



## ● **Czech businesses need to get out of their comfort zones to succeed on the global market**

By: Petra Breyerová, 24. 09. 2007, Source: <http://www.cbw.cz>

Clint Lehr, director and owner of Austria-based training and consulting company Cleahr Results is testing the waters of the Czech market hoping to cash in on local companies' desire to learn how to think differently to compete more effectively on the global market.

Lehr spoke with *CBW* after he led his first Czech workshop called Success Strategies—the Five Key Areas of Influence organized by management consultancy **Williams & Partner** Sept. 12 at Hotel Esplanade Prague. The U.S. native surprised the audience of mostly managers at the beginning when he asked them to stand up, create lines and give each other "proper back massages." While in the U.S. people laughed at this practice but didn't mind it, the mostly Czech audience felt uncomfortable, but not as much as participants did in Germany, Lehr said.

The reason behind this unusual—for Europeans—training technique is that Lehr wants people to feel a little uncomfortable to experience what it's like to get out of their comfort zones. People and businesses can grow only if they attempt to move beyond their norms and allow for new ideas, he said. "[Through the massage] people learned that [while] touching somebody you don't know does no harm ... stepping out of the comfort zone takes some guts." The demonstration also helped the audience open up and talk, and an exchange of ideas is crucial for learning and improving, he said.

Lehr set up Cleahr Results in 1997 in the U.S. and moved to Austria four years ago. The company focuses mainly on designing tailor-made training for companies that want to grow and expand internationally. Before moving from the U.S. Lehr was a senior corporate consultant for the **Anthony Robbins** group of companies and also worked for consumer goods maker **Procter & Gamble**, beverage maker **Coca-Cola** and the U.S. military.

### **Q: What does it mean to step out of the comfort zone?**

**A:** It is a number of things. It is meeting people that you would normally not meet. It is being not afraid to express an idea for fear you would be perceived as an idiot. It is taking an idea you have and actually trying to put it into production—whatever that is, as crazy as it may sound.

People are always afraid to do things because they fear they are going to be criticized or they will fail. What happens is that if they never do it, they've already failed before they even started. They don't realize that. When someone [follows through and succeeds with a concept, others] just say they were lucky. But they are not lucky, they were just not afraid to do it. ... because luck is only 'labor under correct knowledge.'

### **Q: Do you think Czech businesspeople should move out of their comfort zones more?**

**A:** I think they'd be more productive if they did, if they just didn't hold [on to] their own [ideas] and learned more about other people's business even if they are not dealing with them directly. Sometimes it is nice to have a meeting just to meet with people, go to networking nights or business meetings, where you can just meet and talk and see what people think, what kind of ideas they have.

**Q: What advice would you give to Czech firms?**

**A:** Businesses just must be willing to try something different. If they want to expand they have to step outside of the norms they have. If they really want to get better they have to look and allow for new ideas.

**Q: In what aspect is Czech business still lagging behind?**

**A:** [Compared to the Czech Republic,] the U.S. is moving at a much faster pace. Just to sum it up, 'we don't want it now, we wanted it yesterday.' Even if you are a Czech company and doing business in the U.S., if you don't do something yesterday, you will eventually get out of the business. Speed is what it is about. In the global market where many other companies have the same type of product and all the products are good, who wins?

**Q: Are you planning to expand to the Czech Republic?**

**A:** I am trying to put feet in the Czech market. Except for Austria, I do lectures in Lichtenstein and am planning to move to other markets such as Poland and Hungary.

**Q: Do you see potential on the Czech market?**

**A:** I think the market here is ready for this [kind of training] as businesses want to expand and go to another level. If the [local] businesses just stick to what they know, they are not going to be able to expand internationally.

Our trainings are custom-tailored to the needs of each company. I can do leadership training for two different companies and the training will be different in each of the forums because their needs are different. We have initial meetings [with companies] where we discuss the outcome goals, challenges, all the things that are going on and ask where the firm would like to see improvement, and what the improvement would mean to the firm. And then I design training based on the [interviews and assessments].

**Q: Are you going to focus on particular sectors?**

**A:** No, if I do that I am limiting myself and I don't like to do that.

**Q: Which sectors here need this kind of training most?**

**A:** Probably the financial sector because it is so traditional in many ways that it needs to come out of that a little bit. Another interesting area for me would be the retail sector.

**Q: What are the biggest challenges for Czech expansion?**

**A:** Building the trust with the Czech market [will be the greatest challenge]. I would love to come back and do some business here with companies. But I fear that I am going to have to actually push them a little bit in order for them to know me. [Companies] may not be ready and may be afraid to have that kind of training. In my presentation I add funny, contagious things. Most people here

think they are going to be lectured in a [drier, more] traditional way—[that is] when somebody talks to them and that's it.

**Q: But there may be other things Czechs may criticize. I am used to the interactive American-style lectures and training, but in the session you let some participants talk too long and they moved away from the topic so much that I got bored and regarded it as a waste of time.**

**A:** But maybe there was an important point for them to get out. Maybe it is something that they never had a place to say this [before]. The interesting thing is that even though it may have been bullshit for you or for other people, maybe this particular person moved on to something else. The exchange [of ideas] took us 10 minutes—well, it is 10 minutes out of our lives, it is not a big deal. The thing is that for that person those 10 minutes may have been very important. Maybe that person will do something tomorrow that will change somebody else's life just because they were allowed to do that [state their opinion]. You never know.