

Peter Krištofovič: Anyone can be more successful!

A finalist in the Entrepreneur of the Year 2009 competition, one of the TOP 100 managers in Ukraine, and a holder of the Best Company of the Year 2008 Award given to the best performing companies in their field of business, Peter Krištofovič (37) is a proof that even in Slovakia an 'American' dream can come true.



For Peter, education and self-development have become his philosophy, by which he also tries to inspire his environment. As part of an exclusive interview for Magazín.sk, Peter provides some insights into the secrets of his success, and offers advice how each of us can become more successful.

How many companies and people do you manage and what kind of business are you in?

"I am a co-owner of more than ten firms in five countries (four in Europe and one in the USA). We have a skeleton staff of more than 100 plus another 3000 external collaborators. Our

business is financial services, asset management, private equity and distribution. We own real estate and produce various commodities."

When did you make the decision not to be an average employee?

"There wasn't an immediate impulse, it wasn't something that would come 'out of the blue'. It was more of a constant desire to be better off and work on myself; an understanding that only in business I can gain much if I work much... that I am responsible for myself and my performance."

What motivates you to perform in business?

"For me, business is a form of self-actualisation. Business is about the ability to innovate, create, improve, and offer a better service to customers, and a better place to work for my colleagues. My motivation today, however, is different from what it was at the outset of my business career."

Do you think anyone can become successful?

"Well, anyone can be more successful than he or she was before. The question is how you define 'success'. If you mean money, well, then not everyone can be a millionaire, and, indeed, just a few eventually become billionaires."

What do you think is the most common reason for people to fail?

"Poor goals, poor self-discipline, poor knowledge."



Many people 'get stuck' in their workplace. What would be your advice for them to 'break free'?

"It's all about their mindset, attitude to their own life. We are free to choose what we do in our lives – but few people really believe they are. People who do not work on themselves and turn away from pursuing their dreams 'get stuck'."

But how should I find an answer to the question 'what should I do in my life'? Where did you look for when you were searching your own way?

"I like the quote 'the goal is the way, the way is the goal'. Everyone should look for one's own ways, pursue one's own dreams, philosophise on what is the thing that he or she really looks for. It is a process. That's how it was in my case – and I haven't stopped exploring my inner self."

Do you sometimes feel like going somewhere to the south, perhaps, enjoy the sun and just hang around?

„Everyone probably feels like that, but that simply wouldn't work in the long run. Every human being is a person, and needs self-actualisation, a society where he or she meets other people. Everyone needs to find a meaning in life. The best approach is to switch between hanging around and hard work. And then just keep switching."



Can you enjoy your money?

„Yes, but money is just a mean, not the goal. I like travelling, I like fancy cars, and I also enjoy using my money to help other people. Our charitable foundation supports several projects here at home and one big project in Kenya."

How to handle an incapable boss?

„Replace him... If you are an able employee and work on yourself, your value increases, in which case, you'll eventually get either your firm on your side, or you'll change the firm."

What can you afford? Is there something you had to give up as a result of your success?

"I can afford freedom, but I had to assume a great deal of responsibility for others."

Entrepreneurs are often described as ruthless, greedy profit-seekers. Do you think there is a place for something like heart in business?

"You should have said – entrepreneurs in our country. A culture supportive to sole traders and small businesses is still lacking. Our market is distorted and that's not good. Of course, heart is a part of business since business should also include a service to people. But, at the same time, each entrepreneur chooses his or her own path and is responsible for his or her own attitude towards the world. Unfortunately, we do not have a standard market environment in our country."

What should people struggling to get a job in the current crisis do first on their path to success?

"They should work on themselves. Choose a competence of their own, which the market can appreciate, and start working on themselves more. The market does not await mediocre skills. And competition will only be tougher. If you know what everybody knows, you'll become mediocre."

How do you cope with a failure?

"I learn from it. Failures are absolutely vital – they make you reassess, analyse, change. It is a feedback about how NOT to do things in future. If you have a grand vision, it's easier for you to



overcome obstacles. If you have your own 'WHY', you'll find a 'HOW'."

Do you think that even today one can become a millionaire in Slovakia?

"You mean a euro millionaire, well, that's fundamentally more difficult. You can become a 'Slovak crown' millionaire, but to earn tens of millions of crowns, it takes time. But what's absolutely crucial is to believe something like that is possible and then just go after it."

What do you think are the most important preconditions for success?

"Drive, self-discipline, knowledge related to self-actualisation and 10 000 hours of training..."

You are promoting a set of principles which you call 'BALANCE 5'. Could you develop that idea a bit?

"I believe genuine success means keeping one's life balanced in five crucial spheres – hence BALANCE5. On annual basis, I try to maintain a balanced approach to the following five activities:

- 1. Family and relationships with other people*
- 2. Health and fitness*
- 3. Earn money, spend reasonably and invest*
- 4. Career and self-actualisation*
- 5. C.L.A.G. – constantly learn and grow*

The point is that everyone assigns a different priority to the above spheres and, in principle, the sphere which is given a higher priority grows at the expense of the harmony of others. So I attempt to live so as not to feel a deficit in any of these spheres. It takes self-discipline and planning, but it's worth it."

Recently, you have transformed your business experience into training courses and seminars you lead across Slovakia. What is the idea behind it and what is your target audience?

"I was approached with an offer to become a speaker in the Best guest programme. This programme aims to encourage secondary school and university students to set up businesses, and is led by the young and very talented Juraj Kováč. I like to inspire young people to take control of their lives, work on themselves and pursue their dreams. For me, it is a part of my commitment to help other people."



What about other visions you have in business and life?

"As to business, we try to change the face of the financial services industry in Slovakia by bringing in new and truly customer-oriented products, and help people secure their pension. My overall life goal is to try to maintain BALANCE every year, become an example for my two daughters, and maybe also help to change this country for better."

What would be your advice to young people dreaming of luxury houses, fancy cars, holidays, but also to those who fear the future?

"Dreams and goals are important in life, they make us improve. But it's not just about tangible goals, there are one too many unhappy millionaires in this world... Fear is a positive emotion because it protects us. There is something like negative fear though, which often stems from a lack of confidence. But if you work on yourself and try to improve, you build up your confidence, and you have no more fears about the future. What you have is respect. But that's a completely different type of emotion. The future will be what we make of it. That's why it is up to each and every one of us to help ourselves and others."

You are setting an example for many, is there someone who inspired you?

"I can think of several inspiring figures who shaped my attitude to the world. I am motivated by those who had the strength to stand up and face their ordeal, those who fought for a big thought or their own freedom. I am inspired by all those who don't think just of themselves, but also help others. They come from various backgrounds – scientists, military leaders, artists, athletes, presidents, disabled people, but also my colleagues who pursue their own dreams."

Source: Magazín.sk

URL: <http://magazin.atlas.sk/biznis/peter-kristofovic-kazdy-moze-byt-uspesnejsi-%28rozhovor%29-1734555.html>

Author: Marek Mittaš, 11.3.2011