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Management

A School with a View

»MANAGERS WHO FAIL TO ADAPT TO NEW TECHNOLOGY RISK BECOMING OBSOLETE, SIMILAR TO THOSE WHO RESIST USING COMPUTERS OR PHONES TODAY.«
ALEKSANDAR RAIĆ, PMBA 2004, MSC IN MANAGEMENT 2004, VICE PRESIDENT OF AI TRANSFORMATION, INFOBIP, CROATIA

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Tell us a little bit about what do you do in Infobip and what Infobip business is about? How come and when did you join Infobip?

Infobip is a globally recognized company, renowned for its cloud communication platform facilitating seamless connections between businesses and their customers across various channels like SMS, email, voice, chatbots, and more. Our omnichannel marketing platform empowers developers, marketers, and customer service teams to engage with customers and prospects effectively. Leveraging AI-powered chatbots, virtual assistants, and customer data platforms, we personalize every interaction, earning Infobip recognition as a leader in the 2023 Gartner Magic Quadrant for Communications Platform as a Service.

I joined Infobip during its strategic expansion phase through M&A activities. Drawing from my prior role as an Integration Officer at Teva, a pharmaceutical company, where I oversaw international market integrations, I brought valuable expertise to Infobip. Over the past three years, we've successfully completed five acquisitions while I concurrently led the HR organization, recognizing its critical role in seamless integration. Recently, I've taken charge of driving AI

Transformation, aimed at optimizing the utilization of emerging technologies both internally and externally.

Can you share a specific example where AI implementation at Infobip led to a significant improvement in customer experience or operational efficiency?

One impactful instance of AI implementation at Infobip involves our CRM system's AI widget, extensively utilized by our global sales force. This tool furnishes sales professionals with profound insights into potential leads and cross-selling opportunities, leveraging real-time data augmentation from sources like ZoomInfo. An AI-driven algorithm scores lead potential, allowing sales teams to prioritize high-scoring leads and drastically reducing the time spent on lead qualification from weeks to minutes.

Additionally, our advancements in voice technology incorporate proprietary neural networks tailored for noise cancellation during voice calls and efficient detection of voice answering machines — a feature demanded by several global clients. Currently, our focus revolves around integrating

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our voice capabilities with our flagship AI Assistant product to support real-time interactions with AI voice bots, particularly beneficial for industries with large call center operations such as banking and telecommunications.

How do you foster a culture of innovation within your team, especially seeing how rapidly AI is being applied around in business?

Fostering innovation is integral to Infobip's culture. We are always exploring ways to improve our products and services, not just in AI but across the board. Our company ethos, encapsulated in the phrase "We are just starting," reflects our startup mindset, despite our size.

AI is currently a hot topic, even though this is not something new, but sort of got a lot of wider public acknowledgement in the last year with OpenAI and ChatGPT developments. In what ways do you think AI will evolve in the next five years, and how is Infobip preparing for these changes?

Over the next five years, AI will continue to evolve rapidly, introducing new products and services that we can't yet imagine. Infobip is investing heavily in AI to position ourselves as leaders in leveraging this technology.

In your opinion, how receptive is the top management of companies to recent technological advances? Will LLM

and neuronetworks developments wipe out a whole class of managers?

We are promoting a "human in the loop" concept – we see AI as something that will not replace people but make them more productive, effective and happy in the end of the day. So, I believe AI should enhance human capabilities, not replace them. Managers who fail to adapt to new technology risk becoming obsolete, similar to those who resist using computers or phones today.

It was a while since you graduated from the IEDC, nevertheless, what would you say are the lessons that you learnt during the program that has proven time and again to be true in the management world?

The IEDC is a great school! What we had all learnt there is a real treasure that made our careers more successful. It is all about having a bigger picture and analyzing any problem from several viewpoints, not only from our personal academic expertise. As an IT person I have learned to look into problems from finance, marketing, leadership, HR,

change management and other aspects - that is a valuable gift that an MBA gave to all of us.

For many people in business AI and any other technologies mean change and we know people in their majority do not like change. How do you approach introduction of change as a manager?

Kotter, that we learnt about in the program, was indicating 8 steps of implementing a successful change. That is still very accurate, and you can apply it to the AI adoption as well. And, I did exactly that – we have created a sense of urgency, selected a small team of AI enthusiasts to do experimentation together with the customers. They have delivered awesome results and quick wins in a very short time. Based on that we have created the Strategy, communicated it and mobilized the whole organisation for the change. Simple 😊

Do you share Elon Musk's view that AI is a double-edge sword, that could be used for good and evil and we must be able to regulate it? Do you follow the news about the Frontier Model Forum?

Any technology is a double-edge sword. Starting with matches which might be misused by an arsonist. However, the Frontier Model Forum and other institutions like the EU Commission with its AI Act will contribute to the regulation of the AI technology usage and will avoid misuse by design. Probably, all these

efforts will result in having AI regulated on the global level, like the nuclear technology is regulated, for an example. Infobip fully supports and respects regulation framework.

At our last Presidents' Forum in Bled, we had a privilege to host Prof. Philip M. Parker who presented a project he works on, called Botipedia that if implemented, has a potential to »replace« wikipedia, as it uses Machine Learning to produce articles on any topic in any existing language, without heavy limitations on what kind of content can be produced and published (as it depends on Wikipedia editors what gets published). Ultimately, Botipedia is aiming at making information available to everyone who has internet access on this planet and in fact has a noble idea behind of reducing poverty around the world and making the world a more just place. It might sound utopic, as there are plenty of dictatorships around the world that regulate information access to cater to the dictatorship regime needs, however, do you think something like that, or AI powered tools, can ultimately re-allocate the wealth around the world?

Yes. The beauty of AI is the democratic potential of such technology that could improve our lives as humans for better. However, to reach its full potential we should all contribute, for example, with allowing proprietary content to be available to everyone. That sounds utopic in our fragile and fragmented world today, but, over the time, when enough wealth will be produced, we might see that become a reality, supported by the artificial general intelligence (AGI). We ourselves might not see it during our lifetime, but our grandchildren would have a decent chance.

From the futuristic views, to the everyday reality around us... While the job and the area you work with is fascinating, it probably means a high tempo and quite some stress, doesn't it? What are your mechanisms of relaxing and recharging in your free time? What makes you happy and content?

At home, I am just a simple village person. What made me happy last time was, when I recently bought myself a new tractor. Working on the land, taking care of olive trees together with my wife and kids, playing with my dogs and cats is something I find as a good stress relief.

PMBA 2004, MSC 2004

Aleksandar Raić
Vice President of AI Transformation, Infobip, Croatia

What science fiction books do you read if any? Any favourite authors? If not SCI-FI, what kind of books do you like to read in your free time?

I like watching SCI-FI movies, but if question is about books than I prefer those about agriculture. Of course, I also read also relevant for my job books and the last one I have enjoyed was "Zero distance" by Danah Zohar.

The latest TV series you watched?

Only ones that I have followed were "Fauda" and "Black mirror" on Netflix.

What kind of music do you like? Any favourite band?
I like all kind of music, depending on the occasion and mood I am in. My favourite band is "No Clue Band" because my friends are playing in there.

If you use ChatGPT (or similar service), do you thank the machine after it completes your request?:)

Yes, I do.

How many different countries did you visit, how many did you live in, what's your favourite place that you like coming back to?

I have visited probably 50+ countries while I have lived in Serbia, Croatia, Netherlands, Germany, and Israel. I have no doubts where I like to come back - I like to come back to Bled and Slovenia as one of the most beautiful country with nice and friendly people.

Your favourite childhood cartoon and why?

It is certainly the Professor Baltazar cartoon. That is a famous Croatian animated TV series for children about an old inventor who solves problems using his magical machine. I love it so much because I like idea of helping people with innovative solutions, that is why I have even picked "Baltazar" as the name for my team at Infobip.