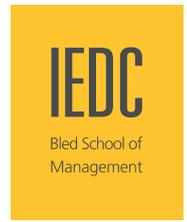


# IEDC Faculty: Learning from the best



*A School with a View*

Date: 24. 4. 2013

Dr. Nenad Filipović, Academic Director of IEDC

## “IF YOU BELIEVE IN COMMON SENSE, THEN THE ONLY WAY TO BEAT THE CRISIS IS TO GET THE BEST OUT OF THE PEOPLE”

Dr. Nenad Filipović, since 1991, a lecturer, MBA Project Director and Academic Director of the IEDC – Bled School of Management. He teaches courses in General Management and Business Ethics. He keeps close contact with business practices through his work, as Director of EMBA Projects, as well as his advisory services to a number of international companies.

IEDC - Bled School of Management decided to pioneer in offering Executive MBA programs. In 1991, when the first program was launched, there were no such programs in Central and Eastern Europe. How did you decide to be part of this story?

I was asked to join IEDC in autumn of 1990, after my decision to leave the board of Končar became public. When considering my future, I was deliberating two main choices: joining a multinational which I knew well from before, taking a managerial position in Eastern Europe, or changing the profession from managerial to “academic” and coming to Slovenia. Three things were instrumental for my final choice: Slovenia being close to previous home (Zagreb); Danica and her team impressing me with their energy, making me feel it would be fun to work with them; and, most importantly, sense of a mission IEDC had and I believed in: helping the transformation of individual companies and the whole region through development of professional management. To be honest, I had very little understanding of what IEDC MBA was supposed to be and what role I

was supposed to be and what role I would play within it.

As (our) EMBA programs are becoming a mature product, what are their distinctive features?

I strongly believe that our EMBA (and

since other things are needed, including appropriate experience and “chemistry” within the company. What allows our MBA programs to be effective and differentiates them from many other programs carrying the same title? First of all, its ambition. We are committed to help our



PMBA) programs stand for what an MBA should be: an experience helping the managers to significantly develop their professional competences and get more ready for taking over the most demanding managerial and leadership responsibilities. By the way, I would never claim that an MBA is a guarantee for CEO level performance,

participants become better managers, leaders and even human beings, which is not a simple aspiration. Many other programs have the ambition to teach the students advanced financial analytics (and many other bits and pieces of professional know-how, of course), they clearly limit themselves to delivering professional

analytical toolkit. As important as analytics and the whole rational side of management are, they are far, far away from things needed to be really good at the top of an organization. Our programs are also quite unique in the balance of topics covered, in quality of the educators, in beauty of the setting (both IEDC facilities and Bled), in total dedication of the staff and in the effectiveness of learning methodologies used (what in good old days was called "pedagogy"). These features make them stay high in the global relations. On the regional level, we should also add the international mindset and high quality of the discussions held both in the classroom and outside of it.

You are definitely not a classical university professor. As Director of EMBA Projects you have supervised more than 200 consulting projects, you are an advisor to a number of international companies, a personal mentor to CEOs and a supervisor; you keep close contact with business practices through your work. What is the main advantage of it for you and your students?

Our MBA programs are designed for management practitioners, not academics. Our participants have to go back and apply what they have learned, often in highly delicate situations. I feel responsible for the relevance of the learning I facilitate. I have to be up-to-date with my understanding of the real world they belong to and the issues they face. Of course, I also must be able to help them with conceptual thinking about these issues, but that is only part of the story. I first of all have to be judged by them as a credible partner in learning, I then have to find an effective way to bring over my insights as well as to create space for them generating their own ones. All of that would be practically impossible

would I not spend enough time and effort working "in the field".

**What is your favorite memory from the class?**

Every single time people open up to share and I feel the energy of the whole class grow.

#### ABOUT NENAD FROM ALUMNI

«Nenad Filipović offers a unique combination of longstanding, hands-on business experience and deep, analytical thinking. This makes class discussions - whether based on his own experiences or on questions posed by fellow classmates - a very inspirational academic experience.»  
Jan Kettner, Managing Director South East Europe, Dometic Group, Sweden, EMBA 2011

**You were named for the Professor of the year for many times by IEDC's students. What inspires you in the teaching process?**

When at the end of the day you feel it was worth.

**What is the best piece of advice given to you by a teacher?**

When I graduated in computer sciences and stayed at the university as teaching assistant, my first boss told us, "young Turks" a story of him grading an exam at home. He was very young at the time, proud of being an assistant professor and giving the students tough time. As he graded the exam, he kept commenting how bad the results were. His five year old son approached him and said "Papa, did you consider to teach them first and only then give them exam?" That short sentence reminds me of the very essence of my job and is the best advice I can pass on to younger colleagues.

**How do you define your success and how the success of (your) MBA students?**

I assume you are asking me about professional success, but I would answer more generally. I would be very happy that, when I leave the stage, I leave something behind me. Since I do not build bridges or compose, what I can leave behind are people whom I helped to be better human beings and more successful business leaders.

**Name three reasons, why companies should invest in general employee talent development, despite the global recession?**

If you believe that "money talks", then a good argument is the research showing that the stock price of companies which are consistently on the Fortune list of best employers significantly outperforms the Fortune 500 index, recession or no recession. If you are more in favor of academic jargon, then consider what else besides employee talent (including competences and motivation) matches the definition of resources providing sustainable competitive advantage: valuable, rare, inimitable and nonsubstitutable. Finally, if you believe in common sense, then the only way to beat the crisis is to get the best out of the people.

**Do you notice any difference in students you taught 20 years ago and more recent ones? How has focus of their needs and interests changed?**

I notice many changes, probably too many to discuss them in detail here and now. Two big ones: these days they come better equipped with basic managerial know-how and more experienced, so we can go further and move faster. On the less positive side, many are more cynical and live less balanced life. The fact that we do not belong to the same generation

any more probably also makes me feel things have changed. I try to be open-minded, but I consistently fail to understand the beauty of Facebook.

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**What inspires you? / What is your life philosophy?**

I don't think I am already mature enough to have life philosophy. Being an educator is a perfect excuse to remain childish at least in one part of your character.