

# Maxim Zagornov: "The most important thing is to never give up"

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**On June 8, Maxim Zagornov, Director of MKS Group, President of the Small Energy Association, and Business Russia's business ambassador in the UAE, turns 50. On the threshold of the anniversary we talked to Maxim Zagornov about what it means for him to be an entrepreneur, what he considers his main achievement in business and life, what helped him to pass through five crises in Russia, to enter foreign markets and what advice he would give to young entrepreneurs.**

- Maxim Alexandrovich, you have been in business for about 20 years. You have created one of the most successful engineering companies in Russia. What does being an entrepreneur mean to you?

- For me, an entrepreneur is, most importantly, an opportunity to realize my creative potential. Maybe someone goes into business for the "long ruble" or someone has dreams that if they become an entrepreneur, they will live somewhere in the Bahamas and everything will be created by themselves. I can disappoint you: there is no such thing. In general, I have always had a lot of ideas. And working at enterprises or working in state structures, where everything is clearly limited and regulated, where they work according to the principle of "keep your head down" and "don't do anything extra" - it depressed me. That's why I started my own business, became an entrepreneur, and it allowed me to realize my ideas, my dreams. So the main thing is

creative realization.

- Do you remember the moment when you decided for yourself that you wanted to run your own business and not work for hire or, for example, develop in politics?

- It didn't all happen so easily, not in one moment. I tried it first - I got a job in a large company as an ordinary sales manager, to see how well I would be able to communicate with people, whether I would be able to run my own business. And when I saw that I could do it, in 2000 I organized my own company in Tomsk and started reagent-free water treatment. I wasn't lucky enough to be born lucky or married lucky - I achieved everything by my own labor. There was no start-up capital as such. I saved up some money, invested in the business, and that's how it all began.

- Today, having traveled this path, what achievements are you proud of and consider significant? Not only in business, but in life in general?

- For me, the most important achievement is that I have realized what I wanted to do. Maybe not one hundred percent, but eighty percent, but what I wanted to do, I did - I realized. This is the most important thing for me. I realized myself as a manager, I realized myself in projects, both Russian and foreign.

We were not afraid to dream. I remember walking along Kirovka and seeing the Chelyabinsk City business center. We looked at it - it was such a gorgeous building. We thought: "It would be great if our company were located here. Some time later, we were already in this building. Then we had the goal of entering foreign markets. And after 3 to 4 years, we entered foreign projects. Now we have very interesting work abroad: in the United Arab Emirates, in the countries of the Persian Gulf. Everything started with a dream, with an idea, and then we realized it.

- Why do you think you are able to do what you do? Team, clients, circumstances, is it all down to you personally?

- I think in every business, first of all, the leader is very important. As a rule, a team is created around the leader, structured around him. And the leader is always the person who sees further, sees ahead. And the team believes in him, he leads the team. Of course, because the team believes in this leader, they are able to move forward and work together. That is why in any business there must be a person, an enthusiast, who drives the whole process.

- What qualities should an entrepreneur, that very leader, possess?

- It is very difficult to answer this question. There is no secret to success as such. Of course, they try to describe it in books, to systematize it somehow, to show some kind of path in business: if you have read it, if you have some knowledge, you will definitely

succeed. But the real situation is that in every business, in every case, a person's individual qualities turned out to be necessary for that particular business, for that particular project, and only then did it work out. The most important thing I would like to advise is, of course, to never give up. I believe that our businessmen achieve some results only because they overcome some difficulties and never get discouraged. Something didn't work out, it's hard, the responsibility for people is constantly festering, all these moments in the country and the rearrangements that take place... Of course, any person would be thrown off balance by this. But businessmen are such strong people, who despite everything go to their goal and do not bend. This is a very important point, so that a person does not bend despite any problems.

- Doing business in Russia is extremely difficult. What is your growth driver?

- It's very difficult to say. It's like the proverb: if you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans. This is the problem of planning. In fact, it is very difficult in our country, and in general, to plan something for a long period of time in advance. Of course, our financiers and bankers like to have a 10-20 year planning horizon. But life overturns and overturns all this. Over these 20 years, so many events have taken place both in the country and in the world. And each time we have to adapt to new challenges. We sit down and figure out how to work under the current conditions. So it is something new every time. It is impossible to plan anything here.

- If you had to start everything from scratch, for example, in another sphere of activity, in another country, would you succeed?

- I think, of course I would. Businessmen, I would say more precisely - entrepreneurs (I like this word better) - are people who do not sit still, they always need something, such engines, which in any environment, in any country, are bound to come out. And there are a lot of such examples. People who have moved from our country to other countries, practice shows that if they have proved themselves here, if they have been successful, they quickly emerge and become successful there as well.

- What is your global goal now?

- The most important thing in our conditions is to preserve the company and our team. This is the most important goal. Frankly speaking, the challenges are so serious now, we have something going on every month, something is changing. So the most important thing is to keep the team together. And we are working on it. This is our main task.

Well, and the global task: as we had planned, we are entering foreign markets. We used to be a regional team, a regional company, and then we became a federal company - we started working all over Russia. Now our scale is already in the CIS and

far abroad. We would like to become a global company in our energy segment.

- What does family mean to you?

- Family is the most important thing for every businessman. Because every man needs a back-up. Frankly speaking: as a rule, those entrepreneurs who have a strong family are more successful. There are no unnecessary problems that bad family relationships can bring. It can just ruin a business, something that I have seen many times: businesses just fall apart. All these problems in the family, bad relationships, they can really bring down any successful person.

And I'm for the idea that the family is the cell of our society. I am in favor of strong families. And I would like to wish everyone to have strong families, more children, more successors to our cause.

- What qualities would you like to instill in your children?

- The most important qualities I would like to instill in my children are respect for other people, respect for money, love for the Motherland and our people, because these are very important moments. I am a supporter of the proverb "Where you are born, there you are useful". There is no point in traveling and looking for a better place somewhere, this better place should be created here, where you live. And I would like my children to have those qualities.- What inspires you to do something that brings you joy?

- That's a difficult question. I think it's a combination of different moments. That and the joy of the work. I like my work. I really like doing business, my job is my favorite. I like new contacts, communication with interesting people - something that allows me to develop as well. I also like the cultural part - I enjoy visiting theaters and going out whenever possible. It's also sports and traveling. Of course, all my travels are work-related. I visit the countries where I have a job. There is not enough time to visit Thailand, for example. It is mainly the Emirates or Europe. But such work trips, they give me an insight into people's real lives. I do not immerse myself in the tourist format, when I arrive and see a beautiful picture, but by talking to people, I understand how they live there. What are the disadvantages of life in Europe - it is clear to me, and what are the pros and cons in the Emirates. And looking at all this, I can frankly say: we also have many pluses in Russia. We have a wonderful country. So, returning to the answer to your question, I would say that this complex, which brings joy, is diverse.

- Today, looking back at your path in business, in life, how would you characterize it - is it difficult, thorny, interesting, or driving?

- It seems to me that all entrepreneurs who started from scratch, who are going on their own, have a rather complicated path. And it is their own, individual path. And I think, as he is, that's how he should be accepted. Everything happened along the way. But it is thanks to the team and the support of my wife - she is my business partner - that we have overcome everything and are moving on.

Even if something could be changed, I would not do it. Basically, the way it was, the way it happened. Everyone has their own path. And the interest here is also in the process itself, how you go about it. To be honest, I'd like to keep going. If you have traveled the road, that means you have reached the finish line, then what? The road, I believe, never stops for an entrepreneur. It's a road that's always going on. And that's what makes it interesting.

- And in conclusion, a blitz poll, please answer briefly. What would you invest in without hesitation, even if it were your last money?

- There is a general principle of investing, and I agree with it - in education.

- Complete the phrase: "To make the coolest product, you need to..."

- You need to not repeat anyone else.

- The best motivation for you?

- Creativity.

- I'm an entrepreneur and this....

- Interesting.

- Thank you very much for the conversation.

Talked to Maria Nevolina