

Date: 25. 6. 2016

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## »HIERARCHICALLY DRIVEN LEADERSHIP? NOT WELL ACCEPTED BY GENERATION Y!«

*With nearly thirty years of experience, Marko - architect by profession, advertising man by passion and manager by training -, is one of the pioneers of the Slovenian advertising industry. His pioneer spirit always challenges him to the frontline of new adventures. So, he is alumnus of the first generation of Executive MBA program at the IEDC-Bled School of Management, and the fourth candidate who successfully defended the PhD Thesis at IEDC! Marko continues to conquer new areas of knowledge and hopes to join the circle of leadership experts with his doctoral study, titled 'Exploring leadership in the context of generation Y: Study in the European advertising industry'.*

*He has been actively involved in many international projects in the most influential advertising agency of former Yugoslavia, before founding his own agency in 1991. After ten years of continuous growth, he linked his agency to the McCann Worldgroup global advertising network. As a lecturer and jury member, he regularly participates in professional events in Slovenia and abroad. He has been one of the founders of IAA International Advertising Association's Slovenian chapter and has presided over it for four years. He has participated in various committees of the Slovenian Advertising Chamber and is a member of the Golden Drum Creative Council. For the fourth year in a row he has been nominated a mentor in the AmCham Young Professionals program by the American*



*Chamber of Commerce, and he also acts as a mentor to various start-up companies. He is a recipient of the H.K. McCann award for business excellence for his management of the agency.*

By: Tonja Blatnik, Head of Corporate Communications, IEDC

## **What was your most important take away from the Executive PhD Program?**

I was initially, maybe naively, expecting to get an extension of the Executive MBA program, a sort of MBA in XXL size. However, very soon in the process I learned that the PhD program offers a different perspective on managerial issues; it deals more with a broader perspective in understanding “why” rather than suggesting “how”. Since I am curious by nature and like to dig deeper for the underlying reasons of phenomena, I found some real value in changing my personal perspective; now I am more reluctant to jump to conclusions.

## **Whom would you recommend it to?**

Reflecting on my own experience I think that curious minds, people who are (motivated, driven) with their quest for knowledge and deeper understanding will benefit from a PhD program the most. Having said that, I would expand my recommendation to those interested in pursuing a teaching career, thus disseminating their expertise to younger generations of managers. A combination of grounded managerial experience, accumulated in day-to-day management activities, and broader theoretical knowledge from the PhD program, can build one’s credibility and add value to the teaching process.

However, a candidate considering enrolling into the executive PhD program needs to assess their time and energy capacity honestly and objectively; a PhD study requires lots of both and should not be taken too lightly. It took me five years of intense work and travel for my research, and occasionally I felt deprived of any

work/life balance. But, as I argue in my dissertation, the work/life balance is a relict of the past and an outdated concept anyway.

## **Your PhD research is dealing with exploring leadership in the context of generation Y: Study in the European advertising industry. What are the most interesting and useful findings?**

When I started with my research the Generation Y was a rather new and fascinating phenomenon, presumably very different from previous generational cohorts. My own dilemma how to manage them resulted in a broader research, asking both Generation Y members and their leaders in various European markets about their perceptions. I debunked the myths about them which result from simplified media stereotyping, suggesting that the Zeitgeist (our current socio-economic environment, in particular the changes in information technology, the impact of social media, etc.) provides a much better explanations for their values and behaviour. For example: the media reports stereotype the Generation Y as being extremely narcissistic, but why is it then that taking selfies is so popular across all generations?

An interesting observation, concerning the leadership aspects, is that their leader needs to earn their respect and authority; it does not come from her title on the business card. Hierarchically driven leadership does not resonate very well with this generation. They are true digital natives, they know how to get and use information, and this results in their confidence.

And thirdly, I suggest the importance of curating the company culture as one of the most im-

portant aspects of good leadership. While the company culture in the advertising industry overlaps with what I call the “advertising tribe”, this suggestion may be relevant for other intellectual industries as well. In these times when life-long commitment to one employer or even to one career has become an anachronism, it is crucial to appreciate how a stimulating culture attracts and retains the best talent.

## **What motivates people like you and your colleagues to endure under challenging circumstances?**

Obviously, we all have different extrinsic and intrinsic motivators, so I can only speak for myself. I try to set myself specific goals in life, and then I work towards them. It is like running: when your legs start to hurt and your lungs gasp for air, you visualize the finish line and keep moving.

My own intrinsic motivation is derived out of curiosity; I want to understand the world around me, and I want to understand myself, too. My research journey, as it unfolded, was a precious introspective, which I did not expect initially. If I dare to speculate more broadly, for my colleagues, too: I think that a good manager knows how to manage himself before managing others, therefore setting goals, balancing the time and handling occasional difficulties come as part of the personal and professional identity.

## MEET MARKO

### There's nothing better in life than ....

.... flying a little airplane in quiet air shortly before sunset, skiing fresh powder under clear skies, a glass of good wine in pleasant company, a peaceful moment with an inspiring book

### The biggest achievement in my life is ...

.... yet to come. I am proud of my career, my family, many accomplishments in life; but I keep setting myself new goals and working towards them. To paraphrase: when someone says "Why?" I try to respond with "Why not?"

### The most important time-management lesson ...

.... We tend to focus on urgent matters, while neglecting the important ones much too often. The instant gratification we get from accomplishing a small task prevents us from focusing on important things which don't have an externally imposed deadline.

### How do you relax ...

.... I have many hobbies but not enough time for them. Flying and freeride skiing are definitely among them, and so is travelling. But for a truly relaxing moment to recharge my batteries I cast my vote for a lazy afternoon in Piran, on our rooftop terrace with my wife.

