

What's missing in Romania's education system: A tech CEO's perspective

Following our [June interview](#) with Dan Bulucea - Google's New Business Development for APAC - on leadership, naturally, our discussion returned to what makes great leadership. What are those specific situations and contexts that help build better leaders? It turns out, unsurprisingly, that it has to do with education.

But, it's not just primary education and college - the schooling system - it's also about CEO's continuing education - especially since our VUCA environment means that what we've learned is quite soon turned obsolete.

So let's hear Dan and Radu discuss:

Radu: In the first part of our interview - we talked about what was like to start the Google office in Romania and what leadership and innovation mean at Google. Now, taking a step back - I have to ask about two areas that are closely connected to leadership nowadays: technological change and the education system that has to prepare our kids for an entirely different world.

Firstly, you interact a lot with Romanian CEOs by virtue of your position - how do you think they perceive this amazingly fast technological change? How do they adapt?

As I said, I feel very privileged to have been the one to open the Romanian office, because of many reasons: we are very open to technology, we move fast, incredibly fast, we don't seem to have patience. Looking back where we were 25 years ago it's impressive, we skip stages, make errors, we hope to learn from them, all of this very fast.

Yet, in Romania there are still a lot of expats that come here for management positions. I don't know if this shows a lack of competence on our part, or a lack of trust in finding local competence. But this is unfortunate.

Looking at the trajectory that Romania had - coming from a culture that didn't grow any kind of business skill, living in communism, with no schools to form an entrepreneurial mindset - I am amazed at the courage to try, to risk everything in business. This is a courage you don't find often.

Still, we should be sufficiently modest and realistic about it and see what we have to learn next.

We must figure out what are our nation's strong points. It will take some time and effort until we have a national strategy however. As far as I can see we have a very good computer science school that builds amazing minds and businesses known all over the world. And we should capitalize on that.

Radu: Thinking about leadership, what do you think our current education system, for all its misfortunes, should improve most?

As mentioned, we seem to be very well prepared on STEM subjects, yet our school curriculum doesn't cover at all the emotional intelligence area. The ability to relate, to be empathic, to communicate. It's very rare to see a Romanian businessman being comfortable speaking in front of an audience. For any American or English person - this is as natural as it can be - it's only communicating and sharing information, nothing more, things that can be easily trained by exercise, if addressed early on in education. And these soft skills are gaining more and more importance. This happens because knowing something is getting very democratized - you just take an online course and you develop a fairly good understanding of the topic. But if you haven't developed the soft skills at the proper time, they are much harder to grow afterwards. And soft skills can seriously limit leadership.

What about technology and the claims that it changes children's behavior, that they are becoming less sociable. There are even doctors that recommend to restrict access to technology. Do you have any insights on this?

I don't think the issue is with technology per se. I believe that looking at technology as a "savior" for our kids education is fundamentally wrong. Reading a paper book or an electronic book is not essential. What is essential is that we read.

Parents have a major role in positioning technology. The fact that they give computers to children doesn't mean they should spend all their time on computers. Just like, if your kid is tall enough to reach the pedals, it doesn't mean he is ready to drive a car. Somebody has to be next to that kid and show him how to use the Internet, how to make the most of it. On the other hand, the fact that they can choose whatever entertaining content they want - well, this is amazingly different to how we spent our childhood with two hours per day of political content. And I am glad for it.

If you are interested in how to support Romanian education, please read about our NGO - [AVE Romania](#) that is meant to transform the educational system in Romania by 2035.