

PERSONAL In our new series we provide an apolitical forum for top managers to write their opinion about how they feel as businesspeople, and what is currently on their minds - all this free of controlled, company related news.

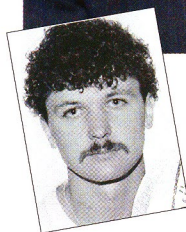


Prejudice and change

I HAD A REBELLIOUS TEMPERAMENT. Above all, I rebelled against customs. The first manifestation of this was when as a child I strongly detested the formal greeting reserved for women in Hungarian. I did not understand why it was not possible to greet women by saying "good day". I liked to dress provocatively. As a boy scout patrol leader in primary school I renamed our patrol 'Beatrice patrol' after the flagrant rock band Beatrice. I went to school in tight jeans and an ankle-length red and white polka dot scarf (a symbol of political and social protest). A quarter of a century ago in secondary school I had my head shaved nearly bald as part of a bet. I wore blue and white striped trousers, had a razor blade hanging from my neck and a compact military rucksack slung over my shoulder. The security guards in every store I went into appeared within a few minutes, took me aside and made me unpack my bag to see what I had stolen. I waited curiously to see whether they would finally apologize.

I STARTED UNIVERSITY and went to the theatre a lot. For me, going to the theatre meant having to wear a suit and tie, even though I really didn't like it. This is how I was socialized or what the environment (what I would refer to as culture) in which I was raised deemed fit. One evening one of my roommates was getting ready to go to the theatre. I was shocked to realize that he was wearing jeans. I couldn't help but comment. "I'm going to see Ubu the King at the Katona" (the Hungarian equivalent of Birkbeck Centre for Contemporary Theatre), was his reply. After a bit of an argument, he went to the performance, albeit a bit irritably, in jeans. After that, he always wore a suit and tie to the theatre. Speaking of culture, two things come to mind that have been preoccupying me lately. One is company culture and the other is the culture of different nations.

COMPANY CULTURE. Perhaps one of the simplest and at the same time one of



István Juhász
as the CEO of Grepton Information Technology Plc. today and in 1991 when he started his PhD studies

the most complicated things in the life of a company. Interestingly, company culture does not depend on the employees working at a company at a given moment. It is something that every colleague learns and embraces, for better or worse. It is eight years ago that I left my first workplace. Since then, the employees have come and gone; in fact, the same can be said for the company's management and owners as well. Everything except for the company culture that is passed on, deeply ingrained in the organization. I do not think that this is company specific, because I am

witness to strikingly similar things at my current company.

MANY PEOPLE KNOW that I like to travel. The two main reasons for this are my admiration for nature and my thirst for the knowledge of different nations. I love different cultures, their diversity, their heterogeneity, and in my view it is this diversity that constitutes the greatest treasure in the world today. In a world where in the spirit of globalization the leading nations are doing everything in their power to erase them. Because the culture in which they live, that they control and shape is 'enlightened' and represents the 'right mindset'. I have been to Papua New Guinea. In the mountains there is such a lack of protein that the pigs they raise play a crucial role. To foster this and to prevent the piglets from perishing, it is common for the women to breastfeed them. Barbarians. Yes, this is the first word that comes to mind. However, if one spends some time there, in that context, in that milieu, in that culture, one's mind changes prompted by the realization that it is not a question of free choice, but a matter of survival. On returning home, it took many months for my wife and I to process what we had experienced. That having been said, it did not occur to me to send armed forces to liberate the oppressed mothers who, by means of self-sacrifice, provide for the future of their families.

CHANGE. The only thing that is constant. Nothing can be done against it, like it or not. Changes that for many people trigger passive or active resistance. Changes that for me have always been a source of opportunity. Changes that we suffer, whether we want to or not. Changes that induce me to put my suit and tie on every day, heartily address the women I meet with the formal greeting reserved for them and arrive to my workplace, exposed to continuous change, but with a stable company culture.

István Juhász