

Trust is essential for a successful company

by  **Mateja Čotar**,
General Director
Oncology Business
Franchise and Country
President of Novartis
Slovakia



When someone asks me what is the most important element of building high performing teams, the first thing I think of is trust. Trust is one of the most substantial values I live by in my personal and professional life. I believe that when you surround yourself with people whom you trust and who trust you, you can achieve the impossible.

That is why I've strived to stick to this belief throughout my entire career. When I was 29, my former CEO in Slovenia told me: "You develop your people by trusting them. Now I place my trust in you, and I want to send you to the Czech Republic". It was my first international experience, which helped me get to where I am today.

I am currently serving as Country President Novartis Slovakia, a position I took up in December 2018. Our key asset is the research and development of innovative drugs that have the potential to reimagine medicine. We bring solutions in therapeutic areas that contemporary medicine cannot effectively treat. In the field of clinical trials, we are one of the largest investors in Slovakia, with over thirty ongoing projects. At the same time, with our Sandoz division, a world leader in generic and biosimilar medicines, we play a crucial role in improving patients' access to treatment.

As one of the key players on the Slovak pharmaceutical market, we are also actively participating in improving the business environment as well as the reputation of the pharmaceutical industry. We want the society to cease perceiving us as pill sellers, but to look at us as a company that helps improve people's health and lives and brings real added value not only to patients but to the whole society. Our ambition is to be an innovator not only in drug development but also in new treatment approaches, sustainable funding and measurement of

treatment outcomes. To be able to achieve this goal, we have to empower teams which will become true partners to the government, payers and other Slovak companies.

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Therefore, we set high standards for our employees. Today it is not enough to have only high medical and pharmaceutical knowledge. The ethical and moral profile, professionalism and teamwork are of great importance. We want to have the best people who share our values and visions. Our people are the most valuable asset for us.

We create programs for personal and professional development of the team members, and of course, we also offer many work benefits. We also strive to create a motivating work environment

and team culture that can attract and retain talented people. In our company, we call it an "unbossing" environment, based on empowerment, personal responsibility, open communication, mutual respect and trust more than on hierarchy structures. Trust and collaboration mean higher personal responsibility of each team member.

I realize that it is not always easy, because we are fighting for human health and lives and the role of each team member is crucial and extremely responsible. Therefore, as a leader, I always try to be available to my colleagues and also to deliver on trust that my superiors placed in me by sending me to Slovakia, where health care is undergoing a turbulent period and facing multiple challenges. These include a lack of people in all areas - whether they are doctors, nurses, executives, etc. We are all on the same boat, and we should all do our best to motivate high profile people to stay and work in Slovak healthcare for the good of patients in this country.

As a pharmaceutical company that actively cooperates with many stakeholders in the healthcare system, I can say that I meet many highly educated and professional people: doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other professionals in state institutions. Many representatives of patient organizations also do an excellent job for Slovak patients.

I perceive Slovakia as a country with huge potential, although

many things do not work ideally compared to other European countries. I see significant gaps in the availability of medicines in oncology. Only 50% of cancer medicines approved by the European Medicines Agency is available to patients in Slovakia, putting Slovakia at the tail of Europe in this area. And that's a pity. I think that Slovak patients deserve better!

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I also meet many passionate people who are courageous and willing to change this situation. I believe that when these forces will align, patients and the society as a whole will finally benefit! With my team, I would like to be a part of this change. We are ready to contribute to it, together with my 260 colleagues and other partners, by creating opportunities for common dialogue with experts, patients, health insurance companies and regulatory institutions in order to bring innovations here. That's why I came to Slovakia. And if we succeed, I will be able say that my stay in Slovakia made sense. The basis for this change is definitely people – the human capital on which the mutual trust and partnerships are being built.