



# WALK THE TALK IN THE TIME OF CONSTANT CHANGE

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**Interviews on leadership  
with European business leaders**

by Linda Štucbartová



**ATAIRU**

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CZECH&SLOVAK  
**LEADERS**.com

# EDITORIAL

I very strongly believe that everyone has his or her own individual uniqueness and if we discover and grow it, we are going to achieve stellar performance with ease and enjoy fulfilment in life.

One of components of leadership development is observing and learning from other leaders. The present e-book, brought to you by ATAIRU and Czech & Slovak Leaders, is intended as a vehicle towards that aim. It features profiles of business leaders from diverse industries and with diverse backgrounds. What they have in common is how they lead their organizations in times of change and how they leverage collaboration through diversity for themselves, their people and their organizations to thrive. I am proud of Linda who combined her passion for authentic leadership, diversity and writing with her natural talent in creating partnerships to produce this e-book.

During our March trip to Japan, where we are running our authentic leadership programs, we came across the Japanese concept of



IKIGAI, which means “a reason for being“. Interestingly, IKIGAI employs the very same concepts we work with – discovering what you are good at (your natural talents), what you love (your passions) and what you want to do with it (your purpose) – and applies them not only to leadership but to life in its full complexity. Just like we do at ATAIRU.

Today, volatility, complexity, fast pace and uncertainty are features of business. This calls for a kind of leader who is clear about his inner anchor – no matter what you call it – as something to hold on to and in fostering innovation, collaboration and engaging the full organization in a sustainable manner.

**I hope our e-book will serve as a source of inspiration for your journey. Enjoy!**

**Radka**

**Radka Dohnalová, Founder & Managing partner of ATAIRU**

# OBSAH

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# ANGELA MAZZA

**SAP, Regional Chief Operating Officer,  
Middle & Eastern Europe**

1.

**Have a compass  
and set for a discovery  
journey at sea**

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Having the opportunity to interview Mrs. Angela Mazza on the topics that have been both my expertise and passion seemed like a dream coming true. Despite the fact that the interview took place on the very day as the suicidal attacks in Brussels in March 2016, the atmosphere in the room was full of optimism and mutual understanding. It was a unique experience as four women gathered in the room in a technology company to discuss the issues of leadership and technologies, but soon the scope of the conversation went much beyond, to the issues of corporations and their role in the society as well as the current issue of refugees.

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The journey of Angela Mazza is a remarkable one on both personal and career level. Born in Naples, Italy, at the age of eight she moved to Switzerland with her parents and she studied tourism. At the age of 25, she switched to technology and IT. She has been working for SAP for 13 years; prior to joining SAP she held senior positions in Oracle and Deloitte. Her corporate career took her all the way from Switzerland to Italy, to the Middle East to Doha, Qatar, but two years ago she moved to Heidelberg, Germany to become responsible for Operations in the Middle & Eastern European region. The fact that SAP walks the talk and chooses well the people who live and breathe diversity is reflected in the quote of Bill McDermott, CEO of SAP.



Mrs. Mazza, how would you describe your fascinating career and life journey?

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I would compare it to a discovery journey at sea. There are times when the sea is calm, as well as times when it gets rough. I have always had a map and a compass, knowing where I wanted to go. I am ambitious, dreaming big and I always follow a direction. I still feel like being at sea, with the ultimate goal ahead of me. At this particular moment, it is not expressed as a particular position

I want to reach but rather the sense of meaningful work, contribution and impact that I want to make and create within the corporate world.

**As long as I love what I am doing, every day will be different and everybody be motivated. And it is my responsibility as a leader to make sure that other people stay motivated as on the first day when they started the job with the aspiration of living their dream.**

I have just returned from Women of the World festival in London and according to the latest Gender Equality Forum research, given the current rate of progress on gender equality, it will be only in 2133 when the gender parity is reached. How

do you see the trend of advancing women to top positions – is it a glass half full or half empty?

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It varies country by country but I tend to be very optimistic in general. Looking at the Gender Report by the World Economic Forum, the Czech Republic currently ranks 81 out of 145 countries, Slovakia 97. I do not see this standing that bad as of now. And looking at us, there are four women in this room right now. That, combined with the fact that I just have come out of the meeting with a 50:50 diverse management team in the CEE countries, gives me a lot of optimism. There is still a long way to go but I believe that...

**the answer needs to be tailored to each country and its situation.**

We all should take steps forward to see that more women advance in their careers so ultimately the glass fills up with more water.

Many companies have recently introduced mentoring schemes to help women to advance in their careers. What is your experience and suggestion for a successful development of talents?

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I have already mentioned the

importance of having your own goals and an inner compass, but it is true that I have always worked with a male mentor. It enabled me to understand how men think, what matters to them and how to approach them. I believe in the saying that “opposites attract”. My first mentor was my father and he has always supported me throughout my career. Another time it is the person you spend your life with, it can be a husband, a partner, a spouse. My father and my husband have always inspired me and I have always looked up to them and at the same time they have provided stability and support. If a woman is reluctant to ask for a mentor, she is missing the big picture, which means defining ‘what I am missing for the position and who the right person who can help me with the next steps is’. Do not be afraid to share your dreams and then be ready to go the extra mile to reach it. We, as women, should not think in terms of gender. We should make sure we have the right talents and thus are the best person for every position. From my own experience,...

**the more women focus on presenting themselves as women, the less successful they might be because they will always be perceived exactly the way they framed themselves:**

**“as women”, not as the best person capable to do the task needed.**



Of course, we as women are different and our approach is different, but is there a need to point out the obvious?

We both support the broader notion of diversity, not only in terms of gender, but also age, nationalities, physical abilities etc.

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What a notion of soul sisters! When I received a diversity award for the region two months ago, I said that diversity is all about respect. If we really respect different people, cultures, religion, and sexual orientation, we maintain our open attitude, accept them as they are and listen to them. There is a huge difference between respect and a mere tolerance.

That brings me to my next question related to the refugee crisis in Europe and the condescending tone of discussion. You have been a migrant yourself, so how do you feel about this discussion?

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Being a migrant myself, I have experienced the tendency of doing more than others. I came from Italy to Switzerland at the age of eight. Just imagine the cultural difference besides

the fact that I did not speak the language. But this life lesson was very valuable and forming for me. That is why I am so open to different cultures, interested in world issues. As a migrant or a refugee, you know where you have come from and you have opted for a better life. You do not

**“I’ve always believed that none of us is as smart as all of us. For sap to help the world run better and improve people’s lives, we need to be the most diverse company in the world. We need strong leaders who role model this – from gender diversity to cultural diversity and differing points of view.”**



worry about an extra hour of work and you have no problem going the extra mile. I am therefore very passionate about the topic. In April, a refugee joined our team to help integrate him into the German working culture. I appreciate the different mind-set and the desire for success shown.

With regards to the current discussion about women and quotas being introduced in the largest enterprises, are you a supporter of direct quotas or rather voluntary measures of enterprises?

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My position is always to support always the right person for a job, if it is a woman, it is even better. As I have already mentioned, we as women do not do ourselves a favour by getting a job for being a woman. At SAP we have a couple of programmes that might be also inspiring for other companies. And I, during my last 13 years of career at SAP, have never ever had a feeling that I am not getting something because I am a woman. Diversity really starts at the top, with our CEO, Bill McDermott. He truly lives and breathes diversity and then his approach is reflected throughout the company. He has been a great source of inspiration due to his passion for diversity and encouragement to dream big.

Currently, there is a lack of women in IT sector in Europe, even though IT sector might be a good career choice for them, allowing flexible working hours and the trend of work-life integration. European girls simply do not prefer to study science or technology. How do you challenge the trend and how do you encourage young people to explore this industry?

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I find the world of IT and technology fascinating but personally speaking, my journey confirms the trend mentioned since I studied tourism.

That is why I feel the need about sharing my journey with others, explaining what perspectives the IT world offers and even if you have studied something different, you can join the industry later and still build a successful career.

Naturally, attracting people to come and join outside of businesses has become another passion of mine. Two years ago, we launched our Sales Academy programme and in my region of Middle and Eastern and Europe we have around 100 graduates, some of them also from the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Young graduates from various countries have the opportunity to see the headquarters and gain experience in Silicon Valley, to mix and interact with each other, to go back and work on their project. It is fascinating to see their vigor, energy, enthusiasm and the ideas they bring alongside with their personal growth. This academy also focuses 44 on pre-sales positions. I believe there is no need to stress that the mix of graduates is gender balanced.

I enjoy having some graduates on my team, I like being challenged, and I enjoy the different way of thinking and acting. I am certainly not one of those who are constantly criticising

the new millennial generation. I see them as the true future of SAP.

Despite the positive atmosphere in the room, women who reach the top positions have the reputation of not helping other women. Do you believe that women's solidarity is still less applied when compared to men's solidarity?

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I cannot say from my own experience that women do not support each other and I always stick to my rule of supporting the right talent – I have seen that once truly diverse teams are formed, these are the best ones functioning. One interesting aspect that I would like to mention based on my observation is the notion that we as women tend to be much more critical about our behaviour towards each other and not supportive enough.

How do you personally cope with the stress and what are your tips for work-life balance?

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I am passionate about what I do and therefore I do not perceive my job as being stressful. However, everyone needs to address the issue of work-life balance to make it fit his or her needs. I have learned to adjust my free time so I can really recharge my energy. My free time is limit-

ed so I consciously make choices. I love playing golf or flying with my husband, or simply being with my five year old goddaughter, during all these activities I get my energy back. I stopped being around people who were draining me. As a boss, I am conscious about the time off needed for my staff.

**If I happen to write an email during the weekend as this is the time that suits me, it usually starts with the line “do not read until Monday” and I do not call my people in the evenings.**

However, I often mention both men and women should be clearer both about tasks and roles that they are performing. It is sad when women give up their career because they do not have a supportive husband but also sometimes men are very stressed about not having supportive wives. I regard the supportive environment and the agreement in a couple very essential for not only a successful career but also for a fulfilled life in general. A few years ago, the issue of a burnout has been discussed. I believe that most of the time the job is not the one thing to blame but rather the ultimate thing, it is only an interface that is mirroring an existence of a problem.

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What are your personal top three career tips? And after the long debate we have had, I guess they will be same for both women and men.

1.

**Take action.**

**We define ourselves through actions. Knowledge is not valuable, unless we act.**

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2.

**Act with passion.**

**Such an approach will inspire and connect with other people.**

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3.

**Never act without a goal, always know what you aim for.**

# FRANK KOHL-BOAS

2.

Google, Head of HR Northwest,  
Central and Eastern Europe

No one will  
motivate you  
at Google

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Mr. Kohl-Boas has working experience from Unilever, Shell and Coca-Cola. Since 2010, he has been Head of HR Northwest, Central and Eastern Europe for Google and as such supporting, together with his team, Googlers in more than 19 countries focusing on leadership, talent development and the evolution of an innovative, diverse and inclusive company culture. As opposed to customer-centric models, Google is an advocate of an employee-centric organisational model as laid out in the company's letter at the time of their initial public offering in 2004.

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Kohl-Boas emphasised that Google was neither the first nor the only company to think employee-centric, quoting Sir Richard Branson "Clients do not come first. Employees come first." as well as German founder of the "dm" drugstores Götz Werner "If you take care of your employees, they will take care of the clients".



Google regards every employee as a talent, and even if they leave, they are believed to stay in the ecosystem. Can you talk more about the Google ecosystem? I cannot imagine many people leaving Google, usually ranking a no. 1 desirable employer in polls. However, if employees leave, how do you keep in touch with them?

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We have indeed a relatively low attrition rate of regretted leavers, which is great. Many employees leaving us do so because they have been offered jobs with other companies at an often times much higher level of responsibility and scope. Examples include Head of Online Department, Country Manager and the C-suite with other companies. A few have become entrepreneurs, establishing agencies, consultancies or online businesses. The online community in countries and by industry sector is still relatively small and one regularly sees each other at conventions, summits or business meetings. In addition, we have an alumni network, Xooglers – that's the name for Googlers who left us – may become member of. And I should add that it is not uncommon

that we re-hire former employees at all levels.

You mentioned a recruitment process and its tremendous impact on all other HR and Learning and Development processes. At Google, approximately 1/3 are referred by peers, 1/3 are sourced from in-house recruiters and 1/3 apply for open roles. You pointed out that A-class interviewers will bring A-class people, a B-class interviewer is likely to bring C-class candidates. That is easy for you being so popular but what about the companies that are frequently citing “the war on talent”?

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We compete for talents, too, especially IT Engineers are in very high demand but so are employees who want to lead digital transformation. Since Google's recruitment process is consensus based, every Googler who participates in the interviewing process needs to be an “A” interviewer. The “A, B, C” refers to a simplified categorisation of employees with regards to their engagement. Only “A” employees are highly engaged and will aim to hire candidates looking for the

same opportunities to second purpose, autonomy and mastery in their employment with Google and to enable others to do so likewise. Google's value proposition and attractiveness as an employer consists of offering a strong mission, transparency and a voice for every employee. All of these ingredients can't be purchased nor engineered or implemented by “golden rules” framed in hallways. You need to live and lead by them daily.

**It is a question of culture and the culture is owned by and lived by your workforce,...**



which is why the recruitment process and its reflection of your company culture and its values is the single most important HR process you have and decisive for your ability to win, develop and keep talents in your organisation.

Google regards diversity not only as gender diversity but also in terms of culture, sexual orientation and / or nationality. You pointed out that you need to have a male and

a female candidate for each position. Being such an attractive brand, I can imagine that most of the categories do not pose a big problem. What about the age diversity?

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To the best of my knowledge, Googlers, in the regions I support, can be anywhere in between the age of 28 to 52, with the majority being at or around 35-40. From my point of view,...

**it's not a question of the biological age, it is about the know-how and skill set and the mindset...**



to keep developing both. We live in a "VUCA" (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) world and to face or even succeed in it, you need a learning mindset. I don't think it is linked to an age but based on my observations, it often decreases the more experiences and routines we have and rely on. It takes an effort to remain curious and to stay aware and alert to changes around you and what that may mean for your know-how, required skills and behaviours. In a world where many changes are deceptive and come in a disruptive

way, a comfort zone can become a danger zone. Are you willing to learn or even report to people who may be younger than you? Are you actively aiming to learn and try out new things?

Your talk touched on transparency, feedback culture, sharing and learning.

How do you personally live the statement of Lazlo Block, SVP, People Operations in Google? "Give people slightly more trust, freedom, and authority than you are comfortable giving them. If you are not nervous, you have not given them enough".

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I lead by setting objectives, leaving the how to achieve the objectives with my direct reports. I refuse the temptation or at times their desire to replace their decision by mine. With some of them working remotely, they often have to rely on their own judgement anyway. That includes their approach to daily HR matters as well as their ownership with regards to the need and frequency about their business travel or acceptance of invitations to internal and external

events of all kinds. They are adults and I rely on their assessment even at the risk of them taking a different decision than I might have taken. That said, it's my task to support them, by coaching (What do you think happens if...?), giving feedback (In my view, you did/ did not...) or mentoring (When I was in a similar situation, I ...).

**freedom comes with responsibility...**



and that's why I expect my team to keep me well informed so that I'm not taken by surprise and am in a position to take ownership for decisions and doings of my team including their potential mistakes or lack of judgement I'm ultimately accountable for.

doesn't have any impact. In Vodafone we make sure that every statement is supported by clear action.

Can you share with our readers some "future recommendations and practices" that you are currently trialling and other companies

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We want to do our part in creating better work environments which is why Eric Schmidt and our SVP, People Operations, Laszlo Bock wrote books about our HR policies and processes (How Google works, Work Rules!). In addition, we share our work practices and welcome other companies to contribute to a platform called “re:work”. I also see quite a few companies who experiment for example with holacracy, different pay and performance philosophies or new forms of learning (“edutainment”/“gamification”).

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**it's your people who put strategy into action...**



and who have to utilise technology to the benefit of the company. So in consequence, relevance of HR practices will increase, requiring an employee-centric company culture which will become a major driver for success in the market.

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# BALESH SHARMA

Vodafone, CEO of Vodafone  
Czech Republic

3.

We in Vodafone  
walk the talk in regards  
to diversity

Mr. Sharma, Vodafone is known as a company promoting women and diversity in general. How is this attitude influenced by your experience, being the only Indian in the company and often with regards to diversity, being the only male in the panel discussion to address such issue?

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In Vodafone we believe that by being diverse and inclusive we will attract and retain the best talent in to Vodafone and make the best choices for our customers and shareholders. Everyone has a role to play in ensuring people at Vodafone can be at their best irrespective of their Gender, Race, Religion, Belief, Disability, Age, Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity.

**Personally I very much believe in benefits of diversity – based on my own experience – diverse teams are more creative and productive.**

Your company is regarded as a challenger to status quo and other companies monitor your activities and implement them later as a proven practice. What are your top three “easy and quick wins” to support diversity at the workplace?

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I am glad that Vodafone is perceived as a company that sets trends in diversity area. Talking about Diversity without concrete



actions doesn't have any impact. In Vodafone we make sure that every statement is supported by clear action.

**In terms of Gender diversity I am a big promoter of our global maternity policy – enabling our female colleagues to work part time and get full salary.** 

This helps our colleagues to better manage work-life balance and continue with their carrier. Many companies are lacking women in senior leadership role,

**I believe creating the right conditions for them will help women to grow and they won't have to choose between carrier and a family.** 

terms of LGBT diversity, based on a recent research, only 10% of companies focus on LGBT issues and engagement and they provide tailor made support/benefits. In Vodafone for example, among other benefits, we give LGBT employees a day off for the registration.

How do you see the diversity as an issue in the Czech Republic? The

Czech Republic currently ranks on the 81st place out of 145 countries surveyed according to the World Economic Forum.

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I was surprised to hear about a pay gap in the Czech Republic – women earn 21% less than men in the same roles. I am happy about the fact that in Vodafone we treat people equally, there are no differences in salaries. We have to realize that women play many roles – at work, at home. It is very important to create and offer and support for women.

In Vodafone, you are famous for „walk the talk on diversity“. You introduced full compensation for part-time working women coming sooner from parental leave, you support parental leave for both women and men, you held every year diversity week to celebrate diversity in all aspects – gender, age, nationalities and others. With regard to technology, you make sure your technology and mobile applications help to victims of domestic violence. What are other trends that you will be introducing?

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Our Diversity focus is on Gender, LGBT, Disability and Age and are constantly looking at needs of our people. As the population in Czech and Europe is aging, we will soon introduce programs addressing this.

**Regarding technology:**

communication networks underpin every aspect of a modern society, enabling people to stay in touch with family and friends, access information and increase their understanding of the world around them while accessing services that can improve health and wellbeing, enhancing skills and increasing prosperity for the population as a whole. We believe that our technology can have

a transformational impact on society – a belief shared by the Vodafone Foundation who's Connecting for Good strategy is focused on using our technology to tackle some of the most challenging social issues in the world. Our Foundation in the Czech Republic has already offered to the community of people with disabilities powerful ICT solutions: a smartphone for visually impaired people BlindShell, a transcription system Transkript for people with audition impairment, a reading trainer for kids with dyslexia Včelka and our last winner of the Vodafone Foundation Laboratory R-ITAREPS aims to help people with schizophrenia via ICT App to monitor their wellbeing and stay integrated in their communities.

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# ROMAN KNAP

SAP, Managing Director SAP,  
Czech Republic

4.

I do not only set  
targets for myself,  
I reach them

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When I interview leading personalities from IT corporations I sometimes feel like being on a different planet. This is not only due to the range of topics related to new technologies, disruptive trends and discussions about cloud or IoT (Internet of Things), but also due to many of these being beyond common comprehension of most users. I very much appreciate the positive energy, optimism and passion that leaders in IT authentically show. Interviewing and photo shooting Mr. Roman Knap, MD SAP Czech Republic, was no exception.

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Let`s talk about competition, is there still such a thing in IT? In this field, many former competitors were forced to collaborate, so it seems that the paradigm shift from collaboration to completion has proven to be working...

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Yes, competition still exists; however, now we talk about a new type of competition. After a period of consolidation and acquisition of smaller players by large multinational corporations, new competition has emerged in the form of dynamic, young start-up companies. These new players and challengers have built their business using IT principles. Multinationals usually react in two ways, either they try to change the way they themselves operate to become more flexible and dynamic, or they start to support the young companies to secure their markets also for themselves. And so we are back to the claim that IT technologies are backing up all ideas and projects and so everybody is using technologies from big IT companies.

Your saying “there is fun in IT” has

attracted a lot attention. I had the opportunity to attend the SAP Forum in September and I can confirm that it was a lot of fun. The computer selected a beer for me, I was able to ride a scary roller-coaster using 3D glasses and I passed the test proving I am not suffering from IT dementia...

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This statement has been quoted quite often and I have a feeling that there is even more fun than ever in IT. When I was appointed the MD of SAP in the Czech Republic, after being the MD in Slovakia, I had two priorities. The first one was to give SAP a human face. The second priority was to invite people from other industries to collaborate, so the labelling “these are those from IT” would not be valid anymore. And such approach has also affected the way we organise our events. We started to pay more attention to people coming from various backgrounds and industries and directly from our customers, we stopped using IT language, those facilitating our events are not from IT and to our regular SAP Forum in spring we invite various customers to speak about their user experience.

The feedback from customers confirms that our different approach is working. Before, they had no clue how much fun they can have with us, how much interesting and also enjoyable the IT segment as such can be. And as we discussed diversity of backgrounds, I would like to mention also gender diversity. I am proud to announce that SAP has gained the global certification for its gender equality and the Czech Republic was one of the branches that met the criteria.

Let us now take the rose-tinted glasses off for a while. It is a sad fact that the Czech Republic, albeit a leader in exporting digital technologies, cannot use IT efficiently. How can we improve the use of IT in the public sector?

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Well, even this situation can be viewed as an opportunity. This can be a role just for us. I personally do not believe in voluminous strategic documents, as these might be great projects only for consulting companies, the reality is simply different. Many things have already been designed and

discussed, so why start from scratch over and over again?

**I believe that it is important to start with baby steps.**



We have enough visions and strategies, so let us start implementing them. Alternative solutions will always exist. It is only an illusion to divide the project part from the realisation part. And one more thing is important – to set an example.

**If top leaders start using technologies and by doing so start explaining the benefits to others, everything will be easier.**



Right now, with regards to the young generation not willing to participate in the elections, e-government is often cited as a solution. As a citizen, I know how I am being served. I still have to run to various offices. Information is not shared. I do not see my balance account vis-à-vis (towards the state). Starting a business is a very lengthy and complicated procedure, which becomes even more difficult in case of a foreign body that wants to start own subsidiary here.

Your optimistic approach is also based on the claim that the Czech Republic is an attractive country. Compared to the others, you do not cry over the lack of qualified IT specialists since you are able to attract enough foreigners to come and work here.

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The Czech Republic is attractive thanks to its location, history and I often stress that we have many clever and educated people here. It is true that as SAP is growing we would need even more people, because we ran out of local sources. All foreign employees confirm that they have a good life in the Czech Republic. It is a safe country with good infrastructure and the cost of living is not enormously high. So most of the conditions needed for people to feel good are fulfilled.

You are an optimist, however, it is often the difficult moments that define great leaders, the moments when one has to overcome a barrier. Which moments do you recall as transformative and challenging ones?

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I remember that when five years ago I was appointed a new MD of SAP in Slovakia, it was a new country for me, a new team and a company that had no history on the market. At this moment all people coming to me were mentioning all possible problems which could arise. I was warned that the Slovaks rarely accept Czech managers, I was told how specific a Slovak market was and how MD was the position with the least stability, and one with negative effects on personal life and much more... All various risks in many forms. However, for me, this was an enormous opportunity. How many times can you get such a challenge? What was the worse thing that could happen? To return back to the Czech Republic. Personally, I really like Slovakia and I really enjoyed working there. I was able to get support from the team, build relations with customers and so I started to build upon the first successes.

**I promised my team maximum support in return for support from them. And together we were really successful.**



What is your definition of a leader?  
And do you see leaders around yourself?

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Each leadership training starts with a definition and so I could also cite a few. However, I would like to make a parallel to a good salesperson. A good salesperson is the one who customers like to buy from. Well, and...

**a good leader is the one who is being followed with joy.**



I see many leaders around myself at SAP and I like to learn from them. As long as they are on their positions, I have a reason to believe that everything will be ok. You know, IT environment is truly unique. Making a parallel to IT from the point of implementation of a complicated system, you work on a testing system and when everything runs smoothly then you apply it in real case scenario. Can you give me any other industry where you can do the same? Can a doctor afford to test a new approach on a patient? Or an architect or an engineer?

Let us discuss the theme of Corporate Social Responsibility that we share. Nowadays, corporations, thanks to their activities in this sphere, are considered bearers of the value of civil society.

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Our mission is “Run simple to improve people’s lives” and this can be fulfilled in many ways. One of them might be enabling creative people worldwide to fulfil their vision for SAP. The second level might be represented by charity or volunteering. Each October, we have “a month of service” when employees take part in a specific project to help raise money for charity organisations. We are glad to see how many and how much employees are interested. As I have already mentioned, I very much appreciate being recognised for the diversity and the certification we have received is the proof. The third level of best practice is best documented by the project Autism at work. At SAP Services (former SAP BSCE) we employ people with autism at various positions. The main motif of this programme is not CSR as such but the unique chance to hire very talented people. These

people will on the other hand get an interesting and stable job, so it is a truly win-win situation.

**Large corporations simply must lead by example and prove that embracing diversity brings benefits to all concerned.**



I am personally a board member of Junior Achievement. I have already been involved in Slovakia and now I am looking forward to continuing the cooperation.

# STEEFAN HÖCHBAUER

5.

SAP, President of SAP  
Middle & Eastern Europe

Digital transformation  
and its impact on  
businesses and society

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Having the opportunity to interview Mr. Stefan Höchbauer gave me not only a positive insight into the situation on digital transformation in the Czech Republic and its neighboring markets in Austria and Germany, but also an impulse to look at the technology from another perspective. More than ever, new technologies are becoming drivers of the business model change. The revolutionary examples of Airbnb and Uber show us how small players can grow into global ones and on the other hand, how the global ones might become smaller ones or disappear completely. In order to succeed, the IT needs to become integral part of the business to profit from the successful and long-term sustainable development.

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Mr. Höchbauer, what are the main business model changes and disruption trends that SAP helps its customers to address?

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The topic of digital transformation or business transformation as discussed nowadays is driven by three factors. The first one is represented by surprising competitors that have emerged and now are challenging many established players in traditional industries. Several years ago, it would seem odd to consider that BMW or VW would face competition from Google and its autonomous driving, as Google now has all the data relevant and needed. Similar disruptions are happening elsewhere: one of the biggest taxi providers Uber does not own cars, likewise Airbnb achieved its success without owning one single hotel bed.

**More and more, the traditional companies in traditional industries need to start thinking about new ways how to engage with customers.**



The second factor is linked to the Internet of Things – taking into consideration all devices that are

connected to the internet and that will be connected to the internet. According to studies, by 2020 there will be about 50 billion devices connected to the internet. We tend to think mainly about mobile phones, but there are many other devices and sensors connected, and generating enormous overall volume of data.

Just imagine immense opportunity for businesses arising from combining data from devices together with corporate data, which create the backbone of the enterprise, and then enriched with the data from the social media. Now the next step comes and that is what to do with the data and how to combine them with analytics. We present to our customers the example of Digital Boardroom as the place where all information about different parts of the enterprise is available and so it enables not only access to data in real time but also decision making according to complex evaluation of the current status of an organisation as well as enhancing communication across various departments. Besides effective decision making, this approach also enables many new

opportunities how to interact with customers.

The third dimension of disruption trends comes with next generation, the so-called millennials or also internet generation. They have totally different ideas about how to consume goods and services. I always present the example of my 14 year old son. He likes cars, but he has already made up his mind that he does not want to own a car in the future. He wants to have a flexibility and use it according to his needs, so he thinks about sharing cars with friends and changing models as he likes. And now this new approach to consumption is starting to be reflected in the whole automotive industry.

Having heard all this, now I understand that your statement: “In order to win in the new economy, you must digitize or become irrelevant”, should not be considered an overstatement.

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To illustrate all of the changes mentioned above on one specific example, I can give you an insight from my recent discussion with a car rental company, an industry

that few would consider particularly innovative. Generally, we would think the business is about maximum possible utilisation of the cars, being at the right place at the right time. However, facing the challenges, there is a need to come up with new types of shared and mobile services for their customers. Potentially, SAP as a corporate customer, will not have one company car per employee but rather service level providing a car at disposal according to needs. So from owning or renting a car, we are turning to consuming either miles or hours or any other flexible arrangement.

Individual SAP employee might thus profit from various cars for different occasions. Smaller car easy to park when driving in a city, a family car when going to the seaside for summer vacations or an offroad when going for a skiing weekend. Or perhaps would he or she like to try a convertible throughout summer? Expanding on this mobile car, let me describe a few services that could be interesting from the user's point of view. Just by entering the car and connecting to the GPS, there would be a welcome

and the navigation system would be automatically selecting the optimal journey to the next meeting. If I go to the petrol station and I refuel, the bill would be automatically added to the right expense company account. No more difficult and manual handling of receipts and bills into a system. By the way, this is already possible thanks to SAP technology called Concur. So this was one example that for changing business models you need flexible and reliable, rock solid IT infrastructure with data, applications and solutions and building on these, you come up with new services and ways to engage with your customer to serve their needs better.

Digitalization is truly affecting each and every industry and each and every geography. The adoption might be different if you compare America and Western Europe to Russia and CIS but it is omnipresent. Sometimes, it comes under headline of business transformation but the ultimate aim as to how best adapt for future market is always the same.

For a long time, SAP has been associated primarily with large

corporations. In reality, 80% of your customers are SMEs. In Germany, the SMEs have been traditionally considered backbone of economy, but in the Czech Republic, SMEs have been in an inferior position with regards to access to funding and innovation, when compared to multinationals. Has the situation changed?

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In SAP we have the same customer base in each country where we operate. What might differ, is the definition of the SME as such, with regards to the revenue or number of employees. But the principle how we engage with SMEs, what products and solutions we offer and how we engage with them, stays the same. As you pointed out, SMEs are also a backbone of business for us. Look at our product and portfolio and you find a range scaling from small to large enterprises. In some areas the offer is the same, in some areas there are special products developed in cooperation with our partners, based on our technology and ready to solve specific solutions in particular segments.

SAP is active in both, public sector and private sector. How is the public sector, comparing to the private one, interested in digital transformation? Are there any differences, can you give an example?

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It is interesting to note that with regards to the digital transformation, the often mentioned public-private sector divide is not relevant. There might be some slight concerns with regards to cloud solutions, but overall, the solutions and the responses are the same. Let us take the example of growing pressure from citizens with regards to the need of more transparency and budget spending or the pressure to be more flexible in handling administrative agenda filing on the documents and paperwork. The topic of efficient data use and data sharing can be extended to health care where I see a great advantage and potential. The potential of connectivity was demonstrated in one study done by the Heidelberg University Hospital which carried out digitizing cervical cancer screening in Kenya, in a process that helped to prevent data loss and duplication. And one last

positive remark regarding adoption and readiness, I am pleased to see that the level of discussion is almost comparable between Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic.

So far, we have talked about transforming businesses and technologies. Now, let us talk about people. What is your view and approach to leadership at SAP in times of transformation?

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In SAP, we make sure we have the people at the right positions. We embrace the notion of all inclusive diversity, in terms of gender, age, nationalities and last but not least even different physical abilities. I am so proud not only about my diverse team and particularly about the high number of talented women managers in executive positions throughout the region.

**We walk the talk on disruption and so we introduced the methodology called design thinking**

which is a smart way of brainstorming and engaging with our customers. But we also use it internally. We talk

about potential disruptive ideas, topics, trends and influences and how to link them to the opportunities our technology enables. Therefore, the employees need to be open to learning and to adapt fast. We also experienced our transformation from turning from an enterprise resource planning system company into a cloud company based on rock solid technology SAP HANA. This way, we are able to address much bigger market potential, in terms of different industries, lines of business, different buying centers etc. Our experts are trained to be always the most relevant source for their customers as potential consultants on future disruptive trends in a particular industry or business.

**We invest in training, education, coaching and we are aware that this is an on-going and never ending process.**



## A Design Methodology.

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Basically, Design Thinking is a design methodology, which differs from traditional design approaches in specific ways. For example, it is characterised as more creative and user-centered than many traditional design approaches.

## A Problem-Solving Approach or Process.

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Design Thinking can be regarded as a problem-solving method or a process for the resolution of problems. As a solution-based approach to solving problems, Design Thinking is particularly useful for addressing the so-called “wicked” problems. Wicked means that they are ill-defined or tricky. For ill-defined problems, both the problem and the solution are unknown at the outset of the problem-solving process. Even when the general direction of the problem may be clear, considerable time and effort is spent on clarifying the requirements. Thus, in Design Thinking, a large part of the problem-solving activity is comprised of defining and shaping the problem.

Much like any other problem solving process, Design Thinking consists of a number of stages or phases, which differ slightly between various Design Thinking proponents.

## An Approach to Encourage Creativity.

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**Unlike analytical thinking, which is associated with the “breaking down” of ideas, Design Thinking is a creative process based on the “building up” of ideas.**



While analytical approaches focus on narrowing the design choices, Design Thinking focuses on going broad, at least during the early stages of the process.

**In Design Thinking, designers do not make any early judgments about the quality of ideas. As a result, this minimises the fear of failure and maximises input and participation in the ideation (brainstorming) and prototype phases.**



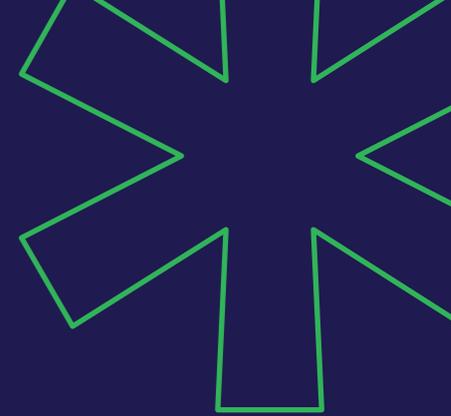
“Outside the box thinking”, also called “wild ideas”, is encouraged in the earlier process stages, since this

style of thinking is believed to lead to creative solutions that would not have emerged otherwise.

## A User-Centered Approach That Brings Design into the Business World.

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Design Thinking is seen as a way to apply design methodologies to any of life situations. It is often used to explore and define business problems and to define products and services. In other words, Design Thinking brings the design approach into the business world. As a style of thinking, it combines empathy for the context of a problem, creativity in the generation of insights and solutions, and rationality and feedback to analyze and fit solutions to the context – All this helps derive a solution that meets user needs and at the same time generates revenue, that is, drives business success.



# SILVIA GAVORNÍKOVÁ 6.

Slovak Export Credit Agency EXIMBANKA SR,  
Head of International Relations Department

**Authentic leadership**

**has changed my attitude**

**to life**

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It is a pleasure and privilege to introduce you Mrs. Silvia Gavorníková, who is not only the Head of International Relations Department at Slovak Export Credit Agency EXIMBANKA SR (Export-Import Bank of the Slovak Republic) but also the Chairwoman of the OECD Working Party on Export Credits and Credit Guarantees. In addition, Mrs. Gavorníková finds time for self-development activities dedicated to authentic leadership and last but not least, her passion in horse-riding resulted in organising top-level equestrian events in Slovakia.

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Silvia, can you share with our readers more about important milestones on your career journey that took you from Bratislava all the way to Paris?

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I have been working in EXIMBANKA SR for 18 years. During this time I have managed to develop knowledge and understanding of the export credit environment and international regulations which are very complex and strict. When Slovakia joined OECD and EU we had to fully comply with these rules, what was sometimes a very challenging process.

On the other hand, this environment is very dynamic as some regulations are being continuously updated and new ones are being adopted. Just like any other international environment, export credits are also about advocating national interests. So I quickly understood that if I wanted to support our national interests, as a national delegate, I needed to speak out, yet our counterparts had to learn to listen to our opinions, i.e. opinions of small countries. To understand national interests correctly, it is very important to communicate effectively,

either with my colleagues who are in touch with Slovak businesses or with exporters directly.

The journey took a while as I have been participating at the meeting of the Export Credit Group in Brussels, where only EU Member States are involved, since 2008. During this time I have gained experiences in international negotiating, learned how to support national positions, as mentioned above, national interests, and also our preferences. All international negotiations are based on personal contacts and if you are a respected negotiator, then you can seek support for becoming the Chair. I am very grateful to gain the possibility to run for the Chairman of the Group.

I believe that I can be trusted by my colleagues to fulfil the task of the Chairman as an honest broker working to the benefit of the entire Group. Therefore, the EU Council Working Group endorsed me as an EU candidate for the position of the Chairman in OECD as well as a member of the OECD Export Credit Bureau in autumn 2014.

I was elected into this position by all Members of the WP ECG during the OECD autumn plenary meeting in November 2014 and re-elected for 2016 in November 2015. On 1st of July 2016, the Slovak Republic took over the first ever Presidency of the Council of the European Union (SK PRES), so I have become also the Chairman of the EU Council Working Group for Export Credits for the 6 months of the Slovak Presidency. The main challenge for Slovakia as part of these important responsibilities and opportunities is to find the way among the Member States to compromise to be able achieve a consensus on difficult issues on the EU agenda and to best represent our country. In this regard we will be hosting a Presidency meeting for all ECG members (EU Member States) in Bratislava in October, so I will be very proud to also welcome my colleagues at the Informal Presidency Meeting in Bratislava, the town where I was born and raised.

Paris, OECD and the world of finances – the three elements evoke the verse “it is a man’s world”. Did you perceive it the same way? Did it feel like you

were breaking a glass ceiling or was it more difficult to overcome some stereotypes due to the fact that you were coming from “the East”?

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I would say that our Working Group is very well gender balanced thanks to the deep respect for professional qualities of each other and great work of my female colleagues. I definitely was not the first woman to chair the OECD meetings (which started in 1978) or EU; however, it is true that in our OECD working group I am the first representative coming from the former “East block” who was elected to the Export Credit Bureau. I have to admit it would not be feasible without the support of my colleagues from the European Union and other OECD members, and of course my Slovak supporters.

Once I have earned the trust of the group, I am trying to do my job properly and in the most professional way. My main task as the Chair is to move the negotiation process forward. To achieve this I have to listen to the delegations carefully and understand the background very well. One of the most important features of the Chair

in such an international environment is being impartial, loyal to the Group and I believe that in this sense my origin is an advantage.

How do you define yourself as a leader and your leadership style?

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I heard once, that “leadership” cannot be taught like management, but can be learned and enhanced. I became familiar with the Talent

**I believe that authentic leadership has opened my eyes in the area of self-development and improved the quality of my life not only in my professional career.**



Dynamics Profile Test which I find quite useful, because it is based on natural talent and not on skills. My personal talent dynamic profile is “Supporter” and based on this result I realised why I had always needed to work with people and lead them to achieve the best outcome of their work. This has confirmed my role in which I always felt the best – activities relating to people, organising teams, motivating, communicating, people-focused leadership, learning

through conversations and teams, communicating through one-to-one discussion. Together with my team we create a great team and our work is very well accepted within our institution as well as in international meetings. My favourite sentence corresponds with my profile: “It wasn’t just me, it was the team”.

You dedicate quite a lot of time to self-development. What are some key findings you can share and pass forward?

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I got in touch with the authentic leadership programme through my great coach Eva Štefanková in spring 2015, with the main aim to prepare for the historically first ever Slovak Presidency in the EU Council.

**What I value most out of this self-development approach is the attitude towards myself, ability to look at myself and starting to know myself.**



This goes hand in hand with the ability to understand my strengths and weaknesses and take all the knowledge to achieve the best performance in my work. I consider

myself blessed because I like my work very much; if I should describe my job I would say a “dream job”, so to improve myself in self-development is very natural to me as I want to improve all the time.

Do you see enough leaders able to address the current complex issues, be it on the local, regional and European level? What are the biggest challenges they face?

An authentic leader is in my view a person who makes his/her decision naturally as a free human being with the full responsibility and best intention to achieve his/her goal. In my opinion, these days are very challenging because thanks to social media many “leaders” pop up and quickly disappear.

**I believe that to become a leader is a sustainable process of learning, listening, communicating and expressing oneself.**

I think one of...

**the biggest challenges for every leader is to understand where their role is...**

and know well available room for manoeuvre, which can be used effectively to achieve their goals.

Horse-riding is your passion but you do not do it merely to relax but also used this opportunity in the past to promote Slovakia abroad. Besides horse-riding, can you comment on your overall approach to work-life balance, how do you find time and where do you find energy?

I’ve always dreamt about riding horses, and since my parents didn’t like this idea I had to wait till I was 14 to find my way to start riding on my own. After a short adventure in racing stables I found a riding stable of show jumpers, with the No.1 Slovak rider at that time and I’ve been riding show jumpers/hunters ever since. I have competed on the national level and my favourite part is riding young horses at the time when you can teach them how to like to be ridden and influence their personality. No matter how much I like my work, it is absolutely crucial to have balance in my life. My work includes a lot of traveling, which is time consuming and especially long negotiations

could be exhausting, so I need to be focused and concentrate at all times. Horses are the generator of my energy, the moment I sit on a horse back all the problems disappear, the head clears up and I am able to rethink and re-evaluate all I have in my mind.

Looking 20 years ahead, what would you like to see?

I am grateful for all opportunities that I have got in my life and I believe that all this would not be possible without a great support of my family, my husband and my parents.

So even in 20 years from now I would like to be surrounded by people I love, can rely on and trust at the same time and I still would like to work in a position which would also be my hobby and passion.

Your final words...

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**Authentic leadership has changed my attitude to life, opened my eyes in many ways...**



and made me realise how much my reaction can influence the outcomes which then have the major impact on my decisions. When I look back I understand my reactions in the past much better and I believe that for the

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future many more circumstances will lead to a different outcome, because of my current knowledge. I would like to wish your readers successful decisions and satisfaction in their life, which brings all the joy and delight.

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# DIANA RÁDL ROGEROVÁ

7.

Deloitte, Office Managing Partner  
at Deloitte Czech Republic

Make an  
impact that  
matters

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Despite the freezing weather and melancholic mood, so typical for the Czech winter period, Diana Rádl Rogerová never ceases to smile. Cuban blood in her veins explains that only to an extent. What counts much more is her personal determination and her attitude that she does not allow her energy to be sucked out. She destroys the myth about people in audit not being fun to be around and she claims that audit has to be sexy even for the clients. She shares openly the fact that she does not want to have the position of Managing Partner in Deloitte forever because she is always interested in trying out new things.

As part of her childhood dreams, she tried ballet, and during adult years she was pursuing singing. Currently, she is looking forward to start playing piano and dreams about playing a grand piano in public premises one day. On the top of her demanding work, she is also raising a son. Even though she has most likely given a dozen of interviews, after assuming her new role, she did not forget to thank me and mentioned she had enjoyed talking to me.

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You have been appointed to the position of Managing Partner in Deloitte after working for Deloitte for almost 21 years. How has the company changed over the two decades and how have you personally changed?

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Well, speaking of such a long employment history in one company, I tend to remind myself of experts claiming that after so many years spent in one company, a person is not suitable to join a labour market again. (Particularly when I carry out interviews or when I read articles.) On the other hand, the company itself has changed significantly.

When I joined Deloitte in 1996, it had 50 employees, now we have 900. I like to tell my son, who is used to playing on iPad since early childhood, that in the beginning we had no computers. Audit and taxes represented the main specializations in that era. Today, we are mainly consultancy driven. It is the very specialization on consulting that allows us to create an environment where everyone can find and develop their own talent. This is also the reason why I have stayed

in one company for so long. There are not many companies allowing employees to try various spectre of activities and have the opportunity to change tasks or even industries. Gradually, I have gained experience in finances, real-estate, audit, be it on the level of the Czech Republic or even the regional one. There is an enormous extent and level of the knowledge present in the company. That is what keeps me here. I am still with the same company but I've done so many different things over the time. By the same token, I cannot imagine being on the position of Office Managing Partner forever.

I believe that such positions should rotate due to the fact that each person brings a new drive and innovation. I love changes and trying out new things. The other thing that keeps me here is the environment that allows to make mistakes. Our inner position in the company equals to us wanting to achieve A levels; however, in order to get there, we sometimes need to make mistakes. I also had the opportunity to work for a client when I was seconded from Deloitte to join "Všeobecná Úvěrová Banka/ Bank

of Intessa" - I regard the opportunity to get a client's perspective quite essential and therefore I support such opportunities for my colleagues as well.

Deloitte is known for a friendly atmosphere...What else makes you different?

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Friendly atmosphere is most appreciated and also mentioned by colleagues who have been at Deloitte for a while. My principle is not to slander our competition. Therefore, I never claim that my services are better than theirs, since I am not a client who can make such a statement. I am not interested in comparing myself to competition, I am interested in bringing different services. And it is the use of technologies that makes us different. With the technologies one should not only understand consultancy work with regard to projects implementation. We have also begun to use technologies in audit and tax, so clients are having more fun dealing with the mundane tasks.

One would not be interested in mere

invoices cross-checking for a longer period of time. Our group of partners invests a lot of time and energy into thinking how to make such work more “sexy” and how to bring additional value to our clients. I am proud to say that some of our technological tools developed in Prague will be introduced on a global level. We try to have a mind-set that would be based on a difference with regard to the use of innovation and technologies. Our Global CEO Punit Renjen claims that it is not our sub-brand Deloitte Digital that matters but the reality that we want to become “Digital Deloitte”. The world is changing and so are we. Therefore, we want to become an undisputed leader with respect to the use of technologies. Since we are discussing changes, I would like to mention the speed that has been steadily increasing due to which we need not only young people and their drive, but also general knowledge and calmness of senior partners. I am myself inspired while talking to our French senior partner Frederic Maziere who is willing to share his career journey with me. It not only interests me but also fills me with energy. I have the overall tendency

to look at the bright side and not to have my energy sucked.

Let us now look at the bright side of the upcoming generation of the workforce, the generation Y or the so called Millennials. It seems that they are quite an enigma to many - to HR experts, managers, training and development professionals and in fact, to all of us as parents.

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This generation is truly different. I do not think that it is the values that are different, it is rather the life style. My Cuban ancestry confirms to me that it is their lifestyle that is better. You often hear that there is a different attitude in Spain or Latin America but it is not true. People work a lot in these countries, however differently. I have nicknamed this generation as a Latin generation and I respect the fact that they need to manage time so they can do other things than just work. I believe that most of us want that as well; however, we are not used to sharing it openly. That is the essential difference. New generation is not afraid to ask. The disadvantage is that they often ask for many things at the same time. But that is our fault

since we are the ones raising them. We give them a lot, too much. And we commit one more mistake, we are being protectionist. Therefore, young people demand independence on one hand, however, they also demand being led and supported on the other hand. In reality, independence is not possible without responsibility. This statement only brings me to my previous claim that the young ones are just mirroring the way they were raised.

So what elements do you perceive as essential for the efficient leadership managing various generations?

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I see three factors. The first one, flexibility, was already mentioned. The second one is the trend encompassed by the English term well-being. Such trend is not only about a permanent smile but about satisfaction at work, the feeling of belonging somewhere. Deloitte fulfils all the conditions. We have never created any hierarchy, people communicate freely, we have never paid attention to differences between an assistant and a partner of the company. Naturally, our responsibilities differ. The third factor

is represented by the environment that allows people to develop and to fulfil their potential. For me, people always come first. Whenever you take care about relations, the results in terms of figures will follow. Allow me my personal remark with regard to diversity and different leadership style as to men vs. women. I personally feel that women have bigger tendency to connect to the company and to bring about the culture change.

Men are more efficient with regard to dramatic changes or crises. Currently, in Deloitte, we mainly need to connect in order to be more flexible and use the synergies. Simply, each period needs a different leadership. This is also linked to the fact that we should not consider a step aside or leaving a position a failure or a negative trend. On the contrary, even faster rotations on the position of Office Managing Partner will be beneficiary, since every newcomer will bring a new vision and energy.

**You have mentioned personal well-being, so how do you walk the talk?**

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I stick to two basic rules. Whatever

I truly want, I manage. Everything is about priorities. The second rule is that nothing has to be perfect. I know that I want to accomplish excellent work but I also know that not hammering out the last unsubstantial detail will not bring the world down. Perhaps others will even not notice such a minor omission. I am not a fan of perfectionism. I enjoy doing sports, skiing, running, biking. Every weekend I go to the mountains in Harrachov, downhill skiing and cross-country skiing. I run four times per week, last year I was running almost everyday. I am supported at home. I still believe that two-career marriage is possible but respect and true division of household chores must be at the heart of it.

I successfully managed to find a husband who understands all of the above. Despite the fact that he has his own career and business, we share household duties and also child care equally. Many men in the Czech Republic are quite indolent so they offer their wives to stay at home to take care of children and the household. Even though I love my job, I would quit should my family

suffer. Such perception gives me the oversight and makes me calm.

**What about men? Do you find that they are also concerned?**

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I believe I am lucky being surrounded by nice people. I know many men who deal with such issues seriously. In Deloitte, we have two partners who took a half a year sabbatical leave to take care of their family. As the saying goes, “birds of a feather, flock together”. Either I have attracted them or they have attracted me. This brings us back to the issue of flexible working schemes not only for women but for all those who need it. The fact that I do not see any differences in Deloitte, does not mean that I do not perceive some stereotypes harming women in a Czech society as a whole. It is partly due to the culture and partly due to the fact that women are reluctant to ask for many things, particularly support of any kind. They rather perform tasks on their own than asking for help. But even this is changing, to some extent thanks to foreigners who come to live here. The world is changing, and so are we.

Your motto is: “Make an impact that matters”. In Deloitte, you support women, charity, design... Is there a common denominator to all these activities?

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Our aim is that people perceive that it is not only the world of business that matters. The role of business is to support other projects. In case you are successful, help others be successful too. It is not about different worlds, but communicating vessels. It leads us to the concept of creative out of the box thinking, when you do not think about yourself but also about others.

The above mentioned projects are fulfilling, give us energy and we have

fun while contributing. It is beautiful to support arts or charity. We do not mention it publicly, because we support charity in order to give it support and not to talk about it. Values that you support are translated into business directly, for example in the form of ethical business. The support of art is directly linked to innovation that I have already spoken about. Art is always innovative, since it gives you chance to view the world differently.

We meet at the beginning of 2017...  
What do you wish others?

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**Satisfaction. It is a simple answer, as long as you are satisfied, everything is possible.**



# RADKA DOHNALOVÁ

ATAIRU, Founder and Managing Partner

My life is  
what I stand for

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Successful Czech leaders who gained their education and professional experience abroad and then they returned because they want to make a difference to their homeland from within represent another category that fits into the ambassadors without a diplomatic passport framework. As was the case with personalities in preceding series, I chose Radka Dohnalová for several reasons. Not only that Radka is a Harvard University MBA alumni, but she managed to get her degree having one small son at the beginning of her studies and the second one born before she finished. And on top of that she has managed to have success and fulfillment in both corporate and entrepreneur world. Radka studied in the US and UK.

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She started her career in various positions in business in these countries as well as in Italy when working with the United Nations World Food Program. After 8 years she returned to the Czech Republic and joined McKinsey. While working for McKinsey and giving birth to two children, she managed to get an MBA from Harvard University, where she co-authored “The Authentic and Integrated Female Leadership Model”. She has 3 children and lives in Prague.



The first traditional question is, how do you perceive today's world?

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What a question to start with! I really feel that we are at the turning point in a way how we operate as humanity if you wish. Right now we live in a time of accelerating changes – both positive and negative. New holistic ideas, values and technologies are developing that have the potential to change our global system into a more sustainable one. Transformation is possible once we make a paradigm shift in our view of reality and our relationship to nature and each other. Because the obstacles to human progress are cultural, not technical, we can accelerate this process through new kind of Leadership.

You have been abroad several times for a longer period of time and you have always planned to return. How do you perceive the Czech Republic?

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Since I was very little, I always wanted to make a difference. When I was working for the UN, it was great to make a difference to people in Africa and other developing countries,

but I have always considered the Czech Republic my home and I care about this country. During that time it became clear to me that it is at home where I want to make the difference. The second reason is that I say my home is where my family is. I wanted my children to experience our roots and be close to their relatives. I am embracing my country with all its positives and negatives and I view the negative aspects as opportunities for change. I not only love the country but also the people. It is great for me to see the potential of the country when working either with leaders or young talents.

Now let me ask you about your studies at Harvard. This is a dream coming true not only for many students but also for many senior experienced professionals. What do you consider your most valuable learning experience?

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For me this was a defining moment in my life. Before I went to Harvard, I was always trying to prove to my parents that I am good enough and I was hoping that having a diploma from Harvard would finally make me

happy and fulfilled, so I had very high expectations. When I got there and I met with many so intelligent and driven people I felt neither fulfilled nor confident. This truly forced me to spend the two years looking at my life from a different perspective and ask myself some tough questions: what is that I want, what would make me fulfilled and where I could really make a difference as a leader. This experience was the most valuable when compared to any tips or tricks.

Can you give any advice to potential students?

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Go for it, it is worth it! I spent whole one year only just preparing my application, I did not apply to any other MBA schools compared to my American colleagues who applied to ten schools. I knew this is the school I am going to. For me it was one of the most precious experiences, perhaps because I got something totally different from what I expected.

Now, let us turn to diversity. Given your economic background, you support your arguments for greater diversity in companies with two facts: first,

the unused potential of employed women -“only 56% employed women in the Czech Republic compared to 70% in Scandinavia; second, the ageing population and danger of 500 000 jobs will no-one to do them by 2040”. Despite these hard data, it seems to me that the discussion on diversity is very much polarizing in the Czech Republic. Certain companies understood the trend and are embracing it, while others pretend it does not exist.

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I do not consider the polarizing debate specific for the Czech Republic. I have seen similar responses across Europe and this trend was proved when we were doing the study Women Matter with McKinsey. Debate on diversity depends very much on the context. If you need to convince someone, it feels „pushy“. When you push someone, they push back. I talk about diversity in much broader context than quotas and number of women participating. I talk about the leadership needed for 21st century, the leadership that generation Y is seeking and leadership that will make companies successful and

people will feel fulfilled at the same time. If you look at the qualities of leadership that is when diversity is important, as there is a female and male way of leading, so the qualities are not specific to particular men and women but rather female and male energies or qualities of Leadership.

**To me, diversity is an amazing opportunity for companies to transform their leadership, the entire corporate environment and unlock potentials of people.**



You work within the business-corporate environment, namely with CEOs and then with women preparing for board positions. How do you perceive involvement of the public sector, especially government?

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I think the role of the government is important but I would not overestimate it. Government policies make things either easier or more difficult but they do not cause change per se. We need to take responsibility for changes we want to see – whether it is in a household, in a company or in society. If there is a law on flexible working hours but at the same time

my husband is reluctant to share household responsibilities, then I will not be able to make it anyway. My husband and I constantly “recalibrate” our work and family life so that we can both engage in our jobs as well as to raise our three children together.

Much has been said about women lacking solidarity and very often those women who make it to the top are criticized for not helping other women. Is there such a thing as women solidarity?

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I think it is not about women solidarity per se, but what lies at the core is really the topic of collaboration. The question is, why don't we collaborate? And the reason is that either consciously or unconsciously we feel threatened. When we work with women leaders, we work with both authenticity and fears because the element of not helping others goes down to our own insecurities. Is it that we want to be seen as the ones who made it and then to be sure there is no one to follow us and threaten us? Getting women to board level is one thing but then

comes the next question what is the quality of women you want to have on board? Our aim is to empower women leaders to bring truly diverse qualities of leadership to companies to make a change and contribution.

Work-life balance is slowly becoming a cliché. But still, how do you manage to run your own business, family with three children, to have time for yourself.

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**I also do not like the concept of work life balance. I do not want to balance work and life. For me, work is an expression of life. My life is who I am, why I am here and what do I stand for, ...**



so it evolves around my purpose transforming society through a new model of leadership. If my work is about expressing my purpose, there is no reason to balance it. Also, for me it is not a matter of hours but energy. Last, but not least, it is important to

have an “A team” in life. My husband is on my A team, also my nanny, my parents, my mentors and as well as my work team, all of these people support me to do things I want, to make a difference and to contribute. I have help and I do not claim to be a superstar.

What is your final advice to our readers regarding diversity and leadership?

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**Everyone has a unique value through which he can contribute to his family, team, organization as well as society. So go and find your place or purpose or unique value.**



When you find your place – your authentic self – you know where you can contribute the best to benefit yourself as well as the whole without feeling threatened by others. And this way we can make the world a better place.

# LINDA STUCBARTOVÁ

written by Lenka Čábelová

Living a life  
on tip-toes

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For more than three years, my interview series with prominent leaders have been appearing in the Leaders Magazine. At the beginning of 2016, I was approached by the editor in chief, to tell more about myself and the reasons behind writing and sharing the stories. I have asked my friend Lenka Čábelová, Communication and Citizenship Lead for Microsoft, to write an interview with me. I hope that now as the concept is presented, more readers will nominate Czech and Slovak people who have contributed to the positive image of both countries. Share with us your suggestions on leaders and join us in the effort to improve leadership by presenting positive examples and visions.

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When I first met Linda, she was in a kind of a “double agent” role - a trainer as well as a participant of an authentic leadership development workshop. It took me some time to find balance with this duality but after working with Linda for one year, I fully understand it makes a perfect sense for what she wants to achieve. Another thing that struck me was her mix of gentle blaze energy and grounded agility. I did not even have a chance to realise it but soon she led me to do things that help me make my dreams come true and that I had never before believed I was capable of doing. Linda has an incredible instinct for opportunities, drive to make them happen and a charm to naturally connect people who need to connect for such purpose. I am very pleased to say that soon we started to play a “triple agent game” and nowadays I consider Linda to be my teacher, my classmate as well as a friend.

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Linda, you were a head of Diplomatic Academy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, HR manager and a Head of learning and development in several

private companies, and now you act as a coach and a mentor as well as a regular interviewer of successful and inspiring people. What is the thread of all this that makes the essence of yourself?

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I believe I am best characterised by the desire to change things through working with people. I recall when I was 13, the Velvet Revolution started. My sister who is 10 years older was a member of the strike committee at Charles University. I decided to set up a strike committee at our elementary school and so became a part of the revolution. As a university student I was engaged in early years of Forum 2000 conferences. This drive to engage and make an impact on the world naturally made me go study abroad. As a young lady, I was very keen to change institutions; I even proposed to cancel the United Nations as I found it inefficient in what it wanted to achieve. Gradually, I realised that destroying something is not the right way, that it is better to build something new, and, most importantly, to change people because when individuals transform, institutions will gradually

follow the change. If you ask about my personality, then I am a perfect match to what the talent dynamics profiling model says. I have the energy of blaze and, just like fire, I often have no limits. I love to interact with people, inspire them with my energy and lead them to new ideas and opportunities. For some people, it may be too much heat. My first job was in the public sector and I recall that my colleagues used to say “She is the one with a lot of energy but she will calm down”.

Did you calm down?

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Not at all. I left eventually. I never meant to lose my vigour and I have kept it through everything I did - and I left when it was clear that it is not possible or desirable to achieve harmony between who I am and what the organisation needs. This is a very important finding. The older I am, the more I like to work with people who can benefit from my energy and let others choose other coaches who better fit their personalities. Because this is the only way to build a healthy relationship that brings benefits to both parties.

**I believe in win-win approach and natural reciprocity as the only sustainable way to create long term and happy relationships. There is an element of release and relief if you accept that “You cannot be everybody’s darling”.**



Being able to arrive at such learning assumes a high level of self-awareness. I am intrigued by how you interweave your personal and professional identity. This reflects also my own experience from ATAIRU workshops where you work on personal and professional transformation in parallel. What can the approach bring to individuals working with other people, i.e. leaders, managers, coaches?

**I understand authenticity as accepting who I am at my best without playing any games and roles.**



If we know who we are and decide to live on our tip-toes, not on our knees, we are able to see and choose the right opportunities, connect with the right people and be exceptional.

**Many people keep trying to play various roles at home and at work and they burn too much energy on it. They stop being authentic and they are not transparent to others.**



There is an element of legacy of the Communist past when most population tried not to stand out of the crowd and strived to be in a grey invisible zone.

**Authenticity requires quite a lot of personal courage, doesn't it?**

It requires the transformation of attitude. It is not easy but once you succeed, it goes fast and naturally. Just to give an example, it helped me reframe how I see myself as a mother. I was never a structured mother who is good at regularly picking up kids from school, doing diligently homework with them, etc. I tried but it took too much energy and I was then nervous and did not have capacity for things I really wanted to do with my kids. It was great for me to realise that I can do it differently without feeling guilty for not playing the typical mother role. I found a lady who is a former teacher

to work with my kids on school stuff; she is perfect in it and really happy to do it. She loves it. And I have space to do things that no one else can do with them - we make trips, visit friends, discuss what we see and experience. I have the opportunity to give them the best of me. And on top of it, it is very convenient for me because I can be myself. The key trigger was to understand that I do not care how others judge me - this is my life. You know, sometimes we women are harder to each other than men are among themselves. We need to show more solidarity and support and less judgment.

**In your series of interviews with “Ambassadors without Diplomatic Passports” you often ask about national identity – how Czechs are perceived abroad. Do you see any relationship between individual and collective identity? Can lack of authenticity on the individual level impact our national identity?**

When it comes to national identity, I am concerned about our attitude to elites. Many Czech people see success as something that should

not be appreciated because there is something wrong with it. It goes far beyond the Communist times, as the case of prominent opera singer from early 20th century Ema Destinnová, famous in Berlin, Paris and New York and rejected in the National Theatre in Prague, shows. There are so many great leaders who have a positive impact in their respective areas of work and who achieved success in an honest and virtuous way. I see them as a source of inspiration and by interviewing them, I hope this will bring a change to how we appreciate talent and success of others. Authentic leaders speak not only about achievements, but also about failures. We only learn when we are outside the comfort zone. No-one has learned walking, riding a bike or skiing without falling.

We are back to the point that the most important change happens on the individual level and subsequently we can experience transformation on the organisational or even national level. This is what you do in ATAIRU - you try to give people courage to be authentic leaders. What does it mean?

We have a vision of achieving positive impact on transformation of society through a new approach to leadership. I have been with ATAIRU for two years and I've had the opportunity to work with over 150 managers in leading positions who made a big difference in their companies by implementing in their teams what they have discovered. So far, we have worked with more than 350 leaders across the region of Central and Eastern Europe. Just recently I discussed my work with a former university colleague and she was intrigued by my positive perception of today's situation. It is because I sense more than the negative news we get through the media daily. I see many competent people in top positions with very strong values and desire for change. These people work hard on themselves and want to leave a positive footprint in whatever they do.

At what point do people in top positions arrive at the need to undergo such personal transformation? It takes quite a lot of time and readiness to admit and appreciate weaknesses

and imperfections, and these people are usually very busy and very successful. What drives them to it?

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I see two key factors. The first is sustainability. Yes, they are successful but they often have worked all their life very long hours and with extreme intensity. They understand that they cannot live like this for another 15 or 20 years. The second reason is the need for a different kind of fulfilment. It is like climbing a high mountain. You have reached the top and what next? Maybe there is another mountain nearby but is this the challenge you need? Would it bring more value to you if you tried to get there? Maybe there is more value and satisfaction in enjoying the view from the top for a while, in accepting the journey as a goal, in helping others learn to climb or even in asking why I have gotten here and whether mountains are indeed the right place for me to be in...

Diversity is still a challenging concept in Czech society. How do you perceive it?

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It is very fragmented and polarizing.

Not many people understand that diversity is not only a question of gender, but of all natural differences in society. Nowadays, we have four generations in the workforce, this is a new situation. Just one example from the biggest private company in the Czech Republic - ŠKODA AUTO, illustrating what today's reality looks like: people are employed there from 16 years (apprentices) to 65, there are more than 40 nationalities and also people with different physical abilities. Such diversity has been unprecedented in the workplace. Organisations in the Czech Republic tend to work on each element separately and in waves.

There was a wave of doing gender diversity, then age management, etc. But we need to think of it as a whole. When we exercise, we train all parts of the body together, right? Would you spend a year working on just your belly and the next year focusing on legs and then on your back, etc.? This would cost a lot of effort but definitely not lead to a healthy body and good feeling. You cannot split a human being into categories and work on one part only. You are

not a different person at work and at home. We always need to see the full picture, as individuals as well as in organisations, to get the best results. Diversity is enriching, leads to prosperity and innovative outcomes. In order to appreciate it, we should not be afraid to embrace the unknown and different. And to do so, we must be sure of ourselves, strengths and values. Then we know what to stand for and the outside (unknown) element will not seem threatening anymore. That is why for me diversity is only one key element of authentic leadership.

I have a big hope in the new generation that is just entering the market. They are interested in what impact their actions have on society and they have experience from abroad. I keep my fingers crossed for them to succeed in making our future more connected to what is happening in the world and consequently the Czech Republic being less provincial. Sometimes I am sad that my friends from other countries often tell me that in terms of spirit, Prague feels like a large village. That is why I try to pay attention to subjects

that are global in nature, surround myself with personalities that have a global outlook. And this brings me back to Talent Dynamics and the talent of each individual. The more certain we are about ourselves and our purpose, the more opportunities for collaboration arise. We do not see others as a threat but as the complementary ones providing skills we do not have.

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# LENKA ČÁBELOVÁ

**Microsoft Czech Republic  
Communications and CSR Manager**

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Lenka Čábelová's mission is to create and tell stories that change people's lives by touching our minds and hearts. She likes to see the bigger picture and, as if making a puzzle from a hundred pieces, she turns words into a strong corporate message and fragmented activities into integrated communications projects. She achieves this through mastery of storytelling. Storytelling is a unique way to share ideas and stories. It can enhance intercultural understanding and communication and can promote a positive attitude in company environment.

As a professional, she acts as the ambassador of the vision of the company and connects people and organisations around the theme to achieve synergies and make an impact. In her role as the Communications and CSR Manager at Microsoft Czech Republic, Lenka creates and tells stories about how new technologies increase flexibility and mobility and how freedom to get things done from anywhere helps improve business results as well as better integrate work and life. She participated in ATAIRU Authentic Leadership programme in 2015.

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# ABOUT

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## **ATAIRU**

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ATAIRU is an international leadership development firm which guides leaders towards achieving activating individual uniqueness and collaboration mastery. Since 2013 have been reinventing the way individuals and companies achieve results – from hard work to ease, sustainability and satisfaction. So far 500 leaders have graduated from our long-term leadership programs.

[www.atairu.com](http://www.atairu.com)

## **Czech & Slovak Leaders**

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Established in 2001, the Czech & Slovak Leaders magazine brings interviews with successful leaders, and coverage of top-level events, EU matters, lifestyle and culture. In its electronic versions, the magazine is read by hundreds thousands of people from around 80 countries per month.

[www.czechleaders.com](http://www.czechleaders.com)

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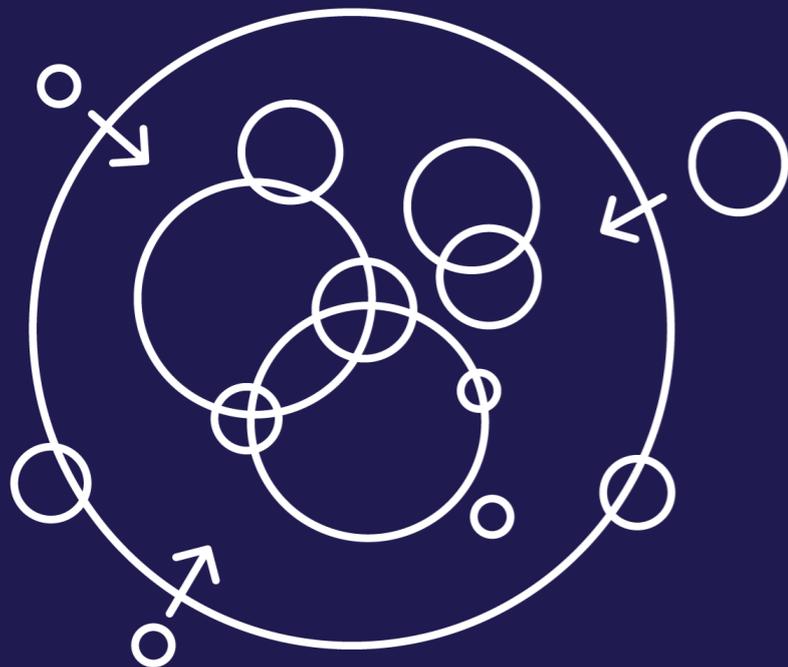


# OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

## At the core of what we do is the concept of Authentic Leadership

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Authentic leadership is an approach to life, including collaboration and leadership. Based on human diversity of talents, passions, purposes and beliefs, it gives individuals and teams a sense of fulfilment and leads to better performance and stronger relationships.



1.

## The concept of ATAIRU Authentic Leadership

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was developed by combining proprietary research on leadership in the 21st century from Harvard Business School with the latest academic research in neuroscience and cognitive science.

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2.

integrates facts and transformational techniques with a strong focus on day-to-day business leadership.

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3.

as been used to develop hundreds of senior leaders and their companies across Europe, Middle East and Japan.

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**Linda Štucbartová**

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Interviews on leadership with European business leaders

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