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WORK AND LIFE CONNECTIONS

Success comes at a price. Business leaders face difficult decisions regarding demands on their time on daily basis. The responsibility towards their families and their employees makes them carefully consider each minute of their day. We want to know how they like to spend their time out of work, what inspires them and motivates them.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your professional and personal life?

(JD) I always believed that we are more flexible and adaptable than we think, but it still surprised me how disciplined people were and how quickly we adjusted to the "Covid way of living." It was an intense learning period from all aspects. In work we discovered that we could manage most of our discussions and decision making virtually, however without personal interaction for extended periods, our culture suffers. I was extremely proud to see how Johnson & Johnson handled Covid. The sole focus of the organization was on people, delivering for patients and supporting employees.

At the home front it was confirmed that our society undervalues teachers; in the two weeks it took our school to adjust to virtual classes, my husband and I aged considerably, and our children considered pursuing alternative careers - not requiring an elementary school diploma.

(MF) The pandemic has impacted the lives of everyone in the world. And as it escalated into waves of cases, it rewrote the definition of a casual day. Distancing, being responsible for not just our own lives, but the lives of our closest ones and those with compromised health, or the constant adoption of new restrictions - this

all made it really difficult to keep up the habits we had been building for ourselves. Luckily, at Vacuumlabs, we have always believed in the power of community for the wellbeing of our people. That's why shortly after the first wave, we came up with an internal testing service for our people that allowed them to safely come back to the offices in Skypark if they chose to do so. Just a few weeks later we made this service available to the whole country, as a spinoff company branded as Rychlotest-Covid.

on quality time spent with their loved ones instead of quantity. In terms of daily life, most of our interactions were swapped for video calls, online meetings, and virtual gatherings. Delivery services helped many local businesses survive even without customers on their premises. From the perspective of Vacuumlabs, we were able to start and successfully run our portfolio company for testing - Rychlotest-Covid, which is now part of Novuma.

our children and our dog Gofri. They become very impatient if put off for too long and demand the attention they deserve. I also try to keep to the routine of 30 minutes of yoga each day. When I am on a good track it helps immensely with my balance, both physically and mentally.

(MF) At Vacuumlabs, we are supporting a healthy way of living with a strong focus on work-life balance. I believe that it's important for each of us to get to know ourselves and transform this knowledge into habits. For example, if I know I am not a morning person, I would not try to overcommit to early morning activities but would direct all important tasks to the second half of the day.

and are healthy for me - like my morning workouts at the company gym, lunches with my colleagues in our canteen or the quality time I spend with my loved ones.

What advice would you give to your 20-something-year old self?

(JD) Let me use my favorite quote: "You're enough as you are, don't worry, love yourself and love others". said the horse. "Eat cake" said the mole." (from The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse by Charlie Mackesy).
(MF) Do not rush things, everything has its own time.

What are the parts of your work that still excite you and give you motivation?

(JD) I love working with people, learning from each other, and creating a work environment where we feel motivated and encouraged. So, in short, finding ways to encourage motivation is my motivation. I continue to be inspired by the innovation in drug development and what it means for us, as patients, especially when we can bring this innovation to patients in Slovakia.

(MF) I love a good fruitful brainstorming session with colleagues that helps provide different points of view to ordinary things. I am excited every time when we onboard a new



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Were you able to identify any positive side effects or opportunities resulting from the present situation?

(MF) It primarily slowed down the hectic pace of life many of us considered to be normal and reminded us of the value of freedom. For many this meant refocusing

What is the favorite part of your day and why?

(JD) I like our breakfasts, before the kids go to school. We sit around the table, sip good coffee, admire the early morning sun or fog, and talk about everything and nothing. Jokes are flying, everyone giving and receiving equally. It frames the day nicely and is a good reminder that whether the best or worst day is ahead of you, there will be tomorrow's breakfast.

(MF) I like mornings because I have the ability to influence how my day will look - I usually work out and eat a healthy breakfast which elevates my mood throughout the day.

Do you have any habits or routines that help you maintain your work-life balance and work well for you?

(JD) The best keepers of my work-life balance are



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I am very fortunate to be able to build my routines around the things I love

client after winning the project in a long battle, it means we are really doing an exceptional job.

If you had to make a career switch, in what other profession can you imagine yourself?

(JD) If I switched my profession, I would work in a position where I could advocate for environmental protection in full capacity. However, I believe that there is a lot we need to do as individuals, and I am very happy that I currently work for a company that cares about sustainability and environmental protection and there are important and impactful actions we deliver to reduce our footprint.

What book do you gift or recommend the most often and why?

(JD) It's not exactly a book, I have been gifting colleagues and friends the "Five-minute journal." The journal asks three guided questions in the morning and at night and it provides an opportunity to frame and reflect on your day, to think and put things in perspective. It is the "lazy way out" for people like me, who are just too restless to do proper journaling, but want to enjoy the benefit.

Can you name three sources you have recently learned from or have inspired you the most (e.g. people, books, websites...)?

(JD) Podcast: "Unlocking Us" by Brené Brown, People: David Attenborough Website: Find What Feels Good - Yoga with Adriene

(MF) I am an avid reader of the Economist where I always find the most objective information and learn a lot about the financial sector.

The most inspirational in a long time is the initiative "Ide nám o život" that was formed shortly after the shooting incident in which two young people, members of the LGBT+ community, were killed. The activism of the group is bringing people closer to understanding the key problems and is aiming to depolarize society.

The third one is the place I go every day - Vacuumlabs. No other place contains so many inspiring people like the one we've been carefully building together through the good and the bad times, for which I am extremely grateful.

What is your biggest fear for the generation of your children? What about the biggest hope?

(JD) My biggest fear is that we are not fast and conscious enough about changing our bad habits on this planet and we will make life very difficult for our children and future generations. My hope is that they will be smarter and braver and they will find a way to go back to coexisting with nature.



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(MF) I will reply to this question a little bit more philosophically - where there is no hope, there is no fear. I am a firm believer that technology, when used right, is here to help the next generations in ways we cannot completely predict. Of course, misuse goes hand in hand with innovation, so I am just hoping the ethical values and kindness will stay here to inspire the good in people.



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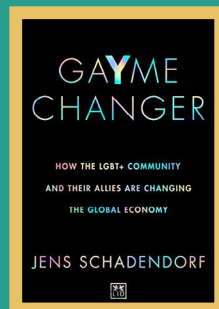


(MF) I don't think I have ever had any doubts regarding the career path I've chosen. Of course I was interested in many other things growing up, but very early in my life I knew the career path I was naturally inclined to. On the other hand I can see myself strengthening my mentoring skills and helping startups figure out how to make their breakthrough.

To provide you with some bookish inspiration, this section of the *Connection* magazine features reading tips from various interesting people related to AmCham Slovakia. We have approached them with the following question:

What book has left the greatest impression on you recently and why?

recommended by



GAYME CHANGER

by Jens Schadendorf

At Vacuumlabs, we are proud to be growing an inclusive and diverse environment. We're not only promoting equality, but trying to educate people in the least biased way. I always recommend a book by Jens

Schadendorf - GaYme Changer: How the LGBT+ community and their allies are changing the global economy. I have a few copies in my office and I encourage people to read it.



recommended by



BITTERSWEET: HOW SORROW AND LONGING MAKE US WHOLE

by Susan Cain

In her first book "Quiet", Susan Cain focused on introverts and their power in a world which seems to be dominated by extroverts. Ten years later, she published "Bittersweet", in which she explores the role of sorrow and longing in our lives. In a culture praising the ideal of permanent happiness and relentless pursuit of success, she stresses the importance of melancholy as a way to find real joy and discover true beauty.

Combining research with her own experience, Cain once again manages to offer a different perspective which makes the reader reconsider his or her basic assumptions. Cain shares her love for her favorite songwriter Leonard Cohen, whose famous lines from his song "Anthem" summarize the book's approach nicely: "There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in."



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