

2026 International Symposium on Hidden Champions

Symposium Information

Symposium Theme	Hidden Champions in Rising Economies: The Unrevealed Roads to the Future
Time	15 October 2026
Main Venue	Multifunction Hall, International Campus, Zhejiang University, Haining
Organiser	International Research Center for Hidden Champions (IHC), International Campus, Zhejiang University
Co-organisers	Zhejiang University International Business School (ZIBS); School of Management, Zhejiang University (SOM); National Institute for Innovation Management, Zhejiang University (NIIM); Chaowen Tianxia Media (Zhejiang) Group Co., Ltd.
Supporting Organisation	Ruihua Institute for Innovation Management
Supporting Projects	Major Special Project of the Ministry of Education in Philosophy and Social Sciences, "Building an Independent Knowledge System for Technology and Innovation Management in China" (2026JZDZ009) Key Program of the National Natural Science Foundation of China, "Growth Mechanisms and Development Models for Specialized and Innovative Enterprises" (72332005)
Working Language	English will be the primary working language. Simultaneous Chinese-English interpretation will be provided for keynote addresses and panel discussions.

Symposium Chairs



Hermann Simon

Symposium Co-chair | Founder and Honorary Chairman, Simon-Kucher | Honorary Director, IHC

Hermann Simon is a German management thinker whose work focuses on strategy, marketing, and pricing. He coined the term "hidden champions" in 1990. He has held professorships at Bielefeld University and Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz and visiting appointments at Harvard, Stanford, and MIT. He has authored more than 40 books, many on hidden champions and corporate globalisation.



Xiaobo Wu

Symposium Co-chair | Professor, School of Management, Zhejiang University | Director, IHC

Xiaobo Wu studies innovation management and strategy, with a focus on technological innovation, global manufacturing and competitive strategy, and digital and intelligent transformation. He has been a visiting scholar at the University of Cambridge and a Fulbright Senior Visiting Scholar at MIT Sloan. He developed the concepts of secondary innovation management and C Theory from the experience of leading Chinese firms.



Danica Purg

Academic Chair | President, CEEMAN | Founder and Dean, IEDC-Bled School of Management

Danica Purg focuses on leadership and management education and has advanced the integration of the arts, ethics, and responsibility into management curricula. She co-edited and contributed to Hidden Champions in Dynamically Changing Societies, has long supported management education networks in rising economies, and was inducted into the Thinkers50 Hall of Fame in 2025.

Programme

Wednesday 14 October Registration

Time	Venue	Programme
14:00 – 20:00	International Campus, Zhejiang University	Registration, collection of conference materials, and hotel check-in

Thursday 15 October Keynotes Industry Talks and Panels

Time	Programme
08:30–09:00	Arrival and Sign-in Guest sign-in and collection of conference materials
09:00–09:10	Opening Ceremony Welcome Remarks
09:10–09:20	Hidden Champions Through the Eyes of Generation Z
09:20–09:50	Keynote Address 1: Hermann Simon (Founder, Simon-Kucher) Hidden Champions in a Changing World: Origin, Evolution, and the Future
09:50–10:20	Keynote Address 2: Xiaobo Wu (Professor, School of Management, Zhejiang University) Beyond Catch-Up: The Innovation-Led Growth Path of Chinese Manufacturing Firms
10:20–10:30	Coffee Break
10:30–10:50	Keynote Address 3: Danica Purg (President, CEEMAN) Strategic Leadership Issues in Different Phases of Hidden Champions in Rising Economies
10:50–11:10	Keynote Address 4: Zhijian Hu (Chairman, Chinese Association of Science of Science and S&T Policy Research) Rethinking the Boundaries of Science and Technology
11:10–11:30	Keynote Address 5: Pil Hwa Yoo (Professor Emeritus, Sungkyunkwan University) Hidden Champions: The Evolution of a Global Business Paradigm
11:30–11:50	Keynote Address 6: Julian E. Schenkenhofer (Professor of Entrepreneurial Families, WHU - Otto Beisheim School of Management) Beyond Obscurity: Corporate Visibility, Knowledge Spillovers, and Innovation in Hidden Champions
12:00–13:30	Lunch
13:30–13:50	Release of the Report on Innovation and Development among SRDI Enterprises Bin Guo Professor, School of Management, Zhejiang University

Time	Programme
13:50–14:10	Industry Talk 1: Changhong Wu Chairman, Zhejiang Shuanghuan Driveline Co., Ltd. From Precision Drivetrains to Global Competition: The Growth Journey of a Hidden Champion in Manufacturing
14:10–14:30	Industry Talk 2: Lei Mao Co-Chairman, Ningbo Yongxin Optics Co., Ltd. From Precision Optics to Intelligent Sensing: Innovation and Growth in Optical Manufacturing
14:30–14:50	Industry Talk 3: Riping Zhang Chairman, Juli Automation Equipment (Zhejiang) Co., Ltd. From Electric Drive Equipment to the Low-Altitude Economy and Robotics: New Growth Frontiers for Specialized Equipment Manufacturers
14:50–15:10	Industry Talk 4: Aisheng Han Chairman, Hangzhou Haolian Intelligent Technology Co., Ltd. From Digitalisation to AI Agents: How AI Is Reshaping Traditional Industries
15:10–15:30	Industry Talk 5: Chen Liu Founder and CEO, Style3D (Linctex Zhejiang Technology Co., Ltd.) From AI + 3D to Industry AI Agents: Innovation and Globalisation in Digital Fashion
15:30–15:50	Coffee Break
15:50–16:00	Launch Ceremony for the "Hidden Champions: Mondays at 8" Offline Series and the Qianjiang AI Salon
16:00–16:35	Panel 1 (Inaugural Qianjiang AI Salon): AI Reshaping Industry: New Gateways, New Technologies, New Champions Moderator: Aiqi Wu Professor, School of Management, Zhejiang University
16:35–17:05	Panel 2 From Tacit Know-How to AI-Enabled Digital Assets: Renewing the Competitive Edge of Hidden Champions in the AI Era Moderator: Jing Ji President, Ruihua Institute for Innovation Management
17:05–17:20	Closing Remarks

Note: This programme is provisional. Speakers, presentation titles, and session arrangements are subject to final confirmation by the Organising Committee.

The Organising Committee of the 2026 International Symposium on Hidden Champions

September 2026