

»*PANTA REI*, AN EXPRESSION ATTRIBUTED TO HERACLITUS THAT TRANSLATES TO »EVERYTHING FLOWS« - REALLY RESONATES WITH ME. NOTHING IS FIXED OR PREDETERMINED, AND WE CAN SHAPE OUR LIVES AND OUR WORLD THROUGH OUR ACTIONS AND INTENTIONS.»

NINA STUPAN, EMBA 2018-2019, CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER AT MENDOTA INVEST, PRESIDENT OF THE IEDC ALUMNI CLUB SLOVENIA



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Interviewed by Vera Pasyukova, photos provided by Nina Stupan and IEDC

First of all, congratulations for becoming the new President of the IEDC Alumni Club Slovenia! What are your plans and what would you like to focus on during your mandate together with the team of fellow alumni who joined the board?

To begin with, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the school and my colleagues at the IEDC Alumni Club for

their recognition and their confidence in electing me as the new President of the IEDC Alumni Club Slovenia. It is an honour to serve in this role and I am committed to working with my team to further our shared goals.

The vision for the Alumni Club is to establish a connecting platform for the MBA Alumni clubs of the IEDC in the region. The aim is to build on the knowledge acquired within the framework of the IEDC

school, and through joint events ensure the transfer of knowledge and business and managerial experience between Alumni.

In line with this strategy, several key action plans were identified, namely to increase connections and cooperation between club members, to boost members' participation in club events and projects, and to organize gatherings with content, focusing to the content to be co-created by

club members (in a format of exchange of good practices, round table discussions, company tours, etc.)

Me and my colleagues from the management board of the Club have already taken steps towards establishing a cooperation between the Alumni clubs. This already led to an agreement between Slovenian and Croatian IEDC Alumni clubs to organize certain events together in the following year, for a start. In addition, we are in discussions about organizing a Business breakfast, following the model currently organized by the Romanian IEDC Alumni Club, which would become international.

I understand that building connections between members from different generations and clubs (and regions) take time and effort. But it's important to approach it with an open mind and a spirit of collaboration.

You graduated from the EMBA program at IEDC four years ago. Looking back at EMBA experience now, what were the major takeaways for you? What do apply in your current work nowadays (what do you do nowadays)?

Reflecting on my EMBA experience at IEDC four years ago, I can confidently say that it has significantly shaped my professional journey and personal growth.

The major takeaway that I apply in my current role as Chief Legal Officer at Emonika Center, a project of OTP group and currently the largest mixed use project in the country, is to always have a big picture: the EMBA program instilled in me the importance of strategic thinking and maintaining a holistic view of the business landscape. In my current role, this means understanding not just the legal aspects of our real estate project, but also the business, financial, and societal implications. This broad perspective allows me to make informed decisions that align with our overall business objectives of our project.

Next major takeaway I would emphasize is the need to constant redevelopment and growth. The EMBA program was a powerful reminder that education does not end with a degree. As a Chief Legal Officer, I am constantly faced with new challenges that require innovative solutions. In today's fast-paced world, being open to new ideas and continuously learning is crucial for staying ahead. This has led me to continually seek out new knowledge and skills, whether it's staying updated on changes in real estate law, regularly attending industry seminars, learning about new project management methodologies, understanding the latest trends in commercial real estate development or seeking

feedback from colleagues and stakeholders.

The EMBA program at IEDC was obviously more than just an academic endeavour to me, it was a transformative journey that equipped me with valuable insights and skills that I apply daily in my professional and private life too.

At the time you applied, you've been with BTC for about 10 years covering legal. What was the main reason for you to apply for the EMBA?

When I first joined BTC, I started as the Head of Legal. However, after a few years in this position, I transitioned to the role of Director of Property Management, so from being just a legal, to become a manager and leader. This new role presented a unique set of challenges and required me to acquire new skills, particularly in leadership and management.

Recognizing the need for growth and development in these areas, I saw the EMBA program as an opportunity to broaden my horizons and equip myself with the necessary tools to excel in my new role.

I had heard excellent reviews about the school from various sources, including individuals who had attended other management schools. They praised the practicality of the program, covering all necessary areas of management, and its focus on personal development,

which instills confidence to act decisively, confidently and with excellently built-in leadership skills. This feedback resonated with me, as I was seeking a program that went beyond theoretical knowledge and offered practical, real-world applications.

Looking back now, I am incredibly grateful to BTC as my employer at that time for the opportunity to have been part of the EMBA program. It has changed me in so many ways, both professionally and personally. I know that all students of EMBA emphasize that, but this is so true, it has to be repeated over and over again: professional and personal transformation going through the IEDC EMBA programme is truly noticeable. The knowledge and experiences gained from the program continue to guide me in my current role at Emonika Centre.

Would you say studying for the bar was easier than finishing an EMBA?

Comparing the process of studying for the bar exam with completing an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) program is indeed challenging, as they both require different sets of skills and cater to distinct professional paths. Whether one is harder than the other would likely depend on an individual's strengths, interests, and career goals.

I still remember going through the process to pass a bar exam as very exhausting and challenging, even though it happened 20 years ago. EMBA programme happened to me in a different stage of life and even



though it was challenging (and from time to time, especially passing the EOM exhausting) I felt it lighter. But passing both felt at the end really rewarding.

Do you still keep in touch with your classmates?

Indeed, maintaining connections with classmates is a cherished tradition for many of us. In our generation, we have a lively Viber group that serves as a hub for communication. This platform allows us to remember each other's birthdays, celebrate major holidays, and share photos from individual meetups. It's a wonderful way to keep the spirit of camaraderie alive, even when we're physically apart.

In addition to this larger group, I have a smaller circle of colleagues that I meet with on a yearly basis. Our gatherings are a melting pot of cultures, bringing together people from the Balkan region. We've had the pleasure of visiting Sarajevo twice together. Despite the diversity of our backgrounds, we find common ground in our shared experiences and have a lot to talk about. These meetings are always filled with laughter and good times.

Moreover, the Slovenian contingent of our generation

has a special tradition. Once a year, we gather for a dinner where we catch up on each other's lives. It's a time for reflection, sharing, and strengthening the bonds that have held us together over the years. And of course have some fun.

Being an experienced lawyer and a manager who has met a lot of different business people, who would you call a successful person?

When asked to define what makes a person successful, I believe it goes beyond just professional achievements or financial prosperity.

To me, a successful person is someone who radiates a certain energy that reflects his/her completeness, both in his/her private and professional life. Successful persons possess an inner power, a drive that seems capable of changing the world (even if it might be a bit of an exaggeration saying that :)). This energy is not just about the ambition or determination, but it's also about the wisdom that a successful person carries within. Such person is also constantly evolving, always seeking to improve himself/herself, and strives to be humble and kind. A successful person further on is not just leader, but



The major takeaway from the EMBA that I apply in my current role is "always have a big picture"!

also mentor, always willing to share his/her knowledge and experience with others.

But most importantly, for me success is about being true to oneself, being authentic and being a person of integrity.

With all the work, family and personal obligations and demands it is important to not forget to take care of yourself. What are your strategies to unwind after a stressful day or a stressful week?

Unwinding after a stressful day or week is not just a luxury, but a necessity for my overall well-being.

My number one strategy for relaxation is immersing myself in nature. There's something incredibly soothing about walking through nearby woods, breathing in the fresh air, and simply being alone with my thoughts. This allows me to connect with the present moment and find inner peace. If I were living near the sea, the sea itself would undoubtedly be my go-to place for relaxation. The rhythmic sound of the waves, the feel of the water, and the smell of the salty air have a calming effect that's hard to match. Activities like swimming and sailing, or

simply sitting by the shore, can be incredibly therapeutic to me.

Sometimes, also a good chat with a friend can provide a fresh perspective and help put stressful situations into context. These interactions remind me of the importance of human connection and the value of shared experiences.

If you had an opportunity to do something differently at some past turn in your life, what would that be?

I've come to appreciate that every experience, every challenge, and every success has been a valuable lesson and despite the seemingly random and subconscious nature of many of the steps I've taken, I wouldn't change a thing. Especially the actions that seemed not in alignment with my prior professional pursuits have contributed to my growth and understanding.

All steps and actions taken have shaped my knowledge, honed my skills, and ultimately led me to my current position.

I feel good about where I am now. I am proud of the path I've walked, and I am excited about the journey that lies ahead.

What are the things that you enjoy doing?

To be honest, I find joy in the simple act of living each day. The quiet moments in the morning, the drive to work, my first coffee, jokes and conversation with my kids, the music that sets the tone for my day - these are the things that I cherish.

Work, for me, is not just a means to an end, but a source of satisfaction and fulfilment too. I enjoy the challenges it presents, the opportunities it offers for growth, and the sense of accomplishment that comes with overcoming obstacles and achieving goals. Sharing thoughts and time with my friends and colleagues is another aspect I truly enjoy doing.

So, in essence, the things that I enjoy doing revolve around embracing the present, finding joy in little moments of life, and fostering meaningful relationships with my friends. These are the elements that make each day worthwhile and fulfilling.

Last but not least, what advice would you give to your children?

The advice I would give to my children is twofold: **Never stop learning** and **Be kind**. The first piece of advice, "Never stop learning," is one that I have personally adhered to throughout my life. The world is a vast and complex place, and there is always something new to learn. Whether it's a new skill, a new language, or a new perspective, learning

keeps our minds sharp and our lives interesting. It allows us to adapt to new situations, solve problems, and understand the world around us better. Moreover, continuous learning fosters curiosity, creativity, and innovation, which are essential traits in today's rapidly changing world. The second piece of advice,

"Be kind," is equally important. In a world that often seems harsh and unkind, a simple act of kindness can make a significant difference. Kindness doesn't cost anything, yet it can change someone's day or even their life. It fosters empathy, understanding, and mutual respect, which are the cornerstones of a harmonious

society. Being kind to others also has a positive impact on our own well-being, as it promotes happiness and self-esteem.

WHAT ONE CAN'T FIND ON NINA'S RESUME



EMBA 2018-19

Nina Stupan
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The last TV series you watched were? "Beckham" and the last season of "Sex Education". I liked "Beckham" as it's a compelling biography of a man who was focused on football from an early age and excelled in his profession despite facing major challenges on his path. "Sex Education" I recently watched, with my kids, of course. It's refreshing to see such an approachable and open discussion about topics that were once considered a taboo.

The music that usually plays in your car/headphones?

My musical tastes are quite diverse and eclectic. At heart, I'm a rocker, with a particular fondness for anything featuring electric guitars. However, my playlists are not limited to just rock but include classical music, vintage music, world music, and thanks to my kids also pop, indie music, R&B and rap.

My favourite comfort food? Without a doubt, it's pasta. It's like a warm hug on a cold day, a pick-me-up when I'm feeling down. With so many different shapes and sizes available and a multitude of sauces to complement, it is never boring and always exciting. It's a dish that brings people together.

What is your next holiday destination?

As winter approaches, my next holiday destination will for sure be the ski slopes.

Ad infinitum, how many of the following latin phrases have you learnt as a law student back in the day, please highlight: Ipso facto, Mutatis mutandis, In loco parentis, De gustibus non est disputandum, De jure, Bona fide, Annus mirabilis, Cogito, ergo sum, Non intellego latin.

Well, if I didn't recognize the classic legal phrases, probably my Roman law faculty would call me and ask me how I had passed his exam :) The ones I didn't mark are not (classic) legal expressions, yet I know them - even though I »Non intellego latin« :) My favourite phrase, however, is Panta rei, which is not a legal expression. The expression is attributed to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, and it translates to »everything flows«. This phrase encapsulates the idea that the world is constantly changing and nothing remains static, emphasizing the impermanence and fluidity of existence. This applies to all physical and mental phenomena, such as our bodies, thoughts, feelings, sensations, and perceptions. Nothing is fixed or predetermined, and we can shape our lives and our world through our actions and intentions. This thought really resonates with me and my understanding of the meaning of existence itself.

