

# LET'S TALK POWER

In conversation with Ivana Rybánska, the men who created a company culture as powerful as the batteries produced by Clarios, share the key motivations and elements of their strategy. As a result, Clarios Slovakia manages to acquire and keep talent through internal branding and educational empowerment of its employees.



**JURAJ BARUS (JB)**  
Global Director of Clarios Finance Shared Service Centers

*Juraj, 2020 was a tough year for business. Why did you decide you needed internal branding?*

(JB:) We unbundled from Johnson Controls in May 2019. Not even a year later we were in a full scale pandemic. So our first challenge was to get recognized in a market already saturated with many business centers. We wanted attention to attract fresh talent and to justify the fact that we are one of the biggest battery producers worldwide. Not many people know that our batteries, perfect example of full circular economy, are powering every third car you see on the road. Our product is well established and its innovation cycle goes back 130 years, though our business services operation in Bratislava launched literally like a startup. Our local team will never assemble even one tiny part of a battery but will be fully responsible for greasing the wheels of global operations. We set a goal to distinguish ourselves by creating an atmosphere of business partnership. To be frank, I no longer believe B2B or B2C models are sustainable, so we decided to invest in our own strategy - B2H - or business to humans.



**MICHAL GUŠŤAČÍK (MG)**  
Senior Transformation Manager at Clarios Slovakia

*Michal, I believe you entered the stage at this point.*

(MN:) We started this job with Clarios in summer 2020 after the first lockdown left the team unsure of what will come next. It was a growing group of about 200 people and most of them struggled to explain what Clarios is about to their peers. And they were right. When we asked unsuspecting respondents outside our bubble if they had any awareness of Clarios

brand, most people had no clue. On the other hand, everyone in Slovakia knows Varta, a battery from the global Clarios family. We like to help brands tell their stories so we instantly fell in love with the product and the local management with a rather radical strategy and courage to move heavy stones. Our mutual agreement was that it is pointless to invest in brand recognition, but rather to empower teammates as brand ambassadors and teach them to spread the message.

decided to outreach our competitors and invested heavily in learning and adapting new skills ranging from financial acumen to communication mastership.

*But it all started with master narrative.*

(MN:) Exactly. We have a saying that business culture eats strategy for lunch. The strategy would not be successful without significant tweaks in culture inside the team. This is where real storytelling begins. Together we defined the Clarios empowering narrative with three basic roles as hero, victim and villain. That's the playful part. For practical reasons, we derived power behaviors and power words that help teammates to live and deliver the story every day. And we teach them to use it.

*Michal, I presume aspiring words are not enough.*

(MN:) Not at all. That's why we prefer to call them behaviors. Clarios walks the talk. Behaviors tend to get under your skin by training and through symbols and ceremonies. Just one example: When you enter the Clarios office in Bratislava you will see an impressive wall of honor featuring key home brands of batteries all over the world. The team itself created it and added spicy comments to the characteristics of each. If you want to see what proud of product means, I recommend you see it.

*Michal, you stressed outreach. Why did you choose to pursue your own educational track while others go to external suppliers?*

(MG:) We as Clarios reviewed the opportunities on the market and prepared a knowledge gap analysis. Based on the results we came up with our own and precious Clarios Finance Academy that teaches our troops how to apply finance theory in our processes, how to analyze financial and non-financial data of Clarios and support employees self-esteem when achieving their goals and proposing innovative solutions. At this stage we have more than 80% of employees pushed through this program and the results are amazing. We've received very positive feedback from our business partners on the quality of our people. Also, the Bratislava center is leading more and more global projects and we are taking over more complex activities.



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JURAJ BARUS



*Michal, what is the core of that radical strategy that captivated your brand consultants.*

(MG:) Juraj already emphasized the business partnership. I think that sums it up, but let me tell you about how we decided to accomplish it. Clarios Slovakia is offering a very competitive package of benefits but it is also very comparable to what is offered by others. We



**MICHAL NOVOTA (MN)**  
Partner & CEO Restartup