



## IN CONVERSATION:

# WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW TO GET STARTED?

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Key:

**SK:** Sandra Kiendler (teacher, BORG Bad Leonfelden)

**JS:** Jürgen Schacherl (teacher, Bundesgymnasium Bludenz)

**SK:** So hello, Jürgen. Thank you for joining me today.

**JS:** Hello Sandra, it's nice to be here.

**SK:** Yeah. As I already said, my name is Sandra. I work at a higher secondary school in Austria, in Bad Leonfelden. And I want to know more about this awesome opportunity of hosting a workshop from OSHub Create Your World. So, if you could tell me a little bit about yourself first and then maybe talk about this a little, that would be great.

**JS:** Sure. Not a problem. As you said or as I already said, my name is Jürgen. I teach in a Secondary school in Vorarlberg in Bludenz. It's a pretty big school. It's one of the biggest schools in our state. We've got about 1000 students, I would say. I teach English, German cultural studies. And this workshop we did as part of our cultural studies program. The kids, they told me they were suffering a little bit from the whole COVID situation. We had to cancel lots of workshops, so it was great to have that opportunity to just do something online and something that they're actually not really that familiar with.

**SK:** I totally understand that. My students said the exact same thing. So many things were canceled over the last two years. I'm an English and History teacher and we also could not do a lot of stuff that we originally planned. So, I would be really looking forward to using this opportunity to get to know this workshop and use it for my students as well. Let's start with something more general. First, can you tell me about the OShub and create your world tour in general, like Generation Y that you hosted? What was it all about? What was the topic?

**JS:** Well, the workshop was basically about digital worlds. I would say about a game that those two hosts had created, an interactive game where the kids had to play certain roles and move their characters on the screen. Before we actually started with that, we had to create our own characters, talk about



digital storytelling, those sorts of things. So, it's basically a kind of thing that students would really like and students are really into because they spend a lot of time online. But the problem was that maybe they are too far away from the creative aspects of this sort of life. And that's why it took him a while to get involved in the idea of what they had to do. But it was then quite interesting to see how they develop their own memes, how they develop their own characters, and how they even gave their characters little character traits and to see how those characters develop. That was quite fun.

**SK:** That sounds amazing. Can you tell me more about the group you did this project with? Like, how old were they and what type of class did they go to?

**JS:** Well, they're year 11, meaning they're between 17 and 18 years old. They're, their class is in the cultural studies and languages branch of our school. So, they're actually acquainted with lots of cultural ideas for art history. And then we're currently involved in a bigger project where we look at role models and gender roles throughout the history – present, past and future role models in the work field. So, we look at different jobs and the ways jobs have changed, and this is why this workshop really fit in quite well with our idea of making them familiar with what's going on with gender roles and creating different jobs.

**SK:** Might I ask, how long did the workshop take to complete?

**JS:** I think it took about 3 hours. Yes, one hour 50 minutes.

**SK:** So it was not really a problem to fit it in like on one afternoon or anything. It was all done in one take.

**JS:** It wasn't a problem because I'm teaching them for 3 hours straight Thursday afternoon. So, it was just perfect. But I also heard that they could do it in 2 hours as well.

**SK:** But that's good to know about adaptability. Like I only have 2 hours, for example, one afternoon, so it would be great if this would also fit in there for one of my English classes, for example, or history.

**JS:** Okay. I was actually also thinking about doing it with my younger students. I have a year seven class right now. They're 13 and I feel like they could be perfect for that as well.

**SK:** Good to know. So, it's also for all different age groups. Adaptable, wonderful.

**JS:** Yes, exactly.

**SK:** Okay. And after the workshop, do you think your students got an even better understanding of how technology shapes our society? Like, what do you think? Did they really get an appreciation for that?

**JS:** But, it's a big question. I think they got a quite good understanding of how technology and digitalization shapes the society in the last two years. So this is just an additional element. I think, what I hope, what I really hope for is that they get an idea of how computer games are also created, how you create characters and how characters interact and behave in certain situations. I think that's the thing that they actually took away from. It's not the digital storytelling element, but the storytelling element that they did, they got more from than the digital part, I think.

**SK:** That sounds very interesting. I would also like to note that. So I would be very interested myself in learning how to program the computer game and create a story for it. And also, that basically things get me thinking like your students might feel more empowered in the digital world now too, like they know how to navigate it better. What do you say? This workshop helped them to feel safer in a digital world?

**JS:** I'd say if there's one thing that they also learned is how should I put it? They know how computer games work and how characters, digital characters work and how they create the sort of thinking that goes into creating those characters. Meaning maybe they're a little bit more literal when it comes to their understanding of media worlds and why a character behaves in a certain way. I think it would need to be broadened a bit more and developed a bit more for students to actually get a deeper understanding. But they got a first idea.



**SK:** So it would be like a groundwork basically through this workshop, and then it would be more like digital citizens, like they become more aware of what is expected of them in our society. That's great. That's what I want for my students too.

**JS:** I would say, it could be a great addition to digital account building, which is starting next year anyway.

**SK:** Yeah. What were the hosts like? What did they bring into the workshop that was particularly unique for you and your students?

**JS:** Well, I think the first thing that surprised the kids was how young the hosts were, because I think they're still not that far removed from my student's age. So, it took him a while to get used to the fact that it wasn't a, I don't know, 40 year old person standing or sitting in front of them, but two young women who are basically still studying and still developing their own world. And maybe that was the question that they had to deal with at first, but they got used to it quite quickly. In the end, I felt like I was a bit in the way.

**SK:** I also think it's important to bring different types of knowledge into the classroom through workshops like this. And when you've mentioned like two young women doing this workshop, what do you think? Is this like something that should be done more in classrooms?

**JS:** Oh, definitely, definitely. I always feel like I'm in the way of real progressing in my class. My class is very feminist. There are lots of online activists as well. And I feel like I'm always in the way when they want to develop, because it's always me. It's always the white man explaining the world to them. And then we always talk about that as well. So, it was a great change, I think, in the way we deal with each other. Then it was there actually those two women that did the workshop and not another person, that's basically a carbon copy of myself.

**SK:** Okay, that's great to know. But like I said, it doesn't need to be women. It's just like a different perspective can bring something new into the classroom, like a new teacher or a host for a workshop. I think it's great to change the rhythm.

**JS:** But I think especially when it comes to digital worlds, it's important to have more women representing that field.

**SK:** Oh, yes. I couldn't agree more, definitely, because we're still used to seeing like more men presenting those topics. And as kids, young kids seeing this, is definitely something we should all strive to achieve.

**JS:** Exactly. Yes.

**SK:** All right. One more question. Like in general, do you also connect with other partners outside of school, like Ars Electronica, for example, or other organizations like in broader communities? Like, do you also have partnerships with them or workshops?

**JS:** Well, we do a lot of workshops in Vorarlberg, as I said, we have this branch „ Kulturelle Bildung“ which involves going out and doing projects with external partners. For example, this big project I was talking about before is an organization called Amazone. That's basically a forum to empower young women to become more active, to become more active in the public life. So that whole idea with the gender roles in the present and the past in the future that goes back to their initiative. We have a Fachhochschule in our vicinity. We're doing three workshops for photography workshops, all of those things there as well. But as you know, it's a small state, so there is a limited number of partners, but we use those partners whenever we can.

**SK:** Yeah. And also, you know, in this new digital age, you could also reach beyond Vorarlberg and connect with partners from all around the world and also from all parts of Austria. I would say.

**JS:** As we tried with this workshop. Exactly.



**SK:** So that's definitely something I strive for with my school as well, to get us connected more in different parts of Austria and worldwide. So, it sounds actually perfect to open the door for students and for the school itself to create your world.

**JS:** Yeah, definitely. It's a very important element of our modern classrooms, I think.

**SK:** So, in which setup did you do this workshop? Like were the students at home in front of their screens?

**JS:** Yes, because all computer labs have been so busy. So, we had to go home. I gave them an hour off and so they went home. That's why we started a little bit late, because it takes about an hour and a half to get home from school into the little valleys anywhere.

**SK:** Right. Because it would have might have been easier, you know, in a computer room, like to connect a whole class and they had the screen to share, and they could all work together. Like maybe this would have worked better. What would you say?

**JS:** So that's true. I agree. I mean, in retrospect, I would say, yes, it would have worked better, but since I was COVID positive at that point and I was in quarantine, it just played out really well for me because otherwise I wouldn't have been able to participate and nobody else had to shoulder my responsibilities. So, I told them, you know what, go home, do it in front of your own computers. But in retrospect, I would say yes, if I could do it again, I would say, let's stay. It's cool and let's do it in a computer lab. Yes.

**SK:** So that was very, very insightful. And I'm looking forward to the workshop now. Definitely.

**JS:** You're welcome.

