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# WORK AND LIFE CONNECTIONS

Achieving professional success often involves navigating many challenges. The responsibility towards their families and their employees makes business leaders 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.

### What do you currently perceive as the biggest challenge or the biggest opportunity in your life?

(AO) I have just been appointed to a new role as Director Financial Planning and Analysis for Research and Development function in our company, where I will be overseeing financial strategy, budgeting, and performance analysis for R&D initiatives. It is a great opportunity and a big challenge while at the same time I am handling other responsibilities in my other role as Site Lead for our Centre of Excellence in Bratislava. It is a demanding time, especially with the pressures of annual planning and the onboarding of a new team member. On top of that, I have been involved in preparing the deck for our Corporate Senior Leadership Finance review, which has required long hours and a lot of attention to detail - I always aim for perfection in my work.

Challenges are just opportunities waiting to happen. This transition is allowing me to grow, explore a new area, and develop new skills. It is a chance to stretch myself while still supporting my team and ensuring that everything continues to run smoothly.

(SM) I consider the uncertainty in the market - especially in the transport sector - stemming from several factors to be the biggest challenge in my working life at the moment. However, every challenge can be turned into an opportunity...

### What achievement from the past 12 months are you proud of the most?

(AO) Over the past year, my greatest achievement has been stepping into the role of Site Lead for our Centre. This transition wasn't just about setting a new strategy - it was about teaming up with our local leaders to make sure it worked. Their support and openness really made it all come together and employees can see and feel these results. One of the most rewarding aspects of this role has been addressing employee needs more effectively, which led to a significant increase in employee engagement. By focusing on building a supportive and engaging work environment, we have been able to enhance the overall experience for our team members.

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Additionally, I am proud of how we have successfully promoted our site as a key location for senior visits and high-profile meetings. This has not only raised our site's visibility but also highlighted our team's capabilities and achievements on a larger stage. Seeing the positive impact of these efforts and knowing that we are on a path to continue growing and improving our workplace has been incredibly fulfilling.

(SM) Starting in 2024, I took over the reins of the company's management after my predecessor, who had successfully led the company for more than 20 years.

### What is the favorite part of your day and why?

(AO) I actually have two favorite parts of the day. ☑ The first is a slow morning, especially when I'm working from home. Having the chance to enjoy a proper breakfast without rushing sets a positive tone for the rest of the day. It gives me a moment of calm before things get busy. The second is the evening, when I can close my PC and fully unplug. Knowing that the work is done and I have free time to do whatever I want is incredibly refreshing. I am fortunate that my kids are older now and don't need my constant attention, so I really get to enjoy those peaceful evenings.

(SM) Early morning has the most magic for me, the first coffee, a quiet moment with myself before the daily hustle and bustle.

### What regular habit or routine has had the biggest positive impact on your life?

(AO) Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is something I need to prioritize, and I have developed a few habits that work well for me. One key rule I follow is to not work on weekends or public holidays. I make it a point to finish my tasks during the work week so I can spend quality time with my family and friends over the weekends. Planning vacations and breaks with family and friends well in advance is another routine I have established. I even block off my calendar immediately so that these moments are protected. I try to spend all my eligible days during that same year as these breaks energize me a lot.

Exercise is also an important part of my routine, although it became regular only some time ago. I've found that scheduling sessions with my trainer helps me stay committed, so I block time in my calendar for that as well. The same goes for entertainment. Whether it is the theater, cinema, or just catching up with friends, I make sure to block space in my calendar for these activities to recharge and relax.

While these routines have helped me a lot, I'm always striving to improve them. Achieving balance is a continuous journey, but being intentional with my time has made a big difference to me.

(SM) During the COVID period, I started cycling intensively. As it had a very positive effect on me, I joined many people who regularly dress in Lycra, fasten themselves to the pedals (and fall at traffic lights), and overcome themselves.



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

(AO) If I could speak to my younger self, I would say: Invest in yourself early, continuously, and with intention. You are at the start of an incredible journey, and this is the time to explore as many opportunities as possible. Step outside of your comfort zone—often. Have the right people around you who believe

in you. Challenges, especially those that feel uncomfortable, are where you will learn the most. This is where true growth happens. Take those risks, explore the unknown, and don't shy away from failure—it is part of the process, mistakes are important in learning. Two guiding principles that continue to inspire me:

1. Dream what you want to dream, be what you want to be, because you have only one life to do all the things you want to do.
2. The only way to do great work is to love what you do.

With these values in mind, remember that the greatest investment you can make is in yourself and in pursuing the things that truly ignite your passion. This can't be taken away by anyone.

(SM) Enjoy life to the fullest, don't forget to use "please" and "thank you", and ask grandma for another portion of Szeged goulash, because you'll never taste the kind she used to make again.

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

(AO) What excites me most is the opportunity to work with people who are eager to make improvements and are driven by a higher purpose. Seeing that shared energy and engagement always inspires me. I am an analytical person at heart, and love diving into data—whether it is about creating an Excel file, a model, or refining reports using new technologies. The process of optimizing analysis to bring greater efficiency to our work excites me, even when it requires an upfront investment of time. It is always worth it to remove barriers going forward and make life easier in the long run.

I am also a believer in continuous learning. There is always something new to explore, whether it is a new tool, method, or approach to solving a problem. But above all, what motivates me is seeing the team succeed. When they can work independently and accomplish great things without needing my supervision—that is

true success. And nothing beats the feeling of being surrounded by smiling, happy people who are proud of what they have achieved together.

(SM) Interaction with the young generation. Watching how playfully they adapt to new technologies; I like to exchange opinions with them and try to understand their worldview.

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

(AO) Honestly, I am quite happy with the path I have chosen. But, if I were to dream up a different future, I would love to run a facility for active older adults who need companionship, or perhaps a small guest house where I'd bake my own bread and cakes, relax with family and friends, and enjoy the simplicity of life. Both ideas combine connection, hospitality, and a sense of fulfillment.

(SM) My wife says I would make a great gardener. It may be a subliminal persuasion to mow the grass or pick up fallen leaves, but who knows, maybe I could make a living...

**Can you name three sources you have recently learned from or have inspired you the most?**

(AO) Beyond books, I find podcasts to be a great source of both relaxation and learning. For example, I love listening to "Adela a Sajfa" - their podcast is so fun and lighthearted, and they really help me relax in the evenings. When I am in the mood to learn, I turn to "Vedatorsky podcast," "Dejepis inak," or "Dejiny", and even some podcasts about financial investments or maintaining a healthy lifestyle. I always find something valuable to take away.

(SM) I love listening to history podcasts on my frequent travels. It's fascinating to put yourself in the role of Alexander the Great when he first entered Babylon or James Cook when he discovered Hawaii.

**What is your biggest fear for the generation of today's children? What about the biggest hope?**

(AO) My biggest fear

is the extent to which today's children rely on digital technology. While technology offers incredible opportunities, I worry that over-dependence could affect their critical thinking abilities and make them more vulnerable to misinformation, like fake news. It is essential that they learn to question what they see online and develop the skills to think independently and critically. On the other hand, my greatest hope is in their intelligence and adaptability. This generation has more access to knowledge and resources than any before, and they have the potential to use those tools to create positive change. I believe in their ability to utilize the opportunities around them and make the world a better place, using technology in thoughtful and innovative ways.

(SM) I strongly believe that today's generation of children will grasp the digital heritage by the right end and use it to their advantage. My biggest hope is that there is already a child in the world who finds a cure for one of the currently incurable diseases.

**AmCham Slovakia celebrates its 30th anniversary this year - what wish comes to your mind for this occasion?**

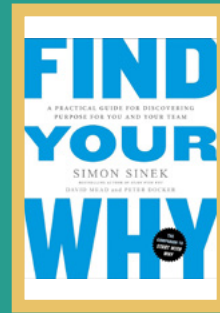
(AO) My wish for this milestone is for continued growth and innovation, just as you have demonstrated over the past three decades. May the community keep inspire and connect individuals through meaningful content and conversations, fostering collaboration and positive change.

(SM) I met AmCham shortly before its thirtieth birthday, so our relationship is still in its infancy, but I know from my own life that relationships formed around thirty have a high added value and I wish AmCham to continue to open its arms to lost souls.

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



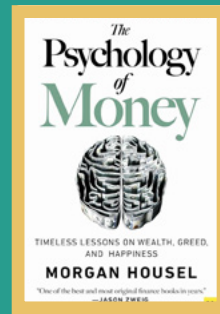
**FIND YOUR WHY**

by Simon Sinek

It's a powerful guide to discovering purpose, not only for individuals but for teams and organizations as well. It encourages deep reflection and

helps people align their work with something meaningful, which I believe is key to long-term fulfillment.

recommended by



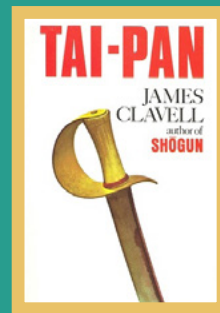
**THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MONEY**

by Morgan Housel

This book explores how our behavior and mindset around money shape financial success more than pure technical knowledge. It offers insights that resonate

on both a personal and professional level, reminding us that our relationship with money is deeply tied to our emotions and decisions.

recommended by



**TAI-PAN**

by James Clavell

Along with all the novels from the Asian Saga, a gem that enriches all readers.