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Zoya Zhabenko, Business Development Director, Home Shopping Russia Ltd, IEDC MBA 2015-16 (Ukraine)

»NO MATTER HOW WELL I KEEP DEVELOPING MY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS, IN MY OPINION, "SITTING IN ONE PLACE" LEADS TO A PROFESSIONAL MYOPIA».

When you first time meet Zoya, she does not strike you as a lady that has kickboxing listed among her hobbies. Even though she admits she does not practice it lately, she definitely knows how to throw that exact kick and that the power lies with the technique. Zoya has two degrees under her belt in mechanics and in marketing. When coupled with an IEDC MBA degree, it seems it makes her ready to face any thinkable challenge. Zoya is from Ukraine, however, currently she resides in Moscow, Russia, but goes back to Kyiv quite often. She built her career in Studio Moderna Ukraine, however, left after 10 years, and not only the company, but the country. We asked Zoya to share with us her story and what is she doing nowadays.



Interviewed by Vera Pasyukova

Tell us a little bit where are you currently, what are you doing and how is life treating you? How come you decided to move to Moscow and how often do you go back home to Kyiv?

Almost a year ago, some major changes happened in my life. After more than ten years of work in the Ukrainian office of Studio Moderna, I left the company and received an offer to work in Moscow and, as a result, moved there.

In Moscow I work in a holding comprised of companies specializing in direct sales and logistics. When I started working there as a business development director, I was involved both in projects within the holding,

as well as in the projects with external partners. In the beginning of March I was promoted to the position of the Deputy General Manager of the company Home Shopping Russia, being responsible for sales management and in the meantime overlooking the merger of companies within the holding.

In my current position what is especially valuable for me is the experience of building departments and projects from scratch, management experience and, of course, possibility to work with a great team.

Moving to Russia was a kind of an opportunity to completely reset myself and to try new challenges. The decision to do

this was far from easy. In Ukraine, I have relatives, friends, business contacts, and an understanding of the Ukrainian market according to the specifics of my profession. Due to Russian legislation, I have to leave the country once every ninety days, that is why I fly to Kiev at least once every three months.

Why did you decide to leave Studio Moderna after more than 10 years? What helped you make up your mind? Was it a tough decision?

My decision was dictated not by one reason, but several. However, the biggest reason was a wish to try myself outside the company and business environment that I used to work in for more than 10 years. No matter how well I keep

developing my knowledge and skills, in my opinion, "sitting in one place" leads to a professional myopia. I would also like to point out that the education at IEDC contributed to boosting of my confidence and strive for new achievements. It is impossible not to see opportunities around after finishing an MBA. During an admission interview with Prof. Daniel Szpiro I asked: "What is the most important thing, in your opinion, that the school can give me?". His reply was: "Confidence." And he was absolutely right.

You attended Executive MBA Program at IEDC in 2015-2016. Was the decision to enroll into EMBA fully yours or it was partly you and the company? Did the education meet your expectations and what impact did it have on your further career development?

The wish to study at IEDC came from my side. It was not about just having a prestigious MBA title under my belt but I was truly impressed by the positive professional changes that I observed in my colleagues after their graduation from IEDC. I am grateful to my former leadership for support and given opportunity to study in this business school.

I can say that MBA has completely turned around my understanding of education. In addition to new knowledge, information, tools and techniques for business, the school provides something more valuable - it changes the way of thinking and expands the perception. And it also prepares you for any business task. That ability and attitude turned out very useful when a year after graduation I was promoted to the position of a sales director and became responsible not for 1, but for 7 sales channels.

When you were applying for an EMBA, you mentioned that your long-term plan for your career was: »I set myself a goal of becoming a successful leader of my own company or a department in a big Ukrainian or International company and of having global approach to implementing innovations.« Did it happen yet or transformed into something else? What kind of a future or plans do you set for yourself now?

Now I am more inclined to open my own business. I think this will be my next challenge after my experience in sales management and business development in large companies of direct sales in Ukraine and Russia.

recommendations on the issue specified in the case. These were done in groups, therefore not only our own knowledge and strength were important, but the ability in to work in a team.

The fact that the group members were from different countries and had work experience from different business fields made things more complicated, however, at the same time contributed to a valuable experience. Cultural differences, various expertise, various levels of proficiency of English that we had to use for communication, however, were compensated by the integrity of our final result. Despite the tight deadlines, stress, disagreements and lack of sleep, we had a lot of fun,



Would you share, please, some of the memories from the class or preparations for the class or any other formal/informal situation that you would never forget?

There were many bright moments and it is difficult to point out just one. End-of-Modules were memorable - it's a kind of a mini exam, when in less than 2 days, you had to familiarize yourself with the case and prepare a presentation with

discussed ideas, were creative and helped each other. It was an unforgettable experience.

Also, Pierre Casse's classes had a big impact for personal transformation.

Do you keep in touch with your classmates or other IEDC alumni still?

For sure the school helps expand my business network. Our group has a general chat in Viber, where

we occasionally communicate and share the news. With some alumni, I keep in touch more closely. We communicate, congratulate each other on important events and even go travel together.

What are the things that keep you motivated and give you energy?

I'd point out two main sources: for a physical wellbeing it's the things like a regular workout and 7-8 hours of sleep that help me. To keep me mentally energized, I devote time to self-development, enrich myself with new experiences and get energy from a feeling of self-realization when reaching my goals. Meeting and working with interesting, smart



people that I can learn from also keeps me motivated a lot.

Are you still practicing kickboxing?

Unfortunately, not. However, it was one of the most effective ways to drop the negative and recharge. If possible, I will continue training.

MEET ZOYA IN EVERYDAY LIFE

My friends would describe me as a reliable friend with a good sense of humor.

The last book I read was in fact a digest of articles in Harvard Business Review on »Strategic Marketing«.

The last film/TV series I watched was the "Green Book" by Peter Farrelly.

My last trip was to Kiev.

My leadership motto is:

To be effective - every time start from WHY, only then move to HOW and WHO. If knowledge is a tool for management, then EQ is a tool for leadership.

The advice I would give to my younger self: »Don't be afraid of change and new beginnings.«