never been a problem in that regard. Friends and relatives come to visit us all the time. Plus, you can often find me on the go at one of our other destinations. That includes Switzerland, of course – and Zurich in particular, which is where our management team works and important decisions are been taken.

Is there anything that you would have done differently now? Anything you might even regret?

I can't say I really regret anything. When I think back, though, I could have been even more open to taking risks from time to time. In the past, we've had chances to buy the odd property that I'd love to have in our portfolio today.

How has the serviced apartments business evolved over the years? What do you see as the key differences between now and its beginnings?

There have definitely been a lot of changes in the industry. During the first few years, VISIONAPARTMENTS was something of a pioneer; the business developed practically on its own. Relatively little was required to get our properties to a 100% occupancy. However, as we grow and expand beyond Switzerland's borders, our competitors and the demands of the business are rising all the time and we now have to make much more of an effort to push that same figure over 95%. People's expectations have also evolved; it's not getting any easier to make our guests happy. With interest in shorter-term solutions on the rise and the leisure market becoming more and more aware of us, you have to be a lot more flexible these days. Back in 1999, all we really



needed in our office was the good old telephone. For reservations, for example, you now need completely different technologies and mechanisms. Just last year, we unveiled a new website that we're constantly optimizing to keep up to speed with the latest developments. Finally, there's obviously a world of difference between managing a company with two or three employees and one with more than 120.

How would you describe your target clientele?

Our target market is very international and we welcome guests from all over the world. Many of them are businesspeople who are working on projects in a given city for an extended period of time and need an uncomplicated temporary living solution. A good number of them are also travelling alone and thus looking for smaller flats that still provide everything they need, which ours certainly do. I'm actually always surprised by the high percentage of women among our guests. More and more often, people from the regions surrounding our destination cities also turn to us after separating from their partners or finding out that their new home won't be ready on time.

Is there still potential for growth in the furnished apartments business?

I think so, yes. Compared to the United States or Asia, for example, the market isn't nearly as established or advanced in Europe. That's why I'm expecting this new way of living to continue making strides here.

In Zurich in particular, one continues to hear criticism that you're taking up valuable housing space.

What do you think of these claims?

I have to say I can't really understand them. The opposite is true, after all: we offer people places to live! Many of our properties – including the new flagship house at Zurich-Giesshübel train station, for instance – were originally office buildings or planned as such. So far, we've converted quite a few properties into residential buildings, creating additional living space in the process. Our doors are always open to all and our prices are very attractive, especially when you consider all the services they include. (Editor's note: VISIONAPARTMENTS prices include TV and Internet access, weekly cleaning, rubbish disposal, ancillary costs, and more.)

What are your future plans for VISIONAPARTMENTS? Do you have anything interesting on the agenda?

Now that we've reorganized and consolidated the company after a somewhat chaotic 2013 – we did open two sizable new properties in Berlin and Zurich, of course – we're once again keeping a keen eye out for further expansion opportunities. Our wish list includes larger cities in the German-speaking countries, such as Frankfurt and Hamburg. We'd also like to continue growing in Munich and Vienna. Meanwhile, we're hoping that we'll soon finally be able to realize our project in Geneva despite some complications with the local authorities. And finally, we're planning to invest in our current properties, some of which have begun to show a bit of wear over the years. In any case, it's safe to say that things won't be boring at VISIONAPARTMENTS. My team and I are already looking forward to the next 15 years!



VISIONAPARTMENTS

Your first address.

About VISIONAPARTMENTS

Founded in Switzerland in 1999, VISIONAPARTMENTS specialises in the rental of high-quality furnished flats known for their commitment to service and style. The company quickly advanced from start-up to Switzerland's market leader and now offers around a thousand temporary living solutions tailored to its clients' needs in Berlin, Lausanne, Munich, Vienna, Warsaw, and Zurich, with Geneva soon to follow. VISIONAPARTMENTS is now gradually expanding both domestically and abroad while continuing its focus on the German-speaking countries. [visionapartments.com](https://www.visionapartments.com)