

IEDC Alumni Success Story:

ALEKSANDRA BOŠKOVIĆ: »SEEING MY TEAM GROW ON A PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LEVEL, THROUGH JOINT WORK AND EFFORTS, MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING AS A LEADER AND AS A MANAGER.«

Interviewed by Vera Pasyukova

Photos provided by Aleksandra Bošković

You have become a CEO of Bild Studio in 2018. What has it been like so far in the shoes of a CEO? What major challenges have you had to face so far and what is it that you like most in this position?

Being a CEO is challenging in itself, and working in an IT industry, which is ever-changing, doesn't make the job any easier. However, it is interesting and it suits my

character - I do enjoy twists and turns. The major challenge is to accept the fact that you can never be sure that the decisions that you are taking on a daily basis are going to produce the result that you want and you have to accept the risk, that some will be an absolute failure. Still, I do like pushing my personal boundaries, and letting go of the feeling that I have to be 100% sure and know it all.

But, seeing my team grow on a

personal and professional level, through joint work and efforts, makes me feel like I know what I'm doing as a leader and as a manager.

The IT industry is still underrepresented by women,



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so it brings me particular satisfaction to pave the way for more girls and women, and it is my personal mission to help more women thrive in this industry.

That year 2018 you also started your EMBA studies at the IEDC. How did you manage to combine work and studies, as it's almost "mission impossible" when you are here in Bled for the module to have full control of what goes on back in the office?

I have to admit, that period of my life was extremely tough, but it made me aware of my personal strengths and the strengths of my team, as well as the weaknesses. It would be impossible for me to go to study and be absent for a two- or three-week long module without the support of my team and my trust that they can handle things on their own for that period of time. The first module was the toughest and it got easier along the way. Studies were harder :), but planning and delegating responsibilities was a must and that got easier. Also, my study buddies were a major support system. Through their experience and their handling of the job & family responsibilities, I've learned

a lot and they've helped me numerous times with advice on how to approach certain challenges.

How would you assess the situation in your industry in Montenegro and maybe in the region? What are the latest trends and developments? How do you keep up with what is going on?

The IT industry in Montenegro is still underdeveloped compared to the region, not to mention western markets, but it's evolving and growing each year.

Until recently, the government was unaware of the potential of IT, and there were no funds to support IT companies, their products, innovations. However, in the past three years the situation has been changing. Funds

the west. In order to compete on the international markets, we need to keep up with them. With the startup scene that is still emerging, we are able not only to keep up, but to influence and to create trends, which is encouraging, especially for the younger population.

All in all, with the promotion of IT, education at an early age, good investment opportunities and openness to the EU market, I think, Montenegro will be able to make IT a strong vertical pillar of growth.

Not only did you manage work and studies, but shortly after the start of EMBA program you also welcomed a new member to the family. What are your support systems and mechanisms that allow you to navigate so well? Is it



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and investment in the IT infrastructure and education are still quite low, but it is promising. With strong support from the private sector, I do believe that we can make IT one of the strongest pillars of the country's economy and growth. Our IT industry is under the strong influence of trends that are coming from

really possible for women "to have it all"?

I got pregnant during my second year of studies and my boy saw my MBA diploma when he was only one month old. I mentioned already that it was tough :) But it turned out once again a great test of my own resilience and

determination. It wouldn't have been possible to manage studies, work, a newborn, without the support of my family (grandma's were the best), my husband, my colleagues both at work and at school, and the IEDC management and professors, who were a huge support as well.

Is it possible for women to have it all? Yes, but it takes a village to raise a child, as they say, and I have one. The beauty of my "village" was, that it was composed of people who didn't have to be part of it, but still chose to be there, and were there for me - at Bled, in Podgorica and in my home town.

Taking a retrospective look at your career path so far, would you do something differently?

I would take on a mentor or a coach sooner. This way probably it would have been faster to learn. Instead, I was learning mostly by myself, along the way. Even though I didn't have any particular person who could supervise or advise me, I've learned from great leaders and professionals through my career and I'm grateful for each bit of advice they gave me.

You've got an IEDC EMBA diploma under your belt. What was the best takeaway from those two years?

I could list a number of things: get to know and understand your business, its strengths and weaknesses; take calculated risks; lean on your experience; never stop learning; read and keep up with the latest trends;

change and turbulence in business are normal; you're not too old to learn from other people; be humble; ask for help; let the ethics guide your decisions; invest and give back to your community.

Who were your favourite professors and why?

Jim Ellert has to be mentioned first. He was announced the professor of the year for the 20th time by my generation, for his devotion, guidance, enormous knowledge and support that he provided not only during the lectures, but during our whole studies. Moreover, I have to mention a few more, even though it's quite hard not to miss anyone.

The school takes pride for bringing the best professors, and it's rightly so. I'd like to mention Dr. Nenad Filipović, for making strategic thinking easy to understand and applicable to different industries and situations, and provoking us to take a stand and defend our opinions. Professor Hendrik (Drikus), Mani Sandher, Niko Slavnič, Joe Pons, Alenka Braček Lalić, Brane Kalpič, Pierre Casse - all made us grow so fast and made our studies an unforgettable experience. Besides professors, the IEDC management team and staff contribute immensely to an overall success of a school, the learning experience and provides you with the feeling that you won't be left alone in any situation.

Do you still keep in touch with your classmates or come across fellow IEDC alumni in business circles?

Does that network still help you now?

Yes, of course. We created a Viber group early on and it's still alive and kicking. The pandemic prevented us from seeing each other for a long time, but we managed to put together few small gatherings. The best thing is that during and particularly after the school finished, we made partnerships and we still rely on each other. There are numerous occasions when people ask for help or advice and there's always someone who's there to give a helping hand. It's an amazing feeling to know that almost in every industry you have someone, who knows exactly what you need or can give you a good advice. Our generation was special and I'm really proud for being part of it. Alumni are the greatest power of the school and I'm glad that IEDC nurtures and promotes its former students long after they leave school.

Particular good memories from the school that come to mind that you cherish?

Extraordinary people, amazing landscape, kindness and laughter even during the toughest moments, making friendships for life and proving that we learn as we grow.



MEET ALEKSANDRA IN EVERYDAY LIFE



EMBA 2018-19

Aleksandra Bošković
CEO,
Bild Studio, Montenegro

When driving, I prefer listening to ... Spotify and playlist that I made with Shazam.

My favourite free time activity is ... spending time with my family, reading and yoga classes.

My next travel destination will be... Zagreb or Berlin, I have not decided yet.

Last TV series/film I watched that impressed me was... a movie "The professor and the Madman" (2019), TV series "Mare of Easttown" and my all time favourite "Grey's Anatomy".

Last book I've read was... I usually read more than one book at a time: one for my soul and another for understanding management better. So, last books I read were: Simon Sinek "Start with Why", Iva Malešević "Kad je ponta bila mala"- her first short stories book and "The Lover" by Marguerite Duras.

I keep up with the pressure by... sharing my thoughts with my close friends and colleagues, by making plans a day before, by saying NO more often, doing physical exercise, enjoying small things and celebrating small victories.