

Slovak Telekom inspires businesses to eliminate prejudices in communications

Slovak Telekom has a long-term commitment to help the community in which it does business thrive. The company has demonstrated its long-standing effort to systematically shape the environment and communities via various social responsibility projects. Most notably, Slovak Telekom has run projects for the hearing impaired since 2002 and recently introduced projects for people with sight loss. We discussed how the company wants to shape the changing society with its Chief Country Officer in Slovakia, Dušan Švalek.



DUŠAN ŠVALEK
Chief Country Officer
in Slovakia, Slovak Telekom



BIOGRAPHY

How would you define the role of businesses in the 21st century?

In the first place, Slovak Telekom as a telecommunications company, has an obligation to help people and businesses to connect with each other. As we move further into the twenty-first century, we need to invest in modern technologies and communication networks to increase the interconnection of organizations, individuals and markets around the globe. We must do this while respecting the environment and focusing on society.

Where do you see Slovak Telekom in this fast-changing Slovak society? How have you integrated corporate social responsibility at Slovak Telekom?

In my opinion, our responsibility as the market leader is to foster innovation and support our customers and all of society on their journey to digitization. We have increased the pace of investment to help digitize the country to assist economic development, especially in the rural areas of Slovakia. I am proud that our customers appreciate our efforts and this is reflected in strong financial results. We perceive a strong obligation and mandate to give back to society.

What is your driving force for reshaping the society?

Businesses drive innovation; create value for themselves as well as for society. I feel there is a shift at businesses from focusing on the bottom line, to having a positive impact on Slovak society and at Telekom we want to take the leading role. Of course, customer

satisfaction and enthusiasm are our driving force, and just having the best network is not enough to ensure a first-class customer experience. We apply the highest standards as regards the environment and social topics, employee education and customer care. In 2018, we were the first company in Slovakia to successfully incorporate into our communication standards a new program of inclusive customer care. Throughout the year, our call center agents and technicians were trained to help better identify barriers impacting customers, to tailor their communication style and better understand customers' needs. The goal was to eliminate prejudices in interpersonal communication in the first line of contact with the customer.

What caused this shift from a profit-first orientation towards a more socially responsible approach?

Well, organizations have realized that businesses are not separate from the rest of society. And society has changed in that employees and customers feel that companies should be responsible for their operations. We have a new generation of employees and customers who are aware of the problems faced by the world and who want to make a change. I believe millennials and the following generations will play an important role as the catalyst of change in society and businesses where profit with purpose is set to become the new standard.

What kind of feedback are you getting from your employees?

The activity was highly appreci-

ated by employees and almost all personnel at customer centers took part in the special training to better identify customer barriers, adapt their communication style and better understand customer needs. This not only helps to improve the customer experience, it also helps employees and customers to better understand each other. And we are continuing to work with NGOs using new technologies such as virtual reality, so that all our employees have a chance to learn. We are very proud to be leaders in inclusive care and we hope we will inspire other businesses to follow.

How do you choose which projects and initiatives to support?

Corporate forms of support are diverse today. One of the best ways is to help in the area where the company operates and is an expert in. Slovak Telekom has been following this path for many years, particularly with regard to the deaf community since 2002 and this year we also extended our support to the blind. However, this is not the only contribution of Telekom to the community and the environment. For example, few people know that most of the electricity that our buildings and transmitters consume comes from renewable sources. And we also run several other projects, often linked to corporate volunteering, in Telekom.

Which projects are you especially proud of?

We have also incorporated aspects of corporate responsibility into our popular summer venue, Magio Beach, which was more

Dušan Švalek completed his education at the Bratislava University of Economics and then at the University of Navarra in the area of business economics and management. He joined T-Mobile Slovakia in 2004 as Director of the Customer Services Division and from 2007 acted as the Executive Director of the Marketing Division. Since then he acted in several managing roles including Executive Marketing Director and later Chief Residential Segment Officer for Czech and Slovak markets, where he was responsible for marketing, sales and customer services in B2C segments. On the first of March 2019 he was appointed as Chief Country Officer for Slovakia.

ecofriendly than ever this year. We used bio-degradable and recycled material for site construction and reduced visual pollution. We reduced plastic waste to a minimum and got rid of disposable cups and straws completely. All facilities at Magio Beach used renewable energy. This popular leisure venue also served as a meeting place for discussions and workshops on diverse topics. We seek to show that in Slovakia much can be done in this direction, if there is a will. Moreover, it "does not hurt" and does not reduce the comfort of visitors. Although we always try our best, there is still a long way to go to achieve the scale required to ensure everyone sees businesses as a force for good.