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IEDC Alumni Success Story

ADELINA BADEA: »I ALWAYS LET PEOPLE DO MISTAKES, SHOW THEM WHAT IS WRONG AND LET THEM LEARN FROM THEM.«

Interviewed by Vera Pasyukova

Photo provided by Adelina Badea

How has this year been for Mobexpert so far? Mobexpert is one of the biggest manufacturers and retailers of furniture and home decoration in Romanian market. How did it affect your shop network and communications and relations with the clients and subcontractors? How do you deal with corona impact on furniture retail industry?

This year was crazy like hell for us, but it had its good moments too! It challenged us, as people, it challenged us, as teams, it challenged us, as businesses. I think that the ones who managed to adapt and accelerate were the ones who survived better and took the advantage of the situation. Also, I think that this period challenged us to be better for our clients, to deliver better and become faster.

I was instated as CEO in March 2020, just few days before Romanian lockdown began and I had a lot of projects on my hands. We planned to implement some projects this year with Mobexpert, but not those that we already started. We were forced to launch few projects far earlier than we planned because of COVID19 pandemic.

The most difficult decision we have ever made was to close the Mobexpert stores for the first time in 27 years. We decided to close the stores first, few days before the start of the lockdown, because we realized that it was worse than what we saw reported in the news and we wanted to protect our employees and our clients. Mobexpert business had 80% of operations offline and around 20% of the operations online, before COVID19 pandemic. We were forced to move everything

online in one day and, of course, we were not prepared, but we managed to grow the online operations from 20% to around 30% this year. We managed to adapt to this situation and to honor the online orders with our great employees who decided to come to work and help us deliver the ordered goods as fast as we could.

The lockdown lasted for one month, from mid March till end of April, when we were able finally to re-open our stores. I did not stay home, not even for a day, as



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I had to work, I was always in the office or in the stores, sometimes in one of our logistic centers.

During the lockdown, we planned to rearrange one of the stores in Bucharest - our oldest stores in Bucharest. It was time to do it and we could not reschedule; works were planned to start in March and we went ahead. After that, in September, we redesigned the store in Cluj, a very important city in Romania, which also needed a makeover after 20 years of being opened. The store in Cluj was finished in just few weeks. It was achieved in a record time and was a great achievement, as we had our most important sales campaign - the summer sale campaign - running while the store was being refurbished.

The Romanian furniture industry was not affected much by the coronacrisis, because people decided to invest the money they put aside for holidays, into reshaping their houses or into buying new property, bigger and more modern. So, we were somehow the lucky. Of course, as they say "God is helping the ones that help themselves". However, there are industries which were really affected, that have seen dramatic turnover decreases like education or hospitality industry. We cannot complain.

You have enrolled into an EMBA when you were already on a senior position. Would you recall what was your motivation to do it then?

Did the program meet your expectations?

The EMBA came as a reward for me from my company Mobexpert. I was the Regional Store Manager for two of Mobexpert biggest stores in Romania, Iasi, and Bucovina. They challenged me at that time. I was the only one with that kind of position in the history of the company, it was a big deal for me to do it and to do

one needs to go through all the stages of an MBA program to understand it: the stress, the new people who will become new friends, the short deadlines, the inspirational projects, all the funny moments in the class and, of course, leaving home for weeks. All of that helped me develop, prepared me for real business life challenges and helped me create lifetime friendships between me and my



it as best as I could. After 2 years in that position, they decided to send me to Bled because, they said, I managed to do it well, but I could do it better and the IEDC will help me.

I was in Bled and the first impression of the IEDC - Bled School of Management left me speechless, I was astonished: great views, great school, great professors!

I always liked to study and to reinvent myself and I think that I will never stop learning, no matter the age or the career position. I am always open and keen on developing new sort of skills which can help me in my professional career.

MBA is a lifechanging experience - everyone told me. Now, 5 years later, I can still confirm that. But

classmates.

Of course, the program met my expectations. I loved it so much. I wouldn't say it wasn't hard but it was great, I had great colleagues, I had great professors, a great mentor and a very nice project for diploma - we had to prepare a business plan for one of the best companies in the world: Microsoft. I guess I was lucky.

One of the critical issues that a manager has to deal with is trust in his/her people and the team. What is your approach to building trust among your people, how do you support them? How do you manage this issue personally?

My personal approach is to give, from the very beginning, small tasks, check results, provide feedback. Always checking and

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always being in touch with my people are the most important steps. With these two steps in mind, I make sure that people are in charge of their projects and this is how my trust in them is growing. Checking is making everybody feel safe, like providing a safety net, having an open parachute. I always let people do mistakes, show them what is wrong and let them learn from them. I always help my people grow by giving them with new challenges and harder tasks, but I also tell them „do not forget to learn something new” and „do not try to take shortcuts”.

Having a lot of managerial experience, what is your view on the corporate management practices in Romania? What would you say are the areas where it could be/ should be improved?

During the last 18 years I have been working for a 100% Romanian company, Mobexpert.

This company has its values and principles, we all have entrepreneurship in our blood, still no bureaucracy needed for any decision. Each store manager has the freedom to take decisions, of course, they are always controlled and they will be always asked for results, but we do not have hundreds of procedures and we will not need a lot of time to approve a budget.

Nevertheless, after school and last couple of years' experience, I understood one important thing: no matter the trust and freedom level, people will always need validation and double-check.

My MBA diploma project was to develop a business plan for Microsoft, and I had the chance to learn a little about their business model and corporate life. After a while, I read "Hit refresh" by Satya Nadella, Microsoft CEO, which is a great book, one of my favorites,



by the way. This book made me admire their business model, the way they reinvent themselves and transform and innovate their business.

You have completed your EMBA studies in 2016. Now 5 years later, what would you say was the biggest takeaway from the program for you? Do you keep in touch with your classmates?

IEDC showed me there is so much to learn every day, the IEDC people and professors became my new and valuable friends whom I cried and laughed with and who helped me make lifetime friends.

But the most important thing was the experience they gave me: one year has passed so fast, in blink of an eye, the year full of rush and fun, hundreds of projects, hundreds of hours of study but also hundreds of hours of fun. This experience also taught me to be brave, to love what I do, to go beyond my limits every day and never forget that learning is a process which never ends. If I could be back in time, I would repeat this experience 10 more times.

We always admire women on top managerial positions. Would you say it is harder for

women to get the senior level in general/in Romania? If yes, what are the culprits? How do you manage to align work and family time?

In Romania there are a lot of women in top managerial positions, a lot. A couple of weeks ago, a top financial newspaper in Romania published the 100 most admired top managers in Romania and there were a lot of women there and I remembered that attracted my attention. We have a lot of smart people here, they are all working hard to get on top, it does not matter if they are men or women:)

My work-life balance is still a challenge for me, I always work aspire for improvement, every day. I still cannot spend enough time with my lovely, sweet teenager who is growing so fast. I feel I cannot even blink without missing something, especially now when we recently moved to a new city, a new home, a new school with new friends. But I consider myself a lucky person because I always have my family there, they are my energy. My husband is the best mentor for me, he is a man who always takes everything with a pinch of wisdom and knows how to balance work and family perfectly. We are together for 24 years, we are a family for 15 years,

but we are also working together for over 14 years, so we could say that we are the best team at home but also at work.

Besides work, what helps you do your job well? What makes you happy and motivated?

I love my job, my company, I love what I am doing every day. It's easy to be motivated when you love what you are doing. I work in a very nice and inspirational environment, surrounded by beautiful pieces of furniture, a work of art in each piece. Our stores look like one home next to another, full of furniture and house decorations made with love in nice colors and very different styles: for kids, teenagers and families.

A furniture store is like a living environment, it keeps changing, new colors, new furniture, new paintings, new trends each year, we can never get tired or bored.

If you met someone who is about to start his/her career,



what would you advise to that person?

One of the things that makes me happy is exchanging ideas with people around me, our customers, our suppliers and, of course, one of the most important resources for ideas, our colleagues. When I found myself discussing ideas with very young people, students or graduates, people who are in their early twenties, I am very happy because I have a lot to

learn from them, they have a fresh view, they are about to become our new generation of customers or colleagues. The only advice that I can always give to them is: work hard, because talent is just a waste without hard work, and think twice when you chose your job because a job you don't like is a living hell.

MEET ADELINA IN PERSON



Adelina Badea
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EMBA 2016

My favourite free time activity is...is spending time with my teenage daughter and my husband, exploring unknow places, riding bikes together.

My favourite travel destination is... Singapore, the most welcoming destination I have ever visited.

The last book I've read is „Principles” by Ray Dalio because I learnt two important things: you are the only one who can decide about your own life and it is up to you to say what works for you and, of course, no pain no gain.

My favorite movie is.... Dr. Strange because it shows very well the power of reinventing: you need hard work, you need to learn a lot and you need an open mind to be able to make the change. It also put in place very well both sides of the coin - a spiritual and a material world.

The country I have not been to yet and would like to visit is... India because I want to experiment with a different culture.

An advice I would give to my daughter is... to be humble, be brave, work hard, party harder and never stop dreaming.