

News&Views

No. 1 2024

MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN CROATIA









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Navigating Croatia's Political Landscape and Digital Future

Dear members and friends,

As the political tides ebb and flow, shaping the future of Croatia, the recent parliamentary elections held on April 17th have brought forth a new wave of possibilities and challenges. Amidst this pivotal moment, the European Parliament elections loom on the horizon, promising further insights into the evolving political dynamics of Croatia and its place within the broader European context.

The outcome of the parliamentary elections marks another milestone in Croatia's democratic journey. With each ballot cast, citizens have voiced their aspirations, concerns, and visions for the nation's future. As we analyze the results, it becomes evident that the country needs leadership which will address immediate issues but will also drive a vision of the country in the digital era. Speaking of the digital realm, Croatia's role in the Digital Decade has come under the spotlight in recent discussions. The recent AmCham's digital conference showcased Croatia's potential to harness technology for economic growth, innovation, and societal progress. As we stand on the cusp of a transformative era, characterized by artificial intelligence (AI) and rapid digitalization, it is imperative that Croatia positions itself as a frontrunner in this digital revolution.

Al stands at the forefront of this revolution, offering unparalleled opportunities to revolutionize industries, streamline processes, and enhance the quality of life. However, its adoption comes with its own set of challenges, including ethical considerations, privacy concerns, and workforce displacement. As Croatia embraces AI, it must do so with a comprehensive strategy that prioritizes ethical principles, fosters innovation, and ensures inclusive growth.

Moreover, amidst the digital upheaval, the issue of employee retention emerges as a critical concern for businesses across sectors. In an era where talent is the most prized asset, organizations must adopt holistic approaches to attract, engage, and retain top talent. From fostering a culture of continuous learning to prioritizing employee well-being and offering opportunities for career advancement, businesses must invest in strategies that not only attract talent but also nurture it for long-term success.

As we navigate through these dynamic times, AmCham Croatia remains committed to fostering dialogue, driving innovation, and advocating for policies that empower businesses and communities alike. Together, let us chart a course towards a prosperous and digitally resilient Croatia.

Warm regards,

Andrea Doko Jelušić



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MARCH 26 / Conference

Trends in healthcare – challenges and opportunities



he 5th edition of AmCham's conference on healthcare brought together 180 key stakeholders from the healthcare sector. The focus of the conference was on sustainable healthcare financing, monitoring of treatment outcomes, reforms of EU legislation on medicines, and joint public procurement in healthcare. A special focus was placed on digitalization, i.e. how data and new technologies can affect a better and more reliable healthcare service for patients.

AmCham supports the reforms being implemented in the field of healthcare and constructively proposes measures aimed at stability and quality of the system. Healthcare systems that strive for quality and cost efficiency are focused on the quality of patient treatment outcomes. "AmCham welcomes the efforts of the Ministry of Health to initiate the process of monitoring treatment outcomes, but also points to the importance of monitoring the entire path of patients from suspected disease to the end of treatment, the importance of forming centers of excellence for individual diseases, educating the general population about prevention," said Andrea Doko Jelušić, AmCham's Executive Director.

Rina Musić, AmCham President, pointed out the results of the 2021 IQVIA survey, which showed that despite some good examples, Croatia does not have sufficiently developed digital health solutions - the development score was less than 2 on a scale of 5, while the highest levels of digital maturity in healthcare were observed in Estonia, England, Sweden, and Denmark.

In the introductory part of the conference, Ana Gongola, Country Head Croatia at Sandoz, presented the opportunities brought by generic and biosimilar medicines, stressing that the availability of generic medicines is crucial for the sustainability of the healthcare system, because for only 8% of the budget 68% of therapies are provided, and last year 91 million boxes of medicines were provided for Croatian patients, with savings of EUR 30 million over the last two years.

Sandra Velasco, Country President Adriatics at Novartis, presented the possibilities of the International Center of Excellence in the Clinical Hospital Center, which would open opportunities for the medicine of the future, which includes personalized approaches, cell and gene therapies, immunotherapy, and the development of radiopharmaceuticals as a whole new concept of treatment in oncology. She pointed out that Croatia, as a regional leader in the Centers of Excellence, has made significant progress in the last ten years, and for the solutions that are yet to come, timely planning of resources is necessary.

The value of data in oncology was discussed by Mark J. Davis, General Manager at Roche. At the conference, it was once again possible to hear that the estimated incidence of cancer in Croatia is close to the EU average, but we record the second highest mortality from cancer among EU countries, especially lung and colon cancer. The establishment of a Croatian oncology database is one of the key components that will enable meaningful insights into healthcare data designed to improve patient care.

The panel discussion "Croatia on the Path of Healthcare Excellence" was attended by Martina Bogut Barić, Chief Advisor to the Minister of Health, Sandra Velasco, Country President Adriatics, Novartis, Antonia Filipović, Head of Employee Benefits, Assistant Vice President, Marsh McLennan Croatia, Ivan Bumber, Policy & Public Affairs Lead Adriatic, Pfizer, and Nikolina Škaron, Government Affairs & Market Access Manager, AstraZeneca. Through continuous reforms, Croatia strives to respond to the challenges of accessibility and sustainability of the healthcare system, reform primary healthcare, ensure the supply of medicines and improve treatment outcomes.

The second panel discussion "Data and Technology Driven Healthcare" was attended by Tomislav Sokol, PhD, Member of the European Parliament, Jelena Curać, Assistant Director for IT, Croatian Health Insurance Fund, Boris Lukovnjak, Patient Journey Partner Lead, Roche, Mirela Horvat Kiš, Policy and Communication Lead Croatia, MSD, and Dunja Maronić Filaković, Market Access Lead Adriatic, Abbvie. Participants agreed that significant advances in healthcare could be achieved through the structured use of data, which would benefit both patients and healthcare professionals, but also the state through system optimization.

MEMBER SEMINARS

FEBRUARY 15

Tax News in 2024

AmCham was pleased to organize a Member Seminar on Tax News with our member Crowe. Mr. Krešimir Lipovšćak, Partner at Crowe, covered the following topics:

Non-taxable payments | Tax incentives for research and development | Changes in VAT legislation | Changes in corporate profit tax | Changes in personal income tax | Interest charged between related parties

FEBRUARY 23

ESG regulation and upcoming audit

As part of the activities of AmCham's ESG Task Force in 2024, a series of Member Seminars were organized with the aim of exchanging experiences and good practices among members in order to better adopt ESG in their business.

The first seminar was held by Ms. Nataša Kos, Manager ESG Services, PwC Croatia, and Ms. Renata Pentek, Manager in Capital Markets and Accounting Advisory Services, PwC Croatia.

The adoption of ESG regulation brings new opportunities for companies to demonstrate to the market their efforts in terms of sustainability and corporate responsibility. Although it is still early in Croatia to expect some major strategic innovations from most companies, ESG reporting brings a small revolution in the reporting process due to regulations, because in addition to standard reports, companies will be obliged to also include a new ESG report.

The emphasis was on ESG regulation, which is already valid for financial institutions, and which is why companies on the market should pay attention to this regulation as well. Furthermore, how the application of regulation in banks will reflect on the bank's client, that is - on the entire market, which will be visible already during 2024.

APRIL 5

ESG implementation in a business organization

The seminar was held by Ms. Andreja Dobra, Head of ESG, Workplace and Mobility at A1 Croatia. A1 Croatia, the winner of the AmCham & Kearney ESG Champion 2023 Award, shared their knowledge and experience in the practical application of ESG in a business organization. Special emphasis was placed on the integration of ESG principles in the context of changes within the business organization and the implementation of specific activities. So, on the way to establish a system within the company for successful monitoring and compliance with ESG regulations, designing and implementing impactful activities and finally quality reporting.

At the seminar, a dynamic discussion was initiated between members about the challenges of implementing ESG in practice, but also about the innovative solutions they used.

MARCH 12 / Coorganized Event

Risks, insurance, and surety bonds: key factors for making your business successful and protected MarshMcLennan

A mCham and Marsh McLennan, the world's leading insurance broker and risk advisor, organized a joint event on the topic of successful risk management and business protection through trade credit insurance and surety bonds as new financial instruments.

The results of the recently published Global Risks Report 2024 by the World Economic Forum in collaboration with Zurich Insurance Group and Marsh McLennan, highlight a predominantly negative outlook for the world in the short term, one that is expected to worsen in the long term.

Just some of the expected risks that the world will face in the next two years relate to extreme weather events, cyber insecurity, interstate armed conflicts, lack of economic opportunities, inflation, economic downturn, etc.

Managing risks and trade credit insurance is more important than ever to ensure business stability and achieve competitiveness. How to protect business using trade credit insurance, identify and minimize risks, and ensure business liquidity using surety bonds as a form of financial instrument were just some of the topics that were discussed at the event.

Opening remarks were held by Iva Rogović Lekić, CEO, Marsh McLennan Croatia, followed by the presentation "Overview of Economic and Geopolitical Conditions and Their Effect on Credit Risk in Europe" by Peter Kerkhoff, Managing Director, Credit Specialties Leader Europe, Marsh. The event concluded with two panel discussions, which included participants from banks, insurance companies, and the private sector: "How to Manage Risks and Protect Business in Turbulent Times" and "Unlocking Financial Security for Businesses with New Financial Instruments".



AMBER NEWS CHAMBER NEWS

NEWS&VIEWS



APRIL 16 / Conference

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A mCham organized the sixth edition of the conference on the digital transformation of Croatia, which gathered 160 key representatives of institutions, the business community, and the media. The conference discussed Croatia's current position on the path to Europe's Digital Decade. The emphasis of the conference was on artificial intelligence and digital transformation, and their implications for the business community, the workplace, and the lives of citizens.

Andrea Doko Jelušić, Executive Director of AmCham, pointed out that AmCham was a strong advocate of the adoption and application of new technologies in Croatia in the areas of card payments of administrative fees, virtual court hearings, digital transformation of healthcare, the new Electronic Public Procurement Classifieds, e-mobility, and digitalization of communication with the Tax Administration. AmCham also organizes an annual business delegation to the USA, where Croatian companies have the opportunity to learn about the latest trends in digital transformation from the American companies leading the trends.

Rina Musić, President of the Board of Governors of AmCham, emphasized that most of the 330 AmCham member companies are in the process of their own digital transformation, which we are proud of, and a trend we would like to see throughout Croatia.

The project of Europe's Digital Decade and the ambitious digitalization goals that the European Union sets before the Member states were the topics of the presentation by the Head of Representation of European Commission in Croatia, Zrinka Ujević. Achieving these goals will be possible with significant EU funds allocated for this purpose.

Tamás Kárpáti, Iron Mountain, gave a presentation on bridging the gap between the physical and the digital through artificial intelligence and machine learning, so that institutions can make the most of their data assets.

We had the opportunity to hear about concrete examples of AI in busi-

ness application from Lidija Karaga from Poslovna inteligencija, who emphasized the importance of a good data management policy for the successful application of AI.

The panel discussion "Croatia's Progress in the European Digital Decade" was attended by Bernard Gršić, State Secretary at the Central State Office for the Development of Digital Society, Gordan Vidić, Iron Mountain, Mislav Galler, Telemach, Renata Vujasinović, Visa, and Tajana Hašperger, Hewlett Packard Enterprise operated by Selectium. They agreed that significant European funds for the green and digital transition can help Croatia achieve even more ambitious goals by 2030 and reach the EU Member states' average in digitalization. The discussion participants also talked about recent technological trends, the development of digital skills, cyber security, and the development of the digital economy and public administration.

The second panel discussion "AI: Potential and Opportunities" was attended by Karlo Ressler, a Member of the European Parliament, and Andrea Čović Vidović from the Representation of the European Commission in Croatia, who gave the perspective of EU institutions on the development and application of artificial intelligence. On the same panel, representatives of the leading technology companies Joško Mrndže, Google, and Vedran Bajer, Microsoft, gave an introduction on the development of technology and a view on new possibilities for application in the economy. Joško Mrndže also held an inspiring presentation about Google's vision of the future of artificial intelligence applications.

NEWS&VIEWS



The program was initiated in 2013 with a goal of developing leadership and soft skills of promising young business professionals. Its aim is to contribute to the personal and career development of such employees through a series of interactive sessions by prominent industry leaders and networking opportunities with their peers.



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MARCH 5 Navigating the AmCham Talents Program and Speed Networking
 MARCH 27 Skills of the Future / Vedran Bajer, Country Manager, Microsoft Hrvatska
 APRIL 10 Millenial CEO / Dino Mileta, Managing Director, Uprise
 MAY 22 The Importance of Orientation to Foreign Markets / Domagoj Borščak, Chief Operating Officer, Bomark Pak
 JUNE 12 Fostering Innovation & Creativity within the Team / Sandra Velasco, Country President Adriatics, Novartis Hrvatska
 JULY 3 Diversity in Team-Curse or Blessing / Krešimir Mlinarić, General Manager, BE-terna
 SEPTEMBER Challenges and Successes in Managing a Start-up / Zdenko Vrdoljak, Director, UMBOSS
 OCTOBER Energy of the Future / Boris Miljavac, Managing Director, Siemens Energy
 NOVEMBER Grand Finale - Competition for AmCham Talents of the Year

FEBRUARY 13

Speed Networking with Franco-Croatian Chamber of Commerce and Industry



AmCham and Franco-Croatian Chamber of Commerce and Industry held a joint speed networking event. Members of both organizations had the unique opportunity to meet 22 companies face to face in a moderated session (2 minutes spent talking to each person) and afterwards enjoyed a great buffet breakfast and continued networking. The event was aimed mainly at sales and procurement managers, who could make new business contacts with companies from various industries in a very short period. **JANUARY 11**

Meeting with Director General of the Tax Administration

Andrea Doko Jelušić - AmCham Executive Director, Hrvoje Jelić - Trade and Investment Committee Chair (PwC Croatia), Helena Schmidt - Trade and Investment Committee member (Deloitte), and Dražen Malbašić - Policy Manager, participated in a meeting with Mr. Božidar Kutleša, Director General of the Tax Administration, and his associates from the Tax Administration.

The topic of the meeting was AmCham's position paper "Continuity in the Practice of the Tax Administration with Regard to the Interpretation of Income Taxes in the Beverage Manufacturing Sector" and the Double Taxation Treaty between Croatia and the U.S.

The deposit system for beverage packaging in Croatia is an example of good practice at the EU level, as it results in an extremely high proportion of glass, plastic, and metal packaging returns. It allows Croatia to meet the national recycling goals and the European Green Plan, and ensures business operations under the principle of a circular economy. Furthermore, this scheme also encourages sustainability and environmental responsibility, promotes the reuse of resources, and reduces waste. The Tax Administration and AmCham have agreed to cooperate on defining the tax treatment of the deposit system for returnable packaging.

Another topic discussed at the meeting was ratification of the Double Taxation Treaty between Croatia and the U.S. and the positive effects it will have on the cooperation between the two countries.





JANUARY 16

Meeting with representatives of the Ministry of Health

AmCham's representatives Jurica Toth, Healthcare Committee Chair (Medtronic Adriatic), Miroslav Šaban, member of the Healthcare Committee (Philips), and Dražen Malbašić, Policy Manager, met with Ms. Tanja Bedovec, Director of the Directorate for e-Health, Ms. Andreja Matkun, Head of the Sector for Information Systems Support and Supervision, and Mr. Hrvoje Jezidžić from the Ministry of Health.

The topic of the meeting was AmCham's position paper "Digital Transformation of Healthcare". In the document, the legal framework of the European Union and Croatia in regard to digitalization oh healthcare is explained. Furthermore, the position paper proposes specific projects, with examples of good practice that would benefit patients and relieve the health system through digitization.

JANUARY 25

AmCham's Executive Director gave a lecture at the EFZG

Andrea Doko Jelušić, AmCham Executive Director, held a lecture for students at the Faculty of Economics in Zagreb as part of the Economic Diplomacy course, on the topic of "Economic Diplomacy in the United States". The host of the lecture was Assoc. Prof. Danijel Mlinarić.

Ms. Doko Jelušić presented key aspects of economic diplomacy carried out by the United States globally, highlighting the role of the business community in strengthening economic ties between the U.S. and other countries. She shared her professional experience and perspectives on how AmCham, as a crucial international business organization, actively participates in promoting the interests of American, international, and Croatian member companies in Croatia.

Particular emphasis was placed on AmCham's role in facilitating collaboration, supporting business projects, lobbying for a favorable business environment, and providing information and resources to enhance economic relations between the U.S. and Croatia. AmCham actively contributes to building and strengthening economic cooperation between the two countries, playing a key role in promoting economic dialogue and exchange between the business communities of the U.S. and Croatia.

POLICY POLICY

JANUARY 26

Meetings with representatives of the European Commission

On January 26, Mr. Dean Kosty, Chair of AmCham's Digital Economy Committee, met with Mr. Guido Accioni and Mr. Vladimir Duković from the European Commission. The host and organizer of the meeting was the Central State Office for the Development of Digital Society.

The topic was the progress of Croatia as part of the process of digital transformation and the implementation of the Policy Program "Path to the Digital Decade" with the aim of preparing a report on the activities carried out in the past one-year period. Discussions revolved around key aspects of the Digital Decade, such as digital infrastructure, business digitization, green and digital synergies, and increased access to digital rights and principles. Special attention was given to achieving goals such as a gigabit network for all end-users, environmental sustainability of semiconductors, quantum computing, and the growth of innovative enterprises and access to finance.

The meeting emphasized the importance of collaboration between the business community and regulatory bodies to achieve the goals of the Digital Decade, focusing on research and innovation, strengthening digital infrastructure, and ensuring competitiveness, resilience, and cybersecurity in Croatia's digital environment.

On February 1, Andrea Doko Jelušić - AmCham Executive Director, and Dražen Malbašić - Policy Manager, met with the European Commission in preparation for the Rule of Law Report for 2024. Topics of the meeting included the situation in the areas of functioning of the judicial system, the framework for combating corruption, media pluralism and freedom of the media, and other institutional issues related to the system of checks and balances. Additionally, there was discussion about the independence, quality, and efficiency of the judiciary in the context of investment protection.

2024	POSITION PAPERS
FEBRUARY	Mass Balance Approach Regulations on Outcomes of Treatments
MARCH	AmCham - Survey of the Business Environment in Croatia – 2024
APRIL	CHIF Data Exchange and Ethical Conduct Contracts
	Comments on the Ordinance on Packaging and Packaging Waste, Single-use Plastics, and Fishing Gear Containing Plastic

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MARCH 14

Meeting with H.E. Nathalie Rayes, U.S. Ambassador to Croatia

Andrea Doko Jelušić, AmCham Executive Director, and Rina Musić, President of AmCham's Board of Governors, met with H.E. Nathalie Rayes, the Ambassador of the United States of America in the Republic of Croatia, and her colleagues Amy J. Lillis, Chief of Political and Economic Affairs, and Clare T. Bea, Economic Unit Chief.

Ms. Doko Jelušić and Ms. Musić presented AmCham's activities to Ambassador Rayes, with an emphasis on public policy advocacy and the organization of expert conferences aimed at creating a dialogue between decision-makers and representatives of the business community to discuss key economic topics.

Through the activities of its six committees in 2024, AmCham is working on a series of policy topics that aim to further improve the business environment in Croatia and make it an attractive destination for investors.

Ambassador Rayes welcomed the perseverance and efforts of AmCham as an organization that represents the voice of international companies in Croatia, and cooperation on topics of common interest was agreed upon.



In conclusion, both sides expressed their hopes for an imminent ratification of the double taxation treaty between Croatia and the United States, which would benefit citizens and businesses from both countries.



MARCH 18-20 AmCham Croatia at Transatlantic Week 2024

Executive Director Andrea Doko Jelušić, Policy Manager Dražen Malbašić, and Policy Officer Tomislav Vidović, together with colleagues from over 20 European AmChams, participated in "Transatlantic Week 2024", organized by AmCham EU in Brussels.

On the first and third day, a Brussels Briefing was held, where participants had the opportunity to exchange the latest insights about important economic policies such as the Corporate and Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, low-carbon climate goals until 2040, EU health policy, and digital policies and their impact on EU-US relations. Special emphasis was placed on the upcoming EU elections and the US presidential elections and the impact that the election results could have on transatlantic relations.

On the second day, the Transatlantic Conference was held, which once again brought together numerous representatives of the business community, decision-makers, and the media from both sides of the Atlantic. European Commission Executive Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis and US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo addressed the audience via video message, while the keynote was delivered by Slovenian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Tanja Fajon. It was emphasized that despite global economic and political challenges, transatlantic cooperation continues to strengthen, thus proving its resilience to external pressures.

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MARCH 5

Workshop on strategic public procurement in Croatia

Members of AmCham's Public Procurement Committee participated in a workshop on the topic of strategic public procurement, organized by the European Commission and the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development.

The workshop is part of the "Strategic Public Procurement" project, which the European Commission implements in EU member states. The goal of the workshop was to exchange knowledge and experience in order to initiate a dialogue on the use of public procurement as a strategic lever for innovative and sustainable public policy development.

The participants had the opportunity to discuss the current state of strategic use of public procurement in Croatia, obstacles faced by public buyers and potential solutions to overcome these obstacles.

The conclusions of the workshop will be used as a basis for drafting a Roadmap for fostering the development of strategic public procurement in Croatia, with a special focus on green and socially responsible processes and finding ways of cooperation between the European Commission and Croatia that help both sides achieve their political objectives.

MARCH 7

Thematic session in the Croatian Parliament on the topic of Health

AmCham Croatia presented its recommendations for the digital transformation of healthcare at the thematic session of the Committee for Health and Social Policy of the Croatian Parliament. The thematic session was organized by Renata Sabljar-Dračevac, President of the Committee, based on AmCham's initiative. Participants at the session included representatives of public institutions, hospitals, medical associations, and the business community.

"Technology shouldn't replace human contact in healthcare, but should be a tool to improve the quality of healthcare for all patients, regardless of their socioeconomic status or geographic location. Equalizing the availability and quality of healthcare not only improves individual and collective level of health, but also has beneficial effects on the wider economy. Good health and quick and effective treatment enable patients to live active and productive lives," said Andrea Doko Jelušić, AmCham's Executive Director.

Based on best practices research, AmCham proposes a series of measures for improving the functioning of Croatia's healthcare system, including the education of health workers for the application of digital technologies, utilization of EU funds for the digital transformation of healthcare, the implementation of appropriate pilot projects, active involvement of patients in treatment outcomes measurement, and drafting special legislation in order to ensure security, privacy and interoperability of the system. It is required to draft a comprehensive strategy that will enable the identification of all necessary actions for digitization of healthcare, include all strategically important stakeholders, and define and create databases that would facilitate the necessary transformation. Considering the current availability of EU funds intended for digitization, an increase in the quality of project planning and the efficiency of the usage of funds is needed, together with closer cooperation between the Ministry of Health and the Croatian Health Insurance Fund, for successful implementation.

AmCham representatives included Andrea Doko Jelušić, Jurica Toth, Edita Šandrk Ivanković, Miroslav Šaban, Igor Lerman, Dražen Malbašić, and Tomislav Vidović.



MARCH 7

AmCham's Survey of the Business Environment in Croatia

The survey covered the following areas: business activities in 2023, the business environment, the impact of institutions on the business environment, comparison with the region, and business expectations. It was conducted in the period from December 11, 2023, to February 9, 2024, on a sample of 116 board members of domestic and international companies in Croatia.

"Despite good business results in 2023 and optimistic business plans (the majority of companies participating in the survey had better business results in 2023 than in the previous year), there is a noticeable increase in the percentage of companies whose results remained the same as in the previous year. The lack of adequate workforce, inflation, and taxation of labor are highlighted as the main limiting business factors," according to Andrea Doko Jelušić, AmCham Executive Director.



Doko Jelušić added that for more than 63% of respondents, business activities in 2023 were better than in the previous year, while for 10%, business activities in 2023 were worse than in 2022. Nearly half of the companies recorded an increase in the number of employees, while just over a third kept the same number of employees, which is in line with last year's results. A significant number of respondents (59%) rated the experience of doing business in Croatia as good or very good, and 53% of respondents noted an improvement in business conditions in the last five years.

The respondents saw increased demand for goods and services, trade opportunities, and financing conditions as the biggest improvements in the past five years, while they linked the biggest deterioration in business conditions with the price of labor, the availability and the quality of the workforce, and the quality of the legal framework.

"Nearly 80% of respondents plan to expand their business, compared to 73% in last year's survey. As many as 72% of the companies plan to create new jobs in the next three years, and 1/5 of them plan to hire more than 20 new employees. Less than 4% of the companies plan to decrease the number of employees in the next three years, which is significantly less than last year's 14%," said Doko Jelušić.

"Compared to the previous year (2022), in 2023, almost 2/3 of AmCham's members recorded similar business results. Nearly half of the companies employed additional staff, but there was a slight increase in the percentage of companies that laid off employees, as well. Inflation was not the focus of businesses in 2021, whereas it was among the main limiting business factors in 2022 and 2023. The lack of an adequate workforce has once again taken first place in 2023, as opposed to its third place last year," said John Gašparac, first Vice-President of the AmCham Board of Governors.

MARCH 23

Presentation at the Academy for Health Policy

Mr. Damir Detić, member of the Healthcare Committee and Public Procurement Committee, and Mr. Dražen Malbašić, Policy Manager, participated in the 2024 alumni meeting of the Academy for Health Policy, which took place in Popovača. They presented the position paper "Value-Oriented Public Procurement in Healthcare with Examples of Good Practice" to the participants of the expert gathering.

AmCham Croatia has prepared a document providing specific recommendations regarding the public procurement of medicines, medical devices, and equipment. The aim of the document is to ensure that future Croatian healthcare procurement practices, including unified public procurement, allow the introduction of innovations and direction of the procurement towards providing maximum value for money. That would improve clinical outcomes and the economic efficiency of the healthcare system to benefit the economy and society as a whole.

After the presentation of the position paper, an active discussion was initiated, on the way in which public procurement can contribute to a better and more efficient health system through the preparation of public calls aimed at the quality and well-being of patients and health personnel.



How to Successfully Transform the Family Business

By Danijel Pevec / Partner, ALPHA CAPITALIS

Introduction

How do you transform a family business into a successful family enterprise? This article explores key aspects of the family business, its definition, challenges, development stages, and strategies for successful transition to younger generations.

Overall, gaining a better comprehension of the complexities of a family business empowers individuals to identify and navigate challenges, seize opportunities, and drive the long-term success and sustainability of the enterprise.

A family business progresses through various developmental stages. The three-dimensional model of family business includes family, ownership, and business, emphasizing the importance of their alignment. Across developmental stages, from founders to successors and collaboration among relatives, challenges like cultural adaptation, conflict management, inheritance strategies, and exit planning arise. Family business advisors are pivotal in supporting these processes.

The main challenges of the family business

The main challenges of the family business include managing family ownership, preserving family relationships, business stability, and managing conflicts. More than 40% of companies go through the inheritance process, but less than 20% survive more than 60 years in the same family.

It is important to establish family governance in peaceful times to ensure a successful transition, and in the absence of that, it is necessary to plan a transition or exit strategy for younger generations. Structured family governance, inheritance planning, conflict management, and adaptation to business strategy are key to overcoming challenges.

Stages of a family business

At the inception stage, the business is owned by the founder, and the key question is how to transfer control to a qualified heir. Founders often feel a fear of retreating, but career guidance can help them. In the second stage, the partnership of heirs (siblings), the most important problem is the ability to work together. Enabling the sale of shares becomes important to avoid conflicts. The third stage, the cooperation of relatives, involves a larger group of relatives with different challenges. Developing an adaptive culture, fostering an entrepreneurial spirit and transparency are key to success.

The success of a family business depends on clear family values, family vision and business strategy, family governance and succession planning.

How can a family business advisor help?

A family business advisor acts as an intermediary between a family-owned business and various professional fields, including legal, business, finance, tax advisory, psychotherapy, and coaching. They assist in implementing family governance, bridging the gap between the family and the business. Supporting all stages of the family business lifecycle, they aid founders, family members, executives, employees, and future generations in nurturing core values. By translating these values into a unified business vision, they help formulate strategic plans, aligning family objectives with business goals.

Through family governance, advisors establish charters, foster open communication, organize family meetings, and support wealth and financial planning. Effective management is crucial; tailored operating models prevent conflicts and preserve business value.

Exit strategies involve planning various exit models, considering personal goals and financial plans. Inheritance planning includes selecting and preparing heirs and promoting transparency to maintain family relationships. Conflict management entails mediating conflicts and adapting strategies to meet family and business needs.

Lessons and conclusion

Family business advisors are crucial at all stages, supporting founders, family members, non-family executives, and future generations. They aid in family governance, exit strategies, succession planning, and conflict resolution, preserving family business values. Acting as intermediaries between the family business and different professions, they establish governance and align family and business interests.

The main challenges of the family business include ownership management, preservation of family relationships, and business stability. Success depends on establishing management structures, planning inheritance, and supporting family members.

Lessons from different stages underscore the need to plan for successful generational transitions and address challenges in each phase of the business journey. Success across generations requires realistic expectations, clear communication, ongoing education, and support for heirs. Family business advisors are essential in transforming family enterprises into thriving businesses.

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Facing Legal Complexities in the Croatian Real Estate Market

By Jasna Biliškov Barun / Director, Biliškov Nekretnine d.o.o.

N avigating legal complexities in the Croatian real estate market can be a daunting challenge for both domestic and foreign investors. These complexities stem from various factors, including Croatia's intricate historical legacy, frequent legislative shifts, and the particularities of local regulations and rules. Understanding these factors is crucial for anyone looking to engage with the Croatian real estate sector.

Historical Legal Challenges

Croatia's history is rich and multifaceted, which deeply influences its legal framework. The shifting of borders and changes in governance have significantly impacted ownership documents and land registries, leading to ambiguous ownership situations. This is especially pronounced in regions that have been under the sway of various states and cultures, complicating the interpretation and understanding of legal documents. The remnants of historical treaties, land reforms, and shifts in national boundaries have layered additional complexities over the Croatian legal landscape, necessitating expert navigation to clarify ownership and legal standing.

Land Registries and Legal Regulation

Land registries are pivotal in the real estate transaction process, providing critical details about the legal status of properties, including ownership, encumbrances, and limitations. Croatia's legal regulations, encompassing ownership, planning, construction, taxation, and other real estate-related domains, are intricate and evolve frequently. Keeping abreast of these changes is essential for investors and legal practitioners alike. The integration of European Union standards and practices into Croatian law has also introduced new dynamics and regulations, further emphasizing the importance of expert guidance.

Construction Permits and Tax Aspects

The process of securing construction permits and other approvals in Croatia is often characterized by its length and complexity. This is compounded by the tax implications of real estate transactions, which include property transfer taxes, VAT on new properties, and property tax. Navigating these financial and regulatory hurdles requires a deep understanding of both national and local legislations, as well as strategic financial planning. The evolving nature of tax legislation, particularly in response to economic and political changes, adds another layer of complexity to real estate investments in Croatia.

Inheritance Issues and Citizens' Rights

Inheritance issues in Croatia, especially those involving multiple heirs or international elements, underscore the complexities of navigating both Croatian and international inheritance laws. These laws are intricate, requiring specialized legal expertise for accurate navigation and compliance. The interplay between Croatian inheritance laws and those of other countries can create unique challenges, particularly for foreign nationals and expatriates with assets in Croatia.

Rights to Purchase Property In Croatia for EU and Non-Eu Citizens

The distinction between EU and non-EU citizens regarding the right to purchase property in Croatia highlights the nuanced legal landscape. While EU citizens generally enjoy a more streamlined process, non-EU citizens face additional hurdles, including the need for reciprocal agreements and approvals from the Ministry of Justice. The situation is further complicated for properties located in areas of national interest, where stringent restrictions apply. Understanding these nuances is essential for non-EU investors seeking to navigate the Croatian real estate market successfully.

Expert Engagement and Proactive Management

Successfully facing these challenges necessitates the engagement of seasoned legal professionals specializing in Croatian real estate. Their expertise is invaluable for navigating the market's complexities, ensuring compliance with legal requirements, and facilitating successful property transactions. Additionally, the role of certified real estate appraisers, surveyors, and other specialists cannot be overstated, as they provide essential services for the accurate valuation and legalization of properties.

Engaging with the local rules, staying informed on legislative changes, and adopting a proactive approach to managing legal challenges are foundational strategies for secure and profitable investments in Croatia. This comprehensive and informed approach, underpinned by expert consultation and thorough preparation, is essential for overcoming the legal intricacies of the Croatian real estate market and achieving investment success.



Movie Theatres -Important Players in the Event Industry

By Maja Valjak Nagy / Head of Marketing - Destination Cinemas, Blitz-CineStar

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However, it was only in the middle of the pandemic that the whole process was accelerated. There were signs of change (due to an amazing offer and also high levels of interest) years earlier, as shown by the increasing number of alternative content on movie screens and B2B events in movie theatres. But during 2020, a transformative year for movie theatres and the film industry, many ideas were incubated. These ideas exploded after the end of the pandemic, with an offer at movie theatres that, in addition to attendance of regular cinema-goers, specifically targets the B2B segment.

Let Us Entertain You

In a world where the movie theatre experience is constantly evolving, theatre halls also became excellent locations for organizing events, because they enable business entities to present products, ideas, and strategies; watching key messages on a 50-300-square-meter movie screen, surrounded by people, has its intrinsic strength and power. Not only the audience or speaker is important for the transmission of a message, but also the ambiance in which you are transmitting that specific message. Any location that offers the organizer a "turnkey" solution, providing, in addition to the technological prerequisites, branding, catering, hospitality, and last, but not least - free parking space, is the choice that most organizers prefer to plan and finalize their event as quickly and efficiently as possible. In Croatia, destination cinemas give great importance to the business segment, something

which companies recognized. Because of this, they became synonyms, not only for the best movie experience, but also for exceptional business events.

During the time of gathering restrictions, streaming of business content was in focus, and the future of live gatherings was questioned. Nevertheless, humans, as social beings first and foremost, and on the other hand, the event industry, which plays an important role in economic activities, have shown and proven that after a crisis, business can change for the better. In that phase of incubating ideas, thinking about how to adapt to future changes after the pandemic is over, many decided that the movie theatre is the location to look toward, due to its technology, design, and great staff.

Film as a Reason for Gathering

It is known that business gatherings outside the office have a positive effect on team members and on the closing of deals. In the past, a classic situation for gathering outside the office would be a restaurant, dinner, team building in a hotel, congress facilities... The big screen, as a medium that conveys the message of the movie, became an interesting choice for business entities over time, especially when it comes to inspirational movies about perseverance and success. For example, a movie showcasing the fantastic success of a famous basketball player inspired companies to flock to movie theatres in 2023, because 90 minutes of an interesting story will remain permanently in the memory, serving as constant inspiration.

A Place for Gamers, Lovers of the Opera, Anime, and Concerts

In addition to the regular offer of films and the parallel existence of the event industry in the movie theatre, 'alternative contents' play a significant role among exhibitors. Recently, you were able to experience the world championship in e-sports. Recent concerts of the world's greatest musicians have also gathered an audience that is not only attracted by the content itself, but also by the fact that they need to gather and share the excitement together. Also, an indispensable element of anime screenings are meet-ups before screenings. A certain audience practices watching operas and ballets on the big screen, directly from some big capital, which makes the content itself more accessible, and of course the potential income for the creator of that content even higher.

Certainly, many surprises await us in the future, for movie theaters in Croatia are ready - they strive to keep up with the times, but they are very often one step ahead of world trends.

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Real Estate Market in Croatia: 20% increase in transaction volume in 2023 By Colliers Croatia



Zagreb office market stock and vacancy

With the expected completion of the Matrix D building and phase III of Buzin City Island in the fourth quarter of 2024 by KFK, and the Supernova Office Towers in 2025, we expect an increase in the availability of office space. It is important to highlight that these new constructions will introduce a fresh office standard in line with ESG standards. Consequently, current Class A buildings, predominantly located in Zagreb and approaching 20 years of age, will undergo a phase of renovation and adaptation to align with evolving market standards.

The retail real estate sector is seeing the development of shopping centers in smaller cities, with Immofinanz (CPI Property Group) as the most active player in 2023, opening five new Stop Shop retail parks. The entire retail sector is in a positive trend, thanks to an increase in real wages and a decrease in the inflation rate.

Meanwhile, logistics and industrial real estate segments continue in a development cycle, marked by demand outpacing supply and a slight increase in rental prices. Key new projects in the Zagreb area are concentrated in zones like Meridian 16, Zdenčina, Lučko, Donja Bistra, Sveta Nedjelja, and Samobor, with Log Expert, RC Europe, Geopost Group, and new market player Accolade emerging as the most active contributors.

Tourism remains our distinctive asset on the world market. The 2023 tourist season achieved a record-breaking 19.5 million arrivals and 92.4 million overnight stays, surpassing the figures from 2019. Investments in the hotel industry include the opening of Hotel Zonar in Zagreb with an investment of 30 million EUR, AC Hotel by Marriott in Split with an investment of 80 million EUR, and numerous other projects that symbolize a new era of luxury and quality in Croatian tourism.

Prices in the second home segment range from 4,000 to 7,000 EUR per square meter for villas and from 3,000 to 5,500 EUR for apartments, reflecting the growing interest in such properties along the coast. The opening of Petram Resort, the imminent completion and summer 2024 opening of Lioqa Resort on Ugljan, and the announcement of Lukoran Resort by Sitno Holding indicate a dynamic development in the market for luxury tourist residences. Simultaneously, the residential market has seen a decrease in annual transaction volume by about 30% in Croatia and 25% in Zagreb, attributed to affordability challenges faced by buyers. The average asking prices (combining new construction and old buildings) per m² for 2023 were 2,900 EUR in Zagreb, 4,060 EUR in Split, 2,660 EUR in Rijeka, and 1,733 EUR in Osijek.

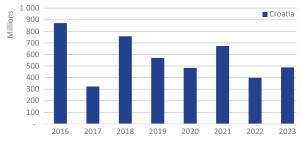
The year 2023 brought new investment activities and development across all sectors of commercial real estate in Croatia, driven by healthy macroeconomic fundamentals and a growing tourism sector. Despite challenges such as a lack of office space supply and higher prices in the residential sector, the real estate market shows signs of maturity and attractiveness to domestic and international investors, promising further growth and development.

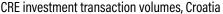
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C olliers Croatia has released its highly anticipated Market Overview report for the real estate sector in Croatia. This comprehensive analysis provides insights into various segments of the real estate market, offering a detailed overview, as well as projections for the year ahead. The year 2023 marks a period of significant investment activity in Croatia, with the total transaction volume of commercial real estate amounting to approximately 500 million euros, representing a growth of 20 percent compared to 2022. Investors continue to focus on the coastal region with investments in tourism

and on Zagreb with investments in the office sector.

The transaction volume of commercial real estate in Croatia in 2023 could have been even higher, but Croatia lacks significant investment opportunities. As a result, large international investors primarily continue to actively observe Croatia as an investment destination. The entry of such investors into a new market like Croatia requires investment opportunities in commercial real estate projects with a minimum value of 100 million euros or 100-200 keys, concerning hotels and resorts. What will certainly mark the coming period is the change in legal regulations, enabling direct investments from pension funds and insurance companies into real estate. It is expected that nearly 1 billion EUR will enter the market from these institutions this year, which will also stimulate additional activity in the market by strong domestic capital.





The office space sector in Zagreb lacks new projects and Class A buildings, so the focus is primarily on renewing existing contracts. ESG standards have become a key part of lease negotiations. Despite a historically low vacancy rate of only 3%, there was no significant increase in rental prices, due to tenants' price sensitivity. Rent for prime spaces ranges from $\leq 15.0/m^2$ to $\leq 18.0/m^2$ per month, while the average rent for class A is about $\leq 13.50/m^2$ per month.



Insights into PPAs Shaping the Renewable Energy Landscape

By Nataša Putak / Go-To Market Expert, E.ON Hrvatska d.o.o.

Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) is a contractual agreement between two parties (energy producer and energy buyer). The agreement stipulates that a certain amount of energy will be purchased at a specific price over a set period, thereby reducing the variability of costs and profits.

In the world of PPAs, each model serves distinct needs. On-site options, like Self-owned, Leasing, On-site PPA, and Private-wire PPA adapt to energy generation at the user's location, with choices ranging from ownership to third-party operation. Off-site models, like the Physical PPA, enable long-distance energy transfers, while Financial PPAs deal with energy market-based financial agreements. Off-site variants offer flexibility: Self-owned off-site for remote ownership, Multi-buyer and Multi-seller for shared transactions, Cross-border for international deals, and Multi-technology and Proxy generation PPAs for diverse energy sources.

While PPAs are a small part of the broader energy transition mechanism, better understanding and expertise in PPAs is essential for innovating and advancing new PPA models that will push the renewable energy market forward.

Decision-making in PPA adoption

The adoption of PPAs involves several critical decision-making factors. Firstly, ownership structures vary – assets can be either self-owned or held by a third party, impacting the risk and control corporates have over the energy source. Ownership desires, funding capabilities, and risk appetite influence whether an entity opts for self-owned installations.

The choice between on-site and off-site models is another crucial consideration, determining the physical location of the renewable asset and its implications on visibility and brand reputation. For entities with space, on-site models might be suitable. The necessity for a physical connection between the renewable source and consumption point also varies, impacting PPA model choice.

Long-term cost stabilization is often a primary driver for adopting PPAs. It's a win-win for corporations aiming to reduce carbon footprints while effectively managing electricity costs, ensuring long-term, cost-effective energy consumption. Models with fixed pricing structures meet such financial objectives.

Many other factors can influence a decision on PPA model choice: local sustainability visibility in CSR, resource suitability for SMEs, and the concept of additionality for environmental impact.

Another aspect to consider is financial and greenhouse gas (GHG) accounting practices linked to PPAs, ensuring compliance with standards like the Corporate Standard of the Greenhouse Gas Protocol. These factors collectively guide corporates in selecting the PPA model that aligns with their risk profiles, sustainability commitments, and business scale.

What influences PPA negotiations: critical elements for success

For a successful Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) negotiation, comprehending various market dynamics is key. This includes knowing the interplay between producers, consumers, and buyers, along with staying on top of current market trends and strategies. The PPA market is diversifying, with products like virtual and monthly base load PPAs gaining importance, indicating the need for adaptation and innovation.

Understanding how electricity prices fluctuate with market conditions is crucial for shaping business strategies and expectations. It's essential to ensure PPA products are tailored to the off-taker's profile and that the PPA price is mutually beneficial, considering market conditions and production costs. Both parties need to have a satisfactory credit rating and financial stability to support the long-term commitments arising from a PPA contract.

Also, getting a handle on different regulatory settings is crucial in managing PPA deals. This involves understanding grid connection rules, variations in market liberalization, and the complexities of cross-border PPAs. We mustn't overlook the impact of insufficient expertise among negotiators, particularly in less mature markets. The evolution of PPA models relies on both educating key players and deepening their understanding of PPAs, especially within financial institutions.

Conclusion: the future of corporate renewable energy sourcing

Despite challenges, PPAs offer substantial advantages. They provide stability against energy cost volatility with stable and predictable pricing. This financial predictability, combined with environmental benefits, makes PPAs appealing to environmentally conscious corporations, fostering an increased demand for diverse and innovative PPA models.



What Is Experiential Marketing and Why Does It Matter?

By Filip Carić / Co-Founder, Flaster media d.o.o.

A saturation of advertising messages has become increasingly common in today's media landscape, with consumers being bombarded with numerous ads across various platforms. The average person is exposed to thousands of ads every day. This massive inflow of marketing content has led to a phenomenon known as "ad fatigue," where consumers become indifferent to traditional advertising methods and are more likely to ignore or actively avoid promotional messages. Research suggests that only 33% of consumers trust traditional advertising, highlighting the need for brands to find alternative ways to interact with their target audience.

Traditional approach VS experiential marketing

The traditional approach of 'tell and sell' has been overshadowed by a strategy known as experiential marketing. This innovative approach is all about creating a brand experience, where consumers are not just passive recipients of a message, but active participants in a brand's storyline, where they have the possibility to turn every interaction into a potential moment of connection and engagement. This could be anything from an interactive installation at a public event, to a product demonstration that allows the audience to see, touch, feel, and even taste the brand promise in action.

The power of experiential marketing lies in its ability to create a deep, emotional connection between the brand and its consumers. It leverages the human liking for storytelling, transforming every brand interaction into a story that connects on a personal level. This approach doesn't just communicate the brand's message, it makes the consumer a part of the brand's story.

Experiential marketing in numbers

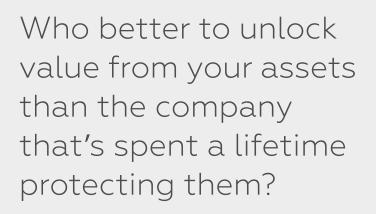
The impact of experiential marketing is visible across various dimensions. A significant 65% of brands directly attribute their events and experiential programs to increased sales, demonstrating the tangible effectiveness of these initiatives. Furthermore, the Event Marketing Institute has discovered that an astonishing 98% of consumers feel more likely to make a purchase after attending an activation. Beyond the immediate impact on sales, experiential marketing also positively shapes brand perception, with 74% of consumers developing a more favorable opinion of a brand after participating in experiential events.

Creating moments that matter

Experiential marketing brings brands to life in ways you wouldn't expect. Beyond the taxi advertising where passengers can interact with products, engage in gamified experiences, or even sample new offerings, try to imagine walking through a park and stumbling upon a live art installation sponsored by a paint company, inviting you to contribute to a community mural. Or consider a VR setup at a tech store that takes you on an adventure in the shoes of a video game hero. It's all about diving in and truly feeling a part of the brand's world. Whether it's participation in events, or a demonstration at an electronic booth, these are the moments that turn a brand's story into a vibrant memory you can take with you.

At its core, experiential marketing is about creating moments that matter. It represents a new horizon in brand engagement. It's about turning brand interaction into an opportunity for engagement, ensuring that the brand's message isn't just seen or heard, but truly experienced. In a marketplace where consumers are overloaded with advertising messages, experiential marketing offers a breath of fresh air, a chance for brands to stand out and make a lasting impression.

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Government Subsidies – A Tool to Enhance the Right Kind of Growth

By Jadranka Orešković, Partner, and Ivan Kovačević, Partner / INDAGO d.o.o.



n the complex web of economic policies, government subsidies stand out as a tool with the potential to bolster specific sectors, support vulnerable populations, and stimulate overall growth. However, the debate over who should receive these subsidies and their associated challenges remains everpresent.

The idea for this article came about after several high and not-so high-profile news regarding the misuse of received subsidies or future granting of subsidies to questionable recipients.

Subsidies serve a crucial role in fostering economic development and addressing market failures. They are often directed towards industries deemed vital for national security, or those facing significant externalities, such as environmental degradation. Agriculture, energy, education, healthcare, and housing are among the sectors commonly targeted for government support. Additionally, subsidies can aid disadvantaged groups, ensuring access to essential services and opportunities.

One primary consideration in determining subsidy recipients is the principle of equity. Subsidies can help level the playing field for marginalized communities, providing them with resources and opportunities that might otherwise be out of reach. For example, subsidies for education and healthcare can mitigate disparities in access and improve social mobility.

In another example, subsidies for growing tulips in Croatia doesn't seem like a particularly great idea, or one that would help level the playing field for otherwise marginalized communities.

Moreover, subsidies play a pivotal role in fostering innovation. By incentivizing research and development, governments can propel advancements in technology, healthcare, and renewable energy, driving long-term economic growth and competitiveness on the global stage.

However, despite their potential benefits, subsidies also present significant challenges. One of the most prominent concerns is their susceptibility to misuse and inefficiency.

Some of the more significant challenges when determining which industries or activities to subsidize are:

- market distortion
- budget constraints
- political pressure and lobbying
- economic dependency
- public perception and accountability

Without proper oversight, subsidies can create distortions in the market, leading to resource misallocation and hindering overall productivity. Moreover, they can become a breeding ground for rent-seeking behavior, where businesses lobby for subsidies, rather than focusing on genuine innovation and competitiveness.

Another challenge lies in the fiscal burden that subsidies impose on governments. Striking a balance between providing necessary support and maintaining fiscal sustainability is a delicate task. Excessive subsidies can strain public finances, leading to budget deficits and potentially crowding out investment in other critical areas, such as infrastructure and social welfare programs.

Furthermore, subsidies often face criticism for perpetuating dependency and distorting incentives. Subsidized industries may become reliant on government support, hindering their ability to adapt to market changes and innovate independently. This dependency can breed inefficiency and stifle competition, ultimately undermining the intended goals of subsidies.

Navigating these challenges requires governments to adopt a comprehensive and evidence-based approach to subsidy policy formulation, considering the broader economic, social, and environmental implications, while balancing competing interests and priorities. Collaboration with stakeholders, rigorous impact assessments, and adaptive policy frameworks can help address these challenges and optimize the effectiveness of subsidy programs.

Additionally, a more transparent, simplified, and inclusive approach before granting the subsidies, as well as continuous professional monitoring after granting the subsidies would more likely than not save the government significant funds, and probably the judiciary system some time and effort.

Ultimately, the government's subsidy decisions should align with Croatia's economic priorities, sustainable development objectives, and the needs of its citizens, ensuring that subsidies effectively stimulate economic growth, enhance competitiveness, and promote social well-being across the country.



Navigating Data Center Challenges in the Age of Al

By Goran Doreski / Managing Director, Digital Realty (InterXion Hrvatska)

n the digital landscape of the 21st century, data centers have become the backbone of technological advancement, enabling the storage, processing, and dissemination of vast amounts of information. However, the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) presents a new set of challenges for data center infrastructure. As AI applications proliferate across various industries, data centers must adapt to meet the growing demands for computational power, storage capacity, and energy efficiency.

Scalability and performance in focus

Al algorithms, particularly deep learning models, require immense computational resources to train and execute complex tasks. As Al applications scale up in complexity and volume, data centers must ensure scalability and performance to meet these demands. Traditional data center architectures may struggle to handle the massive parallel processing requirements of Al workloads, leading to latency issues and performance bottlenecks. To address this challenge, data center operators are adopting innovative technologies such as graphics processing units (GPUs), field-programmable gate arrays (FPGAs), and application-specific integrated circuits (ASICs) optimized for Al tasks. Additionally, the implementation of distributed computing frameworks like Kubernetes and Apache Spark enables horizontal scalability, allowing data centers to efficiently manage Al workloads across clusters of servers.

Balancing data management and storage

Proliferating AI applications generate vast amounts of data, placing a significant burden on data center storage infrastructure. Storing, managing, and accessing large datasets required for training AI models pose considerable challenges in terms of storage capacity, data integrity, and data locality. Traditional storage solutions may struggle to keep pace with the exponential growth of AI-generated data, leading to storage bottlenecks and increased costs. To address these challenges, data center operators are adopting scalable storage solutions such as distributed file systems (e.g., Hadoop Distributed File System) and object storage systems (e.g., Amazon S3, Google Cloud Storage). Additionally, advancements in data compression techniques and data deduplication algorithms help optimize storage efficiency and reduce the overall storage footprint of AI datasets.

Keeping the planet in mind

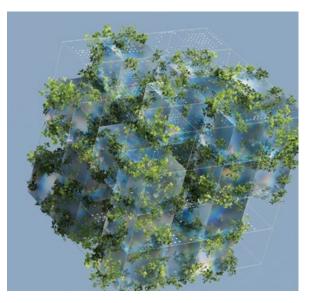
The growing demand for Al-related infrastructure comes with environmental challenges. The computational requirements of Al algorithms and deep learning models necessitate a new generation of servers, cooling systems, and networking equipment. However, adapting to this landscape requires a thoughtful approach that extends beyond mere upgrades. It calls for an industry-wide reconsideration of digital architecture from the ground up.

Embracing modularity emerges as a key strategy. By incorporating modular designs, data centers position themselves at the forefront of the AI revolution, ensuring scalability, efficiency, and adaptability in the face of evolving needs. Modularity also ushers in environmental benefits, enhancing resource allocation, cooling, and power distribution to minimize waste and promote sustainability.

For instance, many of our data centers around the world are ready for direct liquid cooling, perfectly positioning us to support our customers through the AI revolution, offering them the infrastructure they need to harness its potential as efficiently and sustainably as possible.

More efficient data centers that leverage a combination of renewable energy sources – wind, solar, geothermal, hydro/tidal, and even safe, reliable nuclear power – mean less reliance on potentially scarce or non-renewable local power sources. Inside data centers, AI and machine learning advancements further advance this efficiency by seamlessly pinpointing and addressing power-intensive compute hotspots.

Additionally, within the industry we are seeing a shift to cradle-to-cradle rather than traditional cradle-to-grave product lifecycles to limit waste, where data center components that are regularly upgraded, such as servers and switches, will filter into a robust reuse/recycle market, rather than going directly to landfills.



HR and New Generation

By Dušan Beočanin, Manager and Dorotea Neuberg, Consultant / Kearney



B y 2025, millennials and GenZ will comprise more than half of the global population and 75% of the workforce according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In the race to attract the best talent, employers are in no position to ignore the demands of these workers. Yet, there's no universal solution for businesses, and HR teams must juggle new strategic tasks to safeguard current employees, retain talent, and navigate changing remote work setups.

New Generations – New Mindset

For new generations, employment involves more than a paycheck. It's about aligning their personal values and priorities with company values. It's fair to say that employees have the power now, and they're willing to switch jobs to get what they need.

Millennials and Gen Z seek non-traditional career paths, prioritizing flexible schedules, remote work options, learning opportunities, and workplace diversity and inclusion. Research shows that 80% of Millennials desire regular feedback and recognition, and 70% value flexibility and personal time, with one-third favoring these benefits over higher pay.

Generation Z highly values autonomy and seeks purposeful work contributing to societal betterment, often aligning their consumer and employment decisions with sociopolitical values, with up to 70% being personally engaged in social or political causes. They are inclined to leave jobs over disliked practices, with nearly three-quarters considering flexible work policies essential, and they tend to avoid workplaces conflicting with their beliefs, prioritizing issues like climate change, with as much as 96% believing in business involvement in solving social problems, according to the UN's HeForShe Initiative.

HR Role: Shifting from Transactional to Transformational

With structural shifts in the workforce, HR departments will need to get creative to build an advantage that attracts and retains top talent. Traditionally seen as the department responsible for administrative tasks and employee management, HR is now positioned as a strategic partner in navigating the complexities of the workforce.

It is predicted that without significant structural, conceptual, and technological changes to the way HR operates worldwide, the result will be a significant talent deficit of 80+ million people by 2030, and \$8+ trillion in unrealized annual revenues. As millennials and Gen Z join the workforce, HR needs to adjust strategies to accommodate their desires for flexible work, meaningful roles, and avenues for growth, incorporating initiatives such as flexible schedules and ongoing education to foster inclusivity, with a specific emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts.

Next Steps?

HR's role today extends beyond the confines of the office walls. It must be involved in employer branding and ESG initiatives to appeal to the socially conscious values of millennials and Gen Z.

Understand what matters to the talent base. Companies increasingly perform double-materiality assessments as part of their ESG efforts. It is an evaluation tool to assess which topics are of material importance for the external stakeholders in the context of ESG. Such an assessment can help HR departments understand what drives individuals in the desired talent pool, better cater to their values and if needed, revamp the brand.

Making the hybrid work. Globally, we see the trend of many companies (Google, Amazon) requesting their employees to return to the office. The one-size-fits-all approach has proven to be problematic. Companies like J.M. Smucker, which have implemented hybrid work models allowing employees as few as six days per month in the office (termed "core collaboration weeks"), appear to have achieved a win-win situation. Similarly, WebPower Adria serves as a regional example, offering a flexible work week with just four working days.

Leverage the technology. HR professionals are increasingly utilizing technology and data analytics to streamline recruitment processes and improve employee experience, including employee self-service, onboarding, and training platforms.

Bridging the generation gap. Through fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing across age groups, facilitating mentorship programs, and diversity training, HR has the superpower to cultivate a culture of respect, understanding, and appreciation within the company. Such culture is a value driver that attracts new talent and maintains valuable senior talent within the firm.

In the race to attract and keep the best talent, HR is now playing a strategic role. Understanding the key value drivers of the new generation, while maintaining an inclusive and welcoming company culture has become a crucial and tough job for HR teams of today and tomorrow.

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The Future Is Now: AI at the Workplace through Adecco's Research

By Nikolina Radić / General Manager, Lugera Talent Solutions - previously Adecco Hrvatska

Navigating the AI revolution in the world of work

At the end of 2023, the Adecco Group released the results of market research entitled "What's Working? Navigating the AI Revolution and the Shifting Future of Work." We would like to share some of the main findings from this big global research study.

We have responses from 30,000 workers, 7,500 from the Americas, 16,500 from EMEA, and 6,000 from APAC. All respondents are employed across a wider range of sectors and company sizes range from small (more than 10 employees) to very large (more than 5,000 employees). 66% of respondents with supervisory responsibilities account for two-thirds of the sample. Two-fifths of respondents are agency workers, with 87% of respondents white-collar workers, and 20% of respondents tech workers.

The unfolding AI revolution

One of main findings is that we are in the GenAI "honeymoon phase", and that 2/3 of workers think the impact of AI on their jobs will be positive. GenAI will impact millions of jobs worldwide and workers and organizations need a deeper understanding of its potential and its place in their daily working lives. This calls for change management, mapping new roles, and getting skilled up fast. Although GenAI use is widespread, adoption is unequal, and companies must set clear guidance for their workers. Only 46% of workers receive guidance on how to use AI at work.

Workers use GenAl mostly to save time (60%) and to focus on more strategic work (59%), but AI is also seen as a gateway to new career prospects. 54% of workers believe that it can open the door to jobs they couldn't access before. Comparing the positive impact of AI on their jobs across industries, the highest result for positive AI impact is in the life sciences, FMCG, aerospace and E-commerce, while a not-so positive impact of AI is expected in transportation, medical/healthcare, defense, and manufacturing (from 48% to 56% positive impact expectation). It is important to mention that a quarter of workers are unsure how AI will impact their jobs, and that most of them are lower-income workers, rather blue-collar workers and those with less

education. Most workers are asking for guidance on AI from their leaders, but a fifth of executives don't know how AI will impact their jobs and it is a potential problem when their team comes to them for support. Companies should empower workers to take accountability for their upskilling on AI and equip managers to identify practice and powerful use cases. For sure, providing guidance, informal and formal, for all on how to use AI appropriately and effectively is crucial.

GenAI usage is widespread

One key finding is that GenAI usage is widespread, with currently 70% of workers using tools such as ChatGPT and Google Bard, but the top reason people are using GenAI is to find information very quickly, save time, and summarize information quickly, meaning that workers are not harnessing the full power of GenAI. This suggests that GenAI is seen as just an advanced search engine. 11% of workers don't know how to use GenAI or what it is. Leaders use GenAI slightly differently – to speed up digital communication/time spent communicating and use it for help coming up with new ideas. Employers should provide practical clarity on the impact, relevance, and opportunity of AI at work and ensure leaders are AI literate, also coaching them to engage and upskill all levels of the workforce.

We have to be aware of the risk that some workers can be left behind as a result of uneven access to GenAI. Therefore, we as employers have to see it as our social responsibility to ensure that training and upskilling in AI is an equal opportunity and evaluate existing access to tools and technology to highlight and address any inequality. The Adecco Group research shows that many workers are using AI without any guidance from their employers.

Reasons why workers do not use GenAI

Workers who do not use GenAI claim that they lack trust. This trust issue is higher in the Americas (43%) and lower in Europe (35%) and APAC (28%). The number one reason why workers don't use GenAI is because they are concerned that AI use could be unethical and/or discriminatory (51%). Therefore, we have to ensure that our policy on ethical and responsible AI is clear and understood, and that the AI policy is inclusive, transparent, and accountable.

Human touch is still more influential

61% of workers think that human touch is still more influential than AI at work, and they recognize the top 3 least replaceable human skills: 1) Emotional intelligence, 2) empathy/active listening, and 3) interpersonal skills.

The main takeaway for companies is to continue to nurture uniquely human skills through coaching, soft skills training, and leadership development, and provide transparent guidance on the skills needed for further career steps, while also promoting non-linear career paths.

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Investing in Forest Conservation: Business Case

By Lara Vukasović / Sustainable Development Expert, Projekt O2 - Magic Forest d.o.o.

n response to the urgent and interconnected crises of biodiversity loss and climate change, investing in forest conservation and restoration emerges as an unescapable necessity. Investing in forest conservation not only addresses environmental challenges, but also presents significant opportunities for businesses to play a leading role in transitioning towards a nature-positive and carbon-neutral economy. Addressing these challenges will require a transformative shift in business approaches, which can open up strategic and commercial opportunities.

Exemplary corporate citizenship

Corporate citizenship becomes crucial, as both a contributor to the issues at hand, and a vital part of the solution. CSR involves the social responsibility of businesses and the extent to which they meet legal, ethical, and economic responsibilities, as established by shareholders. To remain a responsible, competitive, and profitable company, being a good corporate citizen is a "must have."

Shockingly, over \$44 trillion, nearly half of the global GDP, is threatened by nature loss, stressing the economic urgency of prioritizing natural conservation and restoration efforts. By preserving degraded forests, we not only protect livelihoods, but also combat global climate change and biodiversity loss.

Encouragingly, an increasing number of companies are stepping up, pledging to help plant 1 trillion trees within the next 7 years, with more expected to join. This determined action demonstrates a promising trend towards greater corporate involvement in environmental stewardship and highlights the collective responsibility we share in safeguarding our planet's future, which can only be sustainable through a transformative shift in business approaches.

Three main values of investing in forest conservation

Business profitability and growth: Investing in forests provides a significant opportunity for companies seeking to address climate change, protect nature, and create jobs, with a single intervention. Forests have a net carbon absorption of around 7.6 billion tons of CO2e per year, 1.5 times more CO2e than the US emits annually. Moreover, the economic value of intact forests and their ecosystem services, such as water provision, water filtration and purification, climate regulation, carbon sequestration, pollination services, biodiversity conservation, and cultural value is estimated to be up to \$150 trillion, around double the value of global stock markets. As forests are also home to 80% of the world's terrestrial biodiversity, they are an essential landscape in our efforts to preserve habitats and protect natural heritage. In addition, the sustainable management of forests could create \$230 billion in business opportunities and 16 million jobs worldwide by 2030.

Business resilience: Investing in forest conservation and restoration protects businesses against the loss of natural capital and the physical effects of climate change, while preparing for shifting consumer and investor preferences. With many governments set to introduce new regulations to address nature loss and climate change, investing in forests offers an opportunity for businesses to stay ahead of these policy shifts. The EU Parliament has already adopted, this February, a new law that sets a target for the EU to restore at least 20% of the EU's land and sea areas by 2023, and all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050. Over 80% of European habitats are in poor shape. This nature restoration law has the goal to contribute to the long-term recovery of damaged nature across the EU's land and sea areas, to achieve EU climate and biodiversity objectives. According to the Commission, the new law would bring significant economic benefits, as every euro invested would result in at least 8 euro in benefits.

Values-based leadership: Strong business positioning and values-based leadership are crucial for businesses to build long-term value. Forest conservation supports businesses in becoming leaders in sustainability, strengthening business reputation among customers, employees and ecosystem partners, including the communities in which they operate. By investing in forest conservation, companies can generate business value while supporting nature, climate, and local communities by protecting existing forests, partnering with local communities, governments, NGOs, and others, preventing GHG emissions and nature loss, and prioritizing projects that deliver both environmental and social benefits.

While shifting business practices that contribute to nature loss and climate change is a vital priority, the urgent need for investments in forest conservation and restoration is essential for safeguarding business interests and reversing the damage that has already been done to our planet.



Directors and Officers Insurance -A Necessity for Business Executives

By Iva Rogović Lekić / CEO, Marsh McLennan Croatia

D&O insurance basics

In today's ever-evolving business world, managers are key players in driving the success and growth of organizations. On the other hand, they also face the potential risk of managerial liability.

A lot of companies find Directors and Officers (D&O) insurance to be a valuable solution for dealing with the legal risks faced by their management teams and boards. Simply put, D&O insurance provides financial protection that companies can buy to safeguard their assets and individual leaders from the expenses associated with lawsuits. This type of insurance covers various legal costs, such as legal fees, awarded damages, settlements, and other related expenses, but also PR expenses. Common allegations covered include breaches of fiduciary duty, failure to comply with regulations, lack of corporate governance, creditor claims, and reporting errors. It's a smart way for companies to protect themselves and their leaders from the financial burden of legal proceedings.

Why do companies buy D&O cover?

Quite simply - because executives and managers can make mistakes that can lead to personal legal liability. They often make difficult decisions with significant consequences, based on limited information, especially in situations like mergers and acquisitions.

In today's global business landscape, many companies operate internationally, with investors, trading partners, and operations spread across different jurisdictions. This means that directors and officers not only have to consider their markets, but also comply with regulations, deal with various government bodies, take into account auditors' opinions, and follow the latest best practices for corporate governance and risk management in multiple locations.

D&O market trends - is there a Croatian trend?

In Croatia, there has been an increase in awareness regarding managerial liability among managers. The legal framework has also evolved to hold managers accountable for their actions, especially in cases of financial mismanagement or corporate governance failures. The consequence of managerial liability claims in Croatia include financial losses, reputational damage, and legal expenses. To address these risks, the local market with the reinsurance support has introduced specialized insurance products that cater to the specific needs of managers. These insurance policies provide coverage for defense costs, settlements, and judgments, some also for GDPR or different kind of fines. While D&O policies are generally not intended to cover fines and penalties, many policies will agree to provide coverage for fines and penalties against insured persons, resulting from unintentional violations, when allowable by law.

On a global scale, managerial liability issues are not limited to any particular country i.e. managers around the world face similar challenges. Over the past few years, there has been a notable increase in the number of high-profile cases that have captured public attention. These cases have involved corporate scandals, data breaches, and environmental disasters, and have had far-reaching consequences for both organizations and their managers.

ESG and D&O claims

From climate change litigation to diversity and inclusion, ESG issues are a key source of emerging liability for directors and officers. Investors, employees, and consumers will increasingly expect companies to actively address ESG considerations, while businesses face an evolving and expanding range of ESG-related disclosure requirements and regulation. Currently, ESG litigation has been largely climate related, although many other environmental and social issues could drive future litigation and regulation, including environmental disasters, deforestation, water and biodiversity degradation, as well as equal pay, or human rights abuses within supply chains.

Key risk trends for 2024

As we look ahead, there are several key risk trends that directors and officers (D&Os) should be mindful of.

Insolvencies are rising, geopolitical uncertainty is considerable, cyber risk is elevated, and ESG claims are here to stay, and are proving challenging. D&Os need to be prepared for these headwinds and have a strategy that can adapt when presented with a block to the business.

To effectively address these obstacles, D&Os need to stay informed, anticipate potential challenges, and implement robust risk management strategies. This includes closely monitoring economic indicators, maintaining strong financial controls, diversifying funding sources, and staying informed of geopolitical developments. By proactively preparing for these risk trends, they can enhance their ability to navigate the evolving business landscape and protect the interests of their organizations and stakeholders.

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Top Tips for Wellbeing at Work & Healthy Life-Work Balance

By Maja Blažević / Founder and CEO, Materia

W e all know well-being is the buzzword of the moment, and much more than that. It is the key to being happy and healthy, both in one's professional and private life. It is great if you work in a company that prioritizes your well-being, but if that's not the case, there are things you can do to improve your state of being at work. When it comes to enhancing well-being, at work small things can make a big difference, if practiced consistently. Wellbeing at work is an organizational issue, not just an individual one – and many factors can influence it: the overall organizational culture, your colleagues and your boss, workload etc. While it's hard to make changes regarding these factors, there are some simple things you can do daily to improve your wellbeing and to create a healthier life-work balance. Some of the tips below might help you get started.

1. Check in with yourself daily

Try to understand how you really feel and act accordingly. Instead of being consumed by your feelings of stress or overwhelm, try to become more aware of them and feel more in control. Ask yourself how you are doing and feeling. This emotional awareness practice can assist in reducing the intensity of difficult feelings and give you an opportunity to do something to support yourself better.

2. Reclaim your lunch break

Many people have somewhere along the way forgotten to use their lunch break, justifying the practice through their unrealistic workloads and such. Don't be one of them, use that break to feel more productive. It gives you time to eat, make a functional drink, or to do anything else you need to stay energized. If you skip it occasionally, that's fine, but try to make an effort to priorities your break, as it will refresh you and support your well-being journey.

3. Take a few shorter breaks during the day

It has been said that the human brain needs to take a break every 90 to 120 minutes to function at its best, so the perfect way to endorse these claims is to take shorter breaks during your work day. It would be best to get outside and take a quick walk – this practice can boost your mood, improve focus and motivation, and has a lots of health benefits if you do it regularly. Scrolling social media or reading the news is not a quality break, so try to avoid it.

4. Make your lunch ahead of time and bring it with you to work

We spend long hours at work and it is sometimes not easy to eat healthy and have a balanced routine. You could start a habit of preparing your food in advance (the night before or in the morning) and bring it with you. That way, you consume a homemade meal which, is always a much healthier option, as well as saving money.

5. Make your workspace/desk beautiful

While it is not always possible to influence the overall working environment, we can always make our office desk our work sanctuary, to make us feel focused and productive. Start by removing all the unnecessary items from your working surface, clean it regularly, and leave only what you really need. Try to add a plant, to have something alive and green there, too.

6. Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate

Staying hydrated while working is crucial for your health, well-being, and overall productivity. However, it is easy to overlook it when you're very busy and focused on tasks. That's how dehydration can sneak up to you and cause headache, fatigue, dizziness. Use strategies to drink more water, such as keeping your water bottle at your desk, eating water-based food, setting reminders to drink more water etc.

7. Switch up your coffee for matcha

Try changing your coffee-drinking habit by replacing it with a healthier alternative, such as matcha. Not only does it have numerous health benefits and tastes great – this elixir contains a moderate amount of caffeine, providing a natural energy boost that enhances alertness and focus without the jitters. In combination with amino acid L-theanine, it supports mental clarity, and reduces stress and anxiety.

8. Prioritize micro moments of connection with colleagues

As human beings, we are made to connect, and many studies show that social support and feeling connected improve mental health and reduce stress. So, try to create a daily moments of interaction with colleagues. They don't have to be long, just a couple of minutes of interaction can be uplifting.

9. Use your commute time to wind down and grow

There are many useful things you could do while going to work. Depending on the means of transport, you could read a book, listen to a podcast or music. Maybe you can ride a bike to work, or get off a stop earlier to walk a bit of the way. All these small actions help you to perceive your commute time differently.

10. Practice active rest outside of work

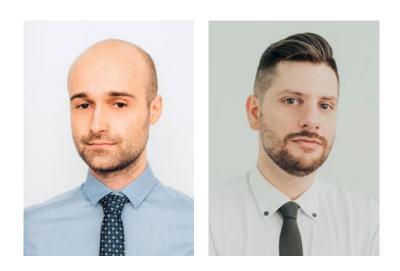
It is so important to spend time outside of work to do the things you love and the things that support your overall wellbeing. Spend time on your favorite hobby and if you don't have one – find it. Dedicate time to a good book, or gardening, running, painting, whatever fuels your creativity and makes you feel like your true authentic self.

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REPORT / NEWS&VIEWS

Legal Leads with AI Feeds

By Marko Đurić, Attorney, and Marko Porobija, Partner / Porobija & Špoljarić



The past two years have ushered in an unprecedented revolution in the use of advanced generative large language model artificial intelligence (LLM AI, or just LLM), fundamentally altering the professional landscape across the board and positioning LLMs as crucial tools for professionals across a myriad of industries. This revolution is redefining how we create, analyze, and interact with text. Lawyers' ability to precisely formulate and express thoughts has gained newfound significance – it serves as a critical prerequisite for effective human-machine communication.

With legal professionals navigating this new landscape, their ability to effectively interact with AI technologies becomes pivotal in leveraging these tools to deliver superior legal services. The emergence of generative AI in law promises a future of unprecedented opportunities for lawyers and their clients, ensuring that the legal profession keeps pace with technological advancements and leads the way in ethical and effective utilization.

Decoding LLMs: why lawyers must grasp the basics

The architecture of LLMs like GPT represents a significant leap forward in artificial intelligence, relying on vast amounts of data and complex algorithms to understand and generate human-like text. For legal practitioners, gaining an insight into how these models work is not just about leveraging technology for efficiency; it's about understanding the implications of their use in legal contexts. LLMs, by design, work by analyzing vast amounts of text data to learn patterns, structures, and nuances of language. They generate text or complete tasks based on statistical probabilities, predicting the most likely next word or sequence of words in a given context, essentially mimicking human-like text generation. This understanding is crucial for lawyers to ensure effective AI prompting and appreciate the nuances of AI-generated content.

Moreover, as LLMs become more integrated into legal workflows, the issues of intellectual property (IP) protection, business secrets, and data privacy gain new dimensions. Lawyers must navigate these complex legal matters with a clear understanding of what AI can and cannot do, the nature of its outputs, and the potential risks involved. Those who understand AI's basic architecture and capabilities are better positioned to address these challenges, ensuring their use of AI aligns with legal and ethical standards, while safeguarding their clients' interests in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Mastering the art of AI prompting

In the realm of legal practice, where precision and clarity are paramount, mastering the art of AI prompting emerges as a critical skill set. This mastery requires adherence to fundamental principles tailored to LLM's unique capabilities and limitations. Firstly, providing context is essential; an effective prompt begins with laying a clear foundation for the AI, and setting the stage for the type of information or response desired. This is closely followed by specifying the prompt with the intended output in mind, a practice that demands foresight and an understanding of the end goal. Such specificity guides the AI more accurately, leading to outputs that closely match the lawyer's needs.

Formatting the prompt appropriately is another cornerstone, influencing the structure of the AI's response and its utility. The inclusion of examples within prompts can significantly enhance the relevance and precision of the output. Lastly, and perhaps most critically, evaluating the relevance of the output is a step that cannot be overlooked. Lawyers must critically assess the AI-generated content for its applicability and accuracy, being vigilant against AI "hallucinations" or erroneous information. By adhering to these principles, legal practitioners can effectively harness the power of AI prompting, ensuring that the technology is a robust tool in their legal arsenal.

Unlocking new opportunities for lawyers and clients

The advent of AI prompting and the mastery of its underlying principles heralds a new era for the legal profession, unlocking unparalleled opportunities for lawyers and their clients alike. This technological revolution streamlines workflows and enhances the precision of legal services. It also democratizes access to legal assistance, bridging gaps that have long existed in the legal landscape. As lawyers become adept at leveraging AI tools, they are positioned to offer more innovative, responsive, and personalized services with unprecedented efficiency. This promises to make justice more accessible and the practice of law more dynamic than ever before, but it also necessitates that legal professionals remain vigilant learners, continually adapting to these changes.



CFO Compass Survey 2023 - Maturity of Finance Functions

By Renata Pentek / Manager for Finance Function - Transformation and Digitalization, PwC Croatia

uring the last quarter of 2023, PwC in Southeastern Europe conducted a CFO Compass Survey 2023 to assess the maturity of the finance functions of different companies in 9 markets of the region (Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia).

127 companies across SEE participated in the survey, operating in over 10 industries (financial services, manufacturing industry, technology, consumer goods and retail, energy/oil and the gas/mining sector, transport & logistics, among others), with an average revenue of EUR 60 million in FY22 and employing 450 full-time employees on an average annual basis.

The main focus of PwC's CFO Compass 2023 Survey was on how finance professionals, mainly CFOs, respond to the increasingly demanding needs of stakeholders and markets, and on how digital transformation is changing the processes within the finance function. Participation from different board members, finance directors, accounting directors, chief controlling officers, and other finance professionals was also recorded.

We invited them to share their insights and perspectives, and the results represent a summary of their views on critical business matters, strategic priorities, and factors they currently consider vital for the transformation of their business strategies. Among many different survey results, two areas presented as crucial.

Transformation process as a must-have

Only 9% of the participants in the survey stated that they have a mature finance function, which implies that they have transformed their internal processes. This also is an indication that, for the majority of participants,

initiatives and activities relating to the transformation of the finance function are either on-going or at the stage of organizing the so-called foundations of the finance area, thus creating the foundation for future transformation, 47% and 44% respectively. When analyzing the results in further detail, individual processes such as management reporting, as well as planning and budgeting, are better developed, with more than 30% of the respondents falling into the top performers category. The major concerns are their capabilities and struggles with sufficient working days required to perform monthly closing of accounts, produce monthly management reports, and complete planning process activities within 30 days.

Manual and slow handling of company transactions limits the ability of the finance function to create any added value in other areas.

Digitalization of the future

According to the survey, only 17% of respondents consider their IT infrastructure and level of automation as developed. Digital automation tools support every management decision, providing them with more time to focus on business strategy.

The results show that the use of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), robotic process automation (RPA), business intelligence, and other IT solutions are at a low level, although finance leaders are aware of their importance in order to become more efficient and agile.

Finance function as a true business driver

It seems that the list of tasks waiting to be implemented by the finance function is still long. In the fast-paced and changing world of digitalization, regulatory changes, and market/environment challenges, the modern CFO's diary has evolved beyond leadership and decision-making.

Business leaders have to respond to challenges and build resilience, while CFOs, at the forefront of every finance function, will be required to take lead in the company's transformation processes. The willingness for change is a new must-do trend.

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Software Development Engagement Models

By Goran Kalanj / Chief Executive Officer, Serengeti d.o.o.

A Il software development projects have one thing in common - the goal to develop high-quality software with all the necessary functionalities and features. Besides this goal, there are the usual constraints, like time-frame and budget. Therefore, choosing engagement type is a crucial step, because it directly affects project success since different engagement types have different types of management and different prerequisites.

The most common engagement models

Two common engagement models in software development are the Time & Material Model and the Fixed Price Model. Despite their billing method connotations, they differ significantly in management approach and prerequisites for success. While in the Time & Material Model, the services provider assigns a team of full-time engineers and the service is charged based on hours spent, in the Fixed Price Model, the service provider takes full responsibility for the whole project, manages it, and has to deliver within the agreed time frame and budget.

Software development service providers usually operate under both models, with some specializing in one. Those specialized in the Time & Material Model put more focus on the development role and have less resources in other roles like project manager, business analyst, etc. Furthermore, they also put a lot of focus on having a well-defined and efficient onboarding model and team management. Those specialized in the Fixed Price Model prioritize business domain knowledge, testing, project management and business analyst skills. This distinction is essential, as Time & Material projects involve estimating planning efforts, with invoicing based on services that are actually delivered.

Time & Material engagement model

The Time & Material engagement model type is very suitable for Agile methodologies, especially for Scrum. This engagement model is suitable when developing a new application using a lean approach, starting with the Minimum Viable Product (MVP), and then defining and developing additional features in an agile manner based on customer feedback.

The most common advantages of the Time & Material engagement model are flexibility and transparency. The client is closely managing the team, which means that the client can directly control the performance of arranged personnel and, if needed, for some team members a replacement can be requested. This results in the fact that the client is charged exactly for the services delivered. In that case, it is not necessary to have the functionality written out in detail before the project starts. Software functionalities can be defined and easily changed during the project.

On the other side, the most common disadvantage of the Time & Material engagement model is that the client has to be actively involved in the management of an external team throughout the project. If the client does not have precisely defined software functionality requirements, which is usually the case, then it is not possible to precisely define project costs and deadlines.

Fixed Price engagement model

The biggest catch of the Fixed Price model is that the client should precisely define all the software functionality upfront, making it most suitable for those who have successfully completed projects under the Time & Material model. This is the case because the client has to have more trust in the service provider, shifting more responsibility onto them.

However, clients have a general picture of what the new application should do, while some details will be defined during the project. A general picture is not enough for proper estimation, therefore the price and deadline aren't reliably estimated. Clients often struggle to define all requirements accurately, resulting in projects falling behind schedule and exceeding the budget. In other words, the Time & Material engagement model is a better cooperation model when the software functional specification is not detailed enough.

Lack of flexibility in the Fixed Price engagement model is something that can be very limiting if requirements change during the project. For each new requirement, a new estimation and negotiation has to be made. This may not be a problem if change requests are rare, but if they happen often, cooperation becomes inefficient, and the development process slows down.

Conclusion

Choosing between the engagement models in software development depends on various factors such as the level of requirement definition, flexibility needed during the project, and the trust between the client and the service provider. While the Time & Material model offers greater flexibility and transparency, the Fixed Price model requires more precisely defined requirements and carries greater responsibility for results on the service provider's side.

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KALIGRAF INTRODUCES A NEW STANDARD IN CRAFTING PACKAGING PROTOTYPES

Kaligraf Packaging Production has introduced technical innovations that raise the quality of crafting packaging prototypes to an entirely new level. With the capability of printing on various materials and effects such as gloss coating, partial coating, foil stamping, white ink printing, or embossing, Kaligraf is setting new standards. These innovative techniques enable designers, manufacturers, and marketing professionals to materialize their ideas with incredible precision and authenticity, utilizing prototypes that closely resemble the final product.

In the intricate process of packaging production, ensuring that each step is thoroughly considered and executed is crucial. In this regard, one of the most important tools for achieving precision and quality is the creation of real packaging prototypes. These prototypes are not merely aesthetic elements; they are essential for understanding the dimensions, proportions, and functionality of the packaging.

The quality of real prototypes plays a pivotal role in their functionality. Crafting prototypes with care and precision allows designers, manufacturers, and marketing professionals to gain a clear understanding of the final product. Kaligraf's prototypes are almost indistinguishable from the actual product, providing detailed insights into packaging solutions before production begins.

Prototypes have a wide range of applications that go beyond design and planning. They are used to test various packaging characteristics, serve as marketing tools to promote products long before they hit the market, aid in negotiations with retailers for bulk packaging deals, and facilitate focus groups and market research. Through these additional purposes, real prototypes become a crucial element at every stage of product development and promotion, enabling stakeholders to make informed decisions and achieve exceptional results.

Ultimately, investing in the creation of real prototypes is not just an investment in the design process, but an investment in quality, innovation, and success. Therefore, harnessing the potential of real prototypes can provide products with a competitive edge and ensure the desired success on the market.





EXPAT IN CROATIA ANNOUNCES EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Expat in Croatia is over the moon to announce the promotion of Marija Tkalec to Editor-in-Chief. Marija joined Expat in Croatia in 2019 as a Copywriter and Researcher.

During the hiring process, it came down to 4 magnificently talented Croatian women, including Marija. Her genuine kindness for

others and desire to protect vulnerable communities made her stand out, and in the end, was the definitive reason she earned the role.

Marija has written more than 330 guides and articles about Croatia's bureaucracy, culture, language, healthcare system, and daily life. The bureaucratic guides, for which Expat in Croatia is known, typically require dozens of hours of research, including many calls and emails to the government to get the facts just right, which takes a tremendous amount of patience, strength, and attention to detail. Marija now leads Expat in Croatia's content strategy and manages a content department of editors, writers, researchers, and contributors.

Marija joined Expat in Croatia in its infancy, when it was solely a blog with zero monetization and an uncertain future. Over the last 5 years, Expat in Croatia has grown exponentially into a company that helps thousands of people every year obtain residence, gain citizenship, and build their lives in Croatia, as simply as possible.

Even though she has been working behind the scenes, Marija's fingerprints are visible in everything we do. She made the success of Expat in Croatia possible. She never hesitates to do what is right and functions as our guiding light every step of the way. Our entire team is grateful to work by her side and we wish to congratulate her on this next step in her journey.

Marija Tkalec is from Bedekovčina in Hrvatsko zagorje. She adores music, hiking, and any opportunity to be in nature. Prior to Expat in Croatia, she was a music journalist.

THE FIRST TENANTS OF RC ZONE SAMOBOR LOGISTICS CENTER REVEALED

RC Europe, a Czech development and investment group, has announced the start of a new phase in the construction of its first project in Croatia – the largest and most modern logistics center RC Zone Samobor, along with the names of its first tenants, all of whom are major players in the logistics sector.

Near the A3 motorway exit and the Slovenian border, on a land area of 170,000 m2, an impressive facility of 86,000 m2 intended for leasing will be situated. The future logistics center, valued at over €100 million and expected to be completed in a year, will allow tenants to use the space according to their needs – for storage, manufacturing, or office operations. Both the potential and advantages of RC Zone Samobor have already been recognized by three

MEMBERS NEWS



significant tenants who have decided to improve their future operations within the Bobovica economic zone. The first agreement was made with the Croatian branch of global logistics leader DB Schenker, which operates in over 150 countries with more than 2,000 branches and some 74,500 employees. This was followed by Logaritam, a company whose team of experienced professionals has been offering storage services, warehouse handling, national distribution, and international shipping for 15 years. The third partner is Milšped, which has been providing modern logistics and transport services in 14 countries across 3 continents for 30 years. Although they already own a warehouse in nearby Sveta Nedelja, this partnership will significantly expand their existing capacities.

After months of dedicated work and the completion of preparatory and earth works, the project recently entered a new construction phase, focusing on reinforced concrete structures, including façade columns and the roof structure. Antonín Dillenz, CEO of RC Europe, has said they are proud of the project's progress, that everything is going according to schedule, and that they are pleased that capacities are rapidly filling up with respectable names from the industry.

DEP - CALCULATION OF ENERGY PRODUCTION FROM RENEWABLE SOURCES

Dignet Energy Platform (DEP) is an online system for calculating basic elements, energy efficiency, and investments for energy production from renewable sources. By using the DEP system, you get a tool that enables a simpler and easier calculation of complex calculations related to biomass, and at the same time enables changing every single element that makes up the biomass energy supply chain. The use of the platform does not require knowledge of any mathematical and calculative analyses. With a simple procedure, "simulate" the best option for your set of desired biomass-based projects, and after selecting the available raw materials and ultimately also the production chain, you will receive basic indicators that include:

- Energy efficiency (E)
- Total investment EUR (InvK)
- Total cost of human labor and cost of produced biofuel in EUR/kWh (Trt)
- Total emission of produced biofuel in kg CO2/kWh (Gt)

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By using a simple procedure, simulate the best option and calculate the cost of energy production from biomass



DEP is a leap into something completely new, and actually demonstrates how the way of thinking and experiences gained on large projects can be applied to a real concrete problem that is seemingly intractable. Until now, the only solution for calculating energy production from renewable sources was to hire an expert to prepare a feasibility study. What if you had a platform that would guide you through all the steps and through all the questions related to the production of energy from biomass? What if the platform would do all the calculations for you, and also allow you to create multiple versions of your project, and through a mathematical method also

analyze which version is optimal? That's exactly what DEP is - a platform for calculation and optimization of bioenergy systems. DEP is intended for everyone who needs to calculate profitability, investment, CO2 production, without extensive prior know-

ability, investment, CO2 production, without extensive prior knowledge or knowledge of production technology. The platform enables precise calculations without knowledge of any mathematical and calculative analyses, which is a significant step forward compared to classic engineering tools. You can find out more about the Dignet Energy Platform here: https://dep.dignet.hr

SERENGETI WON THE TECHBEHEMOTHS AWARD FOR IT EXCELLENCE IN CROATIA

Serengeti, a company specializing in custom software development, is proud to announce its outstanding achievements at the prestigious TechBehemoths 2023 Awards, marking a significant milestone in the company's journey of excellence.

The TechBehemoths Awards, renowned as the first industry-wide event based on public voting, celebrate excellence in information and technology within the global B2B market. With



over 46,000 IT companies and agencies and more than 1,000,000 users worldwide, the TechBehemoths Awards represent a monumental gathering of industry leaders and visionaries committed to promoting digital transformation through technology. The TechBehemoths Awards serve as a grand celebration dedicated to promoting and recognizing digital transformation through technology. Developed by a software development company from Berlin, TechBehemoths is a free B2B platform aimed at facilitating the matching of IT companies and real clients.

What sets the TechBehemoths 2023 Awards apart is their commitment to genuine annual ratings for IT companies, determined through a transparent public voting process. By participating in the voting, individuals play a pivotal role in shaping the industry landscape and recognizing companies that excel in innovation and impact.

In the 2023 edition of the TechBehemoths Awards, Serengeti secured first place in two categories: Custom Software Development and Artificial Intelligence in Croatia. This achievement reflects Serengeti's dedication to delivering exceptional software solutions and its commitment to advancing the IT sector.

Serengeti extends its gratitude to the TechBehemoths 2023 Awards for this prestigious honor and congratulates fellow Croatian companies recognized for their excellence.

IVA ROGOVIĆ LEKIĆ NAMED MANAGER OF THE YEAR 2023 IN THE SMALL BUSINESS CATEGORY

Iva Rogović Lekić, the CEO of Marsh McLennan Croatia, won the Croatian Managers' & Entrepreneurs' Association Award for Manager of the Year 2023 in the Small Business category.

Iva Rogović Lekić earned a degree in aeronautical engineering and is a professional pilot. After her flying career and working as a broker in business aviation, she started working in insurance, first at Triglav Insurance, where she led the brokerage channel, and then in management positions at brokerage firms. She joined Marsh McLennan Croatia in 2019 and together with her team has completely transformed the business since then, increasing revenues fivefold and establishing a strong presence in the insurance and reinsurance market. During her brokerage career, she gained expertise in London, the center of the global brokerage and insurance-reinsurance business.

Marsh McLennan is the largest global company (NYSE: MMC) specializing in risk management, strategy, and people, with a history of over 150 years. With over 85,000 employees and more than 550 offices in 130 countries worldwide, Marsh McLennan helps clients navigate an increasingly dynamic and complex environment through its four leading market firms: Marsh, Guy Carpenter, Mercer,



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and Oliver Wyman. Marsh is the world's leading insurance broker and risk advisor, and in Croatia, it operates as a company offering professional insurance and reinsurance brokerage services, as well as risk management consulting.

Marsh Croatia is the largest corporate broker in the market, managing a premium volume of over 40 million euros. The company specializes in local and perhaps less familiar types of insurance that require specific knowledge, such as directors and officers liability insurance, cyber insurance, claims insurance, and reinsurance in various sectors, with a particular focus on the energy, aviation, logistics, automotive, IT, and food sectors.

ZMP HONOURED WITH TWO ESTEEMED IAM AND WTR GLOBAL IP AWARDS



For the second consecutive year, ZMP has been honored with the esteemed title of "IP Firm of the Year for the Balkans" at the IAM and WTR Global IP Awards, held in London.

This achievement highlights the firm's steadfast commitment and dedication to delivering unparalleled legal services in the field of intellectual property.

ZMP has also been recognized in the category of "EMEA Anti-Counterfeiting Firm of the Year." This significant accolade underscores the firm's proactive stance in safeguarding intellectual property rights and combating the proliferation of counterfeit products across the EMEA region.

The Global IP Awards acknowledge the outstanding achievements of law and attorney firms in litigation, prosecution, and transactional work concerning intellectual property. IAM and WTR's dedicated research team gathers thousands of written submissions from firms detailing their recent activity in the IP field, interviews thousands of top practitioners worldwide, and collects references from in-house leaders, providing extensive market intelligence on the leading players in the field.

Djura Mijatovic, Managing Partner at ZMP, stated: "We are immensely grateful for the recognition bestowed upon us at the IAM and WTR Global IP Awards. These accolades fuel our determination to continue delivering unparalleled legal expertise while making a tangible difference in the global community."

ADRIATECH IS INTRODUCING SCHLÜTER-BEKOTEC-THERM UNDERFLOOR HEATING

We are delighted to present our new product, Schlüter-BEKO-TEC-THERM, an award-winning underfloor heating technology. As the demand for eco-friendly heating solutions surges, the BEKO-TEC-THERM system is the perfect fusion of energy efficiency and low construction height, ensuring unparalleled performance while minimizing environmental impact.

At the heart of Schlüter-BEKOTEC-THERM lies its groundbreaking modular screed, Schlüter-BEKOTEC. This ingenious design optimizes the use of screed material, reducing both energy consumption and material usage. With the incorporation of -THERM



components, our system achieves heating at lower supply temperatures, further enhancing its energy-saving capabilities.

One of the standout features of Schlüter-BEKOTEC-THERM is its ultra-low construction height. Standing a mere 8mm above the studs of the panels, our system delivers rapid warm-up times and substantial material and weight savings compared to traditional wet systems.

Schlüter-BEKOTEC-THERM accommodates a wide range of coverings, catering to various aesthetic preferences and project requirements.

With Schlüter-BEKOTEC-THERM, enjoy the benefits of:

- Low tension screed construction: Say goodbye to cracks and tension buildup with our studded panel design, ensuring a flawless, long-term finish.
- Short construction periods: Cut drying and curing times from weeks to just days, minimizing project timelines and disruptions.
- Compatibility with renewable energy sources: Harness the power of renewable energy with lower supply temperatures, making our system the perfect match for heat pumps.

Explore our website to learn more about this cutting-edge technology and how to enhance projects with superior efficiency, sustainability, and innovation.

20/40 UNFILTERED BUILDS BRIDGES BETWEEN GENERATIONS

The basic principle of mutual understanding is to start with yourself and assume your share of responsibility. There's always a ton of comments about Generation Z or Gen Zers, but, to be fair, we were the ones who raised that generation. They are our kids and we taught them through words, and even more through actions, to be the way they are. We gave them the values they needed to adopt, and now that they hold them, the labor market is up in arms about it.

What is currently different is the possibility of communication - more precisely, direct communication via digital channels with a



large number of like-minded people. Then there are also the clearly communicated views and attitudes of Gen Zers, who are introducing some new



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behaviors to a large audience. Everything that is new and different is confusing at first; people are initially resistant to change, but they then reach a stage where they do their best to understand each other.

Abeceda Komunikacije has decided to assume responsibility for deficient communication and act concretely to reduce the generation gap, improve mutual understanding, teach listening skills to both parties, and open up dialogue. Accordingly, we have launched our 20/40 unfiltered communication platform. Presently, the platform is used for different inhouse activities for a number of clients. However, it will soon go public, as certain universal issues are released into the public space.

These days, there isn't an industry that considers Gen Zers unimportant. The generation in question already makes up a large portion of the purchasing power, seeing as they account for 27 percent of the global workforce. Their influence will only continue to grow, and if brands wish to remain relevant to such a demanding generation who knows what they want, they will have to find their own ways of identifying and communicating with their target group. For starters, they need to understand each other in terms of purpose and meaning, and not just claim that they "get each other."

SUSTAINABILITY INFORMS OUR APPROACH TO EVERY DECISION WE MAKE

The Generali Group is committed to achieving a positive impact on communities, the environment, and stakeholders, thereby contributing to shaping a more secure future for all. Acting as a responsible investor, insurer, employer, and corporate citizen, Generali is committed to sustainability as the originator of the strategic plan "Lifetime Partner 24: Driving Growth", aligned with the European Green Deal and the Next Generation EU initiative.

With that vision in mind, Generali has upgraded its climate protection strategy. From new green and sustainable investments, to halting investments and assuming insurance risks in the thermal coal sector in OECD countries and the rest of the world, to the gradual decarbonization of direct investment portfolios. At the end of last year, Generali confirmed a "AAA" rating from MSCI, the premier international authority on ESG evaluations, which is the highest attainable rating. Furthermore, Generali was once again confirmed in the Dow Jones Sustainability World Index (DJSI) and the Dow Jones Sustainability Europe Index (DJSI Europe).

Three years ago, the Generali Group launched SME EnterPRIZE, a strategic initiative aimed at cultivating a culture of sustainability among European SMEs. Since 2022, Generali has been organizing the SME EnterPRIZE sustainability competition in Croatia, focusing on SMEs that are making a positive impact on the environment and their communities. The previous year's competition received backing from initiative partners Privredna banka Zagreb and the Voice of Entrepreneurs Association.

Generali also demonstrates strong commitment to communities through The Human Safety Net humanitarian initiative, driven by the belief that communities built on the principle of "people helping people" can bring about sustainable change. In Croatia, THSN works alongside the "Growing Up Together" Center to support parents and children facing challenging life circumstances that hinder their children's development.

HOW KELTEKS REDUCES CO₂ EMISSIONS - IN PRACTICE, NOT THEORY

As part of the "Solar Power Plant Kelteks" project, another significant step toward a more sustainable future and a reduced carbon footprint has been achieved. Kelteks has not only successfully cut energy expenses, but has also dramatically decreased energy consumption from the distribution network (by 28%).

The project was made possible by non-refundable funds from the call for proposals "Increasing the Capacity for Solar Energy Production" from the FINANCIAL MECHANISM OF THE EURO-PEAN ECONOMIC AREA 2014 - 2021 and the "Energy and Climate Change" program financed by donor states Iceland, the Principality of Liechtenstein, and the Kingdom of Norway, as well as expert collaboration with Greengreen Advisory, the Energy Institute Hrvoje Požar, and the Norwegian company Hans Claussen.

By installing capacity for electricity production from renewable sources, Kelteks expands what the company lives daily - providing value to its customers by creating rust-resistant reinforcements that prolong the life of everything they are built into, whether it's skis, ceramic tiles, a boat, or a stunning building like The Spiral (66 Hudson Boulevard) skyscraper in New York City.

By reducing the negative impact on climate change through the "Kelteks Solar Power Plant", which produces 900,684 kWh of electricity annually, Kelteks encourages the local business community to do the same and make shifts towards environmentally conscious business practices.

As a reminder of our commitment to sustainability, we share what Zig Ziglar once said: "We don't have to wait to do big things.



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We can start with what we have and where we are, and work from there. However small the steps appear, if they are directed in the right direction, they can lead to big changes."

PRO INTEGRIS PARTICIPATED IN OFFSHORE WIND FARM PROJECTS IN THE U.S.

Pro Integris is a full-service engineering and consulting company providing services in energy automation. With offices in Croatia, Singapore, and Taiwan, they support companies and countries with what they need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and make energy reliable, affordable, and more sustainable.

To achieve their goal, Pro Integris has participated in several of the United States 192 offshore wind farm projects. One of them is a 2.6-gigawatt offshore wind energy project that will consist of 176 wind turbines located 27 miles off the coast. Harness the power of the wind to generate enough clean, reliable energy to power up to 660,000 homes. Equally as important, there is a major project located near Martha's Vineyard intended to help conserve the New England environment. It consists of 65 Siemens Gamesa wind turbines that are foreseen to provide 704 MW of clean energy power to supply Connecticut and Rhode Island.

Sharing the same passion, vision, and values, Pro Integris took a step forward by becoming a part of Siemens Energy Global GmbH & Co. KG, Grid Technologies/Digital Grid, a global leader in energy technology. This acquisition makes Siemens Energy stronger in



digital solutions, and more efficient in energy transition, building the grid of the future. The role of digitalization in energy transmission and distribution is becoming increasingly significant due to the growing complexity of grid structures and the rising importance of environmental compatibility. Ensuring a reliable power supply for consumers while keeping transmission and distribution costs low is essential.

Both companies, Pro Integris and Siemens Energy, share the same strive to continuously push the boundaries of what is possible by staying at the leading edge of disruption. It's estimated that 45% of all emissions savings in 2050 will come from technologies that have not yet reached the market. These companies, with united strength, are heading towards being leaders on that path.



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ĐURO ĐAKOVIĆ GROUP is an industrial conglomerate located in Slavonski Brod, Croatia, with a tradition of manufacturing since 1921, and a significant reputation in the global market.

The primary business areas of the ĐURO ĐAKOVIĆ GROUP today are TRANSPORT (production of freight wagons), DEFENSE (production, maintenance, and overhaul of armored vehicles), MACHINE PROCESSING (repair of rail componentry) and ENERGY.

- Within the group, there operate four companies, together employing over 1,100 employees:
- ĐURO ĐAKOVIĆ GROUP plc. as the parent and management company
- ĐURO ĐAKOVIĆ Special Vehicles plc., which specializes in manufacturing wagons for special purposes, maintaining armored vehicles, and producing machinery for humanitarian demining
- ĐURO ĐAKOVIĆ Strojna obrada ltd., which specializes in development, design, engineering, and maintenance, with a focus on power transmission production
- ĐURO ĐAKOVIĆ Energetika i infrastruktura ltd., which supplies the Đuro Đaković industrial zone with energy

NEOS d.o.o.

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Neos provides business solutions and services covering cloud and system infrastructure integration, advanced analytics, and software engineering. The company specializes in engineering complex enterprise systems, accelerating digital transformation for enterprises, data intelligence, data governance and cloud data management solutions, solving a wide array of business problems. With deep expertise in financial services, telecommunications, utilities and the public sector, Neos enhances business agility across these industries.

Founded in 2002 and an Oracle Partner since inception, Neos has received the Oracle Excellence Award for Business Analytics globally. The company is an IBM Gold Partner and collaborates with other industry leaders such as Collibra, Amazon, Google and Microsoft. As a FinOps Certified Service and Training provider, Neos promotes best practices in cloud financial management, primarily through its SaaS for multicloud cost management and resource automation, CloudVane.



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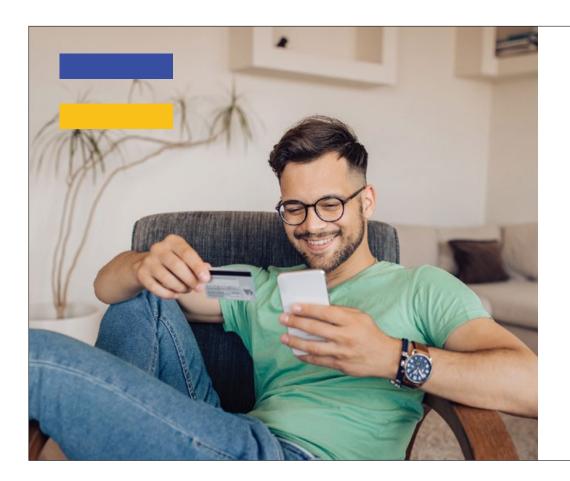
Whether you are talking about deep learning, strategic thinking, or another form of Al, the foundation of its use is in situations that require lightning-fast responses. With Al, machines can work efficiently and analyze vast amounts of data in the blink of an eye, solving problems through supervised, unsupervised, or reinforced learning.

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HSM has been providing quality solutions for more than 30 years.

The distribution and integration of leading software solutions are our core, with an emphasis on Adobe, Salesforce, and Google. In addition to helping companies of various profiles and sizes improve sales, support, and marketing through more than 55 successfully completed CRM implementation projects, we have also built a distributor network of Adobe solutions that spans 22 countries across Europe. We work from offices in Zagreb and Belgrade, with a strong position on the regional market, but are also expanding our business towards the countries of the European Union. In addition to being integration and implementation experts, we are recognized as experienced consultants who direct businesses towards an efficient and data-driven way of thinking. We are proud of our business successes, but also of recognitions such as the advanced MAMFORCE Change certificate, which is additional confirmation that we are just as successful at creating an inclusive and open environment for our employees.

Knauf d.o.o.

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The name Knauf is still synonymous for gypsum in many countries today. Acting as part of a multinational company, Knauf d.o.o. with its business successfully applies a global strategy to the local market. As a Croatian company, it is our responsibility to develop the business in the best interest of the market and to invest in the social community within which we operate, because it is our duty to invest and return. Therefore, after exploitation, surface mines are shaped into areas that are not harmful to the environment. We are committed to producing building materials that simplify design and construction, offer complete solutions, and ensure qualitative safety. With high-quality products, we develop and raise the standard of living to a new level.

Tahograf d.o.o.

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Tahograf d.o.o. is the leading provider of services in the area of increasing competitiveness of vehicle fleets by applying ITS (Intelligent Transport Systems), and is an authorized regional representative/distributor of the leading global manufacturer of tachographs and automotive electronics, Continental VDO Automotive.

The company's operations are primarily related to commercial vehicles and creating added value for vehicle fleet owners, whether through improving efficiency via proprietary digitalization solutions or through high-quality service services for commercial vehicles, as well as education and consulting in the field of road transport. Tahograf is an agile learning organization with 40 branches and over 400 service partners, and over 30,000 satisfied customers across all countries of the region. Through our own companies, we operate in the markets of Serbia, Slovenia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and for exports, we are also present in the markets of Poland, the Czech Republic, Albania, Sweden, and Hungary.





SMALL BUSINESS



Adriatech d.o.o.

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Adriatech is a dynamic company specializing in the wholesale of construction materials, with a commitment to excellence and a focus on delivering the best products to the market. We act as representatives for large multinationals such as Fassa Bortolo, Schlüter-Systems, BiFire, and other European partners. Our diverse range includes dry lining systems, plasters and mortars, façade systems, underfloor heating, and thermal/acoustic insulation, catering to the unique needs of clients, from large construction companies to architects and private individuals.

We adhere to the highest industry standards to ensure that clients receive reliable, efficient, and top-notch solutions. The commitment to quality extends to every aspect of the business, from relationships with suppliers to customer support, prioritizing clients and understanding that their success is the company's success.

Amrop d.o.o.

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Amrop is one of the world's largest leadership and executive search consultancies, with 70 offices in 55 countries and a global team of more than 550 professionals.

Over the past 47 years, we have built a reputation for our focus on quality, talent, and agility. At the heart of our business is a deep connection with our clients. Our goal is simple - to help our clients shape sustainable success and be prepared for "what's next". Our consultants blend entrepreneurship with solid business experience and are able to recognize the opportunities and challenges you face. Our strength lies in our collective expertise and track record, rooted in local responsibility and spanning a global network of senior consultants. We help our clients find and develop their "Leaders for What's Next", adept at working across borders, in markets around the world. We are present in the Adriatic region through our offices in Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Belgrade.

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Angelus Domus d.o.o.

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CONTACT PERSON: Darija Radnić, info@mashroom.hr

Mashroom is a place where you are always welcome to seek out inspiration for luxury and special things for your home.

Here, our friendly employees will always welcome you with a smile, coffee, or a glass of sparkling wine. The Mushroom store was created 16 years ago by owner Maša Kovač and her great love for design, luxury, aesthetics, and interior decoration. With a lot of effort, it has grown year after year. We are exclusive representatives of the Dutch brand Eichholtz luxury furniture and home decorations such as sofas, armchairs, lighting, decorative items. We are representatives of several other brands that offer decorative accessories in a luxurious style. Here you can always find gifts for various occasions – from wedding and birthdays registries, to special gifts for various anniversaries, Christmas program, gifts for the male population. We offer consultations to our regular customers and loyal clients regarding decoration, and an interior decoration service with our partner designers and architects. W W W. A M C H A M . H R



SMALL BUSINESS



Boost d.o.o.

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Boost was founded in 2013 and focuses on business consulting services.

The company holds 3 ISO as well as 15 individual certificates. Boost primarily offers the following services: ISO standard implementations, Compliance, and EU RFPs.

Some of the ISO standards Boost implements to clients are: ISO 9001 (QMS), ISO 14001 (EMS), ISO 27001 (ISMS), ISO 37001 (ABMS), ISO 45001 (OSHAS), ISO 26000: Social Responsibility, and SA 8000: Social Accountability. Boost also helps clients with compliance projects such as: GDPR, Whistleblowers, Corporate Sustainability Reporting, NIS2 – Cyber Security, DORA, CER etc. Additionally, Boost also holds expertise in USA regulations such as SOC2 Type 1&2 Report, PCI AOC, NIS 800-53, HIPAA, and others.

Grey Box d.o.o.

Vrbnička ulica 6, HR-10000 Zagreb Phone: +385 91 3843 123 grey-box@grey-box.hr www.grey-box.hr CONTACT PERSON: Benata Payletić Mužak, CEO, repata@grey.h

CONTACT PERSON: Renata Pavletić Mužak, CEO, renata@grey-box.hr

The company GREY BOX is a startup engaged in the design and production of special boxes made of paper and cardboard.

The boxes are intended for anyone who makes items from yarn. The boxes are an innovation of the GREY BOX company, which have not yet been introduced to the market. The expected presentation is set for fall of 2024. The company GREY BOX plans to place the majority of the manufactured items immediately on the market in the USA and Canada.

Grou d.o.o.

Železna cesta 18, SLO-1000 Ljubljana Phone: +386 64 199 633 hello@grouglobal.com https://grouglobal.com

CONTACT PERSON: Borjan Jevrić, Business Development Director, borjan.jevric@grouglobal.com

Grou is a team of experts specialized in creating bespoke solutions for B2B growth, leveraging a unique blend of auditing, strategy development, and cutting-edge sales and marketing techniques.

Our mission is to empower B2B businesses to achieve unparalleled growth and sustainable success. We strive to unlock each client's full potential through innovative strategies, tailored solutions, and data-driven insights, ensuring that every business we partner with is equipped to navigate the complexities of their market and emerge as a leader in their field. Our goal is to equip B2B companies with the tools and knowledge to become leaders in their industry and scale their companies to new markets.





SMALL <u>BUSINESS</u>

HESA Group d.o.o.

Trg Mažuranića 13, HR-10000 Zagreb | Phone: +385 91 7610 885 marina@hesa-group.com | www.hesa-group.com **CONTACT PERSON:** Marina Franolić, CEO, marina@hesa-group.com

The acronym HESA Group embodies our dedication to Hospitality, Events, Sustainability, and Architecture, symbolizing our unwavering commitment to excellence in these core areas. Over the past decade, our Hospitality Department has been involved in 15+ development projects. Our Event Department has orchestrated 20+ signature events with over 7,000 participants. With a focus on investments, hospitality, and real estate segments, we created the leading events Hotel Operations Weekend Festival, the Real Estate Development Conference, and the Adria Hotel Forum. Additionally, we are the partner for The Economist Impact Event in Croatia. The event portfolio we did for our clients extends across a wide array of industries such as architecture, economics, pharmaceuticals, IT, and healthcare.

Sustainability is at the core of everything we do. Meanwhile, the Architectural Department has achieved great success by completing 50+ projects and becoming the official regional partner of the global company WATG.

Kaligraf d.o.o.

Zavrtnica 17, HR-10000 Zagreb | Phone: +385 1 2347 722 kaligraf@kaligraf.hr | www.kaligraf.hr

CONTACT PERSON: Željka Tihomirović, Marketing Manager, zeljka.tihomirovic@kaligraf.hr

Kaligraf is a graphic studio specialized in packaging materials, production, and packaging processes. We have been in the industry for 30 years and have experience collaborating with numerous domestic and international manufacturing companies.

For our clients, we provide a complete service for preparing packaging for printing and we oversee the production of packaging, from the initial idea to placing the product on the store shelf. We are professionals in this field and always stay up-to-date with the latest information, which we gladly share with our clients.

Therefore, we often organize specialized seminars on packaging management, aimed at the marketing, procurement, development, quality control, or logistics departments of manufacturing companies.

We are experts in packaging from the idea to the point of sale, but our approach is significantly different.

Superius d.o.o.

Ulica Ćirilometodske družbe 1, HR-52100 Pula Phone: +385 52 383 606 superius@superius.co | https://superius.co/index_hr.html **CONTACT PERSON:** Nikola Rovis, CEO, nikola.rovis@superius.co

superius

Superius specializes in creating digital products that streamline workdays for thousands, developing tools to aid users and automate business processes. It's neither a software agency nor a corporation, but prides itself on adaptability, respect, and agility. At Superius, the atmosphere is characterized by smiles, productivity, and a sense of belonging, with a constant drive for improvement and openness to new methods. The overarching goal is to cultivate a team that works smart and lives well, valuing technology while also prioritizing free time and seeking balance. The flagship product is a POS system for small businesses, evidenced by a growing user base, positive feedback, and word-of-mouth referrals. Superius's commitment to quality work is widely recognized.



HESA

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jasna.stilinovic@amcham.hr

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