



# INTERVJU

# Uspех

# JE KOT EPIDEMIJA

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**A**li uspešni slovenski podjetniki v javnosti veljajo za junake? Žal verjetno ne. Po mnemju profesorja in poslovnega svetovalca Hermanna Simona pa so prav vzorniki, ki poleg uspeha in bogastva namesto zavisti dosegajo družbeno priznanje, eden ključnih razlogov za rastočo podjetnost mladih Američanov. Simonova domovina Nemčija pa se po drugi strani ponaša z izstopajočo množico trdoživih, na tradicionalnih vrednotah slonečih podjetij, ki so vodilna v svetovnem merilu, čeprav v javnosti skoraj neznana, in so hrbtenica nemškega izvoza. Pogovor s Simonom nam da misliti, v čem so jim slovenska podjetja morda podobna in kaj se lahko naučimo iz obeh svetov. Z njim smo govorili prejšnji teden, ko je predaval na konferenci za voditeljstvo na IEDC - Poslovni šoli Bled.

**G** Katere države imajo največ podjetij, ki so globalni tržni voditelji in jih imenujete skriti zmagovalci?

Nemčija, Švica, Avstrija in Luksemburg imajo skoraj enako število skritih zmagovalcev na milijon prebivalcev in zelo odstopajo od drugih držav. (Po podatkih Hermanna Simona jih imajo med 14 in 16 na milijon prebivalcev, op. a.). Gre za nemško govoreče države, ki so si podobne v tem, da imajo v njihovih gospodarstvih pomembno vlogo srednja podjetja. Vloga srednjih podjetij je največja razlika med Nemčijo in večino drugega sveta.

**G** Zakaj je tako? Je zaslužna gospodarska politika ali pa je to morda posledica kulturnih značilnosti?

Gre za splet vzrokov, globoko zakoreninjenih v zgodovini. Naj navedem dva. Nemčija do leta 1919 ni bila nacionalna država, temveč je bila zveza 23 monarhij in treh republik. Pred letom 1870 so bile to celo povsem samostojne države. Takrat je bila na primer trgovina med Bavarsko in Saško mednarodni posel. Za nemške podjetnike je torej od nekdaj normalno razmišljati internacionalno, v nasprotju recimo s podjetniki v Franciji, ki je že stoletja nacionalna država z velikim domačim trgom, in tudi v ZDA. Drugi razlog je, da so se v mnogo regijah Nemčije tradicionalno razvila posebna znanja. V Schwarzwaldu na primer že stoletja delajo ure. Nakopičena znanja o fini mehaniki so uporabili v popolnoma novi industriji, v medicinski tehnologiji. Danes imamo tako v tej pokrajini 450 medicinsko-tehnoških podjetij, večina dela kirurške inštrumente. Drug primer: v mestu Göttingen v severni Nemčiji je 39 podjetij, ki se ukvarjajo z merilno tehnologijo, številna izmed njih so globalni tržni voditelji. Zakaj? Univerza v Göttingenu je stoletja imela vodilno fakulteto za matematiko na svetu. Naštel bi lahko še veliko podobnih primerov tradicionalno razvitih znanj, ki so bila pozneje uporabljena v povsem drugih industrijah.

**G** Če je v isti dejavnosti tako veliko podjetij, ali ne jemljejo trga drug drugemu?

Ne, ta podjetja ne tekmujejo med seboj. Vzemimo podjetja za merilne tehnologije okrog Göttingena. Neko podjetje je na primer vodilno za merjenje brezhibne zaokroženosti hitro vrtečih se delov turbin v reaktivnih motorjih. To podjetje nima nič opraviti s podjetjem, ki je specializirano za merjenje kotov. Znotraj teh industrij se je razvila ekstremna specializacija.

**G** Ali so morda majhne države, pač zaradi majhnosti trga, bolj nagnjene k ustvarjanju v svetovnem merilu prodornih podjetij?

V resnici ni tako. Na svetu je veliko majhnih držav, ki skoraj nimajo takih podjetij.

**G** V reviji Manager smo naredili seznam slovenskih skritih zmagovalcev po vaši metodologiji, našli smo jih 34. Kakšno se vam zdi to število?

To je zelo veliko število. V Italiji so jih na primer našeli 76 in vsa so v severni Italiji. Tudi severna Italija izstopa po številu takih podjetij, po pomembnosti srednjih podjetij je namreč podobna nemško govorečim državam, ki sem jih omenil prej. In tudi sestava slovenskega gospodarstva je zelo podobna. Če se primerjate z drugimi državami v regiji, je število skritih zmagovalcev v Sloveniji zelo veliko.

**¶ Vendar se mnogi slovenski podjetniki, tudi nekateri skriti zmagovalci, pritožujejo, da v Sloveniji razmere niso ugodne za podjetnike.**

Takih pritožb pravzaprav ne razumem, kajti tipično za skrite zmagovalce je, da veliko večino prihodkov ustvarijo zunaj države. Kar se prihodkov tiče, torej zanje ni posebej važno, kaj se dogaja na domačem trgu. Druga stvar je trg dela. Če tu razmere niso dobre, pa je druga stvar.

**¶ Prav za to gre: za razmere na trgu dela, za davke, birokracijo.**

To je močna stran Nemčije, odkar je kancler Schröder pred 10 leti sprožil tako imenovano agendo 2010. Ukrepi so znižali stroške dela. Zdaj sicer nova vlada to obrača v nasprotno smer in mislim, da bo nemška konkurenčnost v prihodnjih petih ali desetih letih oslabela. Krivulja stroškov, merjena kot razmerje med produktivnostjo in stroški dela, se je v Nemčiji v zadnjih 12 letih dvignila samo za 10 odstotkov, medtem ko se je v Franciji ta količnik dvignil za 30 odstotkov, v Italiji celo več. Če imate težave po tej plati, jih je treba jemati resno.

**¶ V svojem predavanju ste citirali misel harvardskega profesorja Marca Melitza, da uspešnost gospodarstva ni odvisna od vlade, temveč od podjetij. Verjetno pa to vlade ne razrešuje odgovornosti?**

Vlada lahko uniči konkurenčnost podjetij, kar na primer počne Francija pod Hollandom z zviševanjem davkov in podobnimi potezami. Ne more pa kaj veliko pomagati, da bi bila podjetja mednarodno uspešna. Seveda lahko do določene mere igra pozitivno vlogo. V Nemčiji na primer vlada sofinancira sistem izobraževanja, ki poteka tako, da mladi ljudje tri dni na teden delajo v podjetju, dva dni pa se na stroške države teoretično izobražujejo v poklicni šoli. Nekaj malega lahko vlada naredi pri podpiranju start-upov - čeprav nisem prepričan, da so javni uslužbenci najboljši za presojo, v katera se spleča vlagati. Država lahko nekoliko pomaga podjetjem pri internacionalizaciji. Toda moje podjetje, na primer, nikoli ne prosi za nobeno pomoč, ker ne verjamem, da ljudje v trgovinski zbornici vedo bolje od nas, kako na primer voditi svetovalni posel v Pekingu ali v Singapurju. Znanec na visokem položaju na gospodarskem ministrstvu v Berlinu me včasih vpraša za nasvet, češ da minister hoče narediti nekaj za srednja podjetja. Odgovarjam mu: prosim, ne storite ničesar. Ko sem ustanavljal svoje podjetje, so mi na banki dali cel kup obrazcev, ki naj jih izpolnim, če želim dobiti nekaj denarja od vlade. Zavrnil sem jih in razložil, da se nameravam

ukvarjati s poslom in ne z izpolnjevanjem obrazcev. To samo odvrtača mojo osredotočenost. Podjetnikom svetujem, ne zapravljajte časa z razmišljanjem o tem, kaj delajo vlada in poslanci. Potujte, pojdite h kupcem, opravljajte svoj posel. Nasploh se mi zdi, da je tukaj veliko preveč politikov.

**¶ Katera podjetja so pomembnejša za Nemčijo, ve lika ali srednja?**

Srednja, brez dvoma. Samo nemški skriti zmagovalci, to je 1.300 podjetij, so ustvarili v zadnjih 15 letih 1,2 milijona novih delovnih mest. Velika nemška podjetja, vključena v borzni indeks DAX, pa so jih v istem obdobju ustvarila 300 tisoč. Seveda nisem proti velikim podjetjem, uspešna srednja podjetja so dober temelj za prihodnja velika podjetja. Vendar večina podjetij ne zraste tako hitro kot Google ali Facebook. Takih družb ne boste imeli v Sloveniji. V 15 letih pa se zgodi veliko.

**¶ Kako pomembno je okolje?**

Podjetniška naravnost je močna stran Amerike in šibkost Evrope ter tudi drugih delov sveta. Na ameriški univerzi MIT so naredili raziskavo, ki je zajela diplomante generacij od leta 1950. Pokazala je, da je vsak četrti diplomant MIT ustanovil podjetje, in zanimivo, med tujimi študenti je bil ta delež celo še višji kot med ameriški. Korejci v Koreji na primer nikoli ne ustanovijo podjetja, tam velja za najbolj ugledno, če se zaposliš v velikem podjetju. Korejci, ki so študirali na MIT, pa so ustanovili celo več podjetij - sorazmerno glede na njihovo število - kot ameriški kolegi. Gre za vpliv okolja, a nista najbolj pomembni infrastruktura in dostopnosti denarnih virov, temveč predvsem zgledi. V Nemčiji poznam vas s tri tisoč prebivalci, eden izmed njih je ustanovil uspešno izvozno podjetje, ki je vodilni svetovni proizvajalec cestnih mlinskih strojev. Danes so tam tri globalno vodilna podjetja, vsako na svojem področju. To je epidemični proces, posnemanje vzornikov igra zelo pomembno vlogo pri razvoju podjetniške kulture. Tudi tu ima Evropa hibo. V Ameriki so ljudje kot Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Michael Dell, Mark Zuckerberg, Sergey Brin, heroji. Pred 20 leti so se vsi študentje na harvardski poslovni šoli hoteli zaposliti v velikih korporacijah, vsi so sanjali, da bodo postali glavni direktorji velikih korporacij. Danes jih od 30 do 40 odstotkov ustanovi svoja podjetja. To je zaradi vzornikov; na njihovih primerih vidijo, da je mogoče uspeti in obogateti s svojim podjetjem. Gre za spremembo vrednostnega sistema.

**☒ Torej je dediščina socialistične miselnosti lahko ovira?**

Ne vem, ali gre za dediščino socialistične miselnosti. Problem je kultura, ki previsoko vrednoti varnost zaposlitve in ki goji zavist do podjetnikov, ker imajo na primer večjo hišo in večji avto.

**☒ Za konec se kljub temu vrnimo k negodovanju nad gospodarskim sistemom. Nekateri uspešni podjetniki grozijo, da bodo podjetja izselili iz Slovenije. Je treba take grožnje jemati resno? Se podjetniki z lahko-to preselijo v drugo državo?**

Take grožnje je treba jemati zelo resno. Podjetja se ne selijo z lahkoto, vendar se selijo. Veliko podjetij iz Nemčije se je na primer preselilo v Švico, kjer so bili pogoji boljši, še posebej pred spremembami, ki jih je začel uvajati kancler Schröder. Zdaj uhajajo francoska podjetja. Po združitvi francoskega cementarskega podjetja Lafarge s švicarskim Holcimom bo sedež združenega podjetja v Švici. Potem sta tu Nizozemska in Luksemburg, ki imata nižje davke in ugodnejše predpise in privlačita številna podjetja. Davki so zelo pomembni, a ne edino pomembni. Mnogo držav postavlja podjetjem nevidne birokratske ovire, ki so zelo nevarne.

**☒ Bi morala biti torej slovenska vlada zaskrbljena, ker ima na primer Studio Moderna sedež na Nizozemskem?**

Tega nisem vedel. Seveda bi vlada morala biti zaskrbljena, kajti očitno je imel Sandi Češko razlog, da je sedež preselil drugam. In v prihodnosti gotovo ne bo edini ...

**☒ Že zdaj ni edini.**

Vsekakor ni v interesu Slovenije, da ima tako podjetje sedež v drugi državi. Danes lahko podjetje posluje kjerkoli, to je prinesla globalizacija. Država, ki ne zagotovi boljših pogojev, izgubi.



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**Znanec na visokem položaju na gospodarskem ministrstvu v Berlinu me včasih vpraša za nasvet, češ da minister hoče narediti nekaj za srednja podjetja. Odgovarjam mu: prosim, ne storite ničesar.**

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**Hermann Simon je utemeljitelj pojma »skriti zmagovalci«. Ta označuje podjetja, ki imajo vodilne nišne tržne deleže na svoji celini ali so med tremi vodilnimi na svetu, a niso velika in znana. Po njegovi metodologiji preštrevajo skrite zmagovalce po vsem svetu. Najširši pregled slovenskih smo naredili v najnovejši izdaji revije Manager, izbrskali smo jih 34.**

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(Finance, Vita Cajnko Javornik, Karel Lipnik, June 13, 2014)

Interview

## **Success is contagious**

Accumulated knowledge in a small area and best practices of successful entrepreneurs trigger an avalanche of other successful companies.

Are successful Slovenian entrepreneurs considered in the public eye as heroes? Probably not! Unfortunately! Namely, in the opinion of Hermann Simon, professor and renowned business consultant, good examples set by successful entrepreneurs, gaining healthy acknowledgement in the society, are key motivators to ambitious entrepreneurial engagements of young Americans. As for Simon's native country Germany, it is standing out by a number of well set, tradition-based companies, which have a low public profile but are world leaders and a back bone of the German export. The discussion with Simon opens up the reflection in what way Slovenian companies might be similar to German ones and what we can learn from both worlds. We talked to him last week, when he gave a lecture at the leadership conference at IEDC-Bled School of Management.

### **Which countries have the highest share of companies that are global niche leaders - that you call "hidden champions"?**

Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Luxemburg have almost the same number of hidden champions per million of inhabitants and clearly differentiate from the rest of countries. (According to Hermann Simon they have from 14 to 16 HCs /million of inhabitants.) They are German speaking countries where mid-sized companies play similarly important role. The role of mid-sized companies presents the biggest difference between Germany and the great part of the rest of the world.

### **Why is that so? Is that the effect of the government policy or the consequence of cultural characteristics?**

It is a combination of reasons, deeply imbedded in the history. Let me name two of them. Until 1919 Germany had not been a national state, but a federation composed of 23 monarchies and three republics. Until 1870 those were even completely independent counties. At that time, the trade between Bavaria and the Saxony, for example, was an international business. For German entrepreneurs it has therefore always been normal to reason internationally, quite opposite, for instance, to entrepreneurs in France who have had for centuries a national state with a big domestic market, the same goes for the USA. The second reason is that many German regions traditionally developed different knowledge and skills. In Schwarzwald, for example, watches were made for centuries. Accumulated knowledge about fine mechanics have now been used in a completely new industry, in medical technology. Today we have some 450 medico-technological companies in this region. The majority of them manufacture chirurgical instruments. Another example: in Göttingen, in the north of Germany, there are 39 companies which work in measurement technology. Many of them are global market leaders. Why? The University in Göttingen has had for centuries a leading faculty of mathematics in the world. I could give many more examples of traditional knowledge transforming into new industries.

**If there are so many companies in the same business don't they take the market from one another?**

No, these companies are not competing among themselves. Let's take, for example, measurement technologies from Göttingen. One company deals in impeccable fast rotating parts for turbo-reactive engines. This company has nothing to do with the company which specializes in angle measurements. Within those industries an extreme specialization has been developed.

**Are small nations on the account of their market size more inclined to creating world leading companies?**

No, this is not the case. There are many small countries in the world that do not have such companies.

**At the Manager Magazine we have made a list of Slovenian hidden champions - according to your methodology - and came up with 34 of them. How do you see this number?**

It is a very high number. In Italy, for example, they enumerated 76 companies, all in the north of Italy. This part of Italy indeed stands out by the number of mid-sized companies and resembles German speaking countries that I have mentioned. The Slovenian entrepreneurship is similar. If you compare yourself with other countries in the region, the number of hidden champions in Slovenia is very high.

**Nevertheless, many Slovenian entrepreneurs, among them some hidden champions, are complaining that economic environment in Slovenia is not favorable for entrepreneurs.**

I do not understand such complaints, namely what is typical of hidden champions is doing the major part of their business abroad. So, as far as their revenues are concerned, it is not too important for them what is going on in the domestic market. Another thing is the labor market. If conditions are not good in that area, that is indeed another matter.

**That is exactly it. The conditions are not good in the area of labor market, taxes and bureaucracy.**

This, on the other hand, is a strong side of Germany ever since Chancellor Schröder set up agenda 2010, some 10 years ago. His measures lowered labor costs. Now the new government is turning this to the opposite direction and I think that the German competitiveness will be weakened in the next 5 to 10 years. The curve of costs, measured as ratio of productivity and labor costs, has in Germany increased only by 10% in the last 12 years, as compared to France where the ratio increased by 30%. In Italy even more. If you have problems in that area, you should take them seriously.

**In your lecture you quoted Harvard professor Marc Melitz, stating that the success of a country does not depend on the government but on companies. But this probably does not discharge the government of its responsibility?**

The government can destroy the competitiveness of companies, which is what France is doing with Holland increasing taxes and by taking similar measures. And not much can be done for companies to be successful. Of course, the government can play a positive role to a certain level. In Germany, the government is cofinancing the education system which is organized in a way where young people have a practical training in companies three days per week, and two days of education in vocational school, funded by the government. The

government can do a little bit in supporting start-ups – even though I don't believe that government officials can be best judges of which companies to invest in. The government can also help a bit to companies going abroad. But my company, for example, never asked for any help, because I don't believe that people in the chamber of commerce know better from us how to do business in Beijing or Singapore. A friend holding a high position at the Ministry of Economy in Berlin asks me from time to time for advice, saying that the minister wants to do something for mid-sized companies. I reply, "please do not do anything". When I was opening my company, the bank gave a bunch of forms to fill in so as to get some money from the government. I turned them down saying that I want to do business not filling in forms. This is just disturbing my focus. I suggest to entrepreneurs, "do not lose your time thinking what the government or the members of the parliament are doing. Travel, go to customers, do your business." I believe that too many politicians are involved.

### **Which companies are more important for Germany, big or mid-sized?**

Mid-sized, no doubt. Hidden champions, alone – there are 1,300 of those - have created 1.2 million jobs in the last 15 years. Big German companies, listed at index DAX, have in the same period created 300,000 new jobs. I have nothing against big companies – successful mid-sized companies are good basis for future big companies. But majority of them do not grow as fast as Google or Facebook. You will not have such companies in Slovenia. But much can happen in 15 years.

### **How important is the environment?**

The entrepreneurial mindset is a strong characteristic of the USA and lacking in Europe and in other parts of the world. A survey has been done at the American university MIT including graduates since 1950. It showed that each 4<sup>th</sup> graduate student from MIT founded a company. Interesting, this number was even higher among non-American students. Koreans in Korea, for example, never establish a company. Over there it is more respectful to get a job in a big company. But Koreans studying at MIT founded even more companies than their American counterparts. The environment being important, the infrastructure and the accessibility of funds are nevertheless not of prime importance. What is the most important are good examples. I know in Germany a village with 3,000 inhabitants, one of them founded a successful export company which is a world leader in road milling machines. Today there are three global leading companies there, each in its own specialization. This is an epidemic process – following best examples plays a very important role in the development of entrepreneurial culture. Europe is not good there. In the USA, individuals like Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Michael Dell, Mark Zuckerberg and Sergey Brin are heroes. Some 20 years ago, students from Harvard business school wanted jobs in big corporations. They dreamed of becoming CEOs of large corporations. Today 30% to 40% establish their own companies. This is thanks to the role models who show that it is possible to succeed and get rich with one's own business. This is a real change in the value system.

### **Can then the heritage of the socialist mindset be an obstacle?**

I don't know if it is about the heritage of the socialist mindset. The problem is the culture which values the safety of jobs too much and is envious towards entrepreneurs who have, for example, a bigger house and a bigger car.

**At the end, let's go back to discontentment with the economic system. Some important entrepreneurs are threatening to move their companies out of Slovenia. Should such threats be taken seriously? Can entrepreneurs easily move to another country?**

Such threats should be taken very seriously. Companies do not move easily, but they do move. Many companies from Germany moved to Switzerland where conditions were better. That was especially the case before the changes made by Chancellor Schröder. Now French companies are going abroad. After the merger of the French cement company Lafarge with the Swiss Holcimom, headquarters of the merged company will be in Switzerland. Then there are Netherlands and Luxemburg which have lower taxes and more favorable regulations – they attract numerous companies. Taxes are very important, but not the only important thing. Many governments put up invisible bureaucratic barriers which are very dangerous.

**Should Slovenian government be worried because Studio Moderna, for example, has its headquarters in Netherlands?**

I didn't know that. Of course, the government should be worried, because obviously Sandi Češko had a reason to move headquarters abroad. And in the future, he will not remain the only one...

**He is already not the only one.**

It is in no way in the interest of Slovenia that such a company has headquarters in another country. Today a company can do business everywhere. This is what globalization brought about. And the country that does not assure better conditions loses.

Hermann Simon is originator of the concept "hidden champions". Those are companies holding leading positions in niche markets in their continent or are among three leading in the world. They are neither big nor well known. According to Simon's methodology, hidden champions are now being discovered all around the world. An extensive research of Slovenian ones has been made at the Manager Magazine, where we listed 34 of them.

Internet Forum observation to the article:

I read his book, »Hidden Champions of the 21st Century« - excellent analysis of factors that lead to success in business.

And I say to political parties and future candidates for ministers in the government, » please read this interview and when you start your mandate, please stop »helping« the business with bureaucracy". :P-