



# How to develop your skills in a start-up?

## Do universities play a role and who fills in the gap?

15 June 2015, at IMPACT HUB PRAHA, Prague

**This event was part a series of regional cluster events on e-Leadership. It was organised in close cooperation with the European Young Innovators Forum (EYIF), Data4Youth and empirica. It took place at the IMPACT HUB PRAHA and gathered over 50 participants from the start-up and business community, innovative employers, especially from SMEs and start-ups, entrepreneurs, current and aspiring e-leaders, training providers and universities.**

**Werner B. Korte**, Director at empirica presented an overview of the e-leadership requirements of SMEs based on the results from in-depth interviews with 50 high-growth SMEs classified as 'gazelles' and a survey of so far around 100 SMEs (to be expanded to several hundred). It turned out that the proper e-leadership training format for SMEs and start-ups can best be described as a 'tapas bar menu' as opposed to a 'set dinner menu' which would be more appropriate for e-leadership training addressed to C-level individuals in large corporations. The tapas bar approach describes the fact that start-ups and SMEs need to acquire the necessary skills for e-leadership in a piece-meal fashion whereby ad-hoc self-learning is seen as the most practiced way to achieve these. Consultants and professional coaching / mentoring are among the main sources for training used most. Universities and Business School training programmes only seem to play a role where these are of a short duration, modular, flexible and at acceptable fees.

In his introduction on "e-Skills for StartUps: 4 skills you should have" **Kumardev Chatterjee**, EYIF Founder and President continued and presented and elaborated on the following skill set:

- Coding: get your hands dirty
- Cloud management: make a jump in your productivity AND be ready to grow
- Data Analytics: learn how to use your data
- Security, privacy: be careful with data, in particular YOUR data.

The consideration and implementation of these are seen as crucial to successfully start and grow a digital business.

In the following panel discussion on "How to develop yourself and others in a start-up" **Kumardev Chatterjee**, EYIF made the point that SMEs and start-ups can't invest in the training of multiple people and each in specific skills since – given their size - they need (almost) all core skills within one person. These core skills relate to or include what we have started to call e-leadership skills and are not just technology skills but are also strongly related to a specific mindset needed. In this context **Milan Hrabovský**, DPE Director Microsoft referred to the Microsoft BizSpark, a global programme for start-ups with 100,000+ partners in 165 countries offering free access to featured MS technologies and 3 year access to current full-featured software development tools. He strongly recommended to focus on strengths not on weaknesses of people when training them, and also believes that with the coming 'positive disruption generation' the focus of skills training will have to increasingly address the soft and team skills of people.

**Michal Zálesák**, Managing Director of the Czech ICT Alliance spoke about the good number of talented developers in the Czech Republic who need to be encouraged to start their own businesses. Most of their challenges and problems are not in the ICT area but relate to marketing and sales. Therefore skills like those referred to as e-leadership skills are in high demand among this target group. His plea was for role models best illustrating to others how success looks like.

**Hugo de Sousa**, founder of ALPHAPPL and Board Member of JAdemy.ro described the approach taken by his company to properly train people in short-term 3 months programmes for a career in ICT. The programme is sponsored by Microsoft. An important part of these trainings are the soft skills trainings carried out by a former military and following the bootcamp approach since its mainly these type of skills young people are lacking. Participants receive 70 hours weekly tech training in MS dot net and ALPHAPPL is helping them in finding a job through their network of 400+ companies which are contacted monthly. The start took place in March 2014 and the first students were employed already after 2 months (before finishing the programme). In February 2015 the first student started working for Accenture and in April 2015 another one for SAP. In the meantime around 100 students found a job which results in a very good 70% success rate. Apart from that he expressed the opinion that with kids starting coding already at primary

and secondary schools the ground for successful e-leaders in later life could be initiated. He sees major challenges for universities. Universities need to change completely since from his experience professors do not value the lecturing of students but are mainly interested in their research activities leaving a lot of room for improvement in student education and training. Finally, he mentioned what he described as the 'social security problem' thereby referring to an observation that young people and students lack an incentive to study subjects which offer good potential for jobs (like ICT) since they can nicely live on transfer budgets and payments from government sources without having a job. He forcefully demanded a change of mindset for Europe to get back on track.

Finally, **Jindrich Fialka**, founder and CEO of Contiqua presented the case of his company of a team of designers using traffic sign production waste materials for the development of creative lights using the reflector foil of these signs. He himself being an anthropologist by education emphasised the importance of being able to learn how to learn, a skill set which can be acquired for instance through a MOOC on Coursera with the same name 'learning how to learn'.

In the second panel discussion on "Improving e-skills in a start-up and after graduation" a lively discussion emerged after **Hana Maresová**, Vice-Dean at Palacky University presented her universities' activities in training and especially further training individuals through their Lifelong Learning Center using virtual reality applications, **Mojmír Prokop** from Komerční banka the banks' programme addressed to start-ups.

The point was made by several experts that very often lecturers are the problem when it comes to skills training implying the need for many universities to change from only acting as a (basic) education institution mainly through their Bachelor programmes to also become an executive education institution offering smaller courses and specific trainings very much geared towards industry needs very flexibly in a 'tapas' bar fashion as opposed to fixed Bachelor or Master programmes which can be compared to a 'set dinner menu' which would be more appropriate for e-leadership training addressed to C-level individuals in large corporations. The tapas bar approach describes the fact that start-ups and SMEs need to acquire the necessary skills for e-leadership in a piece-meal fashion whereby ad-hoc self-learning is seen as the most practiced way to achieve these.

In the discussion reference was made to the active use and support of Bachelor's and Master's courses of the global pharmaceutical and chemical company Bayer which has been engaging in the area of prevocational and extra occupational qualification for more than a century, and, during the last 10 years, has been increasingly reliant on the new Bachelor's and Master's degrees that have become an important and integral part of the development opportunities it offers. Bayer offers an extra occupational Bachelor's course in biology in cooperation with German universities (since 1997). So far, more than 200 participants have made use of this qualification. The company has also been enabling young executives to obtain their MBA at selected universities in Great Britain, Spain, the US, China, or Singapore as part of the combined vocational training and Bachelor's course "Management and International Business Studies". Additionally, Bayer offers several combined vocational trainings and Bachelor's courses. All of these include very practical elements on extended internships to ensure a good balance of practical and theoretical work and skills development and are seen as good training and preparation exercises for future e-leaders. This led over to what the experts expressed as the urgent need for partnerships of higher education institutions and players from industry which could help a lot in ensuring people/students getting the right type of skills and practical experience on the job helping them to become successful employees and some of which e-leadership skilled experts in these organisations.

Universities and Business School training programmes only seem to play a role for SMEs where these are of a short duration, modular, flexible and at acceptable fees. Consultants and professional coaching / mentoring are among the main sources for training used most by SMEs. This shows that there is room for other education and training players who find it easier to be more flexible, committed, dedicated like for instance organisations like ALPHAPPL. It is not unlikely that the future education and training landscape will see and undergo some urgently needed dramatic changes. However this is likely to take a rather long time to develop since it requires shifts of mindset of multiple actors in the field including the student, time which Europe does not have in order to become more innovative and competitive and through that create the urgently needed new jobs.



The event is supported by the EC in the scope of the service contract to promote e-leadership in Europe (LEAD)

#### **Links to European initiatives and reports on e-leadership and e-skills:**

- European Conference on Digital and Key Enabling Technologies Skills: <http://leadership2015.eu/conference/>

- e-Skills for Jobs 2015 high level conference under the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union: <http://eskillsforjobs.lv/>
- 7 Regional Cluster Events on 'Are you fit for the Digital Economy? Training and Education Pathways for SMEs and Start-ups' in 2015 in Berlin, Madrid, Helsinki, Lisbon, London, Paris, Prague: <http://eskills-lead.eu>
- 10 Regional Cluster Events on 'New Curricula for e-Leadership - Delivering Skills for an innovative and competitive Europe' in 2014 in Sofia, Reading, Madrid, Milan, Munich, Antwerp, Budapest, Aarhus, Paris and Wroclaw: <http://eskills-guide.eu/home>
- European e-Skills 2014 Conference: e-Leadership and ICT Professionalism: <http://eskills2014conference.eu>
- European Guidelines and Quality Labels for new Curricula Fostering e-Leadership Skills: <http://eskills-guide.eu/home/>
- e-Leadership Skills for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises: <http://eskills-lead.eu/home/>
- e-Skills: The International Dimension and the Impact of Globalisation: <http://www.eskills-international.com/index.html>
- European e-leadership skills conference 2013: <http://www.insead.edu/events/e-leadership-conference/>
- [E-Skills for the 21st Century website](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/ict/e-skills/index_en.htm) - DG Enterprise and Industry: [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/ict/e-skills/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/ict/e-skills/index_en.htm)
- Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs website: <http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/grand-coalition-digital-jobs-0>
- European e-Competence Framework (e-CF) website: <http://www.ecompetences.eu/>
- CEN Workshop on ICT Skills: <http://www.cen.eu/CEN/sectors/sectors/iss/activity/Pages/wsict-skills.aspx>
- e-Skills for Competitiveness and Innovation: Vision, Roadmap and Foresight Scenarios: <http://eskills-vision.eu/home/>
- Towards a European Quality label for ICT industry training and certification: <http://eskills-quality.eu/home/>
- E-Skills: the international dimension and the impact of globalisation: <http://www.eskills-international.com/>
- European guidelines and quality labels for Curricula for e-leadership skills: <http://eskills-guide.eu/home/>
- Monitoring and benchmarking e-skills policies and partnerships in Europe: <http://eskills-monitor2013.eu/home/>
- Fostering the ICT Profession in Europe: <http://cepis.org/index.jsp?p=827&n=940>
- Professional e-Competence in Europe: <http://cepis.org/index.jsp?p=940&n=2406>
- Monitoring e-skills demand and supply in Europe: <http://www.eskills-monitor.eu/>
- Evaluation of the Implementation of the Communication on e-Skills for the 21st Century: <http://eskills21.eu/>

## Photographs

< Photograph no. 1 >



< Photograph no. 2 >



< Photograph no. 3 >



< Photograph no. 4 >

