Annette Winkler

German-born Annette Winkler is CEO of Smart cars, and one of the three highest-ranking women in the Daimler Group. Her appointment in 2010 signified a major shift in the male-dominated auto industry.

In 1995, Winkler began her career with Daimler when she was appointed Head of Public Relations and Communications with Mercedes-Benz in Stuttgart. Moving up through the ranks, she became CEO of DaimlerChrysler in Brussels, then VP of Global Business Management & Wholesale Europe in 2006, and finally CEO of smart in 2010.

Earlier in her career, at 27 years old, having completed a PhD in Business Administration, and a thesis on corporate valuation and jurisdiction, Winkler took over the sole management of her father's construction company, another non-traditional industry for a woman in management. She modernised the operation, making it profitable, and in 1992 was elected by the jury of the champagne house Veuve Clicquot as German Entrepreneur of the Year.