

# Polish managers abroad

Poles are helped in their careers by their determination to study, experience gained during the period of transformation, building companies from scratch (beginning of the 90's), knowledge of at least one, sometimes two, foreign languages and documented successes in developing and managing companies in Poland.

Daniel Lewczuk



**Daniel Lewczuk** completed the Kentucky Christian College, KY, with an undergraduate degree in Management, and also Hope International University in California, with an MBA in International Business. He has been involved with the executive search business for 13 years, initially working in different positions for a renowned executive search firm, i.e. as the Director of Operations and Procurement. His success includes projects implemented in Central & Eastern Europe, in upper management positions. Since 2004, as an entrepreneur, he has been developing a group of several advisory firms, being the owner, including Executive Network Limited, which is part of IMD International Search Group, an executive search network, having 40 offices in 27 countries. Daniel is also the co-owner of the firm GoldenLine Limited, and ClickQuickNow Limited. For several years, he has been also a member of the Polish Business Roundtable Club. He is fluent in English and also knows Russian and Spanish.

THE TALENT OF TYPICAL POLISH MANAGERS, who back in the 1990's were still learning, at an expedited rate, best practices from their colleagues from more developed markets (France, England, Germany, etc.), has also caught the attention of many organisations. By the end of the 1990's, a constantly growing number of organisation managements chose a Pole for the position of president, sending expats from other countries on to new markets (the Baltic countries, Ukraine, Russia and other CEE countries), placing more responsibility and greater trust on local management.

This is how the careers of hundreds of Polish managers on the management teams of international companies began. Today, many known names on the market sit on the top regional management boards of world corporations: Tomasz Bochenek (Microsoft), Ryszard Malinowski (Intel), Lesław Kuzaj (GE), Andrzej Dopierała (Oracle), Artur Waliszewski (Google), Andrzej Dąbrowski (Philip Morris), Katarzyna Kieli (Discovery Networks Europe), Brunon Bartkiewicz (ING), Piotr Kaczmarek (Alfa Bank), Wioletta Rosolowska (Tchibo), Maciej Witucki (France Telecom/TPSA), Paweł Czajkowski (HP), Agnieszka Romańczuk (Avon), and many others. Today, several hundred, and maybe even several thousand Polish managers pursue their careers outside of Poland.

THE MAJORITY OF LEADERS PURSUING CAREERS in managing firms in Poland or in the region are men, frequently working in the IT/Telecom sectors, most frequently for American corporations, possessing higher education, most often from the Warsaw School of Economics.

Abroad, many Poles have contributed to a positive image of Poland through the effective management of organisations. Work, experience, and successes of such people as Janusz Kulik (Penny), Maciej Lebkowski (AlfaBank), Tomasz Muras (Avon), Tomasz Bochenek (Microsoft) are icons of Polish business, who have been acknowledged in the organisations in which they work.

More and more Polish businessmen are achieving success outside Poland: Adam Góral (Asseco), Krzysztof Pawiński (Maspex), Jan Kulczyk (KH Investments), Wojciech Ingot (Ingot), Leszek Czarnecki (LC Corp/Getin Holding) and Michał Sołowow (Echo Investment).

Practice and experience gained outside of Poland are frequently an indispensable and essential capital, bearing fruit further down the career path. As considered by Paweł Wojtaszek, a director, who spent several years abroad, working for Societe Generale: "The scale of business in Paris, London or New York is unimaginable from the point of view of someone who has worked only in Poland." In the opinion of Paweł Wojtaszek, "foreign corporations are fully aware that it is the person, his abilities and contacts that are the greatest asset and are able to pay for this kindly."

Krzysztof Urbanowicz, who managed Unipetroleum outside of Poland, among others, claims that "Shell sends its most talented managers to work in other countries. Poles are creative, able and accustomed to hard work in Poland. However, work abroad is more difficult than at home, but also gives an opportunity to gain an entirely different perspective and experience, which can then be useful in new challenges and handling practically any situation".

According to Piotr Kaczmarek, Head of Retail at Alfa-Bank, for many years, living in Ukraine, "Polish top managers in the east are prized for experience gained in a more developed market, although similar to the one in the Ukraine, and for the ability to work in a post-Soviet culture. This is

not only an issue of language, but above all, very little cultural difference."

Agnieszka Romańczuk, VP of HR for North America, USA, Canada and the Caribbean, working in the Avon headquarters in New York, is convinced that what is helping her and what differentiates her from other colleagues is "determination" and "pressing" for results, independence, proactivity and directness.

For Marcin Marszałek, who has been the VP of Business Development for four years for Western and Central Africa in the Telecom sector, "knowing 3 languages, being multidisciplinary, and quickly adapting to new environments, and also an ability to "fit in" with the surroundings is what is the most significant, especially in the so called emerging markets."

Tomasz Bochenek, who for many years has been responsible for the CEE region in Microsoft, says that in comparison to foreign colleagues, "Poles like to compete with western specialists, have greater determination and a hunger for success. They are characterised by a pragmatic approach and openness to change." Jacek Myrcha, also from Microsoft, notices that, thanks to their experiences from the region, Poles "better understand

the specifics and culture of our region (CEE). Polish ideas are concrete and usually bring about anticipated results, and thanks to intuition, also considerable successes."

ACCORDING TO JANUSZ R. GUY, who spent many years working outside of Poland in markets such as USA, Italy and Russia, the key attribute necessary to achieve success is the "level and quality of education, knowledge of languages, competence in building professional relations with other people, ability and desire for mentoring, passion for the profession, ability to lead an organisation and achieve above-market goals." Those Polish managers, who successfully migrate out of their country to follow their career, stand out in terms of the scale and breadth of experience gained. Especially during the beginning of the Polish transformation, managers in companies (both local and international), operating in Poland and in the CEE region, had the opportunity to very quickly gain comprehensive experience on the market and in an economy that simply exploded with its dynamic. Those who stood out climbed very quickly in the hierarchy of their company and were elevated to international business, and certainly

to regional business, on the basis of "sharing of best practices". There is also a negative side of building a career in conditions of constant rapid growth, which the market of Central & Eastern Europe has gone through. Namely, in the case of a downward correction to the market development dynamics, or even a recession, value-based management through cost reduction is a management practice requiring a different sort of experience. Central and Eastern European markets and the group of our top managers are just passing through this experience."

The most common challenge for many professionals is to balance professional career with private life. There are regions, such as the Middle East, where it is not always easy for families to support a person pursuing a career abroad due to local differences and conditions. It is also a challenge when there is a necessity to move the family from country to country, and children from one environment to another. These relations, frequently strong, are broken every 2-3 years in order to meet the challenges in the next country, in a new company, on a new market. It is the pressure and consideration for family that are the most frequent reason for Poles returning to their country. ::

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