

> **“Organizations can often overcomplicate their purpose and principles, but at LIXIL, we’ve managed to find something powerful through clarity and simplicity.”**

Julia Deister
2021 - Present:
Leader Hydrific, part of LIXIL





Julia Deister

2021 – Present:
Leader Hydrific
CEO & Co-founder at Hydrific,
part of LIXIL

Aug 2021 - Present
Leader Hydrific
CEO & Co-founder at Hydrific, part of LIXIL

Jan 2021 – Jul 2021
Incubation Lead and Co-founder
at Hydrific, part of LIXIL

Mar 2021 – Sep 2021
Leader, eCommerce and DTC at LIXIL
(Sr. Director of eCommerce and DTC)

Jul 2019 – Feb 2021
Leader, eCommerce at LIXIL
(Director of eCommerce)

Feb 2016 – Jun 2019
Business Development Manager eCommerce
at LIXIL

Jan 2015 – Jan 2016
eCommerce Business Development Specialist
at GROHE, part of LIXIL

Sep 2011 – Sep 2014
Integrated Global Work Program
at GROHE, part of LIXIL

Education

2019 – 2021
Columbia Business School,
MBA Master of Business Administration

2011 – 2014
Duale Hochschule Baden-
Württemberg (DHBW) Mosbach,
BA, Sales and Cooperation Management

WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE TO JOIN LIXIL?

My journey with LIXIL began through a three-year work program with the GROHE brand, which combined work and study curriculums to facilitate hands-on learning with classroom education. It allowed me to pursue my Bachelor's degree while gaining first-hand insights from the business world. I feel privileged to have been among the students in Germany who are selected for this type of program each year.

During this time, I had the opportunity to rotate across multiple functions globally every three to six months: Marketing and Sales, Operations, Strategy, M&A, and Finance. This exposure provided invaluable practical skills and a deep understanding of international markets. By the end of the program, it was clear to me that LIXIL was the perfect launchpad for my career trajectory.

AFTER THE THREE-YEAR WORK PROGRAM, WHAT WAS YOUR CAREER JOURNEY LIKE AT LIXIL?

After completing the program in 2014, I received the offer to join a small team pioneering the launch of one of the industry's first Search Engine Marketing (SEM) campaigns. The transition was thrilling. Not only did it involve relocating to New York, but it also meant stepping into an entirely new company division. Within a year, our team's new approach tripled online conversion rates, earning us a prestigious award from Amazon – a testament to our ingenuity, dedication, and hard work.

This recognition and early success were key factors in setting the stage for my career at LIXIL. I was promoted to e-commerce manager a year after joining the team, tasked with establishing the emerging e-commerce channel. When you sell toilets and kitchen sinks, e-commerce may not be the channel that comes to mind, but we saw the untapped potential.

I led the expansion of our small group to a fully operational department, becoming LIXIL Americas' fastest-growing and most profitable segment. It was an extraordinary journey. I started in a relatively junior position and was empowered to establish a department from the ground up – rising to the position of leader for the group.

In 2021, my career trajectory took another inspiring turn. I was first promoted to lead the direct-to-consumer team while continuing to oversee the e-commerce department. Shortly after, I was appointed incubation lead, where I had the honor to co-found Hydrific.



This new venture, part of LIXIL, is dedicated to making water conservation enjoyable and easy. We have launched our first product offering, Droplet, an innovative smart home IoT device designed to optimize water usage. At LIXIL, we are not just building products; we're contributing to a sustainable future, which makes my work incredibly fulfilling.

Balancing my new responsibilities at LIXIL while also completing my Executive MBA at Columbia Business School was demanding, especially during the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this year of change provided invaluable experiences, such as regular engagements with LIXIL's senior executive team and exploring the nuances of venture building. I was able to learn so much in the course of my work, and that added to the excitement of the role.

I would say my career journey has been a continuous learning curve, filled with diverse opportunities and challenges at LIXIL, each contributing to my professional and personal growth.

WERE THERE CHALLENGES WITH YOUR ROLES? HOW DID YOU NAVIGATE THEM?

Being one of the youngest managers at LIXIL was truly an honor, but it came with its own set of challenges during the initial stages of my career. When I was entrusted with the leadership of the e-commerce team, I needed to adapt quickly and demonstrate my competence. There definitely were moments of introspection as I grappled with the complexities of a managerial role for the first time. It was crucial for me to work even harder to prove my worth. But this dedication and consistent performance helped reshape both my perceptions and those of my colleagues, earning their trust and respect.

LIXIL has been amazing in its ability to recognize talent and foster opportunity. The company's openness to entrust significant responsibilities to younger managers is both refreshing and empowering. At LIXIL, people are given chances based on their merits, not based on preconceived notions of who they should be. I know it strengthened my leadership mindset and allowed me to grow quickly with the responsibilities of my various roles, including identifying the right talent to join me in my current venture – which, I believe, is one of the hardest things to do.

HOW DID HYDRIFIC COME ABOUT?

Innovation is at the core of LIXIL's mission to make better homes a reality for everyone, everywhere. And this momentum starts at the very top. Our CEO, Kinya Seto, is a Tuck Business School alumni and advocate of Vijay Govindarajan's Three-Box Solution.

LIXIL joined forces with Tuck to launch the Tuck-LIXIL program to create a common language and framework for internal innovation efforts. Through this initiative, the importance of 'water sustainability solutions' emerged as an area to foster positive change and uncover potential new business ideas.

When the opportunity for Hydrific came about, I had just completed my Executive MBA, and I was contemplating – *"What's next in my career? How can I grow?"* I was comfortable in my e-commerce role as I became an expert in that field. On the other hand, Hydrific and the world of startups were different and exciting to me. While making an impact on society was something that really aligns with my values, what really pushed me into taking the leap was advice from a friend. She said: "Julia, you should always embrace new challenges and step out of your comfort zone. It's really under such circumstances where you find the greatest room for growth." I couldn't agree more, and I am thankful that LIXIL presented yet another opportunity to create value that I can be proud of.



WHAT WERE THE EARLY STAGES OF INCUBATION LIKE?

When we kicked off the incubation phase, we found ourselves starting with a blank canvas. We had the autonomy and ownership to spearhead the initiative. As a small team of six, the responsibility fell on us to chart our course. Our only guiding star was the mission to become pioneers in water sustainability.

In those foundational days, we collaborated closely with a California-based agency and essentially operated in tandem, leveraging their entrepreneurial roadmap. We had day-to-day guidance and mentorship on the intricacies of leading a venture and the nuances of launching a startup.

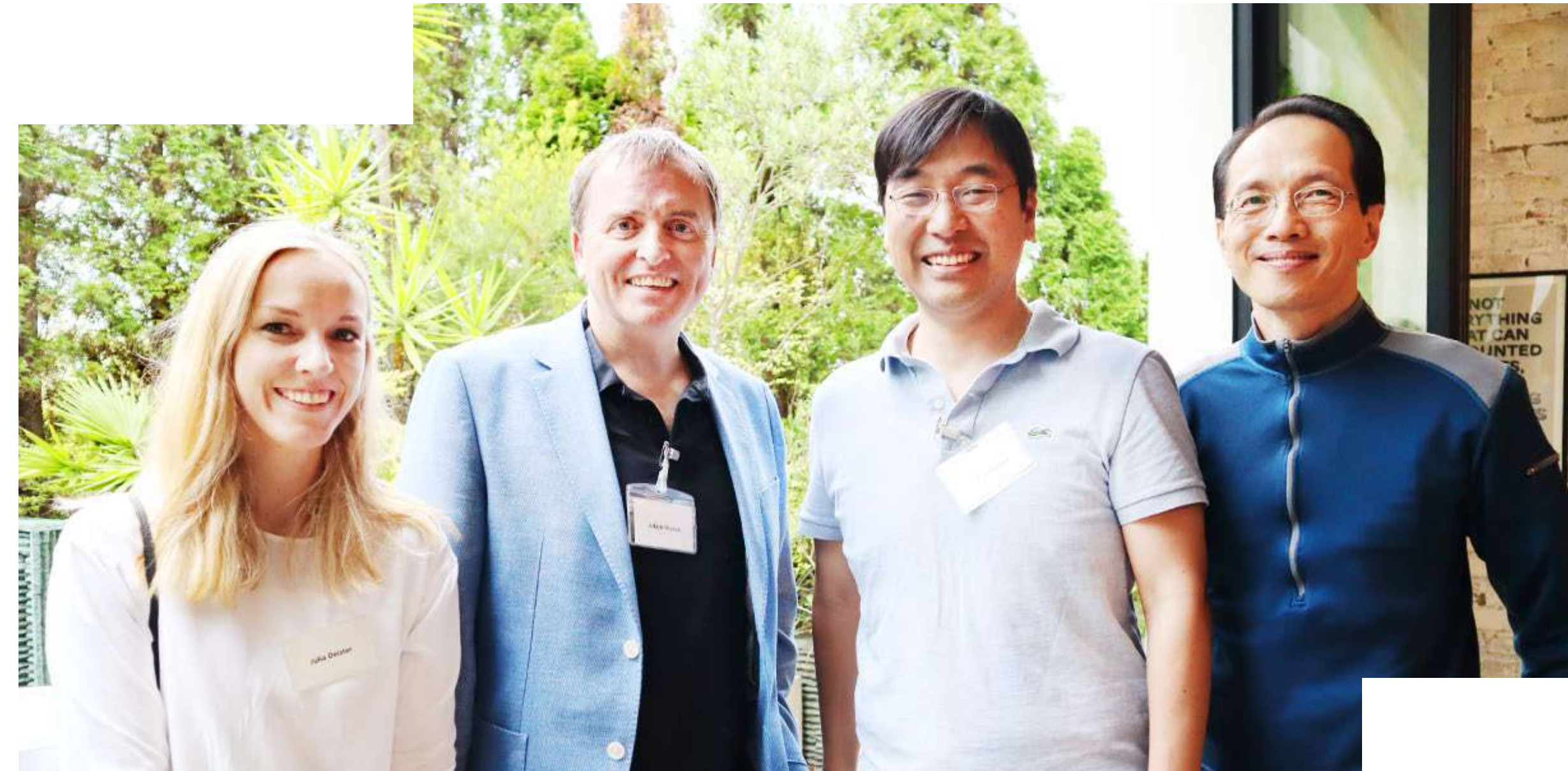
Throughout the entire process, LIXIL's executive team provided direct support and oversight for the venture's development. With their leadership expertise, we carved out our own processes, developed our strategic thinking, and fostered a collaborative atmosphere. I think the defining moment for our team arrived when we secured funding approval from both our executive team and the venture board. It was a vote of confidence in our vision, the effort we were putting in, and the idea's validity. That level of trust and encouragement speaks volumes about LIXIL.

WAS YOUR TRANSITION TO HYDRIFIC WHAT YOU EXPECTED IT TO BE? WHAT WAS LEADERSHIP LIKE FOR YOU?

The transition to Hydrific was both transformational and challenging. I moved from a specialized role, where I was deeply immersed and knowledgeable,

to a broader leadership capacity. Akin to a startup CEO, I oversee all the functions of Hydrific – ranging from Sales, Marketing, and Finance to HR, Operations, and R&D. This required a shift in my leadership approach. Instead of being a hands-on leader diving deep into every detail, I trust my team's expertise, listen actively, and guide them strategically.

Despite my outward disposition as a confident leader, finding my leadership style and adopting a growth mindset was a personal evolution. Carol Dweck's book *Mindset* taught me how to maintain a positive outlook and not fear failure. It's not always second nature for many of us to feel comfortable amidst uncertainties, and it was no different for me. But now, it is one of the aspects of my work that I love the most. I continuously seek opportunities to grow, innovate, and create an impact.



WHAT DO YOU ENJOY ABOUT BEING PART OF THE TEAM?

What I really love about being part of LIXIL is the embodiment of the LIXIL Behaviors – Work with Respect, Experiment and Learn, and Do the Right Thing. Organizations can often overcomplicate their purpose and principles, but at LIXIL, we've managed to find something powerful through clarity and simplicity.

Another aspect I value is how the leadership team provides guidance and mentorship to empower the team. In challenging scenarios, my boss has been incredibly supportive, guiding me in a way that had a lasting impact on my leadership style. Instead of handing me solutions, he'd ask insightful questions that encouraged me to think critically to find my own answers. His approach helped nurture my decision-making skills and provided stepping stones to build my confidence as a team leader.

Now that I've come full circle from being mentored to mentoring others, my primary aim is to empower and instill confidence in others. By promoting independent decision-making and embodying the LIXIL Behaviors, I strive to unlock the immense potential within our teams.

ANY EXCITING PROJECTS YOU ARE WORKING ON?

Absolutely, we're celebrating a significant achievement at Hydrific with the recent launch of Droplet – our innovative smart home water sensor that monitors water consumption from a single point. Being part of this journey, from concept to launch, has been incredibly rewarding. Drawing from the insights of our incubation phase and acceleration process, we're now seeing the transformative impact in every home Droplet reaches, empowering consumers with instant data and insights on their water use.



WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO SOMEONE WHO IS CONSIDERING A CAREER AT LIXIL?

At LIXIL, we value innovation, sustainability, and diversity to create a positive impact – so be ready and buckle up for an exciting journey of diverse opportunities across different regions and functionalities. LIXIL not only offers a platform for professional growth but also nurtures individual talents and encourages personal development.

As of 2023

For more on Hydrific and Droplet, kindly visit the following sites.

Website:

<https://www.hydrificwater.com/>

Droplet:

<https://www.hydrificwater.com/droplet>

Droplet Latest News:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/hydrific/>

“LIXIL not only offers a platform for professional growth but also nurtures individual talents and encourages personal development.”