

the book
OF *stories*

for those
who are
over
20

2011



**Represented in
Three countries: Russia, the Ukraine, Belarus.**

**Ten cities: Moscow, St. Petersburg, Tyumen,
Orel, Smolensk, Kiev, Dnepropetrovsk, Kharkov,
Minsk, Brest.**

**Comprises 24 enterprises: 21 car dealerships,
one car importer, one distributor of engine and
industrial oils, one car transporting company
(Citycar).**

**Headcount 2839 employees in total
2148 men
691 women
average age - 34 years**

Dear Friends!

The book you are holding in your hands has been published for the twentieth anniversary of Atlant-M Holding Company. What's interesting: the book was preceded by a wall pull-off calendar which was published in 2001 to mark the first serious date in the company's life. Yes, it was similar to calendars that people hang on a wall and tear its sheets off one by one with every passing day.

In that pull-off calendar, which is still kept by many employees of Atlant-M, there were quite straight-forward jokes, caricatures, employees' dates of birth and funny stories «from the company's life».

The book published for the twentieth birthday differs from the pull-off calendar in the same way Atlant-M Holding Company of 2011 differs from itself of a decade ago. However, the book and the calendar have something in common: you will find many stories here told by people who actually took part in the events. The stories are different: you will find them funny, amusing, sad and sometimes even offensive. But they are all interesting. And they are all related to Atlant-M Holding Company, to the people who make it up, who surround it and, who have given the company its present shape. The stories from the first person are told by: the founders, top managers, employees of all levels, partners, friends and even competitors.

In other words, you are holding 20 years of a successful company's life, a chronicle of the whole epoch, which is not stated in a matter-of-fact manner but described in vivid colours, with vigorous brushwork of a steady hand.

Just read it.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BOSSES SPEAK OUT

THE CHAPTER WHERE THE TOP-MANAGERS
OF ATLANT-M INTERNATIONAL AUTOMOBILE HOLDING
TELL THEIR STORIES OF HOW THAT ALL BEGAN.

To Be Ready to Become Happy

It Is Better To Do Business Together

My business activity began in Moscow when I was a student of the Institute of Civil Aviation. Igor Malgin and I shared a room in the student dorm and we were engaged in... trade. At that time it was not a way for us to become rich. The only purpose of doing that was to have enough money for a night club to meet some pretty girls and buy them some good drinks. We spent at night what we earned at daytime. We never wanted to make savings. That was a real joy and that made the global difference which came later, after the student days. We understood then that our whole life was still ahead of us and there was no need to save, so we seized the day.

There were plenty of ways to earn some money. We tried various methods. For instance, it was always difficult to buy tickets to Moscow theatres. Groups of students came to theatre ticket offices late at night and lounged around them the whole night through. It was a sort of a sporting contest, like rugby, and the goal was to drive the competitors away from the ticket office. The ticket office opened at 9 o'clock, and those who had managed to be in the vanguard could buy the best tickets. Those tickets were later sold twice or thrice the price.

Huge Dynamo complex was situated just opposite our student hostel. You could work as a barman there. There were standards regulating the weight of food sold, for example, the weight of sausage slices, but students used to make them thinner. As a result instead of, let's say, ten sandwiches with sliced sausage, you could make twelve.

I always considered myself as a law-abiding citizen and I understood, of course, that it was not quite good. That's why, when I was about to get the

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driving license, I decided to work as a freight handler to earn the money for my driving classes.

For two months and a half I had to be earning monthly the amount which I used to earn for two or three days. This money was earned absolutely honestly, though. At that time every morning Igor Malgin ate fresh buns, yoghurts and cottage cheese mixtures which I brought home from my working shifts.

Igor and I were always very different. We met by accident. I happened to live alone in my dorm room during for the first three or four months of my studies. The lad who had to live with me hadn't arrived for some reason. Malgin lived in another block of rooms, and a friend of ours once told him:

- Why do you live over there? There is a good fellow here, you can move to his room.

When Malgin moved in I warned him that it would be very difficult to get along with me. Igor surprised me as we had rubbed along happily! Next year it will be 30 years as we have been rubbing along.

Malgin is my friend. All the time that we lived in the dorm, we divided everything in two. And then we gave the word that we would divide everything equally, no matter what we would do. We have kept the word. There was nothing boyish or idealistic about it. It is better to do business together. This is my point of view. Should I have to begin everything anew today I would do everything with the same people and exactly the same way.

I really enjoy my work; it gives me energy. Viktor Astreiko has invented the phrase (at least I ascribe it to him): people have their own way to success. My way to success, my strongest side is that I can find talented people and talk them into working with me, for me and for my idea. I appreciate the company and the partnership, and I can pick out those people who are really worth something. Before offering a partnership I watch the person closely for a long time. The same was with Sergey Savitsky. At that time I organized a window cleaning cooperative. Sergey Savitsky worked in Igor Riabov's team. I noted that he was very responsible, very quick-witted. There was something about him which I needed in my partner. That's why when we began setting up of Atlant-M Brokerage House,

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he was the person whom I offered to join us. When a person is at work you can see his actual worth at a glance.

The Iron Guys

I can't stop telling this cautionary tale. It happened when our company was just set up. Sergey Samoylo joined the company at that time. He is an outstanding person. He had served in the assault forces, before coming to work for us. The discipline is really tough - drop down and give us push ups... Sergey Samoylo applied those «military-style» approaches to managing people. I was always in favour of freethinking in the company, that's why I told him:

- Sergey, you will never become a top manager of Atlant-M because you are like that.

To give him his due, he heard me, began learning and actually amazed me by ending up as the Chief Executive of the whole region! Today he manages the Holding in Belarus. This is really a story to learn from. That's the people who work for our company!

In 1990 Igor Malgin and I almost simultaneously registered two Atlant-M brokerage Houses, at first in Minsk and then in Moscow. We started business from brokerage firms in Minsk, we did the same in Moscow. In Moscow we also bought some stands and placed them along roads. It was very «trendy» and very profitable at that time.

We got our first considerable amount of money when I went to Belarusbank to Tamara Dmitrievna Vinnikova and took a loan. I told her about our activities as brokers. She believed me and gave us a credit of 50 thousand roubles. We bought a place at Minsk commodity exchange and began working.

Savitsky was a broker, he bought MAZ trucks. We drove those MAZes to Moscow to Malgin and sold them there. After we earned our first money, Igor bought a share of Russian Automobile Exchange at VDNKh in Moscow. We bought Zhiguli cars and drove them to Minsk. Those Zhiguli's were sold by Serezha Savitsky, Andrey Budchenko and Sasha Pyrko. We worked in the two cities from the very start and drove cars and trucks to and fro.

There were many stories of any kinds some of them were funny, some were really dramatic. We could have lost our friend Vadim Ivanov. He drove

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a car from Kaluga and got into an accident. He was then literally pieced together in Sklifosovsky Institute. Professor Sharipov who performed the surgery is still a friend of ours.

Exactly as Karl Marx Wrote

Frankly speaking, I realized that I am a rich man just a couple of years ago. That happened because my partners were too persistent in it. For example, Malgin said:

- I say, Oleg, it's time we spent more money than we earn.

Until that day everything was done as Karl Marx put it: you do something and you receive some added value. You build up that added value and thus new capital is accumulated. You invest it again and create new added value. I have not reached the top in just one jump. I was approaching it step by step. Atlant-M is not a moth which has flown up in a flash. It is a road roller which is rolling, and rolling, and rolling. It moves slowly, but you can't stop it. Look! It is already on the top.

Until 2000 we had no clear corporate management structure. At that time everything was done in the «big-boys-trying-to-act-like-adults» style. Everything was lumped together and mixed up. Malgin invited someone to join the company promising: «25 percent of shares will be yours». I invited someone else: «Your stake will be that high». No one understood the difference between a joint-stock company and, say, a limited liability company. That continued until conflicts broke out. They made us build a well-defined corporate management structure and make a clear differentiation: this is Atlant-M, that is Velikan, and that is Avtodin, and that is Aljans. That happened only in 2001.

We had a supervisor for every business direction. Savitsky was in charge of Volkswagen, Pyrko was responsible for VAZes, and Malgin's specialization was everything related to MAZ trucks. And I, as a rule, was never engaged in sales. I was busy with the strategy and budgeting.

I have a sort of a proverb: in your life you must always be ready to become happy. You will definitely have a lucky regularity or a regular chance which you are waiting for. A regular chance of the kind for us was opening Volkswagen dealership in Sharangovitcha Str in Minsk in 1998. Probably it was the best dealership in the CIS at that time.

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The Torah of Business

Our partnership has managed 20 years mainly due to our clear-cut arrangements. The principle of Atlant-M has been as follows: at the beginning we agree about the things without lawyers. This is the most important point for us. After that we call lawyers and assign them the task: «Since we operate in this country and in accordance with this law, can you formalise our arrangements as close to our actual agreement as possible? The task is to make everything legally binding». And they do this.

The basis for all that is our personal arrangements. This is our Torah, the Holy Bible which we keep to. Despite the actual interpretation of the law, and the fact that there would be different decision taken in the court. No partner has been disappointed yet.

Our partnership continues due to our honest man-to-man arrangements made on a shore. They exist on paper as well. What made us put them on paper?

In 1999 - 2000 a corporate conflict broke out. There were two more founders except for us four: Andrey Budchenko and Dmitry Tiasin. Budchenko had been working with us since our first days at Minsk Refrigerator Plant. He was very strong in management, I should say. He was not afraid to take on any type of work. Thanks to his organizational skills he promoted Atlant-M business. Dima Tiasin had been the Chief Architect of Frunzensky District of Minsk before he joined us. I came to him when we were looking for a lot to build our Volkswagen dealership facility. He offered me: «You will make me a founder of your company - and I will help you build the dealership. I discussed the issue with the guys. Malgin said that we should be careful with all that. My position was more open. Savitsky supported me. This is how Dima Tiasin joined us. It's a great achievement of his that we built the car dealership facility in Sharangovitcha Str. However, a business can't be managed by a pack or a herd of animals; there must be a strict system of corporate management. Although there are shareholders, there must be a director, deputy directors and so on, there must be a sort of a hierarchy. Dmitry did not understand that:

- How on earth? I am a shareholder! Husaenov, you can't boss me around, I'll do what I want.

Dmitry was always starving for money. From the very beginning there

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was an agreement between all the shareholders that all that we would earn must be invested in the business. Tiasin did not want to invest, he wanted to spend. And as far as he was responsible for construction contracts he began receiving kickbacks from our contractors. He was given away by his own contractors. They didn't get along with him, so they told us the whole system in detail. We all met and told him:

- Dima, we cannot exclude you from the shareholders, but we can't work with you either because you cheat on us. So, go away.

He hired a sort of a squad which started putting pressure on us and establishing their gang style rules. Malgin assumed a wise position then: «Let's not fight. Let's meet in my summer house near Moscow. We'll sit down and write down the whole structure».

Dima was a friend of Budchenko's wife. So, he managed somehow to pull Andrey to his side through his wife. Everybody came to the summer house except for them, those two did not show up. Savitsky called Tiasin: «Dima, why haven't you both arrived?» And he replied literally the following: «I wouldn't touch you all with a barge pole».

So we gathered without them. We spent five days to define everything: what our company was, how it looked liked, how it was managed, who the shareholders were, how the dividends should be divided, how meetings of the Board should be called for and so on. We agreed that we three would own Atlant-M and all other companies would be separate: Velikan, Avtodin. Our system of corporate ownership and management has been functioning since 2001. We got a clear vision of how the companies were divided. All that was caused by the conflict.

A conflict is a good thing, too, it moves you forward.

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Business and War Are Incompatible

When a conflict breaks out, you must act formally in accordance with the law of the country you live in. We hired lawyers. If you keep acting in a proper way, the state machine will finally begin working for you despite all the strong-arm tactics employed against you.

I remember a funny incident. «The tough 1990's». Dima Tiasin hired a retired general from KGB or border forces, a really tough protection racket, to have the dispute between us «settled». They got in touch with

me and set a time to meet me at Staraya Square near the Kremlin. They chose the place just to show me how powerful they were. I also had friends in the Kremlin and I asked them for help. They did not refuse me. So we all met at Staraya Square.

My guys asked the retired general:

- So why have you set the meeting on the front steps to this building, have you got a pass to this establishment?

- No, I have no pass.

- And we do have passes. So, we invite you for a talk in a quiet environment. We passed to Staraya Square and the «big men» from my side said: we don't like if someone hustles our friends; settle the conflict peacefully.

This has been our policy ever since: everything must be settled peacefully, within the limits of the law, without the use of force. Business and war are incompatible. You either do business or conduct a war. I am a true born businessman, I love doing it, and, naturally, I never want conflicts. I am not afraid of them, because I grew up in a small criminal town where you could not visit a shop without being stopped by hooligans demanding your money. I went in for boxing when I was five so I was never afraid of conflicts. However, the old wisdom says: a lean compromise is better than a fat lawsuit. And in business this is hundred percent true. Money likes silence.

The Beauty of a Debt Is Its Payment

Another proverb is that the beauty of the debt is its payment. My parents taught me the following concept: if you borrow money from someone you should always pay it back. If you take the money - you must give it back. I am really fortunate in having such a Finance Director as Timofei Marcinkevich. He preaches the same moral principles. Of course, Atlant-M and all our companies work with debts. A crisis may break out, of course, when it is utterly difficult to pay back your debts, but you always can reach an agreement with your lenders.

I am really proud of the way we managed the crisis. Just imagine: a powerful long-haul truck with trailers drives along an autobahn at full speed of 200 km/h. Bang! The crisis! Suddenly the autobahn has ended; the

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road has become narrow and impassable. The truck must have overturned, it must have collapsed. It must have been twisted and folded. But those 19 years were spent to develop a supreme manoeuvrability. Our «truck» has managed to slow down and drive along this impassable road. It is just an image-bearing expression. If we turn back to reality, then...I had a strategy of company development, which was to make a powerful «dash» forward, and I borrowed money for that. So we were caught by the crisis with USD 300 million of loans, of which USD 60 million were bonded loans. All unsecured. Actually the money had been given to us on our word of honour. Bonded loan is deemed to be an unending loan, the period of which is constantly prolonged. However, everything works differently in times of crisis. So, we were told that we would have to redeem the bonded loan in two months. But how? In fact, we didn't have such money. Atlant-M team gathered together, did some hard thinking and... came up with the way to redeem all the loans. There were two ways to do that. We were stocked up. We began selling out just to accumulate cash; selling at a loss was part of the strategy. Secondly, we had facilities, for example, our car dealership facility in the centre of Moscow called Na Sadovom. It was a good property for sale, even in times of crisis. And we sold it.

I was very proud of the team which I managed and of the manageability it demonstrated. This gave me a powerful drive. Another great credit of Atlant-M was that we gave a turn to the whole car market. Incomavto hadn't managed to redeem a bonded loan a month before. Investors shot car dealers down. Like, this wasn't an activity to be busy with in times of crisis. Bank loans turned unobtainable immediately. Banks began calling dealers and demanding their money back. Generally speaking, no one expected that we would redeem the bonded loan. However, we did redeem it. Then investors changed their point of view: oh, everything is not that bad in automobile business! Avtomir was the next company to redeem their loans, and then investors calmed down and ceased calling us every day.

On the whole, money can't buy you a reputation. I do want to be able to take a billion just on my word. And it is going to be this way.

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The Enigma of the Letter «M»

Why are we called Atlant-M? Everyone has a version. Everyone thinks that I am the only person who knows the answer. Actually, no one knows it. All the versions are true: youth (molodiozhny in Russian), Minsk, Malgin, Moscow, modern. All these are good and do represent the company.

All right, I will disclose the secret. The letter M in the name of Atlant-M takes its origin from aviation. We serviced Tu-154 aircrafts. Then Tu-154 was replaced by Tu-154 M which looked absolutely identical but was highly upgraded both technically and functionally. At that time I got that when something was upgraded and one machine was replaced by another, the name wasn't changed, just a letter was added.

At the beginning we were called Atlant Youth Production Centre. Then we changed the name to Atlant Brokerage House. I proposed:

- Let's add the letter M.

And it was added. It was in line with everything: Minsk, Moscow, youth, modern. I personally like the «youth».

My Great Incentive

Now I will disclose the secret nobody heard of. Actually I am a very selfish person. I care about myself only. I enjoy the work I do enormously. The Work. I have a clear vision of what I do and what I do this for. I depend on work. I am a workaholic. This is bad for my family, I suppose. But this is good for others. You can do your business continuously and without a backward glance only if your family is happy. Your rear must be secure. My second wife is a reward for my not having played mean tricks in my whole life. Now she is the Chief Executive Officer of our family. This is my secured rear area, so that nothing impedes my moving forward. The man is like a ship. It leaves the harbour in the morning to put out to sea. There may be storms and shoals and anything can happen with it. But in the evening it must return to its safe harbour to have a rest there. To put out to sea again next morning.

Every day over all these years I was happy. I changed so many things in my life. But I was doing that not because I was unhappy. I make changes in order to make the happiness continue. And as soon as you stop there never will be happiness again. Professor Sharipov, a friend of mine, tells me: «You are paranoid. You just cannot sit still. You can't enjoy things». I have been

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laughing at this. But now I am likely to agree with him. Again and again I need challenges and new projects.

One of the frequently asked questions is that about my goal. The anticipated answer is: money. A billion, two, three billions. Yes, my goal is money. Because when put to good use it is a great power which can help many people. It is of great help for further development as well. Our group of companies employs more than four thousand people. They are respectably paid, they maintain their families and children. However, I want to employ not four thousand but eight thousand people. This is also my goal.

I have my personal weak points. For example, I am a red-tapist. When not put under strict conditions, I can dawdle about all day through and eventually do nothing. That is why I always schedule my time and write my plans down in my day planner. My moment of complete happiness is when I check the points I have fulfilled.

New Challenges

I am a predator by nature and I cannot stay my hunger. The very idea of «putting on flesh» and collecting money is of no interest to me. I found the project which, say, is the dream of my whole life. It is Zubr Capital Management Company. Generally speaking, it is an enormously risky undertaking. As a matter of fact, I just left for nowhere, the same way as I did in 1990 when I left my job at Minsk Refrigerator Plant. I had nothing then but I felt that we guys would manage to do something.

Even before the crisis broke out I had considered leaving the company and looking for new possibilities. I could not just leave it in the grip of the crisis. We have fixed it, put it right, and now Sergey Savitsky takes the wheel to move forward. I am sure he will do this very well. With Savitsky at the wheel Atlant-M can advance significantly. He is a front-line officer. He has a fabulous flair. My strong side is in the back office, i.e. organisation of business processes and the strategy, whereas Sergey is really strong in operations, sales and marketing. He is a forceful person!

I have a new complicated task. There are more challenges for me in my new project than in the automobile business. Private equity funds are a whole industry which arose in the 70's of the previous century. They are

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developing all over the world, but Belarus has not been involved in it until now. If I decided to start this business in Russia I would not be able to do that because there are monsters of their own, such as Troika, Renaissance. In the Ukraine there is Horizon Capital. But in Belarus the niche is vacant and this is our chance. I have been engaged with the fund for the year and a half and I have formed a brilliant team. I believe it is the best one in Belarus.

We are better trained than others and even the foreign experts we communicate with admit it. There are first-class Belarusian companies well-known to everybody which, generally speaking, do not know where to go. If asked about their prospects for the next decade they would only shrug their shoulders. Capital is helpless when the future is uncertain. And Zubr Capital I am in charge of now is a very strong in setting goals.

My Whole Way Is Still Ahead

How do I picture myself 20 years from now?.. I still will not be retired by that time; I'm likely to work at that time. It will be either Minsk or Moscow. A birthplace determines a walk of life. My favourite climate is the atmosphere of the office. It heals me. My office will be on a high, but not higher than the fifteenth, floor. There will be a lot of young people in the office. It is more than likely to be in Minsk. I like this city. I will live in an estate somewhere near Lake Naroch. And I will spend all my free time with my family. My office will be situated next to my home. I will not fly there by helicopter and it will not take me more than 15 minutes to get to the office. I will buy either an office near my home or a home near the office.

By no means I want to say that I am totally successful. As soon as you think of yourself as of a man who has reached all his goals, it is time for you to retire in order not to get in the way of those who still work for their goals.

I have never tried to make sense of the way passed. Because my way is still ahead.

I wish Atlant-M Holding not to lose its energy and willpower ever. If you keep these two, the company will prosper and develop for the years to come.

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20 Years - The Flight Goes on As Planned

How Oleg and I Were Making the World Cleaner

I met Oleg Husaenov at a birthday celebration of Igor Riabov, a friend of mine. It was in 1988 or something like that. I was a student then and Oleg had been just placed to Minsk Refrigerator Plant after graduation from the Institute. We were united by a fascinating and profitable business - a window cleaning cooperative.

Our Youth Production Centre was registered at Consumer Service Centre in the town of Zaslavl near Minsk, and Oleg was its Director, Chief Accountant and, actually, its «brain». We earned good money and the job was a kind of sought-after. We washed windows in the Government House, in the building of Belgosproject Institute, not somewhere. We did that personally and by hand. Straps, mops, cleaning cloths, cleaning agents - and go ahead, make the world cleaner! We washed some buildings just for ourselves, for example the bookstore on Lenina Avenue. We weren't paid for that but they let us in the holy of holies - the cellar, where we could choose books and buy them at a state price. Books were nowhere to find at that time. We worked for the brewery as well. Carrying beer out of the brewery building was prohibited, but we could taste the first unfiltered beer directly from the tank.

So, when a student, from 1988 till 1991, I happily earned my living window cleaning. I studied by day, then we washed windows till eleven in the evening, and at the weekends we made trips to Poland. Sasha Pyrko was a member of the Komsomol Committee and he managed to pop us into tourist groups, and we sold different things at Polish markets. When almost all goods from Belarus had been taken to Poland by such "tourist businessmen", we made trips to some exotic places, like Ashkhabad, for example. We bought goods there to take them to Poland. We did that until

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Oleg once said:

- I am fed up with that. We make good money, though the scale is insufficient. So, Savitsky, manage the cooperative, while I think something up.

I had just graduated from the institute when Oleg decided to open a brokerage house. My question was:

- What's that?

He explained:

- Look, old business relations have been destroyed by now. We will buy places at exchanges, we will go, buy and sell. We will re-establish those relations.

Graduating from the institute I was placed to the Ministry of Justice. I was the second best student of my class, and best students were taken to the Research Institute of Forensic Investigation to continue scientific research which was considered a good placement at that time. I even started working there. It took one day only... It was the moment to make the choice.

Making the Choice

A fabulous placement, a cool salary, an interesting job were on the one hand and some brokerage house - on the other. Not an easy choice to make. In fact, I was quite young at that time, not really quick-witted, and I wanted to share the responsibility with someone else. So, I came to my father. He said:

- You're nuts! They offer you a brilliant job, and you want to change it for some sort of a private business. Are you insane?! Only guys with connections or money can do that.

I listened to him and I went to my father-in-law. He said:

- Why not try?

The scales looked pretty balanced. The relatives' advice wasn't of real help. So I decided to talk with my wife. She knew Oleg and we made the choice together: the brokerage house.

To leave without a scandal, I had to arrange the matter with the boss. I came to my chief on my second working day:

- So and so, I want to take my papers back.

- Why?

- We have an idea to start a business: we are buying places at different exchanges and we'll sell things.

- The idea is good, indeed, but you won't make it. You have no ties, connections...

As he said that I got piqued. Why are we destined to fail?! It provoked a sort of constructive anger. And excitement like in sports. The chief allowed me to quit.

Atlant-M Brokerage House

The idea was as follows: we visited enterprises and made brokerage agreements. Manufacturing plants had products which they could not sell and there were people somewhere who needed that products but could not buy them. We got brokerage fees for arranging that. Surely, the fee wasn't 5%, it amounted to some 20 - 30%. Actually, we got the first salary making the first brokerage agreement. We charged 500 roubles for an agreement. It was in 1991, at the very beginning. The goal was to earn 3500 roubles per month, which meant seven agreements. The ball was in our court, so we visited enterprises, persuaded them, made agreements.

At that time we had a kind of an office at the Komsomol Committee premises. There was a girl, Sveta by name, who sympathized with us, so she allowed us to use a desk in the Komsomol Committee of Frunzensky District Executive Committee. We stored all our papers there. However, they were quite few. The windows looked out on the yard. I remember this very well because during the August Coup of 1991 the Komsomol Committee was closed as a political organisation, so we escaped from the building through the window.

We needed some focus. We delivered oil, timber, paper from Syktyvkar and Tyumen. So, we started developing oil products trade. Later we even had several filling stations. Timber and paper was promising area as well. We started expanding our customer base and establish new connections there. At some time trams circulated through Minsk with the advertising slogan: «Timber. Oil. Paper. Atlant-M Brokerage House». That was the story of our brokerage business.

Then we arrived at Rosavtobirzha (Russian Automobile Exchange). We bought four Zhiguli cars there and started moving in a new direction. Our automobile business began developing much faster and much more efficiently than even the oil one.

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Four Zhiguli Cars and a «Lottery Ticket»

There were four of us when we bought those four cars, Andrey Budchenko and Sasha Pyrko joined us. We went to Chekhov town and drove the cars from there to Minsk ourselves. We parked them at a car parking. The next day I went to the exchange, set the price and sold a car, and then

- two more cars. The inflation was just mad, and we gained the double price, but we had to act really fast in order to buy something else for the money we got.

The car is a good article of commerce because you needn't a special warehouse for it. It is very convenient to start up a business. You buy it for your own money and at your own risk, you drive it to the point of destination, park it at a parking place, then you sell it, prepare the papers, and take it out from the parking place.

When we began selling cars the roles were distributed as follows: Oleg bought cars and I sold them at Minsk commodity exchange. Guys from Moscow helped us with reciprocal transactions; in 1992 they bought MAZ trucks here. So we opened an office in Moscow, in Pravdy Avenue, and another one here in Minsk, in Kazintsa Str., 21. Little by little new people appeared; some of them ran cars from Moscow here, some others maintained them. Soon our office occupied the whole wing of the building. We seemed a firm. There were about twenty employees in the company. I remember it as if it were yesterday, we all worked in the same office room, one computer for us all, managed by DOS. Andrey Budchenko was our computer genius. He could make it work. Actually he just printed the agreements.

It was hard to say how we divided responsibilities. If there was a problem with oil products, we all rushed there, when we had to deliver cars, we did that together. When a train with GAZ-53 trucks arrived we all went to do the detraining. Usually we did that at night.

Why did Oleg and I take control of the helm? At the beginning we had an accountant. But our values did not match his: he wanted to earn something and then to divide that. We used to have similar situations at our cooperative times. So we said him goodbye pretty quickly. Andrey Budchenko left much later. The actual reason for that was also divergence of interests. However, quite different money was involved.

At that time business was both extreme and difficult activity. I remember buying fur coats which turned out to be counterfeit. We had to sell them at Dynamo, the largest flea-market in Minsk at that time. So I stood there selling fur-coats and trying to avoid meeting friends and acquaintances. I did that for a couple times and then decided: to hell with that sort of experience! Now that we have created such a company we face other challenges. However, it has always been interesting.

At that time we had neither apartments nor cars, we had nothing. Oleg was the first to buy an apartment. I was already the Director of Volkswagen

importer company and I drove a brand new VW Passat but I still lived in a rental apartment in Glebki Str. By the way, the apartment was ransacked. They could not believe that there was nothing valuable in the apartment of the guy who had such a cool car!

I always knew that some day I would have plenty of money. I knew that you had to invest in business rather than extract out of it. We hardly able to find the answer to the question of why or what for something happens. However, there is a feeling of right or wrong, which is based on whether you like or not the things you are doing. The point is not money but whether you feel comfortable or not. You must learn to listen to yourself and determine the degree of comfort. Life is a lottery ticket. I have drawn it, but this has not been my decision. Anyway, there is a path for you to follow. You can manage it in different ways. I'm not interested in walking it through without some activity, without some large-scale prospects. You are what you know, what you can, what you have experienced, how much money and assets you have, whom you know, whom you can make a call. However, that's not just money. I like meeting interesting people.

Here is an example. We were at Champions League final between Barcelona and Manchester United. We watched it from the box and had a chance to hold the Trophy before the match. The way I choose allows me to experience such moments of happiness, to hold the Trophy, to talk with legendary Zola, who played more than 600 matches and was dubbed the knight by the Queen. Or to have a possibility to spend three hours before the match talking with Eriksson, who had been the coach of the national team of England for 8 years, discussing tactics and prospects of the coming match. And then, as we arrived at the stadium and I saw children running up to him to have a photo taken, I actually realized what an exceptionally popular person he was.

A yacht on the Canaries cannot become a real value to me. It provides some kind of relaxation and entertainment, but that's not to my liking. First of all, communication with other people is more interesting for me. Secondly, I like being a teacher and a tutor. That's why I like to manage people. When you take a responsibility for someone, it is a stream of energy which you receive and give back. It is a source of interest and possibilities for your personal development. That's really cool. Money just ensures your freedom and comfort, as well as expands your possibilities.

I love to work although there are always things you call your real work and there is inevitable routine. My style of management can be characterized as involving. I like to involve people. I like to coordinate their

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actions. My ultimate happiness is when people are satisfied with their work and achieve goals there which they themselves consider great. It is very important to choose appropriate people and to set goals corresponding to their abilities. It is quite easy to say: I am the boss, so just do it this way. But I say: let's think together, which is the best way to do it. It is more interesting to involve them into the process.

He That Never Climbed Never Fell

We suffered set-backs as well. I think that our greatest failure in business was our first project with a car manufacturer from China. In fact, the mistake was not that we began it. We began and abandoned projects of almost any kind both before and after that. The mistake was that at some point we acted stubborn and spent a great deal of effort and energy although we realized that we could have withdrawn earlier and with less losses. This mistake cost us millions of dollars. Oleg and I made a mistake. But he that never climbed never fell.

Oleg and I are different. We act differently, we perceive the world differently. We are bad advisers for each other. What the hell in providing advice if one is a fullback while the other is a striker? It is good from the point of view of division of responsibilities, decision making, and reaching agreement upon certain issues. And if I intend to double check my own decisions, it is better to address my team. If I need a piece of advice on financial matters I go to the financial department. If I need some advice on coaching I go to people whom I consider professionals in that..

How We Lost to the Benefit

My life has three major stages: 10 years of business activity in Belarus, 10 years - in the Ukraine, and soon there will be 10 years in Russia.

In Belarus I ran our Volkswagen dealership. The start was very successful, Volkswagen cars were selling like hotcakes from 1994 through 1999 - it was just like a dream. We made a great team. Samoilo, Sheiko, Mikhnevich and I - we are all directors now. This star team can manage any task. At that time our importer was stronger than the Russian one. So, Kaliningrad region was given to us. We were offered to buy the importer of Volkswagen cars in the Ukraine as well.

At some point the Ukraine brought us the biggest money. 2000 through 2008, until we folded our operations as the importer, up to 50% of our revenue were from the Ukraine.

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The importer of Volkswagen cars was a very successful project. I was its director, but of course the success should be credited to our team and to our company. When I left the Ukraine Hena Pristrom took the wheel, and we were forced to transfer our rights as the importer. Anyway, I consider it a victory because from the technical point of view our exit was just flawless.

It was a very difficult «case». How should the situation be resolved? How could the interests of the parties be balanced to the mutual benefit? The market was growing and developing. To manage the market a company with a direct contract with the manufacturer was necessary. Our competitor in the Ukraine was Porsche. We are really tiny in comparison both to the Porsche Holding and Volkswagen. However, we had our own interests as well, so we declared them and defended them. Our task was to derive as much benefit as possible from a very unfavourable situation. Since 2001 our importer had been threatened by the manufacturer with breaking the contract. Actually we managed to hold the contract till 2008, to earn hundreds of millions of US dollars and ultimately to receive a financial compensation from the manufacturer. As far as I know, it was the biggest compensation ever paid, not in terms of the actual amount but in terms of its relation to the annual profit. No one was paid by Volkswagen a higher amount as compensation. It was our greatest victory. Later, when the crisis broke out, we earned high dividends from the sale of our importer rights.

All for the Three: De Facto and De Jure

At the beginning, as usual, there was nothing to divide, so we were not involved in any sort of dividing. Then the time came to register our business De Jure and to conclude some sort of an agreement between us. We had to chip in. To invest some money. So we invested. We still had no apartments at that time. I remember that I sold my TV set, my video, my carpet, my car and half of my clothes. We sold all these at Gariūnai Market in Vilnius. At that time he sold his things as well. We stood there laughing at each other. Oleg said:

- Savitsky, we look like a pair of burglars who have just ransacked a flat.

What we sold was piece-goods and was actually the most valuable things you could find in an apartment.

Everyone has a chance in their life and you must take this chance. That was our chance. As a result we bought our first places at the exchange and

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invested in our business. There were three of us: Andrey Budchenko, Oleg and I. Sasha Pyrko decided to stay in the Komsomol Committee until he was provided with a state apartment. At some moment Andrey said: «Give me my money back, I want to leave».

By that time our corporate documents had been structured quite precisely. At the beginning each of us had a 25 percent stake; the fourth stake belonged to our partner from Moscow Igor Malgin. When Andrey decided to withdraw we settled accounts with him and divided his 25 percent equally between ourselves. At the very beginning we agreed that we would always act on equal terms within our business. Even if someone decides to set up a business of his own, this principle remains. For example, Oleg can't set up a business of his own without our prior agreement, neither can I or Igor Malgin. The three of us reached that agreement which is still in effect. Somebody told me once: «Savitsky, take care of your partnership, because this is the most precious thing all of you have». We are completely different. However, the most important issue is that of trust. Our partnership has already survived 20 years, and this is an achievement we all can be proud of!

Oleg's power is in his energy and will. The key to his success is that energy, not his skills or competence.. There must be such an energetic person in the company. Surely, he suppresses those who have less energy. The company needs such an energizer. On the other hand I am a talented communicator and I can sort out difficult issues. Someone must settle a dispute when both Igor and Oleg dig their heels in. That's the moment when I push my position to make us all stay calm and discuss the problem in detail. Each of us is a whole world. However, when three persons make a company they are not three worlds put together, they make one common world. This world has its own teamwork principles and everyone has its own role within it. We are changing the roles now. I suppose it is quite difficult for the company because it got used to Oleg's being at the wheel. It is difficult for me as well. Many tools, mechanisms and people are tuned to his work style. I would arrange this differently, but we have agreed that I will not make any revolutionary changes, just evolutionary ones. Although it is quite difficult for me and for the people, and for Oleg as well. Sometimes I see that he really wants to interfere sometimes. I was in a similar situation when I handed over the importer of Volkswagen cars in the Ukraine to Sasha Riabuhin.

You must swim if you want to learn to swim.

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20 Years - the Flight Goes on as Planned

We concluded our first contract with Volkswagen in 1993. There was a man who's name was Oleg Nichipor, I brought him from Belarusian State Polytechnic Institute. He was curly-headed, unshaven, with an earring in the ear. I even thought then: «Oh, he's just a perfect illustration of the modern careless youth!» It was exactly when we understood that selling VAZes was already boring, very small scale and actually unpromising. In addition to that there were some problems with the supplier. I came across a Avtomotorsport catalogue. Later I discovered that it was a rare copy with the addresses of car manufacturers, for they ceased publishing them afterwards. And in that first catalogue of 1993 there were addresses of manufacturers. Nichipor and I looked through them, chose more than ten enterprises we liked and sent them letters. About half of them responded. Then they started visiting us. They wanted to understand who we were, what our country looked like. At that time we all were sort of blinkered, and it did not come to anybody's mind that one could make a call to a car manufacturer and offer them to set up a dealership. However, the idea came to our minds. We had nothing to show them, so we took them to a car maintenance service located in Minsk outskirts Novinki. It wasn't ours, but we agreed with the owners that we would present it as our common property. It was total bluff when representatives of Volkswagen arrived our «associates» gave us away at the negotiations and declared that the car service did not belong to us. They also said that we were just tatterdemalions nobody would do business with. However, Volkswagen did not choose those elderly “experienced” gentlemen, they preferred us, although we had nothing except for our youth and enthusiasm. Volkswagen posted a tender and we competed with Zaporozhets car service station. After our partners from Novinki had let us down we found a hangar in Mashinostroiteley Str in Minsk, rented it and made it suitable for car maintenance service. And we got the contract.

Our contract with Volkswagen is and will always remain our most successful business project. We signed the contract on the 8th March. We shook hands on the bargain, completed the formalities in April and scheduled the opening for October. Volkswagen is still the only car manufacturer which has both an importer and a dealer network in Belarus.

I am happy with the way we all have walked through.

20 years - the flight goes on as planned. The altitude is increasing.

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Связанные одной цепью

In the Beginning Was the Word

Once upon a time in 1983 Oleg Husaenov and I studied in the Institute of Civil Aviation and shared a room at the university dorm. Once an idea of starting some business came to us. However, nobody was engaged in business at that time - just jobbery, black marketeering, shadow MLM marketers. We realized quite well that our choice was likely to be black marketing or jobbery - trade, as we nowadays call it. We were thinking of selling cars as they were the most capital-intensive goods which provided a chance to make good money. We were not interested in real estate then as apartments were cheaper than cars. Oil and other things of the kind were out of our sight as students' outlook was not that broad.

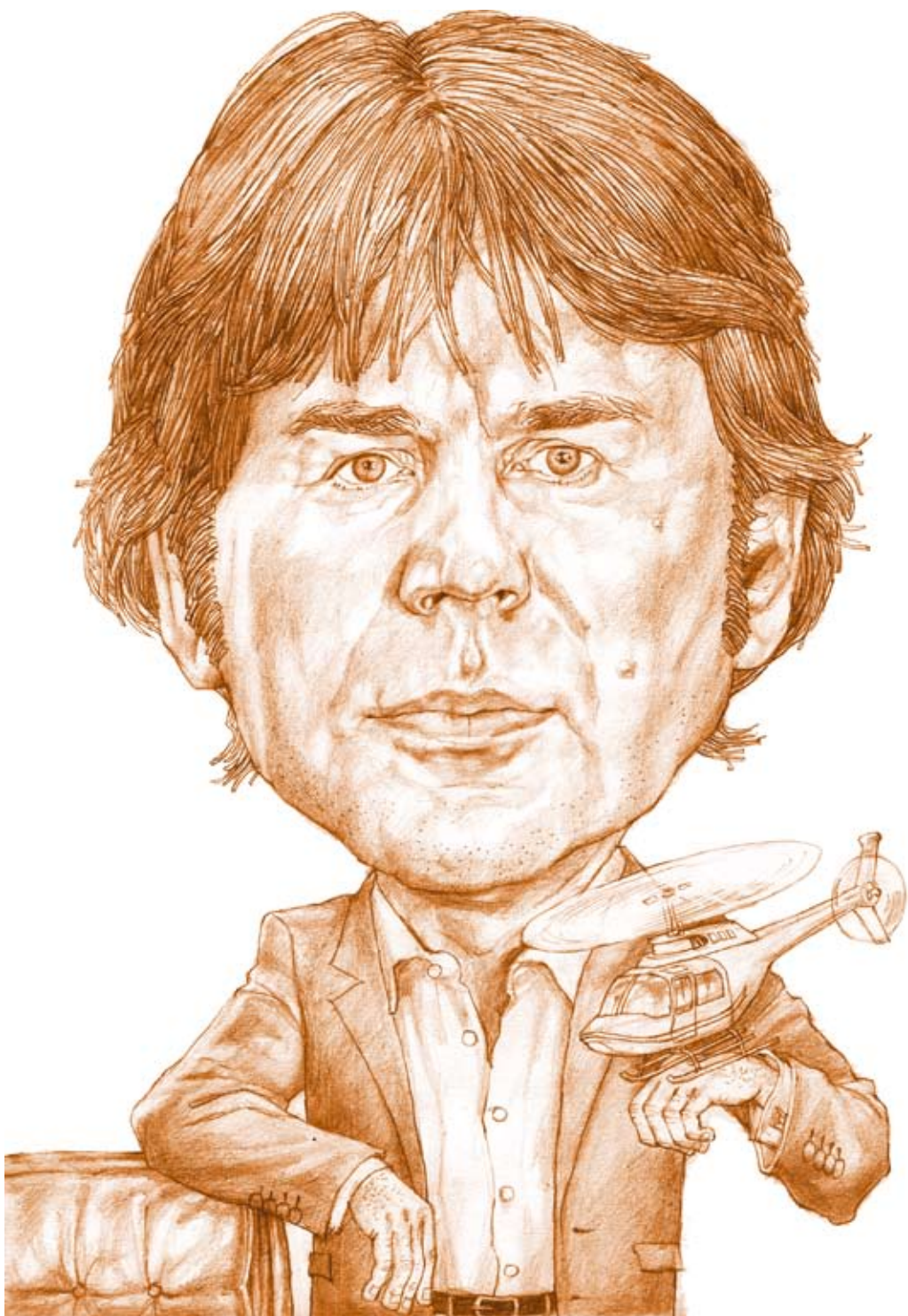
I stayed in Moscow for the graduate placement while Oleg left for Minsk. We agreed that he was to start up a company in Belarus while I was to do the same in Moscow, but, nevertheless it would be the same united company. We promised that whatever we would be engaged in future we would stay friends and partners. Since then on default I have been a shareholder of all his businesses and start-ups in the same way as he has been of mine. We have kept the word.

Developing the business we met new talented people, whom we also made shareholders: Savitsky, Vasilchenko and others but everything started in the dorm room and from the promise we are still keeping.

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The End & the Means

I was born in Riga. Later the family moved to Kolyma which is in Magadan. The Far East could boast of its schools and their level. I got



excellent marks and realized that I must enter the university, preferably in Moscow. I wanted to do business and needed a good market. Having finished school with honors I entered Moscow Institute of Civil Aviation. The motivation to study was great, as those expelled were drawn to the color which at the time meant Afghanistan. We did not want to spend time on the army and were afraid of getting kicked out of the institute. Professors made use of our fears and overloaded us with studies. It was as if we were in the army: a uniform, a formation, roll calls and discipline. We were drilled day after day during six long years. However, many good guys were expelled because of poor progress, lack of discipline and just to keep the rest on their toes. Though, in the end it paid back and we got good education.

There are two important issues for a businessman: a goal ahead and hyperenergy to achieve it. I set my goal when I was in the 8th grade. I wanted to become rich, make good money. This goal hasn't changed since then. It hasn't not evolved in anything else. It is my only ambition. If there is such a goal there must be hyperenergy to achieve it. In a day you must live events a common person experiences in 10 days. Then a year will go for 10 years. And you'll live 10 lives in one. If the goal is set and you have time, equal to 10 life terms of ordinary people, then you have everything to achieve your goal.

We are very similar in that sense with Oleg. He is also hyperenergetic and he has an exclusive goal of his own. It can be described in different words but it is consistent, precise, achievable and sole.

Apart from that we are different. Oleg is more demanding to himself. He does not want to slack himself. For example, I can spend money. Sometimes, quite thoughtlessly. I can fulfill any my wish.

I am loose when satisfying my wishes. His goal must be better than mine. He feels he must save resources to achieve it. I, on the contrary, live a fuller life.

However, we have the same winning formula - an exclusive goal and hyperenergy to achieve it. Ardent devotion provides a free source of energy. If a person champions some idea, lives only to realize it, there's lots of energy. In fact, it is endless.

The Earned Chance

At the very beginning Oleg thought up of the company name - Atlant-M: he added a letter M to the name of the refrigerator factory he used to work at the time. I always say that “M” stands for Malgin (a joke!). In Moscow I also used to start businesses with the same name. There was a company called Brokerage House Atlant-M.

Youngsters usually ask me what's the main issue for the business and I answer - capital. You can work for many years and prepare some base for the future but if you do not have any capital you can't squeeze into big business. Even medium business is unlikely, to my mind.

When I registered a legal entity in Moscow, I used to work alone, there was nobody else. Later I hired assistants, accountants but, nevertheless, I spent most of the time on useless fuss. Some small deals which passed via our settlement account. We bought VAZ cars at the exchange, sent them to Minsk and sold there. There were other deals as well but all of that was just peanuts. At last a crucial event happened.

We had a settlement account at the bank called Delovaya Rossiya. I would ask for a credit there. The officials kept answering that they did not know me, I did not have anything valuable to provide as security. Having applied for a month I was told that they knew me but nevertheless could not provide a credit. Five months later they admitted knowing me quite well but noted that I still had no securities to provide.

One day somebody returned a credit in cash which was carefully packed in two suitcases. It was late in the evening and they did not want to bother counting all that as it would take at least five hours. I arrived at that very moment...

The bank clerks agreed that they knew me quite well to provide me with a credit:

- Will you take the credit in cash from those suitcases without counting?

I agreed to it. It was very big money. It was my first big credit. I arrived at my mother-in-law's, who lived on the first floor in a standard block of flats to think what to do next. There wasn't any business plan, so I decided to go to Ulijanovski Car Plant to buy UAZ cars, which still are best cars for hunters and fishers. At the time physical entities could not buy cars

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of the kind. They were sold only to companies. So, common people could buy only used or crashed cars which left much to be desired. I had all the docs stating I represented a legal entity plus two suitcases of cash. I arrived at Domodedovo airport, went to the police department and said that I was carrying payroll to Uljanovski Car Plant and asked for guards. They escorted me to the plane. I also asked them to call to Uljanovsk and provide guards there. In Uljanovsk I was met at the airport and brought literally to the cashier's office by a police car. I provided the cash, ordered enough cars to load two freight trains and returned to Moscow. Ten days later there was a telephone call and my mother-in-law picked up the phone:

- It's Rizhskaja Freight Station calling. You've been delivered two trains loaded with UAZ cars.

She kept her head:

- Oh yes. That's for me.

My friend and I drove those cars from the railway station to Taxi Parking № 20. It took us two days and nights to do it. I placed an ad in the paper. At first people could not believe that it was possible to buy a completely new car, not some old rubbish write off from some enterprise. So, the cars sold like hot cakes.

Having sold the cars from the first train, I was able to pay back the credit. The cars from the second one were a net profit.

My next credit was twice bigger. After I repaid it, I took another one which was even bigger. At last, the time came when I could borrow any sum from that bank buying whatever I liked - UAZ cars, MAZ trucks or tractors. Later I got enough own money and did not have to bother with credits any more.

Ups & Downs

Our turnover is lesser than that of Atlant-M. In general, business structures dealing with cars are quite alike. There are commercial departments, operating services which are responsible for security, personnel and finance management etc. We set dealer centers, open car showrooms. We may be even competitors from an ideological point of view. By the way, we are about to open two new car centers - Ford and

Mercedes - Benz and are to built three more in Moscow - Lexus, Ford and Toyota.

In Velikan company I have always kept to the same rule: you needn't work in fits and starts, you should move forward smoothly and confidently. Keeping that in mind you are unlikely to get something extraordinary but are sure to achieve normal results. That's why we did not take many credits before the infamous crisis and managed to live it through quite successfully. We have good liquid assets, that's why banks give us as much money as we need. We are expanding and at the same time opening two new showrooms each time.

Atlant-M's goals were far more ambitious. They wanted to make a quick progress but their expectations were wiped off by the crisis. Such a strategy in crisis conditions can significantly slow down the company's development as it is too risky. Being a shareholder of the both companies I like analyzing their development strategies. It is still unknown which of them will turn out to strike home. It's quite interesting, when the companies keep to absolutely different strategies.

Islands

I like a comfortable and fine life. In fact, that's what I am striving for. It's a sensible egoism, I think. I work hard. Just to let myself be a lazy person. That's how duality of my nature reveals. I am extremely lazy and I am so afraid of losing that lazy way of life that I have to work hard to keep it.

As for pleasures of life I like to create material things where I can live quite comfortably. I build estates, enjoy benefits. By the way all those constructions are extremely interesting to me. If that's not the first house you build everything is much easier. You do not have to live at the construction site and can enjoy a comfortable estate, You just visit another house and take pleasure in observing new things which have appeared.

I am fond of moto-riding as well. I have 8 motorcycles of different brands. We have got a helicopter which I like to pilot. Some our shareholders and I decided to buy it for ourselves but I am the only one who can pilot it. I have a pilot license by the way. One of my distant estates is at Rybinskoye

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storage pond. I like to go there by helicopter, there are lots of place there to fly at low altitudes. It's real fun. You can land at different isles, bath at places where there is nobody. Find places to pick mushrooms.

Though I have been living in Moscow since 1982, I do not think it nice for living. It's a splendid city to do business, but it's difficult to live here.

However, one can create isles of pleasant life. It can be a workplace, with a good restaurant nearby, as well as a gym, a house, a nearby country house, a distant estate. I try to create my life at these isles.

When I didn't have personal capital, I thought that to have many houses, cars and motorcycles was cool. However, it turned out that too much property is hard too handle. That's why there is an optimal quantity of movable and immovable property for a person. I would not recommend more than four cars while there shouldn't be more than two big estates. I have them already and if I come up with the idea to find another, even in Switzerland, I will have to think twice.

My ideal pension is lots of travelling and a comfortable estate with some entertainment - good fishing, for example.

A Big Trophy

The most precious advice I got from a professor of our Institute who said: "If you want to have some free time, you shouldn't strive to become a boss".

That's absolutely true. Though I want to give another piece of advice to all those who want to start up a business: if you have a goal, it shouldn't change. You should get an education in youth and after that sleep just 4 hours a day, spending the rest of the time on achieving your goal. If you do not want such a life, you should be aware of that and tell yourself what place you'd like to take.

Any business is quite similar to fishing. Many people who come to my estate would like to call themselves fishermen. First of all they cook shashlyk, drink and later prepare tackles and about noon set off to the river. They come back at 6 in the evening and complain that fish doesn't bite. A real fisherman prepare his tackles the evening before. At 6 in the morning he is already at the place and determined to catch fish. It may

not bite at 8, at 10, at 2 but at 3 in the afternoon he catches a real trophy.

In business it's quite the same. It's not possible to be engaged in business from the noon till evening. You have to work hard all the time. A good fisherman always brings fish. That stands true for a businessman. You can do without the sixth sense. Your goal and hard work is a must, though. If you work a lot, sooner or later you come across what others call a fortune. That's not a fortune, that's just a situation you are able to make use of. And you work hard for it.

For the 20-th anniversary I want to wish Atlant-M the following thing. There are different strategies. Atlant-M progresses by jerks. Jerks may be dangerous sometimes but I do not think there is something significant which needs changing. The company just needs to move ahead. Keep risking at some situations, avoid routine work. Continue moving in the set direction. Such consistency will definitely pay back. With a Big Trophy.

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Because We Are Atlanters¹

How Did I End Up Here

I came to Atlant-M in autumn, 1996. Alla Timanova came to our University and proposed to work for Atlant-M. My first interview was with her, while the second with Oleg Huseynov himself. As the company was rather small at the time and Oleg Ilgizovich was particularly fond of finances (which is still true), he preferred to interview every applicant for any position in the financial department himself. I was really impressed. Though he already was quite an important person there was nothing pretentious either in him, or in his reception room with an old worn sofa or in his own office which was rather small and uncomfortable. Though, there was a laptop on the desk, being the only luxury thing there. Oleg asked questions about my school and university years, favourite sports. We talked a bit about sports activities. It turned out that he went in for boat racing while I was fond of fencing. He couldn't help inquiring about my sports achievements.

I was offered a job in the financial department. My duties were described to me quite briefly- to go to banks and carry financial documents. The most important thing however, was not mentioned: who would be my boss?

It was my first day at work. That wasn't a new position: a person was about to leave and I was hired instead of him. When I came to the office there were two persons there. One of them had already met me as Alla Timanova had told that there would be a new person to take his duties. The other man, Alexander Trotskiy, stared at me rather confused. I realized that something was wrong, however could not understand what in particular. At that time Viktor Astreyko entered the room with a similar surprised

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¹ - In Russian the company name Atlant is associated with the name of Atlas - a rebel titan who held up the celestial sphere being extremely strong.



expression, as his colleague was already explaining to me my duties and how it all worked.

Trotsky was the first to understand the irony of the situation as Astreyko also did not know who I was (he was to be my boss, by the way) and began to taunt him:

- Vitya, meet our new employee. What? Nobody advises with you on taking new staff?

At that moment I realized that I must have failed to play up to the boss as I had been hired without his consent. He was ill when I was being interviewed. So we came to work at the same time and he didn't know about a new employee.

However, I must give credit for his behavior. He regained composure and told me about the department, its tasks and my duties. Nevertheless, there was some tension. Later it was eased and we managed to make friends and are still on friendly terms now.

Astreyko was a financial director of Atlant-M which was not a holding at the time. At his department there were five people and just two were directly his subordinates. The next day I was literally "culturally shocked". When I came to work the first person I met was a really big guy, 2-meter tall, swarthy, unshaven - the spitting image of a Caucasian. Besides, he had a leather jacket and a fox fur hat on. My first thought was: I am in trouble. These are Caucasians selling cars²! The person turned out to be Vanya Chernyavskiy, a former basketball player. When he did not shave he really looked like he was born in Caucas though it was not true.

Being boss to no one, he, however, managed to make an impression of a big fish. I do not remember what he was involved in but he might have controlled something. So, he entered the office either to learn some info or to ask somebody to do something and then I came across him for the first time: Ivan in a leather jacket, unshaven, bossing everybody around. Only later I learnt that Vanya is a very pleasant person, and not from Caucasus.

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We've Done Everything Right

Buying MTBank was an extremely important milestone, I had to combine positions of the head of the financial department and chairman of MTBank. In fact, it was an idea of the financial department. Huseynov understood

2 - At that time Caucasian business was mostly associated with crimes, no wonder the author was frightened at the newly discovered information.

that it could be realized and supported our plans. In general, it was a time when taken decisions were not that thoroughly considered, quite often we played on a hunch and made decisions which seemed quite appealing.

Different banks provided credits to the holding and handled all the financial operations, we had many legal entities so we decided to get a bank to service out car dealers. Only later we realized that what we'd got was not just a supplement to our automotive enterprise but more of a separate business. It stands true now. We are the main shareholder of the bank but we also have a partner - an American fund. Americans are responsible for the foreign operations while we, being experts in the local market, handle domestic operations.

At that time we bought a rather small bank. There was nothing particular about it. It was hardly known in business circles specializing in servicing some shipping enterprises and was called Minskiy Tranzitniy Bank. Later we rebranded and it became MTBank. However, it had a great advantage of others - it had no frames in the wardrobe. This bank has not gone bankrupt. On the contrary, its assets have increased. That's the most persuading sign that we've done everything right.

Our Bank

Another important milestone is returning to the holding. I came to the position of the financial director in good times - everything prospered and it was easy to find money. My task was to attract as much resources as possible for a rapid development of the holding and its enterprises. My team and I got the job done. A bonded debt in Russia, a bonded debt in Ukraine, an increased credit portfolio. Over two years it reached about 100 million dollars which were used for developing the holding. To tell the truth, not all projects were a success. However, there are no companies which always make right decisions as to where and what to invest.

Dmitrovsky project (a complex of three car showrooms at Dmitrovskoye Shosse) can be called unsuccessful, at least so far. We made a bold push to launch a big project. It was quite appealing then, considering the state of the market. After the market shrank, we almost lost interest in the project. Now the market is expanding again and we are slowly approaching our goal - to finish construction and realize the project. We believe it can turn into

one of the leading Russian companies at the automobile market. That's why this project can be treated as temporary unsuccessful.

A complete failure is Chinese cars. The very idea was propelled by Oleg Ilgizovich. I think that project should have been slowed down, it was possible to organize a more active "against" coalition as many top managers doubted its success. Husaenov's enthusiasm and charisma turned out to be stronger. Maybe if we had entered the market more smoothly, we would have faced other results and our losses would have been less when we quitted it.

A new strategy was worked out for the holding. Its author was famous Russian fund "Strategika" headed by Alexander Idrisov. We had a chance for a burst-like growth. Not an evolutionary one - got profit, invested it in building a new car sales center, earned some money again, invested it. We could take leveraged resources and build or buy dealership centers. The idea is not new but Idrisov was able to persuade managers that they really could do it. However, to be frank, the strategy should have been a bit slowed down when dealing with Chinese. In that case, the consequences we had to fight later might have been less global.

The Time to Pay Back

A quite optimistic time of taking money has been replaced by a rather hard period when we had to return credits. The Chinese project had failed. Three dealerships at Dmitrovka had not been completed and opened. The most difficult thing was that the money had already been invested, they did not bring profit yet, though loans were to be paid back. That's why the end of 2008 and 2009 were extremely hot. Resources had to be found and agreements with the banks had to be reached. If it weren't for the team I worked with, I would not have been able to succeed.

I can't say we sold a lot. We had to get rid of an import contract in the Ukraine. However, I'd rather view it as a success, as we had sold an import contract for Porsche Austria before the crisis burst out in summer 2008. It's clear that Germans pushed us a lot. In general, the Ukrainian market had reached the size when the manufacturer wanted to has an importer of his own. Starting from certain car volumes a plant owner wants to have its importer and those intentions are clearly expressed. They were a civilized

European company and when such a moment came they just strived to buy out the contract. The only question to be discussed was money. We bargained with them for quite a time. Finally, we got what we considered a good price at that time. Taking into consideration the crisis burst out in September we were extremely happy.

If we speak about forced sales, I should mention a suspended unit in St. Petersburg. We were building a dealership center there which we had to sell to a leasing company to pay back the credits. It was spending small to save big.

Any financial director is the first defense line. All banks contact him and he has to tell them that the business goes from bad to worse, there is no money and that they have to find some compromise. The end of 2008 and 2009 were extremely stressful for me. My reputation was at stake most of the time. A financial director is the only person to be remembered from all the personnel of an insolvent company. Sometimes even an owner and a director are not that famous. I am usually the first to get all the negative emotions. Meeting a CEO a bank realizes that they have to come to some agreement with the company while a chief financial officer is a person to put pressure. Besides, when everything went wrong, I was the person who delivered bad news to the company. So, I got a certain experience of being a black raven and had to manage it.

I must admit that we treated our creditors in an impeccable manner: we scammed nobody. We did not cross anybody up. It's clear that we had to spend lots of time and efforts trying to persuade banks to prolong credit periods, to provide deferment of payments, decrease or increase of interest rates. No bank we cooperated with was done out of, we could not afford to be crooked businessmen. I must give credit to Huseinovic - he helped a lot, took part in finding ways out, did not avoid meetings with bankers and did not set me up.

Now, knock on wood, we have passed that time. It's clear that there are still some issues to see to but at least the business is expanding in all the regions and even here, despite the local difficulties which allows to be more optimistic about the company's prospects. Our bankers start smiling already.

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Lessons and Prospects

I want to tell a story which I remembered for the rest of my life and which taught me that if you were not a professional, it was better not to meddle with somebody else's activity and make an impression you could be an expert there as well.

When I was the chief of the financial department, our companies made purchasing contracts in different currencies. Now dollars or Euros are mostly used, at that time contracts in quite rare currencies like yens and Belgian franks could come up. Financial managers applied the following strategy: as the profit is assessed in dollars we inquired at the finance unit when it was better to exchange a certain currency. Little attention was paid to the issue at that time. There was a manager who at some point decided he could guess or forecast currency rate movements. He did not consult people who were experts and tried to find intuitive decisions on his own. At some moment we even believed he knew more than my guys. We even had some inferiority complex. Fortunately, I had a very thorough employee who decided to calculate what would be if a company bought currency without those guesses but just as the money arrived. He provided all the calculations and all the department was surprised at seeing the table with results. It turned out that if that "expert" hadn't done anything, the results would have been much better. It was not worth spending time on forecasting. I remembered for the rest of my life: manage your own business. If you are not a professional, than trust professionals.

There are some things I feel sorry about. It's a pity Alexander Trotskiy who made fun of Astreyko on my first working day in the holding left the holding. We used to work together at the financial department. Later I offered him a position in the bank, a quite good one, but he left and engaged in some business of his own. Good for him. However, I feel sorry that Atlant-M did not manage to keep him. That person had all the qualities pure-blooded Aryans, pardon, Atlanters must enjoy: an entrepreneurial flair, strong communications skills and an optimistic approach to life. From the other side, he has found his vocation. And he has no boss...

Conquering the Top

Every year we arrange a team holiday, often combined with some sort of

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a training. A trip to Kamchatka is one of the most exotic and memorable. We had neither a coach nor a training for that trip. First, we had to raft down the river. The water temperature was about 6 degrees. In such water a person dies of exposure in seven minutes. That's why the main thing was not to fall into the river. After that we climbed Avachinskiy Volcano. Fortunately, a dead one. There is no road there, just a river's bed which dries up in summer. Trucks go along it carrying meteorologists and tourists to the volcano. We arrived, and moved into carriages for tourists. Climbing the volcano was scheduled for the next day. The height difference we had to manage was 700-800 meters, usual for sportsmen hitting qualifying standards. It takes them less than two hours. We decided that if people could run that distance we were able to climb it. About 50 people tried to climb. Husaenov decided not just to climb the volcano but to put Atlant-M flag at its top. We had the flag, but not a flagstaff. There were no trees at the mountain. Somebody found a quite heavy wooden stick which was difficult even to raise, not even to climb the mountain with. Aren't we, Atlanters, able to carry a stick with a flag to the mountain top? It started raining. It was September, 7-10 degrees, not very hot, indeed. The higher, the colder. We got dressed in warm clothes and cheerfully set off. Just after 500 meters the first people to carry the flag turned out to be absolutely exhausted. We started to pass it on. At first after 400 steps, then after 300, at the end there were no volunteers to carry the stick and the flag. Moreover, what used to be a weak rain at the foot turned into a windsquall and heavy rainfall, everybody realized there was no strength to proceed. However, nobody wanted to yield and we moved forward. Every 10 meters we passed on the flag. People started to fall. The wind was getting stronger and the road turned into a path, with dangerous cliffs at the both sides. The guides told us that we should not go ahead as it would be dangerous. Everybody yelled happily, we stuck a flag into the ground, made photos and cheerfully went back. At least we moved in the right direction, to the top. Nobody returned back and gave in. We are Atlanters, after all.

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A Story About Four Musketeers

Komsomol Businessmen

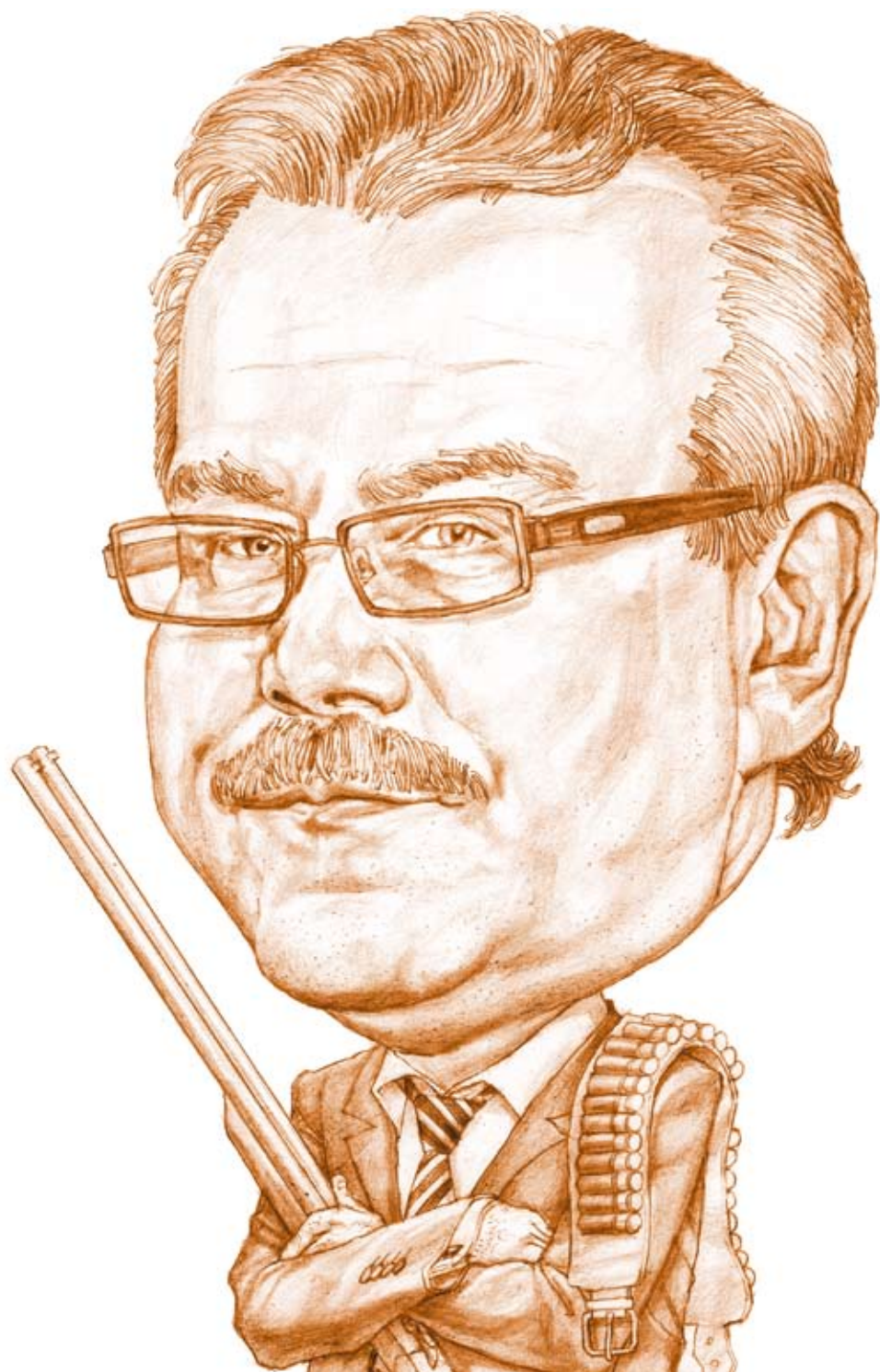
Before 1991 it was possible to create joint stock and small businesses only at some party or komsomol bodies. Oleg Husaenov already worked with Sergey Savitsky and Andrey Budchenko. They had a small business washing windows and got their chance to feel a taste of making money. Their company seemed too small and freshly made businessmen decided to grow. They started with the local Komsomol Committee. I used to be the first deputy to the Secretary of the Komsomol Committee at the refrigerator plant, kinda a bigwig with certain connections and coat-tails which could be used. Oleg drove all of them hard.

The guys came with a certain idea- to create a united youth manufacturing center under the Komsomol Committee. The aim of the center was doing business. We gave the go-ahead to the project. A nice idea, why not try? Everything was settled at the District Komsomol Committee and a new project was given green light.

If it had been possible to start a factory, young enthusiasts would have gone in for production. Unfortunately, it wasn't possible at that time. So the business lay in buying the right things from the right people and selling them to those who needed them. It was the beginning. It all began from a youth manufacturing center which later grew into OOO Atlant-M.

We met thanks to Komsomol. We all were of the same age. Oleg and I became friends at once. His strong charisma and social skills made it quite easy. He was an undoubted leader. I met Serezha Savitsky when I was already working for Atlant-M. Andrey Budchenko came off our path, but that happened later. At the beginning there were four of us. Such

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musketeers...

At some moment I had to start working for Atlant-M. The communist party was dissolved, the same end came to the Komsomol, so our positions were cancelled. As I had some experience, as well as a desire to work and certain skills, I came to Oleg and said: I'm ready.

It was in January, 1992. I started a completely new life in a new year. и By the way, there are different explanations of what letter M, added to Atlant name means. I've always thought that M stands for youth (molodezh- in Russian), and implies attracting youth to business. It's my understanding.

How did it all happen? It's easy to describe it in a chronological way. It's much more interesting to recollect details, events, associations. For example, we did not have personal offices. Just accountants were occupying a separate room not to be disturbed by anyone. There was a place of Nina Nikiforovna Lappo - who was a book keeper from the company's first day. We all sat in a big common room and ran as saigas, not it would be called "bustling". We worked a lot and we wanted to work. Not only because a 27-year old family man needs money. Everybody worked at that time. We came to work in the morning and knew what to do and where to go, what activity to engage, what to look for and where to call. That was interesting. There were no big chances to hit the jackpot. Money didn't come easily. In those hard times breathtaking money was earned only by people who kept their cushy positions at the party and Komsomol. All our former members fled away, went out of the game and even now I can not say that somebody has a serious business and stands firmly on his feet. Unfortunately we did not have such a sinecure. We were common hard workers and dealt with cars - Zhiguli cars in particular.

We could sell MAZ trucks to Russia and buy Zhiguli there. That exchange of goods brought some profit. Oleg had acquaintances in Moscow accredited at the Russian Automobile Exchange. Cars were auctioned off there. Zhiguli brand was in short supplies. Moscow guys arrived at the exchange, bought lots of cars and got them at warehouses. We sent car runners.

There were no special car haulers and cars were brought here by drivers. The biggest lot we drove here was 24 cars, some of them being

piled up on the way to Minsk. It seemed a disaster. However, we restored them and Oleg took one of them. I had a Volkswagen Passat at that time.

Atlant-M staff was already about 20 people. It was Oleg who hired new employees and it was his idea to hire students.

Cars became our priority. I engaged in trading and my task was to meet the market demand. In such a way we came across our first barter deal.

ABC of Barter

We bought RAF minibuses but could not sell them for a long time, as we had chosen the wrong models. Oleg changed those cars for a TIR truck of polyethylene - 2-layer film, thick, the right one for greenhouses. It was a time of cottagers, big greenhouses were appearing at vegetable plots. In fact, it was a good idea to exchange 2 RAF minibuses for a TIR of film, quite successful and very timely. Our warehouse was actually in the cellar. To save we did not hire movers. All the day all male employees carried that film in pairs to the cellar (a coil of film weighs about 40 kilos).

The company was managed by 4 of us: Oleg, Sergey, Andrey and me. Everyone had its own area but the film was sold by all of us in small quantities. Finally, Oleg got to know someone from Belvest and changed the rest of the film for footwear. We began selling the footwear among our friends and relatives. Belvest brand was very popular so we got rid of it quite successfully. However, some pairs were left and Sergey Savitsky and I went to a flea market at Dynamo to sell them all. We were selling them and constantly looking around panicking that some friends of ours could meet us there.

We got rid of all of it. I do not remember exactly what the profit was but we were in green after it for sure. That was not the only shuttle trading experience we got. When the borders were opened in the 90-s, we went to Poland. We carried everything there - even bras of size 100. Poles took everything. They were severely hit by the crisis: goods in the shopping malls were expensive and it was possible to sell almost anything at the market. My trading experience started at that time.

When you set the price and take money, any confusion vanishes, just a thrill remains.

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First Big Money

We went to Poland with Oleg as well as with Sergey and always came back in excess. At that time an average salary was 30 dollars a month and we earned 5 times more in several days. I was building a condominium then and had to make another installment. We went to Poland, sold everything and had about 200 dollars on us. We came to Warsaw from Lodz, decided to exchange Polish zloty for Russian rubles and coming up to the currency exchange learnt that a ruble had dropped twice. We exchanged all the money for rubles and waited till noon. In the afternoon the rate increased again and we bought dollars, waited till evening and again bought rubles. In general for the 3 days of pavement trading I got about 1 000 dollars. I remember it quite well as it was the first big money. I managed to pay out the apartment.

A Brain with Engines

Our salaries at Atlant-M were quite modest. It was doing business for business. Besides, at the very beginning we all agreed that all that we gained we put into business development. Maybe that's why when really big money arrived, we did not romp, didn't divide the property and did not say goodbye for ever. Our company survived because we were and still are united with the common goal.

The company was expanding. We got parking facilities, cars, and brought 100 cars instead of 20. There were no quarrels or showdowns between us. If there were some mistakes we tried to manage them. None of us 4 was a weak link. There was and there is work to be done. There was and there is friendship to keep. We managed to define relations: at work there is a boss and a subordinate, there are friends the rest of the time. All the ideas are of Oleg Huseynov and he created the hierarchy. He was the leader and he was the brain in our team. And the rest of us - Serezha, Andrey and I were engines. Andrey Budchenko followed his own path, as he changed his views on doing business. Oleg always told that if we wanted to become rich one time, we needed to work and work and work hard. We followed the pattern. Andrey, on the contrary, thought that a person could become rich at once. He wanted to take his share, spend it and lead a enjoy a pleasant life. That was the reason for our parting.

Oleg and Sergey always invested money in business expanding. That strategy made Atlant-M what it is now.

Fellow-Countrymen

When we got seriously engaged in car business, we began finding different options of getting cars. And again I am giving credit to Oleg as he managed to find acquaintances at Tolliati car plant. Zhiguli was their main brand at that time. Foreign brands were imported but that was just the beginning, so the scale was not serious. Receiving shipments in ports was a more promising issue for us. We started finding cars in different ports. It was possible to get cars in ports without excise tax and VAT. In such a way cars got much cheaper. The first lot of such re-exported cars Sergey and I had to take in Tallinn.

It's well-known that any port either Baltic or Russian is not a safe place. There is one issue to enter it, another to receive the shipment and the third to deliver cars to Belarus. We, cubs, went to Tallinn for the first time, just got Estonian visas and went. Through Lithuania. In Lithuania we were put off from the train as we needed a transit Lithuanian visa which we hadn't thought of. So, Savitsky and I found ourselves at the platform. The travel allowance was rather limited. We were lucky to have a friend in Lithuania - Hedeminas who sometimes bought tractors and MAZ trucks at our company. We called him, spent a night at his house. It took us a day to make transit visas and finally reach Tallinn.

We took a room at the hotel, arrived at the port. At once we were asked who we were and what we were doing there. We had a delivery note on us. They answered:

- We don't care. You'll get your cars... some day.

We stayed in the hotel for another day. There was the last piece of bacon left and Sergey said cutting it into pieces:

- Sanych, receive the shipment, and I will leave as we won't hold out together.

I spent at the port a day and a night. Just followed the harbour master and rubbed in about our cars. He told me to bugger off but I kept following. Then, thanks to God, I met a Belarusian fellow, who was a warehouse supervisor. He took me from the motel, we drank a bit, I spend the night

at his house and in the morning he told me:

- We will give you cars.

I began explaining that any cars wouldn't do. A better color and a 5 speed gearbox would be nice. We had delivery documents on Zhiguli 7. So, 10 cars were received, 9 were of "Diplomat" color, with a metal front grille, a 5-speed gearbox and just one white with a 4-speed gear. The countryman said that he couldn't give all 10 pimped-out cars. He did that all without taking any money, meaning that some time I could help him as well. Later he visited me in Minsk and later we lost contacts. Projects with Zhiguli in ports passed in and he engaged in some other activity.

When the cars arrived in Minsk, the guys were overexcited. The cars had Matador tires. Nobody knew then that the brand was not the best one. They were foreign which meant better than the tires made in Bobruysk. We got almost twice we spent when selling those cars.

After that I was always sent to control receiving our shipments.

Once Oleg and I went to some port in Transdnistria to see how the things were done there. All bootleg things - metal, wine, cognac were imported through this port - many people had their interests there. We went by car. I am always surprised at how easily Oleg finds his bearings on the ground. I still can't manage it. He glances at the map and knows where to go without any navigator. So, we arrived at the town, found a motel and took a room. The heat was unbearable, the linen worn-through and literally crowds of cockroaches marched the room. A poky hole of a place!

We looked at the port, learnt everything. We took cars from that port twice. At the first time we were lucky again as I met a countryman again. He was the Harbor Master's deputy. Usually we took some bottles of cognac just for representation purposes. When I wanted to open the bottle, the countryman said:

- Keep that for people who will unload the cars. Try this one. When the cars are received, let's go my house.

It was the first time I saw a cottage and it seemed a castle to me. The owner brought a bottle of cognac. I had never tried anything of the kind. Even Hennessy couldn't come near it: a mild chocolate flavor. In the morning I couldn't find any sign of hangover: there was no headache, joints

did not ache. It was the way issues were solved at that time.

We shipped the cars, paying nothing. When we arrived there for the second time we had to pay, however we weren't severely pushed. Later on we got cars from Kerch.

Tough Times

I can swear it was a story to tell. As usual I arrived to see how the things were going on, looked at the parking-lot with cars. I called Oleg and said: "Make payments, our cars have been delivered." The payment was sent and a week later we planned to ship the cars. There was a train which was to carry them here. I talked with a person in charge of the warehouse and he said:

"I will take money for giving out your cars but you should deal with guys who control other districts on your own".

-Why that?

- For the hell of it! Some guys shot one another. So, new people are running the show.

- And how is it usually done?

-A month ago there were folks from Moscow here, shipped two trains. Local guys arrived and said: Leave us four cars and you'll not have troubles on the way home. Muscovites refused and were threatened that otherwise they would remain here for ever. Moscow guys gave the cars and added that ours would pay for that. A week after the trains departed there was a birthday party of a local rod-man. Kerch is not a big city, just one night club where the party was held. Two killers arrived and killed six people shooting from both hands, left the club and went away. The car was burned at the suburbs of Kerch with all the guns. That's why I don't know how you will handle your problems and don't want to.

I brought the news to Oleg and said: "To ship cars is not a big deal but what then? Either we will have to give cars at once, or will be raided on the way home."

... However, we found the way out. We agreed with Ukrainian special forces "Berkut". They took all the ammunition- rifles, machine guns, grenades - and rushed from Chernigov to Kerch in a Volkswagen. They took positions and we started entraining. The form of the warehouse

was semi-circle. So, the cars were being loaded onto the train and local folks were circling around being unable to reach the train. It continued the whole day. They thought we would entrain the cars and leave. We were smarter. We had a portacabin with “Berkut” unit hooked to the train and special forces escorted the train to Chernigov.

To hire “Berkut” was Oleg’s idea. We always tried to deal with state security agencies and never turned to criminal organizations. Surely, they could handle many problems quite efficiently but we thought it would be more trouble than worth. State agencies were of the same money but more trustworthy. In any case, a Berkut’s trip around the Ukraine cost less than 4 cars.

There was a serious shortage of diesel in Ukraine. The train moved out of schedule and arrived a week later than we had expected. The cars arrived just thanks to “Berkut”. Only when they left their portacabin and found a station master, the train got fueled. The guys arrived raw-boned, unshaved but brought all 100 cars safe and sound. It was the most dangerous story, I think.

By the way, when the train with the cars left, we took a back-way to get out of the town: arrived at the hotel, paid for 2 nights and left Kerch the first night. It was tough times.

Zhiguli projects brought profit till 1995. Later on we decided that it was quite reasonable to think of the future and look for something else. Foreign cars came to focus.

A Forgotten Birthday

We went to work as if it were a party. Our children did not see us quite often and I can not spend much time with my family now. I remember one of my birthdays, I got 30. Kinda anniversary. I came to work dressed in a white shirt, a suit and shoes (I was born on December, 1). The guys greeted me. Besides Zhiguli, we sold MAZ trucks at the time. At that day we turned out to have to prepare cars for their dispatch to Russia and there were no people who could deal with that. I had invited relatives for the dinner: Mum, Dad, 2 twins with their families. The wife prepared a delicious dinner. I promised to be home at 7 in the evening and had to start preparing the dispatch at 5. To prepare a MAZ for such a long trip is

not that easy. If a just-from-the-plant truck is sent as it is, it will not arrive to the destination. So, that's what preselling preparation is meant for - tires, fueling, and parts arrangement. I had to prepare 8 trucks. I arrived home at midnight with frostbitten toes (as I was in shoes with a thin sole), dirty. My white shirt was ruined. My wife rubbed my toes till 3 at night. By the way, the trucks reached their destination successfully.

We knew how to work. We knew how to rest, too, though. Quite often we went picnicking with families, to grill shashlyk, to pick mushrooms. We invited other employees to join us. We took MAZ trucks, put straw in the body, then sleeping bags and spent nights like that. Later Oleg made a corporate tradition out of that anarchy.

We have gone to Kazan, to the isle for 15 years. For Oleg's birthday we go hunting. He takes close friends and we hunt for two days. In Belarus. There are enough animals for everyone here.

The Project I'm Proud Of

I was engaged in Zhiguli project till the actual end of that business. Then Oleg said:

- You have enough experience, take Mazda area.

The area was sick, losing and seedy as hell. In two years Mazda brought 400 000 of net profit!

The main project in my life now is St. Petersburg facility. It was very difficult but I could manage it!

I just finished building of the house in Minsk, moved in in February. One of directors who headed a newly open branch in St. Petersburg said that he was leaving. And we had a vacancy there. Oleg said: - - You've trained on Mazda, go to St. Petersburg.

I asked him several times:

- Do you need that? Are you sure?

He confirmed. OK, then. If a friend needs it, I must help. I went to St. Petersburg. Thanks to God, my family is of Spartan style - understands everything and knows everything. When I came to St. Petersburg, they sold 40-50 cars. Certainly, I wasn't OK with that. In half a year we started selling 150 cars, then 250. I didn't fire lots of people, didn't reshuffle the staff. Just the same people started to work much better. Later I had to hire

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more people as the employees couldn't manage all the clients. At the peak of performance we sold about 400 cars. We reformed the business process, wrote down the instructions defining who, what and how must do. We sold Chevrolet, Opel and Saab brands. I added Hummer and Chevrolet Tahoe to the list. We sold almost 500 cars from 5 brands. And St. Petersburg is still impossible to catch up with in sales volumes.

I always tried to go and see what others do. When abroad I saw a car dealership, I went there to see how sales managers worked, what interesting or new they had. Later I tried to adopt that in our showrooms. What's even more important I tried to find people whom I did not have to spoon-feed, who weren't afraid to take responsibility. As soon as a person starts to fawn on, I realize it's not my sort of people. In my surrounding nobody fears responsibility. That is, I think, the best measure of my personal success.

I can say that I haven't had disastrous projects at all. I can listen, I watch, I see. I guesstimate hiring people. To be frank, I was mistaken once. I promoted a person to the position of a director at one of the biggest St. Petersburg companies and he betrayed me. It was two years ago and I still can not accept it. When a person tells one thing and does a different one. When you trust a person completely and he just uses the patronage and does what he wants. When people let me down, it is difficult for me to put up with it. That's why if people leave me, hardly will I take them to my team again.

How It All Will Be

I have a dream. Not about a calm pension. I will have to work in any case, as it is impossible to leave the drive Atlant-M provides. On the 11-th day of vacations my palms itch to take a phone and return to work. That's why I can hardly imagine my pension. However, I know what I am going to do then. I have met so many interesting people and friends. In different cities and countries: Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Ufa, Yekaterinburg, Penza. All of them are good guys to share a table, to talk, to pour them heart. They suit me. Maybe I suit them, too. When I go on pension, I will visit all those men of iron, my friends.

However, that won't happen soon. I am still on board. The way I made, changed my life style for ever, made me wiser. Every person must have

a place in life as well as in business. All the rest are possibilities. Either revealed or lost. I am a fire Sagittarius and I live according to the following principles: “Never give up”. “Never promise what you can’t do”. “Never say never”

Alexander
PYRKO
Chief Executive
Officer
Atlant-M
International
Automobile
Holding, Russia

A Story About Milk, Sour Milk and Crème de la Crème

How I Was Hired

When I came to the holding, Savitsky, Husaenov, Budchenko and Pyrko had already been working there. Pyrko was the chief engineer at the enterprise which was called Atlant-M Brokerage House. However, the story had started earlier. I was doing my fifth year at the university and had to find some job. I had some kind of arrangement with Grodno Polytechnic lycée and was going to become a teacher there. All of a sudden Alexey Afonin (he works as a mechanic) called me and said that he had seen an ad: Atlant-M company is hiring employees.

- Have you called?
- No
- Why?
- Just I don't need it. Maybe you?
- Neither I, in fact...

I took the phone number, though. Why not call? Just in case.

I rang them up. Oleg Husaenov's secretary, Sveta Televnuk, put down my address and phone number and filled in an application for me. She told they would contact me in a week. A week passed and nobody called me. I decided that I hadn't been shortlisted. So, I stopped thinking about it.

Two weeks later Svetlana called me:

-We are inviting you for the interview to our office at Partizansky Avenu.

There was a pass entry system at the building so applicants were gathered at the entrance hall. I saw some of my acquaintances: Nichipor (we studied at the same building), some others. There was 15 people alto-



gether. We were led through some corridors: to reach another building one had to climb the second floor, than descend, then again go upstairs... To tell the truth, that got my attention. All of a sudden I saw Dinova plate at the wall to the right. Atlant-M wasn't yet familiar to everybody but Dinova was quite well-known. So, I thought if Dinova had an office at these catacombs, everything was OK.

We were brought into two big rooms. There were desks and chairs in one of them while the other was occupied by Husaenov. His big Soviet two-piece desk being at the centre of the room allowed the owner to see who came in. Husaenov was young, dressed in a white shirt with short sleeves (it was hot and the windows were wide opened), and a tie.

Savitsky occupied a seat at one side of the table and Pyrko at the other. A thought came: a right-hand man and a sidekick. Oleg delivered a pompous speech, like Atlant-M was engaged in selling Russian cars and was going to build a showroom. Besides, there were some vague intentions of taking up foreign cars. It was at the time when even Russian automobiles were selling like hot cakes. At the end he told to ask questions if there were any. I proved to be extremely curious and began asking too many questions. My specialty occupation was "car maintenance" and my term and graduation papers were devoted to projecting a car maintenance station. That's why I started asking: what car centre? In short, I tried to be clever. I was correctly put in place:

- Man, there'll be time for you to ask all those questions later. There is a person, responsible for the project.

After that my anxiety faded away but I decided to myself: there are still several months till the presentation of the graduation paper, why not try?

A driver's license of B category was a must and I had only for A and C category. I came up to Pyrko:

- Can I first start probation and later get a certificate?
- No. B certificate is compulsory. Go, get it, then come to us.

At that time I was married. So, I told my wife I was going to pass a driving test and went to Grodno. My uncle used to be a head deputy of a town transport enterprise. He gave me a verification that I worked as a driver, which allowed to skip a written examination. Yet, there was still a

driving test to manage. I came to my friend and asked for a car. The friend trained me as a real instructor. I remember overlooking some road sign, so he made me return to see what it was. We could drive our own cars at the maneuverability test. Of course, I took my friend's car. I made the whole round, came up to the examiner and he said:

- I haven't seen it; do it once again.

I made the second round, stopping uphill, looked at the examiner, he wasn't even watching me! So, I hit the gas pedal and moved off with spinning car wheels. I came to the examiner again.

- So?

- A scorcher! Passed. Now the road test.

To pass the road test you needed to have an instructor's car and where to get it? I saw some instructor surrounded by a crowd of people which had similar problems. I came up to him, he began to hesitate but I fished out a 10 ruble bill which finally settled the matter... On Saturday I got my driver's license and on Monday was at Pyrko's office. He looked at me suspiciously but hired me for the job.

Another working condition was a compulsory probation period: to work for free for two weeks. Afonin about whom I've already told you, my fellow from the University, said that he wouldn't work for free and left. (Later I dragged him back and now he is a first category mechanic).

I decided that I'd rather work, though for free, than stay at home for two weeks. The job was to restore arriving cars into a serviceable condition. There was almost nothing to repair in Zhiguli which came from Tolyatti, while re-exported cars, were lacking lots of things. We should put everything together, show cars to clients and if they agreed to take them, write out a pin code. Clients took it to the cashier-desk, paid the money and we provided them with the chosen cars.

Our office was in Partizansky Ave, while the parking facilities were situated in the opposite parts of the city - one in Kalvariyskaya Str, while the other in Masyukovschina. On the second day of my probation Pyrko took me to deliver several GAZ cars. We arrived at the parking and saw a muddy quagmire. Cars were here, while I needed to get to a cabin over there. I had a pair of nice shoes on. I tried to get to the cabin, jumping on some safe-looking pieces of land, changed my shoes for a pair of high boots and

after that carried a battery, and filled the car. Everything was done and I brought the car up to the cabin for the client to take it. He got in to have a ride. He started off, made 15 meters, the car just wouldn't go. I got into the car, got into gear, made several meters and the car broke down. Two eyelets fell apart at the gearshift clutch. It was clear who was that fool who had switched on a hydraulic system. The client:

-It wasn't me!

- Nor was I!

-Change me a car.

It was my first slip-up. Later I learnt not to make mistakes.

After working for a week and a half I was taken for this job as a mechanic. My first salary was 25 rubles and I doubted whether I needed such a job. The next month I got about 50 rubles which made me extremely sad: I had about 250 rubles at the university. I had a family to maintain... However, every month my salary increased by 25 rubles and finally became quite OK.

It was the '90-s. Barter deals were extremely popular. The price for re-exported cars in barter deals was quite low. Cars kinda were shipped to Panama for bananas or something of the kind. We took them as if from Panama. Officially.

In 1993-1994 we found a large supplier in Brest. For a year I got cars in Brest from the parking facility situated at the distance of 50 meters from Brest Fortress. At the Soviet times every school was brought there on excursion. However, I was either ill, or something else happened, so I missed it. During the whole year, I was quite close to it, as I went to get cars two or three times a week, but I was always lacking time. Only this year, being a director general I visited the fortress.

How I Streamlined the Working Process

Pyrko was my boss at that time and we communicated a lot. I saw Savitsky more seldom and dealt with Husaenov only when some trouble happened. Usually he spent time in his office. However, if there was some trouble, for example, a flat tire or some problems with a customer, Husaenov was sure to pass by and see everything. He didn't tell me a thing but later Pyrko arrived...

In August -September we began bringing cars from Brest. I was to supply the missing parts - I went to the car market at the weekend and bought them for cash. I was a deputy of the chief engineer then. Our parking facility was in Liebknecht Str. The sales process was as follows. A client arrived, we took a company car and brought him to the parking facility, showed the available cars, returned to the office, drew out a pin-code, necessary papers and returned to take the car. To go to and fro even without showing cars took about half an hour. There were days when arriving back to the office I found another client waiting for me. Finally, I was fed up with running to and fro several times a day and I went to Pyrko with an idea to streamline the process. The idea was to put a person at the parking facility, kinda on duty who would bring cars to the office on demand. Later we rented an underground garage in Kazintsa Str and brought most of the cars there for mechanics to prepare them.

A Misty Morning and a Contract with Volkswagen

In 1994 we had the first contract with Volkswagen. First foreign cars arrived. However, before that we had contacted many car manufacturers and every week somebody visited us - Subaru, Volvo, Hyundai representatives. Foreigners always demanded some documents. We told them that we were building a car center. In fact, we just had a piece a land for it. We negotiated with Volkswagen as well. Once their representatives arrived. We met them and told about our plans. The night was spent in the restaurant. The next day they were to leave and in the morning they asked to show them the car center...

What were we to do? We took them from the hotel and brought to Sharangovicha Str... to the field. There was a heavy fog, nothing was seen. We again:

- There will be a fabulous dealership...

They just nodded and left.

A fax arrived on the 7-th of March: a delegation from Volkswagen was to arrive the next day. Savitsky, Pyrko and Husaenov reacted to it in the same way: "The wives will be mad about it. We work all the day and will have to spend the holiday at work as well."

As we learnt later, we were the last in their list of candidates. They

chose us, though, young boosters. In June Husaenov and Savitsky went to Germany to sign the contract. Our task was to find at least a temporary facility for the dealership. That “temporary” facility in Mashinostroiteley Str. works up to now.

German Experience at the Verge of Extinction

Afonin, Kamysh and I went for on-the-job training to Germany. The daily allowance was rather small, so we took some food with us. I lodged in a motel while Andrey and Alexey were at some other place at a distance of 15 kilometers. I was to arrive at work at 8 o'clock. It seemed that I had remembered the road to the factory. However, I got lost. I had gone round the town, before I found it. I was late for an hour.

The director warned me at once:

- I know 500 Russian words. So, speak slowly for me to understand.

I talk to him as a captive Finn, two words in an hour.

He paid for the hotel and lunches. The lunch was a small piece of meat, a spoonful of garnish and a spoonful of salad. There was also free coffee at the working place. In the morning in the hotel I got a cup of tea, 2 buns, 2 slices of ham and two slices of cheese. One bun was for the breakfast and one for the supper. An old lady who was the owner of the motel saw it and began to carry not a cup of tea but a kettle and some bread. She told me something in German, I couldn't get a word, just nodded. So, we didn't manage a linguistic barrier. The director and I agreed in the following way: I would work and he would tell me how cars were serviced, etc. Later I found out that that only a person with a certificate of technical maintenance could deal with cars. I had no paper of the kind. So, I helped in the following way: dismount a wheel- put it back, dismount a wheel - put it back.

Once a Transporter T2 arrived. Its injectors and supply systems had to be changed. The mechanic started looking for special literature. It wasn't available. He asked the center for assistance and they sent him a manual by fax. He was studying it while I took a spare part, wrenched an injector and put into a new one. While he was reading, I had done all the job. He stopped reading, saw what I'd done and started shouting. The director arrived. The dealership was a family business, the father was the direc-

tor, a son was a mechanic, the other - a developer, while the mother did some cleaning.

The director said:

- You weren't allowed to do it

I objected:

- What should I have done? To read manuals? I am an engineer.

- You've done it right. However, officially you can't do it. Now he can't bear responsibility for that work. He signs the certificate of work completed. It needs to be re-installed.

- So, I have a right to dismount and put back wheels and that's all?

They were quite angry but having seen that I had done everything carefully and had broken nothing, calmed down a bit. After that, their attitude changed and I was allowed to do other tasks as well. However, when I learnt that we were to stay there for another month, I tried to get in touch with Savitsky asking:

- What's the sense of our staying there? We have learnt to dismount wheels, fenders and carry out a range of bodywork.

Savitsky called the plant and they sent a technical coach Folken Raupah. He used to study in Moscow and was married to a Muscovite. So, he knew Russian.

I moved to the guys and we made a festive dinner - some pasta with minced meat. We had some vodka in the till. At first Folken refused to drink but we talked him into drinking just a little. We finished the evening having drunk three bottles; it was the beginning of our friendship.

We arrived home on November, 7. The dealership had been opened in October and closed at once. It was opened for real after we had returned home.

I remember my first client - a claret-colored Passat. I had to replace the belt. I did it in Germany. We wanted to start off the car, it wouldn't start, valves being opened. I checked the marks, everything matched, the car wouldn't start. The client was getting nervous. We did it again. The marks matched but the car wouldn't start. I told the client:

-Tomorrow a technical expert arrives from Germany. Come tomorrow and we'll solve the problem.

We agreed on it and the client left. The next morning I met the coach

and I took him to the car center instead of a hotel. The coach checked what I had done. Everything was correct but the car wouldn't start. After that we decided to apply a Russian method. We took out the first cylinder, a plug, opened the cover, inserted a cutter etc. To our surprise, we made it work.

- We could have done it yesterday!
- Why didn't you do it then?
- We followed the manual!
- The manual is not the rule set in stone but a guide for action.

It turned out that marks were in the wrong position and a cog wheel was from another car.

How I was Leaving the Holding

Those employees, who worked for the company for two years, could get a company car. However, I got a company car much earlier. I was Savitsky's right-hand man. I got cars, brought cars, talked customers into buying them, sold cars. In fact, I was all in one - an engineer and a mechanic. I wasn't quite fortunate, though, and there was a moment when I started looking for another job.

Being the head of the development department I managed building a new dealership in Sharangovicha Str. I built it as if I would manage it. When the facility was almost ready I came up to Savitsky:

- The market is in full swing. We have lots of customers in Mashinostroiteley, if we move to the new facility, we won't benefit a lot, and the dealership is no much bigger. We'll again lack space. Let's have 2 facilities: here and there. They will make up a dealership network.

He asked:

- How are we to manage it?

I must say that officially it was Savitsky's idea but I consider it mine.

When the director positions were divided Husaenov asked me straightforwardly whom I consider the best candidate for the director's position. Prikazchikov had just arrived; the other candidate for that position was Vodchits. Initially, I considered that I was building the new dealership for myself but later I changed the strategy I was keeping to. The importer was set up and I liked the idea of being its director. At that time the position

was occupied by Savitsky but it was clear that he would move up. That's why I did not aspire to a position of the dealership director and fell out of the management. I stopped taking part in trainings and discussions. I was waiting for the importer director position to get free. In 1999 Savitsky told me:

-I am about to leave. What do you think of promoting Valeriy Mihaylovich Marchuk to the director position?

I did not expect it. Later Husaenov admitted that he had never thought of me as a leader. He might have got that impression from those old times when I asked lots of questions at the job interview and it left a gall in his mind. By the way, it wasn't the first time Husaenov had fired me. I was busy with Zhiguli at that time and I was asked to show a car to a customer. We had a busy season; we were lacking spare parts and couldn't find them anywhere. A range of cars had arrived. We were told not to tear cars down but to make them up and sell ready cars. Two clients arrived - I learnt later they were bankers who were to provide a credit to the holding. They chose two cars. I told them that I would make up the cars when we bought spare parts. They insisted on my taking parts from other cars and installing them to the ones they had chosen. I refused to do that. I don't know what they told Husaenov, he was the only person to deal with them but he called me and without asking anything scolded me and told me:

- If you don't want to work for us, you are free to leave.

-I tried to explain everything but he wouldn't listen to me. It wasn't the first time when Oleg had behaved that way. I should say we are quite alike in that. Savitsky is different. Oleg and I are hot-tempered guys. Two magnets of the same pole.

Interviewing me for a director general position Husaenov asked:

- Tell me, why should I nominate you for that position?

I said:

- I won't praise myself, just repeat Avicenna's quote: Don't tell about yourself aloud. Let other people tell about you, even if in a low voice.

Mr Marchuk arrived at the importer. I wasn't pleased with that but my pride didn't allow me to argue. When Savitsky was the boss I was quite independent. I liked it. Savitsky liked it, too, as the sales volumes grew constantly. Everything was different now.

I couldn't get along with Marchuk and we had a spat within the first month. So, I started thinking about leaving the company. I should give credit to Marchuk, he managed his ambitions, we discussed the matter and we found common ground which would allow me not to quit the company at once but had some time to find another job while Marchuk got a formally functioning division. I didn't want to stonewall the working process, we found some way of getting along but I was fully aware that I was leaving the holding.

What else was I to do? The importer director position was occupied. I was his deputy. However, I had neither power to manage, nor ability to control anything. So I was leaving for another industry.

Once, meeting Pyrko I told him that I was looking for a job.

Some time later Husaenov sent for me and proposed a director position at the dealership in Mashinostroiteley Str.

I got that I could have taken that position four years ago. I could have become the head of the dealership in Sharangovicha Str. However, nothing more was proposed. Husaenov put it blatantly:

- I expect you to agree to the proposal.

I took a day to consider the matter just on a dare. However, in the afternoon I called him and agreed. That was my way to the dealership in Mashinostroiteley Str.

I Prefer Crème de la Crème

Oleg Husaenov frequently says that "Milk goes up till it turns sour"

Milk - cream - sour cream. At a certain period a person either works hard to become crème de la crème or becomes sour milk.

Now I am busy with Smolensk. We are going to open a Volkswagen dealership there. I manage the opening, personnel, training.

I am a looker-on in the Board of Directors. However, I'm ready to work and move ahead. My management style is different from that of Husaenov and Savitsky. I don't want to explain why I do something. It's the outcome that counts.

I consider myself a strict but rather fair person. I am crusty and straightforward. However, I am trying not to take decisions in a fit of temper. It comes with experience. I prefer a carrot and stick policy. To praise and

punish if there are reasons for it.

I have always been treated like that.

Sergey SAMOYLO
Chief Executive
Officer
Atlant-M
International
Automobile
Holding, Belarus

March To the Ukraine

It all started in Minsk in 1999. In May I stopped working for an automobile company BelHyundai. I had been the director of the company for about five years from its first day. Just some days later Sasha Sheyko from the marketing department of Atlant-M holding called me:

- I say, maybe you'll work for us?

The Belarusian automobile market is not that big and people know one another. So, the call wasn't something extraordinary.

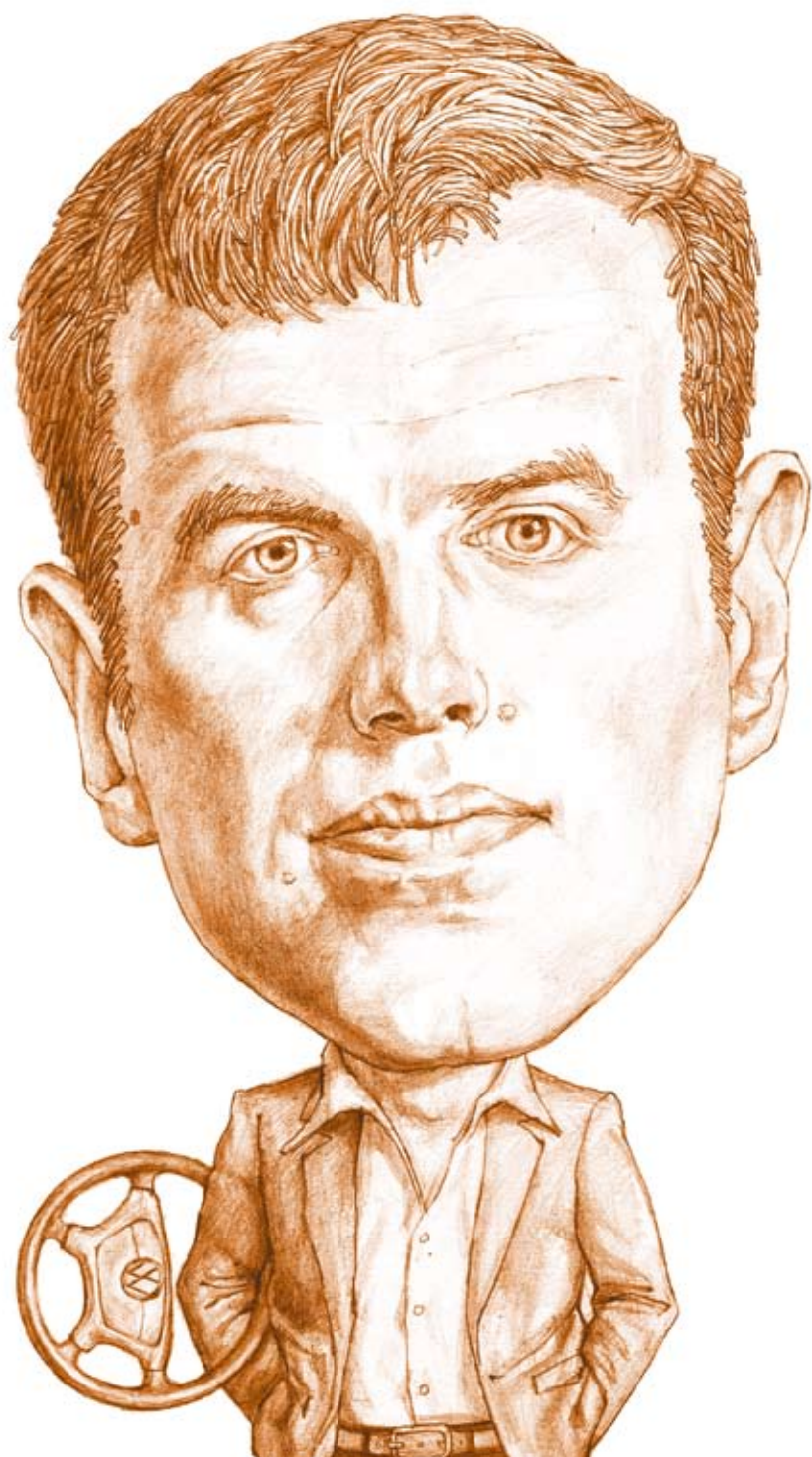
I was honest with Sasha and answered:

- I haven't had holidays for five years. Give me a bit of rest.

So, my friend and I spent two months enjoying ourselves: went to concerts, shows, clubs. Then I got fed up with that all and I called Sheyko: "Are you still interested?" - "Yes. Let's meet and discuss it." He arrived and told about the ongoing projects, mentioning about a possibility to work in the Ukraine. That was how my cooperation with Atlant-M started.

I met the director of the importing company. It used to be Sergey Savitsky, now he occupies a position of the holding CEO. We agreed that in the Volkswagen importing company in Minsk I will be in charge of an independent project - servicing corporate clients. However, the work turned out to be extremely dull just in two or three months. There weren't any possibilities for further development: just minor tweaking which did not affect the final results significantly. Atlant-M had done its best in that area. In winter 1999 I approached Savitsky for a serious conversation:

- Sergey, if there is some interesting project for me, where I can do something, please, tell me. If not, then, I say goodbye as that dull routine is killing me.



- Give me a week.

A week later we met again and Savitsky said:

- We've bought an importer in the Ukraine, we are going to develop it and create a new dealer. Are you interested?

- Certainly, I am.

Just at that time another person talked with Sergey Savitsky of the same things - Anatoliy Grek used to be a financial director then. He also wanted to move ahead. Savitsky sent us both.

We made several trial trips to the Ukraine and realized that it was a real Klondike. The Ukraine is five times bigger than Belarus in territory and population. What concerned world brands, they were presented quite similarly. However, the Belarusian market was rather small and to survive we constantly tried to make something up, to attract marketing, advertising and sales gurus... To attract clients we needed to make efforts, to agonize over it.

At the Ukrainian market there were the same brands but the business model was the following: there had always been a small market growth and nobody fought over clients!!! Clients came, looked for companies, dealers just showed and sold them cars. So, when we got there out of our reality, compared the markets, the conclusion was clear-cut: Klondike! Let's get down to work!

Atlant-M board of directors set the following tasks: to develop the Ukrainian importer, which had been bought literally a year before and to create a showpiece dealership. Tolya Grek and I divided responsibilities at once: he got engaged in the importer project and I wanted to create the dealership.

I remember quite well arriving to the Ukraine April 11, 2000. It didn't took me long to pack things as I did not have a family at that time - just took a suitcase.

Some time later Tolya came to work at my company as he had troubles in the importer. He was used to moving ahead sweepingly that's why he did not find common ground with the people there who couldn't put up with such speeds. In my company he became my deputy, in charge of sales. So, two of us developed the dealership in the Ukraine.

What was the major factor which ensured our success? A huge inner

desire to do something worthy. So, we treated all the difficulties as tasks with several uncertainties. Today, looking back I can tell that the model we applied ensured our success even during the first year - about 200-250 000 dollars of net profit. Three years after we got the anticipated volumes and earned more than a million dollars a year.

Our team consisted of like-minded people who were on the same wave. However, it doesn't mean there were no conflicts or some clashes between people. Our psychologist Konstantin Kovalenok was of real help in such situations. I would call him one of the key figures, involved in building our business success. At least once a year we went out of town, away from families and work - it was the essential condition. A reason for leaving was always formal - either shaping the company's mission or working out strategic goals of the dealership... In fact, it was the time for serious team work aimed at releasing steam and dealing with inside conflicts which had accumulated during the year.

Another key person who ensured our success and developed it was, to my mind, Alexander Sheyko. Sasha is a creative person, you must just follow him, listen to what he says, remember it and put into practice. The outcome will be superb. We invited Sasha several times a year:

- Look around and tell us what we should do to get the best result and the finest? and the quickest?" Every time Sasha's advice was to the point.

We were a pain in the ass to all the market as well as to Volkswagen dealership network in the region because while it was dragging on and we made a quick start. We became a №1 dealership in Volkswagen network which annoyed literally everybody. We had lots of sins: competition inside the holding was one of them. We instigated the importer: were the first to arrange presentations of new models, or organized some other event.

We caused lots of disturbance at the market with our bare-faced breakthrough; we overthrew existing dealership leaders - Toyota, Ford and others which used to be a pattern to follow.

Success consists of many aspects, though. I can not understand how's possible to work from 9 to 5. It was usual for us to go home at 9 in the evening. Tolya and I would work and suddenly at half past ten in the evening we realized that it was time we went home. We followed that schedule

for about a year and did not avoid any kind of work. If the importer was lacking cars we went to Slovakia, Hungary. If we were lacking identification signs or something for our routine activities we referred to the importer in Belarus. All that enraged the Ukrainian importer which formally was our boss. To my mind, all that provided resources and possibilities for it to expand more quickly and move ahead at a greater speed.

At first when we'd just arrived to the Ukrainian market, because of the competition wars profits of most dealership dropped down. Clients could look in at different dealerships and beat down prices to the reasonable level. They bought cars at a bargain price and we bore losses. We were fed up with that and initiated a meeting of three key dealerships, we came to some gentlemen's agreement on the issue and kept to it for quite a time.

That was how it all started.

To my mind there are several milestones for Atlant-M

The first is buying a Volkswagen importing company in Ukraine. It provided a base for the holding to grow for the next five years and good money when the unit was sold.

The second is an entry to the large and prospective market of St. Petersburg. The third includes Huseynov's creating a Volkswagen dealership in Moscow when he proved that there can be no obstacles for a serious businessman if he wants to implement bold and successful ideas. The fourth is attempts to sell Chinese cars. It is, no doubt, a milestone, despite an unfavorable outcome. The last is an entry to Dnepropetrovsk market in 2002 which proved a failure: a dealership there was opened only in 2007. It taught us a lesson, though. When I was explaining the failure I put it like this: Entering Dnepropetrovsk market we have made all the possible management mistakes - at the financial level, dealing with local authorities and construction companies, at making the project and starting up. We failed everywhere. However, all the mistakes were taken into consideration when we were building a dealership in Kharkov which I can call a 100 percent successful project.

**Hennadiy
PRISTROM**
Chief Executive
Officer
Atlant-M
International
Automobile
Holding,
the Ukraine

Atlanters & Velikaners³

Four Men in a Boat

I was born in Kiev, but then I was brought to Magadan and spent my childhood and adolescent years there. I finished school with honors and dreamt of becoming a mathematician or at least an intelligence officer but perestroika burst out and I realized that the Motherland wouldn't appreciate my intentions and I had to rely just on myself. Becoming a rich person was my new goal. That's why arriving in Moscow I entered not the Higher School of the KGB, but Plehanov's Institute.

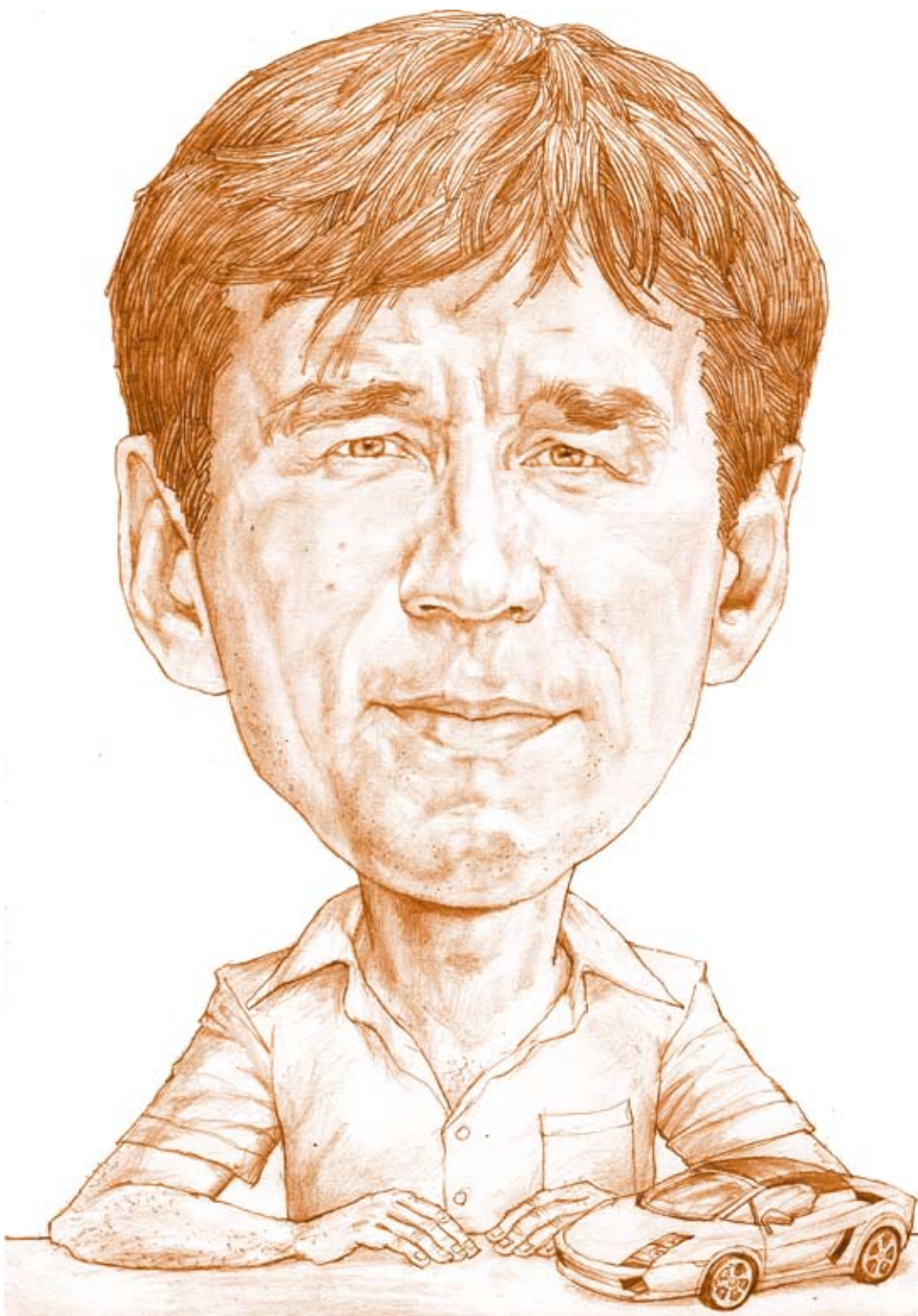
Besides studying I was engaged in a range of small businesses: scarce goods from state shops, caviar from Magadan, vodka from the Ukraine, currency from foreigners etc. Then I was shortlisted and got a job in the Russian RepOffice of Mercedes-Benz to gain a bit of good practices from tycoons of automobile business. I was sure it was just a warm-up before serious activities.

It's funny Igor Malgin and I studied at the same school in Magadan but met only in Moscow at the beginning of the 90-s when I looked in at his birthday party. I met Oleg Husaenov there as well. They made quite an impression and they shared my goals. That's why when in 1995 Igor Malgin proposed to get to their boat called Avtogruz, I did not hesitate a minute. The key factor for me was the team I was about to work with. Some time later Avtogruz was renamed to Velikan. Now we are still together: Igor Malgin, Sergey Savitsky, Oleg Husaenov and I are shareholders of Velikan company.

Oleg Husaenov is a pattern of a racy person and a workaholic, a born leader. I think it is the most precious trait for a businessman of the '90-s.

Alexander
VASILCHENKO
Director general,
shareholder
Velikan company,
Moscow.

³ - Both company names stand for persons of prodigious size and strength



Oleg worked from dusk till late at night, having a day off a week. Over the years I got the secret of his working commitment. First of all, he did not lose but, on the contrary, got energy in working. Secondly, when he has 10 free minutes he can just zonk out, fall asleep even in the armchair and wake up as bright as a button. Besides Oleg has a huge inner impulse to be the first and the best.

That trait is evident from the following story. In the middle of the 90-s Igor Malgin bought a billiard table and we hired a coach to teach us to play billiards. Once Oleg Husaenov visited Igor and stayed for the weekend. He wanted to play as well. Being inexperienced in the game, he kept losing one game after another. Noticing he was a bit out of place we offered to end the game. Oleg insisted:

- Let's play more. Till the evening.

Our swears that we had been training for half a year already and it was impossible for him to win without a bit of training and that if he took lessons he would play on the level field with us did not help. He just couldn't put up with that.

I met Sergey Savitsky later than all the others. He used to visit Moscow seldom. However now, we meet and talk quite often. He is competent, responsible, sensible and calm - these are his strong sides. As far as I know, all the projects he managed - Volkswagen dealership in Minsk, an importer in Belarus, an importer in the Ukraine - were the patterns to follow for the rest of the holding. Sergey seems to be one of the most successful holding's leaders.

I know Igor Malgin better than other shareholders as we have been working side by side in Velikan for quite a time. If I have to name three main features of his personality, it will be charisma, an ability to perceive the situation in general and ambitions. Due to charisma he makes an impression on people of different kinds. It's extremely important for a leader. The second feature I named allows him not to miss the point, find uncommon decisions and reveal risks. When people go ahead without being aware of the situation in general they may turn out to have been going in the wrong direction. If you are accompanied by Igor Malgin, you are sure to go in the right direction. Being ambitious Igor once concentrated on the goal and has been moving towards it since then.

Alexander
VASILCHENKO
Director general,
shareholder
Velikan company,
Moscow.

It's rather difficult to appreciate myself. My outcomes and colleagues can speak for myself. Everyone has its own winning formula. Some leaders are bright and convincing and can talk others into anything. Some leaders try to control everything. Others never change a once taken decision in order not to show their weakness. To understand what your talents are and not copy others - is the only way to personal success.

Leaders must be able to influence people, which is of vital importance. Talented leaders always have their own secrets based on their personalities.

Atlant-M and Velikan

The companies are different. They have different geographical markets, offer different car brands, take different approaches to some key issues and have developed different corporate cultures.

However, not only our common shareholders unite us. We have another thing in common - a facility which was the first premises the companies bought in Moscow.

Buying it was rather melodramatic. When we started up Velikan we had no premises of our own, offices and parking facilities were rented. At the dawn of business development in Russia it was extremely of style to have an office in the center of Moscow and we got one in Pravda Str. However, the parking facility was far away in Medvedkovo. Soon, we found out that it was extremely inconvenient for customers and unwise for business. We needed to find both an office and a parking facility at the same place. We found such a place in Bazhova Str, 17. It used to be parking facilities of Mosovoschtrans.

At first we rented an area of 100 square meters, repaired it, moved in and started working. We were in red for half a year and just kept head above water for another half. Moving a company to another place just killed the business as people used to be afraid of any changes - new company names, new telephone numbers, new addresses. We pulled out of the sales downturn only the next year.

Quite unexpectedly we found out that Mosovoschtrans was about to sell the facility and they had already signed an agreement and even got the prepayment! The buyer was none other than the federal Border Force

**Alexander
VASILCHENKO**
Director general,
shareholder
Velikan company,
Moscow.

which was a branch of the Federal Security Service. The director and main owner of Mosovoschtrans arrived and told me:

- Get out! You have a month for it!

I was aware that the company wouldn't manage another moving and if we left the office Velikan would go down. So, we decided to fight for these premises.

We had a three year rent agreement and formally we still had two years but the agreement was finalized in such a way that we had no chances of prevailing in the action.

We had the only way out: to interfere with the already initiated deal. First of all, we found a secret ally - managers and employees of the very facility. Of course, they had been offered a move to another branch of the company but most of them would be made redundant and they were aware of it. Our ally provided us with access to the facility documents and we hired a team of experienced lawyers headed by Ivan Andrushkevich. They found serious law violations at the privatization process.

Our team needed time to prepare legal documents. The guys worked day and night. At the same time the date for the Border Force officers to move into the facility had already been set. We had to take extreme measures. When their cars had arrived at the facility, the employees did not let them in. The most reckless even lay on the ground. Of course, journalists happened to witness the situation. Passions were rising. The local authorities asked the parties to find a sensible solution that would suit both of them. The Border Force officers left but that was just the first attempt. Mosovoschtrans director understood that it couldn't be just a spontaneous event and twigged who was pulling the ropes. He decided to apply a power method, we were threatened and Igor Malgin was asked to visit some FSS general. Igor was a more experienced person and he told me:

- They know who is behind the scene, it's getting hot here. Let's leave it.

If I had been older, I would have agreed to the proposal. At that time I thought I had nothing to lose and I was sure that moving the company would be the last straw. I convinced Igor to keep fighting. We had to hire bodyguards. Finally we were ready to take the major move and filed a suit demanding to declare the facility privatization illegal, attaching

Alexander
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Moscow.

the property! Mosvoschtrans owner decided to negotiate the deal and started looking for a way out. He needed money while we wanted to stay in that facility. The possible solution was to buy it together with an unprofitable traffic company engaged in carrying vegetables. We did not have the megabucks asked for the facility, so the owner had to agree to a deferred payment for a period of a year and a half. We expected to earn the money by then.

Fortunately, my forecasts proved true and Velikan went up in the world and we paid what we owed. By the way, as we had promised, the transport company was left in the premises we even subsidized its losses. Only later we managed to talk them into moving to another place. We had to buy them new trucks to be more convincing.

Here is the story...

In 1997 Atlant-M made an agreement about a Volkswagen dealer in Moscow and was looking for a place to build a dealership. They liked the premises in Bazhova Str. and asked to sell them a part of it. I felt sorry selling it but we couldn't refuse to help our friends. Now Velikan and Atlant-M have been sharing the facility for many years and a Volkswagen dealership in Bazhova Str. is one of the best in the holding.

When Dreams Come True

To be interesting, a goal must be both ambitious and achievable.

15 years ago Igor Malgin asked me:

- How much do you want to earn in your life?

I answered:

- Hardly a billion: I will lack either a life term or a desire. My goal is 100 million"

Dear colleagues and friends! I want the goal which Atlant-M set 15 years ago not to seem ambitious to you now.

Alexander
VASILCHENKO
Director general,
shareholder
Velikan company,
Moscow.

When Trees Were Small

My getting familiar with Atlant-M holding was destined beforehand as Oleg Husaenov, Igor Malgin and I studied at the University - in Moscow Institute of Civil Aviation. Igor and I were groupmates and Oleg and I lived together in the same dormitory. Oleg and Igor shared the same room for five years. During our last year at the University we were sent to military instruction to Belarus, to the air regiment, disposed in Machulischy. Oleg Husaenov met his future wife there, that's why he moved to Minks where he started Atlant-M holding

Oleg Husaenov has always been full of seething energy. He can not sit still. Only thanks to him Atlant-M has become a big, imposing company. When we were young, he said: "My goal is to build a huge holding". He has achieved his goal and created a big international holding which brings profit not only in Belarus, but in Russia and the Ukraine as well. That's not a mission for anyone to complete.

After graduation I spent two years in the army and when I was out of it in 1991 I learnt that in Minsk Oleg Husaenov organized a company called Brokerage House Atlant-M. As Oleg and Igor were friends and did everything together, at the same year in Moscow a company of the same name was founded by Igor Malgin and I started working there.

When we began working, we had nothing except for an office. Igor rented a common flat in Marina Raskovaya Str. The flat was rented for a daytime and its owner, an old bottle man returned there at night. Igor left there his suit and the old sipper often put it on and walked around.

As it is clear from the name of the company - a brokerage house - we caught with the trend and worked at different exchanges, names of which

Vadim IVANOV,
Chief Executive
Officer
Avtodin Company,
Moscow



I can hardly remember now, and sold phones, suits, building materials and sometimes cars. Russian Commodities and Raw Materials Exchange had just opened and we sold something there, too. However, exchanges we used to work at are completely different from what we mean under this term now. It used to be a common market and we, brokers were middlemen. Our task was to find people that wanted to buy something and bring them to people who wanted to sell it. We found such people, brought them together and earned some money. After a year of such work we moved to another office in Pravda Str - a 15-metre small narrow room. We also got the first computer which cost the price of a car. Before that all the contracts had been typewritten and Heavens forbid to make a misprint - a document either had to be retyped, or a misprint had to be erased or painted out. Hell on wheels! A computer - it was some Russian device like Iskra - significantly altered our work. I handled contracts and installed a program - it became much easier to work!

There was another device which almost turned our life upside down. Do you know which? Not a mobile phone. A fax machine. Before that we had to bring documents for clients to sign, go around the city all day long. Getting a fax machine saved our time. The thing is that we got used to it so quickly that when we asked our clients to accept a fax and heard in response:

- We don't have a fax machine!

We were shocked:

- Oh gosh, you still don't have a fax?!

...By the way, it was impossible just start trading at the exchange, places there had to be bought. We bought it at Russian Automobile Exchange where anyone could freely buy a car. As you remember it was almost impossible to buy a car in the USSR. At the exchange anyone could buy a car at an open price. It was high but that didn't put people off. So, we started buying cars in Russia and ran them to Belarus, where Atlant-M sold them. They still weren't at the free market there. We drove the cars ourselves: Oleg Husaenov, Igor Malgin, Sergey Savitsky and I.

I remember once we were running cars. It was night. Oleg followed me at the road. It was really difficult to drive at night. We hurried and drove fast. I looked at the rear mirror and saw the lights of Oleg's car disappear

and then appear again. It happened several times. When we stopped for a short rest, I asked him:

- Why are you constantly switching lights on and off?
- When I fall asleep I get behind, and then when I wake up I catch up with you.

It was the way we ran cars...

Thanks to running and selling cars at open prices we began earning good money. Later on somebody, I don't remember who exactly it was either Oleg Husaenov, or Igor Malgin came up with the idea: if we run cars to Belarus, why not bring back trucks? So, we started selling MAZ trucks.

I remember having sold our first truck. Igor lived in Polyarnaya Str. There was Taxy Parking № 20 nearby, where he rented a place. The truck was driven to Moscow by someone else, as we did not have the license for the corresponding driving category. It was winter and we cursed all day as we couldn't get it started. The buyer got a brilliant idea to bring KamAZ and we managed to turn MAZ over, connecting minus terminals with the help of a crowbar.

The decision to sell MAZ trucks was the right idea. There were outages at KamAZ plant at that time and MAZ is a good truck. However, trucks were released in a bad package. Director General of MAZ issued a document defining that a truck could be sold without the following parts, enumerating 33 items which could be missing. Some of these items included a storage battery and fenders... In Moscow we added missing parts and sold trucks. So, we had to engage in another business - selling car parts. Later when we established solid business connections with Belarus we started to sell tractors "Belarus". It was the way the business was developing in Moscow. In Minsk the holding first worked only with motor cars: first it was Zhiguli, later Volkswagen, Mazda and other famous brands.

The mid '90s - when we were starting our business, was a troubled time for us. Russia was in chaos. Any business depended on many different things: on the state power which was able to close it down any moment; on gangsters who could press the case or do something worse. Once when I already had my own company and rented an office of about 100 square meters at the plant which made cash registers we had such gunnies in the neighboring room. We were under tension all the time: they came to us,

hit on our girls. It was impossible to understand what business we were engaged in as these shaven-headed guys either played ping-pong, or smoked, or tried to squeeze on us. However, gangsters were not the only trouble we had. It was quite common for a lessor to switch off electricity without notification - and we had to stay in darkness with ruined computer files. The central heating could be turned off in winter. Clients arrived and we counted money in mittens - there were no book-keeping machines then.

At some point we realized that the business had to be divided into 3 parts to make it more stable. So, three companies appeared engaged practically in the same activity - selling MAZ trucks, Belarus tractors and their parts: Aljans headed by Evgeniy Kirichuk, Avtogruz managed by Alexander Vasilchenko and my Avtodin.

... At that time besides selling trucks we decided to engage into an additional business, which seemed profitable to us. It was possible to buy a stand, rent a place and sell there different stuff - juices, water, bubble gums, cigarettes, chocolate. Exactly what many people were doing in the mid '90-s. We bought an expensive and quite nice-looking stand and put it in Leninsky Avenue which is one of the biggest Moscow speedways. One morning we arrived and there was no stand. At the centre of the city with the help of a crane thieves had put a stand at the truck and went away. Nobody had seen that. Incredible! At first we started searching for it, gave an ad to the paper, and promised a consideration. There were lots of calls but all was in vain, so we decided that business wasn't meant for us.

If I look back I realize that Oleg Husaenov has achieved in business far more than I have. I am a founder of only my division while Oleg, Igor Malgin, Sergey Savitsky have started up all the others. However, I can not say I am unhappy. I am Ok with my life and I have lots of ideas and projects at the automobile market and little by little they get realized. The other day we opened a Ford dealership. The project was started before the crisis and the construction had to be put off for two years. It was not easy but we had to sell our parts business. However, we survived, managed the crisis with the least losses possible and in 2010 recommenced the construction.

What concerns Atlant-M holding which celebrates its 20-th anniversary this year, I've already told you that the company's top secret is in seeth-

Vadim IVANOV,
Chief Executive
Officer
Avtodin Company,
Moscow

ing activity of Oleg Husaenov and other people working in his team. One needs a grand talent not just to find people who can develop and expand a business, but to teach them, keep them on their toes, constantly motivate and keep them going. What for shortcomings, there are always petty things which are hard to define. Oleg may be going ahead too quickly sometimes forgetting about covering his rear. The crisis has shown that the holding had lots of unfinished projects. It's quite a dangerous situation when the volume of incoming money decreases and it's hard to service numerous loans. However, thanks to the energy of Oleg Husaenov, his team and his company has come out of the crisis with minor losses.

I want to wish the holding to develop and move forward. Lots of luck! The luck provides wings, gives incentives and makes it much easier to go ahead.

Vadim IVANOV,
Chief Executive
Officer
Avtodin Company,
Moscow

CHAPTER TWO

Friends and Partners

CHAPTER IN WHICH FRIENDS AND PARTNERS RECALL THE
EVENTS THEY SHARE WITH THE HOLDING AS WELL AS TELL
FUNNY STORIES ABOUT ATLANT-M EVERY-DAY LIFE



Outstanding People

Volkmar Zering,
former head
of the VW
Department of
Sales
for Eastern Europe
and Central Asia,
now retired

I first met Oleg Husaenov, Sergey Savitsky and Andrey Budchenko in March, 1993. Atlant-M company had been operating for 2 years by then. From March 1993 till June 1995 I was in charge of VW sales and cooperated with the company as a head of the Department of Sales for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, export division.

I remember fairly well my first visit to Minsk. It was Sunday and all the country celebrated Women's Day - March, 8. The negotiations were difficult and when we finally reached the agreement, I was told about the holiday. I felt really sorry for not knowing about it earlier. It was certainly my fault that the guys hadn't spent the day with their families. The fact that Irina Kuraeva, the only woman among us, was also busy participating in the talks upset me even more. I apologized as I had never heard of the holiday before but it was the first time I felt confident in these people and thought that we were real partners, people for whom promoting a business at the Belarusian market was a number one priority. In April 1993 we signed a contract of intents which contributed to the following success. I think that story with Women's Day is the very situation which shows how the things are done in the company, when being here and now for the sake of business is much more important than personal matters.

We also worked together preparing a VW car maintenance station in Mashinostroiteley Str, 26 which was to open several months later. I came to Minsk with Dr. Prager. The thing is that after my fascinating story he wanted to visit Atlant-M company and meet its young and talented owners in person.

In 1994 I had to retire, but in June 1995 together with Atlant-M we launched a range of projects aimed at developing car maintenance as well as establishing an importer company. Later these projects were handled by Mr. Bedding.

The success of Atlant-M Holding is mainly in modern views its top-managers boast of. They are open, ready to learn, understand and implement Western business models. When I come to Atlant-M web-page, I realize the achievements of the company and its breakthroughs. Such development was made possible only due to personalities of the people who founded the enterprise. Workaholic approach, optimism and readiness to bear responsibilities made for the company's success. The main condition, though, is sincere and trustworthy relations with partners. All that ensures the company's advancement and development.

I wish further achievements and prosperity to Atlant-M team. Receive my heartily congratulations on the company's 20th anniversary!

Volkmar Zering,
former head
of the VW
Department of
Sales
for Eastern Europe
and Central Asia,
now retired



Good Business Instincts and Luck

Autohaus Schulze in Cottbus was particularly interested in cooperation with Eastern Europe. Making acquaintance with people from the Soviet Union allowed making trips to the neighboring countries. Minsk, being the capital of Belarus, was the mostly visited place. Once we came across Antlant-M company. The owners of Autohaus Schulze and Frank Kossik, who was the interpreter

SCHULZE
brothers,
Owners of Schulze
GmbH Auto
House, Germany

at the events to follow, arranged the meeting with Oleg Hусаenov and Sergey Savitsky from Atlant-M.

Both parties were interested in car trading, that's why we did our best during the talks. Due to some common connections we got the idea to turn to the sales department of Volkswagen. At that time (1993-1994) the company was committed to partnership with Russian-speaking countries and was looking for an importer in Belarus.

Atlant-M founders have never lost ground and still keep to the same principles of a businessman. I think it's what ensures the company's success. Atlant-M top managers are open to new trends and ideas, highly motivated, able to perceive the situation in general and take strategic decisions.

The owners and shareholders of Schulze GmbH Auto House treat Atlant-M achievements with deep respect and highly appreciate their work which ensures Volkswagen brand position at Eastern markets.

We congratulate the holding on its 20-th anniversary and wish success and progress to all the employees and shareholders. We wish you good business instincts and luck.



You've Never Stopped

**Hans Werner
BRACH**
Head of VW
Commercial
Vehicle Sales
Department,
Germany

Atlant-M positions itself as the most successful company in the CIS countries. It's almost unbelievable that 3 young students made it come true. You manage difficulties with an iron self-control and certain creativity.

From 1994 till 2008 I was a kind of Atlant-M supervisor on behalf of VW NFZ. From the very first day our goal is to be better than our competitors. As I

supervised Atlant-M for a long time, surely I have lots of things to remember.

First people to meet were Sergey Savitsky, Dmitriy Veselov and Nilokay Demchenko. I deeply respect Sergey. The same respect I express towards your entering the Ukrainian market and achievements there. It was a real breakthrough, and I am proud of taking part in that as well.

All the child entities of Atlant-M are quite independent and are to look for and find financial resources on their own. It's not that simple but you've never stepped back because of difficulties. Your top-managers keep on upgrading their skills and are swiftly moving forward significantly outpacing the competitors. Due to these qualities all your projects have been realized without holding back. That's the very secret of your success, to my mind.

**Hans Werner
BRACH**
Head of VW
Commercial
Vehicle Sales
Department,
Germany



20 Years with No Translation Problems

My cooperation with Atlant-M started when Volkswagen was looking for an auto center or a car dealership in Belarus. I was an interpreter and thus got to know Atlant-M top managers. Oleg Hусаenov, Sergey Savitsky and Alexander Pyrko - they all were young, full of energy and had a bold and forward-looking plan to become a Volkswagen importer in Belarus. To begin with there were

Frank KOSSIK
Atlant-M
representative in
Germany

other companies in Belarus which could compete with Atlant-M in that activity, Volkswagen was considering several applicants at that time. However, the youth and energy of Atlant-M managers were crucial for signing the contract and Volkswagen backed the right horse.

Oleg Husaenov, Sergey Savitsky and I spent lots of time together and so it was not just business but a certain friendship as well. Not only had we met in Belarus. Oleg and Sergey came to Germany as well to get some advice as how to do business. They took into account what they had been told.

For some unknown reason Belarusians themselves considered that their country was perceived in Europe as some barbaric state with a complete breakdown of law and order where a civilized business is impossible. Maybe that's why it never occurred to anybody to refer directly to a respectable car-manufacturer. Atlant-M was the first to do it. Germans never treated Belarus as something inferior to Europe. Moreover, when they came to Belarus, talked to these people, looked at the erected car dealership, they found out that these guys were people to deal with and that common business could be very promising.

I just want to mention that Belarusians really are extremely superstitious and believe in signs. I can easily recall some anecdotes. Once I was interpreting at the meeting of Volkswagen and Atlant-M representatives in Minsk. Upon finishing it, Savitsky, Husaenov and I dropped in some café to take some coffee. Savitsky unexpectedly broke his cup handle off. He really got upset:

-- Oh my God. It is all UP! We will become enemies for the time to come. We aren't gonna make it...

However, as far as I know, that sign has another interpretation if anything is broken, it manifests good luck coming.

Starting from 1994 we communicated quite closely, talked a lot about different things. Every time it was pleasant, joyful and productive for the both parties and all the participants.

I have taken part in meetings and talks in Kiev, in Russia and in Minsk. The holding has showed a well co-ordinated work everywhere. German partners have never faced translation problems dealing with Atlant-M: either in language understanding (I did my best, of course), or in finding common ground. Sometimes it was a bit difficult to explain some local niceties. To my mind, though, in the long run everybody got everything and the parties were satis-

fied with one another.

One of most impressing things. I witnessed opening a dealership in Sharangovicha Str. If compared to the way a car dealership is opened in Germany, it was... It was just awesome! On a large scale! Unforgettable feeling that something important was going on. A large scale and very positive event of the international level certainly impressed German partners. The impression was never spoiled afterwards. As to different events Atlant-M has always raised the bar and keeps doing it now.

20 years is a long time. 20 years of decent work is a very long time. I wish the holding development and success it experienced earlier. I want you to keep the same highest level which Atlant-M has undoubtedly reached for the next 20 years to come.

Frank KOSSIK
Atlant-M
representative in
Germany



True Friends

Aleksey AKULOV,
Head deputy of
Cosmonaut
Training Centre,
Federal Space
Agency, Russia

I got familiar with Atlant-M at the beginning of 2000. I used to be a vice governor of Leningrad oblast at the time. Representatives of a whole lot of companies arrived in the region. Atlant-M would just come to our territory. They had their own small niche and they were in talks with the oblast authorities on opening their first dealership in the region.

Unfortunately, most of our officials perceive the reality in quite a weird way: they considered that just their being contributes to the prosperity of the region they are entitled to manage. I however, keep to the point that any district is successful only if a successful business settles there, creating resources for taxing. That's why we tried to create favorable conditions for our partnership with Atlant-M. They already stood out of all other companies - interesting, open-minded, superprofessional. And sincere, which was important, which surprised me, and which, to tell the truth, won me over. So, our business relations turned into friendship.

In general, a situation when I make friends with some company, for example, Volkswagen or Microsoft is hard to fancy. What concerns Atlant-M, this is that very exception when I can openly admit that I make friends with Atlant-M. I know lots of people there - Oleg and Sergey and Sasha. These are very pleasant and light-hearted people. That's the very exception when neither of them can be described as doubtful. They proved to have been the best for so many years. I don't like the word "team". To my mind, it appeals rather to sport than everyday life. However, it is the very word that describes Atlant-M guys.

That's why when the folks offered me to take part in their tennis competition, I gladly agreed. I play regularly now. Their competition is called Christmas one but its schedule is quite convenient, games taking place at the first weeks of December. Their atmosphere is really unmatched; it is more of a family holiday. Everything is organized with love and care. I must say it is quite a serious competition and I can be proud of winning it twice and taking the second prize two times as well. Also I have every intention to win the competition for the third time and set kinda record to crack. Last year I had a chance to become the winner for the third time but the victory was almost snatched at the last minutes of the game, we lost the tie-break. The outcome of the game was determined by a single point. Never mind! Still, there's plenty of time and we'll show them what we are made off!

I never train hard before the competition; just prefer to keep fit all the time. Moreover, there is more psychology at the game than physical abilities. In general, Atlant-M provides lots of possibilities for people to

Aleksey AKULOV,
Head deputy of
Cosmonaut
Training Centre,
Federal Space
Agency, Russia

try out themselves. I will always remember our going to the Crimea. One of the mountaineer's route, set at the left part of the central wall of Shaan- Kaj mountain was called in honor of Atlant-M. Professional climbers were summiting it. It was a rather difficult wall, cast-in-place, without any brows and with an inverse angle. Mountain ascending took about five hours; one of the professional climbers seemed to be the world champion. We were watching all that from below. It was a fantastic scene. We could share the feelings of climbing a smooth wall at the enormous height and tried a wall ourselves. It was a rather low mountain, about twenty meters. The feelings were to remember as well, I declare.

There were lots of such trips, games... The travel geography is always expanding, including not just Belarus, Russia and the Ukraine. Such trips always keep the team together. By the way, it is why I treat the guys with great respect. There are lots of people who have a so called "hang up" about their work: oh, no time for this, exhausted etc. I always have doubts about such people: are they high achievers? After all, not being able to rest means not being able to work well. Atlant-M team can rest; they can see something good round them as well. They can upgrade almost anything to the state of perfection and clear up if anything is missing. They even have a peer group of Moscow State University graduates. Besides, there is always a certain air of friendliness and professionalism. Atlant-M is, no doubt, the best example of decency and sincerity.

That's why one of my wishes will be as follows: try to show that there is a decent, kind life with true friends and real friendship, without conflicts, as well as intrigues.

Aleksey AKULOV,
Head deputy of
Cosmonaut
Training Centre,
Federal Space
Agency, Russia



Denis Kozlov's Story

Samvel
AMVETISYAN
Chief of ArchIdea
Marketing
Company
Moscow

Atlant-M turned to me asking to organize an advertising campaign to promote the company. We agreed on the format: I was to be some external expert and the project manager. I also advised on contacting Instinct Group to get quality creative ideas. As a result of numerous consultations and brainstorms a splendid idea came up. The plot was to dwell on the key character, a

certain Denis Kozlov who represents the company. We offered several versions to Oleg and finally he approved of two scripts which he liked most.

When did that Denis Kozlov come up? When the name was being chosen, there were several dozens of meetings at the advertising agency Instinkt when we were thinking of the character's name. The last name Kozlov came to the mind because of the old joke: "crossings have been built for you, kozlov!". The name was Denis as it sounds sweet. In the whole the name goes well with the last name and is easy to remember. Moreover, we did not want to use something rinky-dink kinda Ivanov, Petrov, Sidorov². Besides, a hint at some car brand name like Sitroenov would be a bit blatant and unsophisticated.

Our Denis Kozlov was to be a person in his own style. The main feature of his character is his professionalism in what he does. A reliable adviser, whose values, mindset and life style raise trust. He is always to turn to and he can easily handle any problem. He is a person to follow into combat blindfolded. Anyone can contact him: both a Shaolin coach and a director. He assists to everyone. The main idea, therefore, is that Atlant-M company works professionally and for professionals.

After that we chose Gleb Orlov's production company, called Okey-Dokey, which is one of the best companies at the advertising market. Together with that creative crew we flew to Thailand in February, 2008. The place for shooting was near Bangkok, in the ethnography park with many famous temples. The shooting took about three days while much time was spent on casting. Local actors took part in the commercial. By the way, the role of the monk-coach was played by a former Buddhist monk. Denis Kozlov's part was performed by a born Dutchman, who had been living in Thailand for a long time. He has Aryan appearance, a Nordic character and at the same time he is a funny and pleasant person. A young guy about 30 years old.

However, the most difficult thing to shoot was not faked fights but the scene when the coach snatches out a business card with Denis Kozlov's name and Atlant-M logo. To make it really showy we had to get more than 30 retakes. There are other characters in the commercial besides Denis - a master and a disciple. In the second commercial there appears another main character - a director. The beauty of the ad concept was in the plot development. In the first commercial the coach scolds the disciple: You can not please me. Only Denis Kozlov is able to do it, while in the second commercial the director

Samvel
AMVETISYAN
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Company
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1 - In the joke there is a pun based on the similarity of the last name of the pedestrian Kozlov, who crossed the highway against the rules and an offensive word which he was called by the irritated driver.

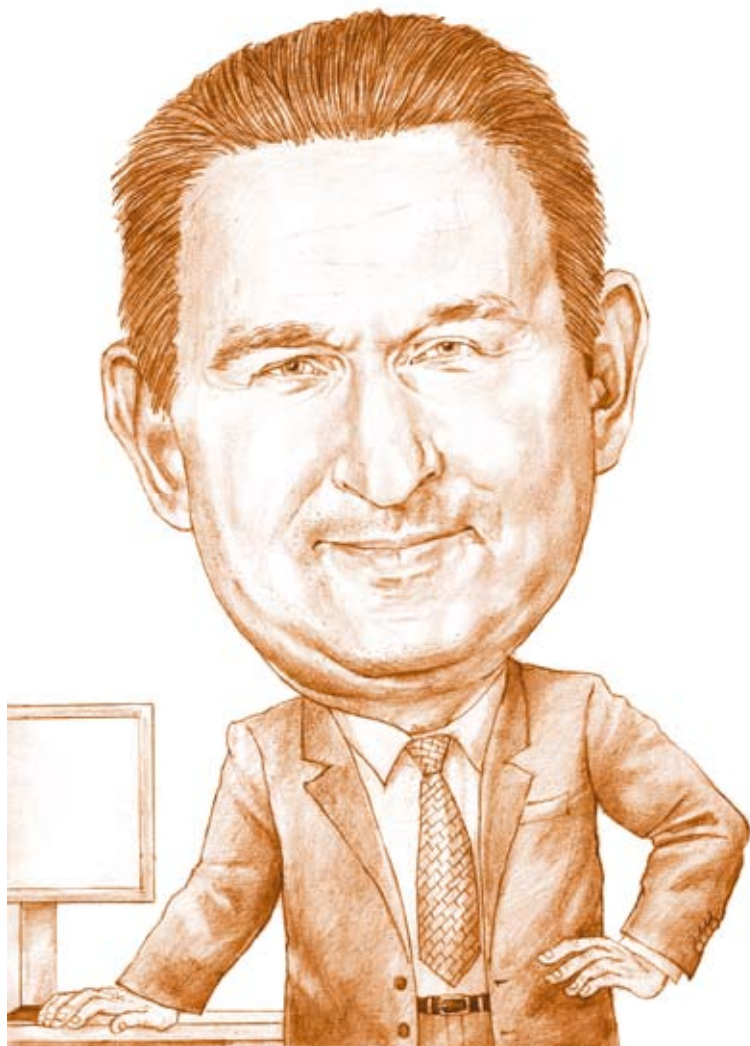
2 - These are widely-spread Russian last names usually to imply a common person

demands following his instructions referring to the mentioned Denis Kozlov. The topic can be dwelled on endlessly. Let's say in the third commercial there appears another character who begins to teach the director to shoot films, for example a producer. He says: Take your lead from Denis Kozlov.

We wanted to proceed up to Oleg Husaenov himself in such a way, who was to appear in some episode and teach somebody referring to his manager Denis Kozlov. As imagination is hard to stop, virtually, any new participant can be included into that chain. Let's say Dmitriy Medvedev chastises prime-minister Putin: However, Denis Kozlov....

I liked working with the guys. It was one of the best projects in my career. At the car selling market all the dealership companies' images are flat and very pompous. What a client needs is a bright, simple and reassuring pattern. By the way, that concept fully manifests the kind of company Atlant-M is. Getting familiar with their team, partners, managers, one gets an impression they are really a team of fellow-thinkers where everybody likes what they do.

Unfortunately, in August, 2008 the crisis broke out, the budget was cut and we had to limit to what had already been shot. However, I have a marketing rule that an abyss can be managed only in one leap. The budget is calculated taking into account the width of that abyss. If it is even 10 percent smaller you are to fall down. Unfortunately, because of the crisis we did not get the effect we had expected. Now the situation is getting better and I hope that Oleg will come back to the idea. It is unlikely to go out of date. Moreover, a viewer can recollect the first episodes. I was told that the first time the commercials were shown in Minsk they made a splash. Denis Kozlov became a common name. It got two awards for the best director and for the best actor at International Advertising Festival in Kiev in May 2008. I believe Denis Kozlov is yet to become an iconic commercial character.



From Zhiguli to Rolls-Royce

**Igor
VERHOVODKO**
managing
partner of ODO
Biznesconsult,
Minsk

A talented person is said to have many talents. Atlant-M Holding specialists have been enjoying an incomparable skill of selling cars and talking a future client into buying one. Even if the latter used to hate that particular car brand, he becomes its most ardent worshipper realizing that his life is senseless without it. San Sanych Pyrko has been and still is one of the renowned experts in the field.

One of my acquaintances recalled that at the beginning of the 90-s after Pyrko's passionate speech about advantages of a comfortable 5-seat Zhiguli car he managed to keep himself from buying it just because he already had VAZ-2109.

There is every reason to believe that it is due to Atlant-M experts Moskvich hasn't become a Zhiguli's competitor at the Post-Soviet space.

I was affected by Pyrko's logic hypnotic influences myself when at some presentation of Range-Rover carelessly asked him for advice about choosing an offroadster. I was warned not to fall in the abyss of technical imperfections of Mercedes, BMW and Toyota and at the end I was aware that my next car will be Range Rover Sport.

However, the life keeps going the same as Atlant-M is. San Sanych is said to be mocking at some Bentley parked at the dealership in Bazhova Street. Maybe because he favors Rolls-Royce? A sign, though. Maybe I shouldn't make haste about buying a Range Rover? I am driving Lexus now. However, who knows?...

I got familiar with the company 15 years ago. Atlant-M is the leading company, which implements the latest business management techniques. As our BusinessConsult company was and still is one of the best at providing external consultant services, the holding chose us for the project.

I can not remember who the first person from the company I met was. I think it was Oleg Ilgizovich Husaenov himself and we reached an agreement about further cooperation just at a common meeting.

We've been dealing with the most important issues, starting from consumers' claims about cars of so-called "poor quality" and up to making the company's investments. Besides, our company managed the construction of new dealerships not only in Belarus but in other countries as well. At first our employees went to Russia to handle the holding's business but later we set up an independent legal entity in Moscow which is now engaged in the company's business in the Russian capital.

I had to meet many guys from Atlant-M; I think I can call Oleg Husaenov, Alexander Pyrko, Sergey Savitsky and Igor Malgin close people. I like the system of arranging employees the holding is keeping to. Sophisticated and forward thinking people work here.

Atlant- M secret is in intellect, persistence, creativity and wherewithal of its employees. What concerns negative traits, if there are some, they are mostly connected with external factors rather than inner relations. Let's say with in-

trinsic economic issues. However, to my mind, the holding manages to deal with all these difficulties applying its own brand creative methods.

Igor
VERHOVODKO
managing
partner of ODO
Biznesconsult,
Minsk



All-Time Brand

Thomas GAD
Media-consultant,
writer,
author of
several books on
marketing,
Sweden

I first heard about the holding in 2005. I used to be a media-consultant at that time and worked with Strategic Partners consulting company. I was told that there was an interesting company which operates at three markets: in Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus and needs branding. I think I met Oleg Husaenov at that time.

I was surprised and excited about the entrepreneurial spirit I saw at the holding. It is typical with many Russian and other companies in the Post-Soviet countries. Atlant-M must have started from the very beginning and its management had to work hard to reach the level it enjoys at the moment.

What concerns the present day, I want to praise the holding management quality. Many young and intelligent people have come to the company. To tell the truth, I was even astonished when I learnt what advanced management techniques are applied in Atlant-M.

Recalling our cooperation I can hardly think of something I didn't like or something that knocked me back on my heels. It's quite surprising but there are no such things in Atlant-M. For example, being a specialist I really enjoyed that Atlant-M was unusually concerned with its branding. As a rule, companies engaged in selling cars work with cars of famous brands with an already established strong image. Therefore, they see no use in creating one of their own. Atlant-M managed to avoid the mistake. The holding top-managers were aware that to compete with other traders they had to stand out in a crowd and that it was very important for consumers not just what they bought but also where they bought the vehicle.

Later, at some seminar with Atlant-M representatives we worked out this idea: "The holding not just sells cars and has an image of a trustworthy supplier but also assists to the customer afterwards. A person can work with Atlant-M for a long time: buying a car, maintaining a service, changing it for a newer one."

I remember Oleg Husaenov asking to help him hire brand-managers. I must mention it, as most bosses ignore our opinion when looking for people who are to manage the brand. Nevertheless, Atlant-M top-managers turned to me for that and it was a wise decision.

I should say that we've got along with Oleg Husaenov quite well. His life is particularly rich in events and he is extremely interesting to work, deal and rest with. We argued a lot when working over the project for the holding but we still are glad to spend time and go hunting together.

I must admit, Oleg Husaenov is an excellent leader, as he managed to gather such a professional, well-knit and active team. They are people with different stories, different experience and different education. Neverthe-

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less, they manage to stay together and work efficiently. The company's secret is in its management and first of all in a humanistic approach to it.

I would wish the holding and its management all the best. What they have already achieved is just a foundation for their future achievements. I also wish luck in all the beginnings, present and future!

You have lots of energy, experience and enthusiasm which is essential for success.

Thomas GAD
Media-consultant,
writer,
author of
several books on
marketing,
Sweden



A Human Factor

Mark IVASHKO
Shareholder and
Chief Executive
Officer
Horizon Capital
Investment Fund,
the USA-Ukraine

THE ROAD TO BELARUS

I am an American of the Ukrainian origin, a mechanic engineer by profession. I graduated from Harvard, got a doctor degree, first came to the Ukraine in 1991 and was there when the Soviet Union broke down. In the '90-s in Europe the US government started setting up funds which

would help private business development. At that time there were few people who risked investing money in the former USSR. 15 years ago I was invited by the US government fund which goal was to help starting up small business and attract private investors. So, I began working here.

Our fund had gathered 132 million of private investments by 2006 and 370 - by 2008. Today we manage about 600 000 dollars and all that money includes private investments in the Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova. I manage the fund and take decisions as to what project we will finance.

Initially our fund was set up to operate in tree countries. However, there was no serious investing in Belarus from 1996 till 2007. In 2007 Atlant-M holding applied to us seeking an investor for MTBank in Minsk. Vladimir Berezin arrived in Kiev, brought their business-plan, talked to our investment director. I got interested and even went to Belarus to see what Atlant-M was. I liked both the plan and their attitude to the project, that's why I addressed the investment committee offering a new interesting project in Belarus.

Today I can say I am very glad and extremely grateful to Atlant-M that they turned to us and paved a road to Belarus for us. They were the first to get investing, thus adding the country to our partners' field of interest.

THE MAN OF ACTION

Belarus being represented by Atlant-M and MTBank looks good when compared to other countries. I am satisfied with the relations we have with MTBank. We faced difficulties at no stages. Besides, we got to like working with the company and planned a project in Russia - Atlant-M Leasing. It failed to realize only because of the world crisis. Oh, there are always failed projects. Atlant-M managed to get out of them successfully, though. Even at the hardest times when money is lost and people get cruel, Atlant-M never lets people down and keeps its optimism and hope for the future.

Our business is quite specific. A human factor is crucial here. Hundreds of thousands papers can be spent but that won't make for personal communication with a person whom investors trust their money and care for future profits. What concerns MTBank, the major factor was not the

Mark IVASHKO
Shareholder and
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business plan but the holding itself, its management and personalities of Oleg Hусаenov and other shareholders. Hусаenov never turns down other people's point of view but always has its own to share. He is open to discussion and new ideas, he is honest and sincere. I also like his being a man of action. He always intends not just to talk but to meet an agreement and realize what have been agreed on.

ADVANTAGES OF EMOTIONAL DEVOTION

Usually I do not pay attention what suit a person is dressed or what car he drives.

However, it caught my attention when I dealt with Atlant-M. They have certain rules to keep to. They not only show these rules to their clients, but follow them themselves as well. I understand and respect that behavior and like it, too.

In the Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, the USA there are different types of businessmen. Hусаenov is a very special person: emotional and devoted. He is mostly interested in the process. The result catches his interest just marginally. He is not crazy about business; he treats his family and other aspects of his life with the same energy. I know many businessmen which are not devoted to what they do. They go and do what they must, though. Hусаenov engages in all the activities with lots of interest. Last time we met when I came to Minsk for MTBank Board of Directors meeting. The global strategy was being worked out and significant alterations were to come. To take the right decision one must be open to new ideas and ready to run the venture. Oleg heartily agrees to that.

Atlant-M often applied to us for advice. For example, when in 2008 the crisis broke out, a part of the bank business just ceased to exist. We thought how to manage it and advised on expanding retail business to physical entities. It can be both profitable and attractive for consumers but it is very complex at the same time. I told them to research how the things were going on in another bank of ours and hire a consultant. At first Oleg objected: "Oh, that's expensive but took the consultant, in the long run".

Atlant-M has a certain policy they are keeping to: if they pay for some services, they need to get results. It's quite difficult to achieve a certain

Mark IVASHKO
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Chief Executive
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Investment Fund,
the USA-Ukraine

result in such a project. It was necessary that everybody agreed to that decision. That's all. Husaenov talked to the bank management to take up the project. I am particularly grateful to him for that, as the project turned to be a success.

BRINGING TO PERFECTION

Atlant-M taught me many things. A corporate culture, to name some. Let's take a tennis competition. I do not play myself but I like watching others playing. I think the next corporate competition will be golf and I vote for it. I like playing golf. Once Oleg and I talked about golf for four hours and I explained to him what's the major difference between tennis and golf. In tennis players act against each other while in golf they play against the hole together. He turned on the heat and even went to England for lessons. Now I am even a bit afraid of Husaenov.

I am Jack of all trades. I am not in the habit of bringing things to perfection while Husaenov, if engaged in something, will do it and try to be the best and the first. It's a very precious trait.

I also got Oleg familiar with an American life style. When he went to California I told him to watch some football match just to get the idea of the game. He really liked how it all was organized. People arrived, prepared BBQ, moved around. He was impressed with the very air of a game as a common holiday. Oleg in his turn got me familiar with Minsk, showed me the best restaurants. The thing is that I like delicious meals, like to cook myself and visit really good places.

HONESTY ABOVE ALL

All over the world doing business keeps to the same rules. Slavonic business has its peculiarities first of all due to the already mentioned human factor. People here are not always just and honest, sometimes they want to cheat a bit, gain something and follow the crooked path. Honesty is above all for Atlant-M. There is an extremely open environment: they always say what they think and defend what they consider right, not taking into account how to out it correctly or what effect it will cause. Husaenov has excellent partners. I met Sergey Savitsky and others at the Board of

Directors meeting. When they arrive here, they study what can be taken here and planted there.

I am extremely glad that Atlant-M paved us the Belarusian market. I wish the holding and its shareholders to keep the achieved balance between their business and their personal lie. I want to hold on working with Atlant-M on new projects to arise.

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A Strong Strategy

At some stage of the company's development Atlant-M needed a strategy to keep to. The first thing to come to mind when I learnt how the things were going on was that we were to define the priorities as there would never be enough resources to develop everything. Working out a strategy implies not just defining what should be done but also determining what

Alexander
IDRISOV
Head of Strategy
Partners, Moscow

shouldn't be done. It was more important for Atlant-M to understand what to do in the nearest future.

We have a certain tradition: we usually try to lure some international specialist to join our expert team. At that time we invited two well-known experts, one of them being a leading German specialist in the automobile market. He was of great use in the project.

The team started working, thoroughly analyzing all the activities of the company as well as international experience of similar companies in the USA and Europe. Finally, we distinguished a direction which seemed most promising for distribution. We looked into accompanying businesses as well. Not just car retailing but car maintenance, spare parts selling etc. We researched other activities Atlant-M was engaged in, though not that precisely. In the long run, analyzing all the chain of automobile business and taking into account that the direction was actively developing in Russia, we offered to focus on it. We considered that business to show the highest increase rates. Besides, the holding was likely to occupy a strong position if it focused on expanding and began building new dealerships - up to 10 a year. To realize it, we had to get licenses at key venture partners. We researched the possible license holders and chose the most suitable ones.

Later we carried out a statistical analysis. We made a finance estimate. It was a very serious stage for the company and it had to shift its focus to creating value. The company had to do business in a way to be more attractive for investors, to increase its value to outrun the market volume growth. In future, it would allow both earning capital and developing the business.

So, the strategy was worked out. We had just "to sell" it to the company as it would cause some changes in Atlant-M operational routine, including people's personal life. The company presented itself as an international holding which meant that its employees must be ready for trips or even for moving to some other country. People took the strategy in different ways, but in general agreed to it.

There was another serious issue to discuss with Atlant-M management.

They would have to focus on just one activity, not being able to support other directions. To my mind, the owners managed to get to the top-managers with the idea. They organized a corporate trip to Turkey and there in pleasant environment, in fine weather, in a nice company and in good mood the top-managers were told a new strategy. As far as I remember, they bought it. Any strategy is based on facts. Anyone can keep going but still there are facts which can not be ignored. There were even some offers from top-managers to buy out some business directions. The main decisions were taken there and as far as I know, most businesses sold at that time are successfully expanding now.

The company set a range of distinct goals. By the way, what concerns operation and finance management. Atlant-M always stood out from other companies. They implemented information technologies, thoroughly controlled finance operations, efficiently set a system of goals and kept to it. It's no surprise that last year Oleg Huseynov was named the best businessman in Russia. The project was really ambitious. However, it was focused which made it quite realistic. A strategy must be realistic. It's easy to make a leap, however it's more difficult to face its consequences. The outcome of the strategy is visible. It wasn't just a paper dream. Sometimes extremely attractive strategies are created but they fail to be realized in the long run. This time the strategy was implemented. Atlant-M always paid lots of attention to people. A corporate university, a set education system - all that plays a significant role.

No doubt, the crisis made its changes. However, even before it the company had doubled its size. If not for the crisis, the effect would be even more impressive. The company is restoring its turnover now and, to my mind, will reach the pre-crisis level. Now the automobile market meets new challenges. High importing tariffs for foreign cars has significantly increased their prices, which can affect the sales figures. Nevertheless, people will keep on driving cars, buying them, which means that the business will keep on developing. Besides, the new rules are obligatory to all the market players, in that situation who is prepared better will enjoy the victory. I do not worry for Atlant-M. They have managed it, cutting

expenses in time. Although it was more difficult for them at that time, as they were expanding, spending much on new dealerships. Certainly it adds up to risks.

Having worked together all that time I made friends with guys. We made many projects afterwards, engaged in telecommunications and maintenance, as well as worked out strategies for some dealerships. We have lots of projects. We have become long-term partners.



Male Bond

Oleg Husaenov is a classmate of mine. We made friends at school. Despite being quite different we have much in common. My attitude to Atlant-M is affected by the friendship. I treat it as Oleg's single pet-project he lives for.

Ilya KRAVTSOV
Businessman,
Atlant-M's friend,
St. Petersburg

Oleg was a very open-hearted friend and let me cheat off him. The trouble was when we were given different tasks at tests. However, he never left me in the lurch: he used to complete his test and help me.

Usually, we managed it and I was never a B-student. Once, though, our tricks were noticed by a young teacher assistant. She gave a flag to us both. I tried to explain that it was solely my fault but the assistant stuck to colors. That happened at the end of the academic term; at home we were given what for. After that I made a hitch of Math and soon began solving equations easily.

When a student I lived and studied in St. Petersburg, while Oleg was in Moscow. Visiting one another we used to enjoy our life. We were reckless and merry, living right and left and spending nights in dormitories. I engaged in business in 1989, my friend a bit later. At that time Atlant-M Holding was not organized as it is now. They followed a thorny path of trials and errors. As any inexperienced businessman does.

At some time Oleg offered me to establish a child company of its holding in Petersburg. Alas, the project did not make off. It seems to me that people may come along as friends but can not become good partners. Nevertheless, I found many good friends in Atlant-M. I still keep in touch with. Many interesting people work for the holding. All of them were my guests.

In that distant 1991 Atlant-M started operating in a certain market sector. It was a reselling of re-exported soviet cars. The business made some profit but at some point they decided to make the scheme even more complex and ventured a partnership with Volkswagen. I think it was Husaenov's idea. There was hardly a civilized automobile market in the country. Oleg's efforts paid off. The first dealership used to be a small gym. Nowadays their showrooms meet the most crucial modern challenges.

Oleg and I as well as other guys from Atlant-M meet just to relax. We don't need anything from one another; we just enjoy one another's

Ilya KRAVTSOV
Businessman,
Atlant-M's friend,
St. Petersburg

company. I used to take my birthday guests hunting at some place near Petersburg. The goal wasn't just killing animals and birds. There is something else here: walking about the forest with a gun, as guns completely change male personality.

Some lasting impressions are connected with Atlant-M as well. We usually go hunting for Oleg Husaenov and Alexander Pyrko's birthdays (at the beginning of December). We used to go to Belovezhskaya Puscha while now we prefer large forests near Vitebsk. To talk with friends in the open country - what can be better than that!

Once we saw a beautiful fawn at the glade. The silence was just deafening and suddenly there was a certain click. I wondered if anybody would dare to shoot. One of the hunters turned out to make a photo. I still keep it.

As for hunting trophies, I am quite indifferent to them. I hardly understand people who put a bear skin as a rug or hang a boar head on the wall. I think Husaenov and Pyrko share my opinion. We rarely return from the forest bedangled with fowl. However, we always enjoy a lot.

By the way, my friends are brave people! I used to be involved in some aviation business and have a plane of my own. However, quite few of my friends agreed to my riding them. People are afraid to be airborne for some reason. Once I offered to Husaenov and Savitsky:

- Care for a fly?

We got into the plane, it gained height and the folks just remained speechless from complete admiration. Everything seems so tiny when looked at from the aerial view: houses, trees, cars. The problems that we had worried about were left on the ground. My passengers tried to hold their emotions but I got that they enjoyed from their expressions and happy smile.

In autumn 2008 I bought a yacht. Husaenov and Pyrko visited me in Greece and we went to the nearest isle. The trip didn't take us long: just 3 hours. The time passed quickly. We fooled around, bathed and chatted till late at night. We woke up early in the

morning to return back as the guys had plane tickets. The wind grew stronger, though, and it looked like storm. As captain I made a decision to heave the anchor. We set off and the guys told me: "Look back". I turned back and shivered: surges crushed at the yacht. We immediately got soaked to the underwear. The Pirates of the Caribbean are just cubs.

The yacht was thrust to and fro, lurched and seemed to turn upside down any moment. However, nobody was going to surrender. Gritting our teeth we went forward and reached the destination. My friends managed to catch the plane and we still remember our romantic sea voyage.

Sometimes I ask myself: what binds us? I haven't found the unambiguous answer to that question yet. John Rockefeller once said that a friendship founded on business is better than a business founded on friendship. I don't completely agree with him. A real friendship depends neither on business nor on a way of living, nor on being richer or poorer.

Husaenov and Pyrko are very sincere and responsible. Several times the guys helped me out of some serious troubles. They had to involve quite powerful connections to manage my problems. I feel morally obliged to Atlant-M owners, as their ties helped me a lot. When I used to have a small business I faced some financial difficulties. They say, lend your money and lose your friend. Oleg gave me the necessary sum without saying a word. Although, quite often when people get in a jam, their friends just give them up. However, that's not the case with Husaenov. He may be called a black sheep among other businessmen, in good sense, I mean. Certainly, I paid the money back. It took some time, though. Our friendship got even stronger. What do we talk about when we meet? Surely, not about money. The topic is not that important... Whether we play chess or football or go hunting, all that is just a background. Interaction is important and that peculiar touch we keep on sharing despite the time passing by.

Ilya KRAVTSOV
Businessman,
Atlant-M's friend,
St. Petersburg

However, Oleg Husaenov has life principles different from mine. It stands true for his team as well. Life is Atlant-M for these guys, which means business. A desire to work and increase capital. Oleg is ready to make sacrifices for it. I always liked watching his views on his company and business in general evolve.

At some point Oleg entered the pool of 500 richest people in Russia. He never showed off in real life, though. Being the boss of a rather large company he ran 10-year old Mazda and lived in a rented flat at a non-upscale district, not buying expensive gadgets. In general, he kept himself out of many things. All the money was invested in business. Sometimes I even mocked at him. Husaenov believed that once Atlant-M would pay off and ate high of the hog much later. That's the person he is.

Husaenov's principles state that to work efficiently the team must be motivated not only with a high salary. Employees must learn new things together; spend holidays together which unites people. Atlant-M lives as a big family and Oleg has enough time for everything, his family being large as well.

I am extremely proud of Husaenov because of that. I really respect businessmen who have lots of kids. Today it's hard to bring up a decent member of society. Education, manners, right mode of behavior. My friend handles all that amazingly well. He has a step-son, but Oleg treats him as his own.

Husaenov is good at hiring people Atlant-M has a brilliant security chief - Viktor Timoshenko. He was fired from the law enforcement bodies but Oleg believed in his decency and competence and employed him. He is as safe as houses, that's why the company rarely dealt with the criminal world. Any serious company which plays some role in the country's economy enjoys both enemies and competitors. Clashes with other businessmen's interests are inevitable. I know Oleg experienced quite drastic moments having been kidnapped. Due to Timoshenko, he returned home quite

Ilya KRAVTSOV
Businessman,
Atlant-M's friend,
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quickly, safe and sound. The last conversation we shared with Oleg was about religion and faith. I look in at St. Nicholas chapel, which stands just above the sea. I told him that I come there not just to bend the knee. I just meditate and looking into eyes of the Wonder Worker at the icon talk to myself. Oleg understood what I meant.

Anyway, we both ask timeless issues. About life, about human soul, about do's and don'ts, about praises or punishments we'll eventually get. Though being children of the atheistic USSR, we still keep a belief in something wonderful. Maybe that's why being engaged in such a merciless activity as business Husaenov manages to keep his humanity, to be sincere and trustful, to behave properly. I think it's what defines Atlant-M development.

Ilya KRAVTSOV
Businessman,
Atlant-M's friend,
St. Petersburg



Moving Ahead

Dmitriy LAGUN
Owner, vice-
president of
Board of Directors
Transport and
Logistics Company
ASSTRA,
Switzerland-
Belarus

BEING NEIGHBORS

We have been partnering with Atlant-M in cargo transportation carrying spare parts since 1996. At that time Atlant-M wasn't a holding yet and was engaged in contracts with Volkswagen only. Later we turned out to be neighbors with Sergey Savitsky and Oleg Husaenov. It happened like that.

My friend and I were choosing places to build houses and ended up with Tsna community in Minsk premises. Atlant-M was selling two houses there at that time. As our wives were busy with looking for the houses, I found out who our neighbors were just later. It was a kind of surprise. Atlant-M security officers became checking our financial state regarding us as possible buyers and the truth came out. The deal was made and we became neighbors.

We used to celebrate many holidays together as neighbors. However, everybody has left. Sergey and Oleg have houses in Moscow. I have been living in the German-speaking part of Switzerland for seven years already, my business partner being a Swiss, too. My company is international and an international business implies certain mobility of top-managers. That's why business trips take most of my time. However, Savitsky's family and mine are still on friendly terms. It all started when our houses were situated next to one another.

When we were finalizing the deal with the houses Sergey took about five hundred square meters from my lot. When I asked what they were about to do with it, he answered it was meant for growing vegetables and fruit. I laughed a bit and told them a story of my wife who every year planted something in spring and in autumn I had to call for an earth mover to get rid of weeds. They kept that piece of land. The story was just the same, though. They even made beds for vegetables. First weeds appeared soon after and we did not try a single cucumber from there.

Once in summer workers broke in a power cable and we spent the night without electricity. Fridges started defrosting, the wives tried to keep some frozen fruit... Electricians who arrived in the morning said that it would cost 500 dollars to repair the damage. I paid for us all. My neighbors kept telling me: "Oh, sorry. Our salary is to be on the 25th". However, I should say they paid me back and I did not have to wait long.

Any businessman at some certain stage lacks friendship. Remaining friends is valued above all. Being in charge of a large business you are duty- bound almost all the time. It alters people and develops a sort of expectation to get something in return for things they give to others. It kills sincerity. When you get to know a new person, you immediately ask yourself: what does he need of me? It's the reason why many

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businessmen lack friends. Once neighbors we are real friends now and I am happy about it.

GAINS & FAILS

Today my company has 25 branches in 9 countries. So, geographically we are tougher than Atlant-M. They have more employees, though, about 3000 people while we just 750. We'll hardly ever reach their size and we do not heed it to be frank, we are a logistics company after all. We help our clients create a chain of goods delivery, upgrade delivery chains and procurement process.

Once our company decided to choose a Volkswagen as a corporate car and our top-managers did drive cars of the brand. However, we did not manage to have all the employees run it. The same story was with trucks.

In general, I consider my greatest fail in relations with Atlant-M the fact that I did not manage to talk Oleg into using our truck fleet to carry cars from abroad instead of creating their own. I don't know whether that division still exists but at that time they took 20 car carriers and set up a transportation company of their own. Maybe they did not trust us at that time and they doubted that we would be able to provide services efficiently and professionally.

About gains... The most important is that we have been cooperating for a long time now. Long-term partnership with Atlant-M is a significant gain.

Sergey Savitsky and Oleg Husaenov have always applied innovative techniques in their business. Especially at the Belarusian market. These were bold ideas, I should say. For example, there is nothing new in setting up an importer. However, to use NLP-methods in business, to establish a corporate university, make up a corporate educational program, and invite coaches to train employees - all these techniques are extremely efficient for personnel management and a team making process. Having an image of a good employer allows a company to lure interesting people who want to work for it. Certainly, people work for money. However, if there are other incentives, the outcome doubles. An image of a good employer always implies a financial aspect. We also took something from Atlant-M for our business. After we visited their summer corporate holiday "Ijunka", we organized one of our own.

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WE ARE DIFFERENT

Oleg prefers a top-bottom approach, mine being more democratic. The first approach provides more discipline but lacks transparency and feedback. Why does a democrat become a democrat? He got used to taking into account other people's opinions, can borrow some good ideas from others, accept constructive criticism and make alterations to his further movement. An authoritarian manager is always right. He has no doubts. That's the difference in our approaches and it affects the corporate culture. Sometimes former Atlant-M employees come to us. If they used to be top-managers, they got used to following orders. When I start enquiring what they would do in that situation, people retreat into themselves. Vice versa, people accustomed to being listened to, supported and given a chance to realize themselves will hardly stick to a company where they have to do routine tasks.

However, all that does not affect our cooperation. Atlant-M is always out there. Even names of the both companies start with the same letter "A".

A SECRET TO SUCCESS

It is difficult to be the market pioneer, market leader and constantly implement new methods. I am just grateful to Atlant-M team who started it and keeps doing it in Belarus. Many people prefer to stick to a once achieved level: why increase quality of some good if it is sold in any case. Besides, some rush movements can decrease the profit. On the contrary, Atlant-M is always increasing its level of servicing and moving the bar upwards for all other Belarusian businesses to follow.

What's the secret of the holding? In its leaders' ambitions. Business success is the outcome of reaching the business goal. A person who is motivated with the business goal moves ahead. My business goal is put precisely: by 2030 we must make the top 10 European logistics companies. I set the goal at the beginning of 2000 and it seems closer the harder I work on it.

A STORY ABOUT ATLANT-M PRUDENCE

We have shared lots of funny stories for many years of our cooperation.

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Once my business partner and I got an invitation to Atlant-M corporate holiday. From two different parties. At first I was invited by my neighbors Husaenov and Savitsky and later Mihnevich, the director of Volkswagen importer sent his invitation as well. We had been working quite closely with Mihnevich so coming to the holiday, just joined other employees of Atlant-M. We took a table and found out that there was just vodka and some popular salad on it. We exchanged looks: it was rather weird and did not seem a holiday organized by a large company. At the end of the evening we came across Savitsky and Husaenov and mentioned almost empty tables. The answer was just of Atlant-M style:

- Guys, you've just mixed up tables! We learnt that the holiday was rather modest just for Atlant-M employees.

WISHES

To have a goal to strive for and to prosper.

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A Story About A Presentation

A STORY ABOUT MAKING A WHIRLWIND
AND PUTTING SNOW IN THE PANTS

Yuriy LIHUTA
Editor of
Avtobusiness
weekly
Minsk

As a journalist writing about the car market I closely cooperated with Atlant-M, which organized test-drives and provided lots of interesting news about cars. Journalists have a trouble of their own when a person

can't write any more, becomes bitchy and dreams of changing something in life. The fate took care of me: I was proposed something uncommon and extremely adventurous. Let alone a money issue. I admit I was just interested in trying something completely different from what I had done before.

It was the end of 1999. The holding was about to present Volkswagen Bora. The company wanted to make it impressive and memorable. That wasn't an easy task. Alexander Sheyko and Alexander Ryabuhin from the marketing division remembered that I used to go in for car racing and had some friends among racing drivers who would manage a fast, furious and powerful Bora. The thing was that before that Germans had delivered Volkswagen Jetta and Volkswagen Vento which was perceived as a car for retired people. When Volkswagen Bora appeared, it had to be brought to the market in a special way. We were to make everybody understand that Bora was tough!

Sheyko and Ryabuhin just called and said:

- We are preparing Volkswagen Bora presentation. We want the car to fly at a mad speed, maybe 160-170 km per hour in front of the stand to show everybody that the car was like the wind. Will you help?

I gladly agreed to the offer but warned them shooting down the idea of a speedy run:

- We won't be able to realize it, the road police won't give a permission for it as it has already happened to some dealer. Besides, it is neither spectacular, nor interesting.

- Any other ideas, then? What should be done to associate Bora with the wind?"

We stayed in a café for quite a time having drunk several liters of coffee and brainstorming about the show. The event should be in line with the main marketing principle: stay different or die! A car running as the wind... Bingo! Why not include a chopper? It sounded that natural, though now I can hardly recollect whose idea it was. However, everybody took it as a matter-of-course and nobody objected saying it was impossible! It gave some ground to hope for prolific partnership and reckless fellow-thinkers.

A chopper, OK, no problem. The next logical thought was to go to DOSAAF club at Borovaya, there were several choppers there. We got into

the car and ran to Borovaya even without warning them beforehand. We found somebody in charge and told him straight away:

- We need a chopper flying at the presentation of our car!.

Pilots were a bit surprised:

- What's in it? A chopper will arrive and?"

- It must fly making a whirlwind.

- No problem. We'll do what you want, - agreed the pilots.

We didn't bargain over the price, such mad offers from such reckless guys happen once in 10 years. We did not argue a lot agreeing on the sum asked by the pilots - 200 dollars. They agreed to take part in the show rehearsals and followed everything which was happening at the ground.

We continued working out our presentation scheme:

- OK, we've got a chopper. What about some action on the ground? If the car just runs at 90km/h, it will hardly be uncommon and interesting

- What about doing a 360 degree spin ... - offered I and even told who could do it. It was Sergey Ovchinnikov who is in charge of Stunt Driving School now and used to be the first stunt driver in Belarus.

The presentation scenario was as follows: Bora runs along the road at a speed allowed by the road police 70-80 km/h, followed by the chopper. Then, the car does a 360 degree spin and the chopper lands on it. We expected that the audience would be astonished at the scene. Nobody thought that the presentation would be beyond our expectations. I should say that at rehearsals the chopper did not land on the car. The pilots just made up a plan to follow choosing the best moment for landing.

Sergey Ovchinnikov started his trainings as well. When he arrived at the place for the first time, he did not like the pavement surfacing and he asked the company's representatives to clean the road. Alexander Sheyko scratched head how to do it. The way out happened to quite simple, though. Going past "Palas" shop in Uruchje, I noticed snow removal cars - big orange ZILs with plows and brushes. Coming up to a driver I did not expect it would be that easy to agree on the matter. The price was just two bottles of vodka. The man turned out to be extremely careful and cleaned the road thoroughly. Any Ice Palace would envy the surface then. When Sergey Ovchinnikov and his friends arrived for a ride, they couldn't leave the car because it was very greasy. The car equipped with winter tires

flew smoothly along the road.

When we made sure the turn was just ideal we moved to the next stage: began setting the place itself to ensure the first-class service. We ordered catering services, brought plastic tables and laid them with appetizers on plastic plates and alcohol drinks and beverages in plastic glasses.

The guests arrived. The mood was just perfect. The tables groaned with food. The drinks flew like water. A breathtaking moment and the show began. Everybody kept still as a gorgeous Volkswagen Bora appeared at the road, black as a crow, followed by the chopper. There was a buzz of delight and Bora spectacularly did a 360 degree spin and the chopper started landing. What happened next had an effect of an exploded bomb: all the tables, plates and glasses were thrown about by an air wave. The snow covering the ground turned into a real snow storm. Some people were lucky to keep something in hands. Who did not manage it, alas! A journalist working for a FIT TV company delivered his opinion quite concisely:

- I have seen a lot being a journalist, but it was the first time for me to feel the snow going up the pants till the underwear!

That was the way Atlant-M showed to everybody that Volkswagen Bora was a car as fast as the wind. At least in the evening at the VIP party for about 200 people in disco club Yula, people talked just about what they had dropped or managed to hold, where we had got the chopper and how tough that all had been. The car got 100% awareness.

Several months later I was offered a job: the holding was looking for a PR manager. They must have liked my recklessness. I can say that we were the only company at the car market which delivered such creative and memorable projects.

A STORY IN WHICH I PLAYED A COLONEL IN THE FILM ABOUT VOLKSWAGEN

I worked in Kiev then. Just before my vacations we started preparing to present Volkswagen commercial cars. I don't remember exactly what car it was, maybe Caravelle. There was a brilliant idea, which seemed interesting: we had to use a motor ship and we found it and rented for the definite date. The idea came quickly: it was summer, it was hot, water was the next logic thought and finally it all arrived to a motor ship. Why not? Our task was to think of something extraordinary to keep people's

interest, mystifying them. The idea was as follows: we would gather all the presentation guests - dealers from all the Ukraine, and go about Kiev water storage, admiring the nature. There would be music, appetizers and drinks served fit any taste. Everybody would be happy. Suddenly, as if by chance, the ship would have to hit the beach where there would be ... a range of fabulous cars to admire. At the river bank there would be a barbeque and other tasty things as well as some sports activities as football and dancing. In general, every detail was cared for and when we rented the ship and placed an order with a catering company I went on vacation feeling absolutely free as the rest issues were to be seen to by my assistants. Some days before the end of my vacations I decided to return to work and it was high time I did it. My employees did not manage to solve the most burning issue of finding a nice, picturesque place owned by nobody, so that the ship could land to it. Tough luck! We were rushing about trying to find some place when some Kiev citizen suggested a nice piece of land which belonged to Dovzhenko pic factory. The area was fenced and there was a watchman at the entrance, who as those in the know told us, allowed there cars with couples in love for just a symbolic price of 5-10 hryvnas. There was a quiet shelter for everyone in that lovely place.

There was no time left to do everything officially through the factory's management. It was clear that the letter would take time to reach the director and we needed to do everything as soon as possible. Besides, it was yet questionable whether the factory's management would agree to that. So, we had to act unconventionally. I talked to a watchman and told him that we needed five cars (the ones we were to present to dealers) and a delivery car (which would bring food and drinks) to be allowed into. He agreed: "You know what, it would cost 50 hryvnas". Piece of cake! Of course, I was a bit afraid as all our agreement was quite informal, but it was too late to change anything.

So, at the set date we brought the cars, arranged them at the river bank in some picturesque place, put a pavilion, everything for BBQ and began waiting for the ship to land. Later I was told that people who were tails up enjoying the evening on board the ship were astonished at seeing cars at the river bank. It was a good reason to leave the ship and continue the party on the ground.

I must say that the watchman thought that he had allowed in the cars and that was all. He couldn't even think of a ship landing to the bank and bringing about 60 people.

At the same time somebody from the film factory management decided to enjoy the picturesque place as well. Maybe in a female company, maybe alone. The man was approaching the place anticipating a marvelous evening and what did he see? There was a ship moored to the bank, music, men in shorts playing football, women drinking cocktails, couples dancing. Amazement rounded his eyes: What was going on? Who gave permission?

One of our guards, a former policeman was a very quick-witted person having thews of steel. The director came up to him and asked:

- Who was having a party?

- SSU (Security Service of the Ukraine) had it large, - answered the guard without batting an eye.

- Who gave permission?

I have already mentioned the guard's strong sides. The guard gestured in my direction (I was wearing a suit and a tie, as always during important events):

- I don't know. Do you see a person in a suit? It's colonel Lihuta, you are free to ask him.

- SSU for real? I'd better be going.

That's all. Nothing else threatened to our presentation.

Certainly, when everything was finished and we were leaving the area, the watchman came up to me and said: "Ugm.. the director enquired... How about 40 hrivnas more for my troubles?" Certainly, we tipped the money he asked for. It was wise to make a good impression on people. You never know how what could happen!

The most important thing was that we had the effect we had hoped for organizing the show. To persuade dealers that new cars could be sold expensively, money could be earned selling cars we invited directors and heads of sales department of about 36 companies in the Ukraine. In the Ukraine the dealership network is much larger than that of Belarus. Encouraged they returned to their regions and told how cool the presentation was and what profit they could make selling new cars of the presented models.

Besides, as far as I remember, the presentation helped to find understanding between the management of the importer (Sergey Savitsky who came from Belarus used to occupy the director's position) and dealers. At first there was some distance in relations between Belarusians and Ukrainians. After spending time together on board the sheep, drinking a bit and playing football, the ice was broken. The Ukrainians accepted us as their own.

I like recalling my working in Kiev: there was a good motivation system there. If the event was successful, best employees got a symbolic horseshoe which was called a "Creative Idea Of The Year". We couldn't follow the trodden path and, in fact, we didn't have to. We always had many ideas and top-managers always trusted us. The only question they asked was: "How much money do you need?" and "Is that enough?"



For Life

Igor MANN
The founder of
the publishing
house
Mann, Ivanov and
Ferber.
Atlant-M
consultant,
Moscow

THE BOSS SETTING FIRE TO HIS SHIPS

I got familiar with Atlant-M six years ago when we started up Mann, Ivanov and Ferber Publishing House. We released the first book, “Customers For Life” written by the most famous American car dealer Carl Sewell. The edition was sold out immediately. Oleg Huseynov reached us on the phone

and offered to be a sponsor. In fact, Atlant-M is the first company which placed its logo on our frontispiece.

I got to know Oleg after the release of the book. I was struck by his preface. He wrote it so well that I exclaimed: What a cool boss! He knows how to fire up. Once I met Oleg at the flight to Almaty and thought: “He is a rich person, the owner of a car holding and flies economy class.” It’s utterly modest. Oleg personality became even more appealing.

Some time after I got familiar with Atlant-M not as a publisher but as a consultant. The holding organized a field training program for its top-managers and I went with them to the Baykal. I covered a number of different topics and was greatly surprised by Oleg and his team. Usually a field training is meant more for entertainment rather than actual studying. That was not the case, though. I was asked to hold more brainstorming and pull information out of his employees. After one of the trainings devoted to a customer-oriented approach, Oleg asked:

- Can we make our company client-focused?
- Of course, you can
- What do we need for that?
- You need a driver, a person who will manage all these processes in

the company and an external consultant.

We have been transforming Atlant-M into a customer focused company for half a year already.

Oleg Husaenov surprised me a lot during our cooperation. For example, first of all I said that if a company was about to take a customer-focused approach, nobody should know about it as all the clients would become more picky and would not forgive even little nuisances. Oleg just shook his head.

He and Sergey Savitsky chose people who could become drivers. Meeting all the shortlisted candidates, I told that I had liked nobody, so I treated their chances for the project implementation as rather low. They did not insist and started looking for the right person who would suit both parties. Finally, they came across Alexander Ryabuhin and I think it was Big Dick. He is the only person able to manage the direction.

Some time after I was sent a link to Husaenov’s interview to some Belarusian e-portal. Being asked about the company’s priorities he

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answered:

--We want to be the most customer-centric car holding at the CIS space. We invited Igor Mann as a coach, he tutored our managers and now we are establishing separate divisions.

How could he do that?! I had warned him not to do it! It was highlighted in the training hand-outs: "Never tell anybody that you are customer-centric". Later I understood that at that time Oleg was a real war chief. He behaved like Caesar, who set fire to his ships upon stepping on British soil and said: "We have nowhere to retreat".

Declaring the company's priority to stick to a customer-focused approach in public, he set fire to his own ships as well.

Any way, for me it's an excellent example in my collection of stories showing that a business is not a set of standard actions and rules.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Once we were having breakfast together - Oleg Husaenov, someone from his team, Misha Ivanov, the general director of Mann, Ivanov and Ferber Publishing House and I. Oleg asked:

- What car do you drive?
- So and so
- Why not this brand?
- Why not?

The same evening I got a letter from some Atlant-M clerk: "Oleg told me to make you an offer".

Another time I briefly mentioned that Misha Ivanov was looking for a good second-hand luxury car. A note by Oleg to Misha Ivanov: "Misha, I know you are looking for a new car..."

Besides being an excellent manager, Oleg is an outstanding seller. I have no idea how he does it. It may be one of Atlant-M success components, though.

As an expert, I can name the features a successful leader must possess. First of all, he shows the direction of moving. He sees the final goal quite clearly. Secondly, he can propel people to go ahead. Thirdly, he goes with the others as the leader. I have met many pompous bosses of Oleg's level, managing businesses of the same size. In contrast to them, Husaenov is

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very easy to deal with. The same stands for Savitsky. They are different but they have the same intelligence, culture and respect for others. All people I contact with in Atlant-M make the same impression; you know the birds of feather... I wouldn't like the idea of Savitsky and Huseinov going in for consultancy services. I do not need competitors.

As a consultant I develop together with Atlant-M and I like working with them.

THE BRAND, THE PEOPLE AND THE LEADERS.

The company has many strong sides. It is a tough brand. It is well-known in Moscow. When in talks I usually take out my lap-top (it has all the brands I work with stuck to it), people recognize Atlant-M logo at once. The brand, the people and the leader - are strong sides of Atlant-M Holding.

When journalists ask me what's the way to success I answer:

- Lenin said: "Learn, learn and once again, learn". Zadorov mocked it: "Learn, learn and once again, learn is better than work, work and once again work". My idea is: learn, learn, learn and work, work, work.

People can not change their life term but they are able to make their life bright and interesting. To get pleasure from one's activity. I think Atlant-M excels in it.

If the company hasn't got lost at the market for 20 years and keeps developing, no doubt, it is a success.

If I have to describe in symbols what Atlant-M is, the company represents the book "Customers For Life" for me. I look at it, at Atlant-M logo and it is definitely associated with the holding. I would like the company's clients share my image. They must be sure that Atlant-M is the company for life.

Six years ago Oleg sponsored the book. Five years passed I am working as a holding consultant in the customer-focused approach. I do not know what will be in five years but taking into account Atlant-M's intentions I suppose it will become the most client-centric holding in the CIS. The circle has been closed. He began with the book and finished realizing its principles in real life. It's a bit early for Oleg Huseinov to write memoirs. Let's give him another 10-15 years and he will write a book not just for his employees but for everyone. I think it will be something like "Customers for Life. Russian-Style". No, Belarusian-Style... No, Atlant-M Style.

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WISH

Once a pen millionaire called me in the evening:

- Igor, what's the sense of life.

I admitted I had no reply

- Damn. Let me know, when you learn the answer to the question.

Two weeks later he called again:

Igor, I found out what's the sense of life. I have asked everybody, professors of philosophy, psychologists, psychiatrists, scientists. There was no answer. Once I went out at the porch of my house and watched my yard-keeper sweeping leaves.

- Master, why are you so sad? - asked he.

- I am wondering what the sense of life is.

- It's very simple

- And what's it?

- It's in the challenge.

I wish Atlant-M to celebrate the 20th anniversary gracefully and brightly.

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the publishing
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Being Optimistic For Life

**Alexander
MUNTYANU**
President of
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Investment Bank,
the USA - the
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Once guys from Atlant-M arrived at our Horizon Capital office and launched a short presentation. Frankly speaking I wasn't present at the meeting but watched the video later and got interested. I met Berezin and we started talking about leasing in the Ukraine, about MTBank. After that I got to know Zhishkevich. At some moment my folk said:

- It's time we met Atlant-M shareholders. It's headed by some tough mogul; we need to go to Moscow to meet him.

So, we met Oleg Hусаenov in Moscow.

Oleg had a really bad day then: everything was wrong, planes were delayed, meetings put off, and some obstacles appeared out of nowhere. There was something in his behavior. I was dwelling on the contract details and suddenly saw his eyes glazed over. We had to discuss legal issues so I felt we wouldn't manage them. I put the papers aside and said: "Oleg Ilgizovich, let's just talk". Talking I mentioned tennis topic. He relaxed, I got rid of tension and everything was OK after that.

Starting from a certain age people are reluctant to make new friends, especially when they have reached a certain social status. The reason is not just in our snobbery, which means that we keep in touch just with those who are equal to us. There appears a certain range of people who begin mooching you psychologically and financially. We made friends with Oleg, though. I am happy about it.

By the way, nobody of Atlant-M shareholders is known for being pain in the rear. They could take the heat, even in the crisis condition, did not work off on the others and managed hardships.

The most impressive thing in Atlant-M is its team, which keeps on developing and moving ahead despite all the obstacles. These are qualities of a good manager as only good managers allow others to go ahead without being preoccupied that they can be schemed against. I've hardly ever come across that quality even among top- managers.

Sergey Savitsky and Oleg Hусаenov are completely different persons. However, treating others they are quite alike as they are not afraid of building strong teams who can outperform them. They both are people who keep reading books when they are over 40, who can socialize and listen carefully what they are told.

When we first met, I was a representative of Horizon Capital investors, so I handled the deal. The company invested certain money in MTBank.

Now we are more like friends with Atlant-M owners. Although, when we meet, even in a casual setting we quite often discuss some business issues. Sometimes they need a piece of advice, sometimes I enquire about something. I hope we'll manage to achieve something together. I'd want that so much.

Atlant-M's model of business is extremely successful. In Belarus I was struck to learn that there were certain patterns to follow in business: clearly defined rules, and people kept to them, did what they promised and tried to do everything fair and square and in time.

Oleg and I have something in common: we both understand that even if people become billionaires, nevertheless they won't be able to eat and drink 1 million times more. People usually enjoy quite simple things. I think that there is another thing that draws us together: neither he, nor I position ourselves as people of a certain status, who look down on others.

There are four components of Atlant-M's success. Firstly, it is its team. They know everything about making up a team, keeping the most talented specialists, giving them a chance to develop their skills and at the same time avoid star fever. Secondly, I would mention their creative power. Very different ideas are promoted. Thirdly, they treat anything as a living system and adapt themselves to it. This is the right approach. If during the crisis Atlant-M had not acted as it actually did, there would be no company already. Fourthly, I know few managers who have achieved the same result without applying any administrative or political power. If we compare the most successful companies in the Ukraine, Belarus, leaving alone Russia, 80% of them are those who had connections, political or criminal backing or some cushy position. Atlant-M managed to be on good terms with everyone, keeping a safe and sound reputation, which is extremely important capital. Any significant investor is ready to become their partner.

Atlant-M shareholders are stress-resistant people. There are many hierarchical companies which are reposed on a single person. When this person gets tired, the pyramid begins faltering and eventually comes apart. There are hardly many companies even in America, which manage to keep the structure and mobility Atlant-M can boast of.

Alexander
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President of
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About Three Pillars

**Andrey
NESTERENKO**
Director General
of Nissan Motor
Company,
the Ukraine

I got familiar with the holding at the opening of a new Atlant-M dealership at Lepse Blvd. I think it was in 2001. At that time I was the commercial director of First Lease Company and was in touch with Anatoliy Grek who was the head of the sales department. We used to discuss professional issues. I still remember a funny story at opening Atlant-M dealership in Gagarina Str in

Kharkov in 2008. Kharkov mayor Mr Dobkin was invited to the ceremony. Walking around the premises of the car center, he was happy about what he saw and asked a rather weird question which shocked everyone: “No doubt, it is a splendid dealership but how could we use it for Euro-2012?” Hardly anybody had the answer...

The most fascinating thing, typical of the holding business style, is a stream-like increase in sales at the dealership in Gagarina Str during its first year. Half a year later it managed to excel in sales another dealership in Kharkov which had been at the market for 10 years! It's the real success. This success includes three main components: a team of likeminded persons, who are good at automobile business, well-oiled business processes and attention which is paid to professional development of employees in the holding. These three pillars, to my mind, ensure Atlant-M success.

WISHES

Nissan Motors Ukraine company has the honor of congratulating you with the 20th holding anniversary. We wish you excellent health, good mood, professional advancements, business success and achieving the set goals. We are glad to have been cooperating with your company for all these years. You have proved yourselves real professionals and reliable partners.

We wish you prosperity and bread buttered on both sides!

Andrey
NESTERENKO
Director General
of Nissan Motor
Company,
the Ukraine



The Guys Can Think on Their Feet

I got familiar with Atlant-M a long time ago. It's even hard to recollect now. I think it was at the beginning of the '90-s. They were buying sports facilities in Mashonostroiteley Str. to open a dealership there. So I met Sergey Savitsky and Oleg Huseynov. It all started with cars. Since then, we have kept in touch and gone together to motor shows in Frankfurt.

**Hennadiy
PODKUROV**
Businessman, a
friend of Atlant-M
Holding

In 2003 I was the head of the external relations department at the Ministry of Industry. The issue about opening a Volkswagen importer in Belarus was under consideration. Germans were choosing between Pushe and Atlant-M to make one of them an importer. When they asked me for advice, I said that there was no choice and just Atlant-M Holding could be viewed as a possible importer. Pushe, was tuffer at that time but what has become of it and where is it now?

I was often asked later how I had managed to hit it. It was very simple. Pushe had completely different interests, a thirst for money prevailing. Savitsky and Husaenov were busy building a real, promising and long-term business, not just stacking cash. They were very scrupulous, being quite different in that from other market players. I knew all the foreign equipment dealers at the market at that time, or almost everyone. There were guys I wouldn't like to associate with. Savitsky and Husaenov were the most decent and trustworthy people. They lived up to my recommendations. Some years later I met these Germans at some party at Zhuravinka and they thanked me: "Your idea to choose Atlant-M was just great. We are happy with them".

Savitsky and Husaenov keep repeating that money shouldn't be number one priority. It will come itself. Who thinks just about money, gets bored quickly and loses interest to everything except for money. Money is not the most important thing, after all.

They were enthusiasts. They were young and did everything right. They possessed everything - upbringing, education, behavior - which favored their business. They treated things in the right way. They had a very pleasant manner of dealing with people. A catching way I would say. They also managed to attract sane, "right" people to their team. Of course, there were others, who slowed down the process or pulled the company in the wrong direction. At least it seemed to me like that. However, if there hadn't been "wrong" people, nobody would have got that there could be "right" persons. The wrong people have left. Just the right people remain.

It was possible to study nowhere at that time. Even today nobody will teach you how to do business. "Clever" books are just nonsense. A person must have a business acumen, intuition, energy, honesty and ability to look ahead, not just focus on things on the doorstep. And there will be everything - chances to live, develop and earn money. A nice team working hard. Even a high-toned book hardly teaches the things which come with experience: dealing with people, solving is-

sues with them. A human factor and intelligence are the most important components. It was clear when I dealt with Savitsky and Husaenov. I was always glad to see them, and was excited about their success.

I can't say we are friends. We get along well, though. At least if we came across one another in the street, we wouldn't cross the street to avoid a meeting. I was invited to all their events. I frequented them gladly. Not because of a duty bound, I just enjoyed them. Their level is just what one needs. Top of the line. They advanced, expanded; at the same time their environment developed and everything around them moved ahead.

I bought several cars at Atlant-M. I remember waiting for my Passat B3. I had prepared money and agreed about the details. A friend of mine asked me: "Maybe you can find another one for me? I want such a car as well!" Is it possible to refuse a friend? I yielded him a car meant for me: "Take mine. I will buy another." I did not want to turn to either Oleg or Sergey. There was a car, what else do you want? However, I could not put up with that. I wanted a new car that much. Even if it would be several thousands more expensive. I had cherished the dream for so long; it was time for it to come true. I came to the dealership center, told the whole story. They had another car for me, of a bit different color but of the same model and at the same price.

My daughter is running a Volkswagen now as well. We haven't left the path we paved to the dealership a long time ago. Her first car, Polo, was also bought there as a present for her 20th birthday.

When I bought cars in Atlant-M, I did not examine them. The company is respectable. The features are in line with the description. There have been no troubles ever. It was possible to buy a car at Atlant-M with closed eyes. I think it is still true. My acquaintances driving cars from Atlant-M are happy about them and recommend the company. 100 % quality.

They have started businesses in Russia and the Ukraine. Well done! It is much more difficult to build a business and hold it at a certain level there than in Belarus. I know it quite well as I've worked both in the Ukraine and Russia. From my personal experience, too little honey and too many flies. Anyway, where is it easy? If a person does anything, there will be results anywhere.

When it became clear that dealing with just Volkswagen was not enough, the guys took some well-thought steps and opened several new directions, car brands and car manufacturers. They can think on their feet. It's unwise to rely just on one

**Hennadiy
PODKUROV**
Businessman, a
friend of Atlant-M
Holding

thing. There must be several directions.

The holding top secret is in decency of its leaders. People are hard to cheat.

I would like to recollect some funny stories about Atlant-M but nothing popped up in mind. It seems to me they always worked much and worked hard. They could rest as well but the work was more important. Their labor was merry, efficient and creative. The one to be envied.

WISHES

For the holding's 20th anniversary I wish luck to Oleg Husaenov, Sergey Savitsky and other top-managers of that business. To keep the air and environment they have created. If the company gets along well, its employees will benefit from it as well. There will be success, there won't be stresses. I wish all the best. Hardly there are many companies which can boast of the same management. In fact, there are quite few. You are moving in the right direction, comrades! Even without a red flag.

Hennadiy
PODKUROV
Businessman, a
friend of Atlant-M
Holding



To Live in the Present

**Viktor
POSTEL'NIKOV**
Director General
of Automobile
Group VIPOS, the
Ukraine

I first heard about Atlant-M when I was in Minsk and happened to drive past their car center. The next time I paid attention to it talking to Germans. I learnt that it was a car holding with dealerships in both Moscow and Kiev. It was in 2005.

Our company started with Opel, Volkswagen and Audi brands. Intercar

Ukraine used to be a Volkswagen importer in the Ukraine at that time. The company was founded by my company Vipos and German Motors, a founder of which was Vipos as well. Germans sold InterCar Ukraine to Atlant-M. They decided to sell Volkswagen importer rights either to us or InterCar Ukraine which at that time was owned by Atlant-M. The winning party would become an importer for all the brands. There was some competition but we managed the situation. Atlant-M took their Volkswagen importer contract and we focused on Audi. I offered the holding to unite the assets and create a single holding to cover all brands of Volkswagen Group. However, Atlant-M decided that they were big, powerful and self-sufficient and followed their own plan. They stuck to Volkswagen. However, some time later we faced a common issue of spare parts delivery. We created a joint venture. Later we took it over as Atlant-M sold its share of InterCar. Nevertheless, the business was quite successful making good profit.

Atlant-M team is good at building a network business. It allows to get good results in management and profits. However, they slow down a bit in taking strategic decisions as a big company has lots of red tape. The system is quite loyal to customers but chucks away a chance to work for the future, loses initiative. The holding is a solid structure. Personnel management is excellent and there are things to learn from. Bureaucracy allows managing the company's assets but it doesn't pay attention to strategy, though. Our staff management may be weaker, we can not milk out our resources but we work for the future. Clients are loyal to them as when they get there they get into the system. It's an advantage in a medium sector. Our management is strategic. We are no penny pinchers. They, on the contrary, take care of the pence. That's the main difference. As for the rest, there are things for us to learn from them and vice versa.

As words of wisdom put it: "Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment." That's why I want to wish the company to live to the full extent today and remain Atlant-M we know.

Viktor
POSTELNIKOV
Director General
of Automobile
Group VIPOS, the
Ukraine



The Highest Difficulty Level

WHERE DO CAR LOVERS END UP

Ilya PROHOROV
Brand-manager
at International
Automobile
Holding Atlant-M,
Minsk

I came to Atlant-M in 1998. Before that I used to be a journalist and work in the Imya daily paper.

I would write extreme on-site reportages. Moreover, I loved cars, as all men do and working for the paper, visited all the car presentations.

When there were no articles in the edition portfolio, my car column used to appear in the paper. In November 1998 I was called from the Volkswagen importer and offered a PR-manager position. Oleg Chanov and Alexander Ryabuhin arrived at the newspaper office and invited me for an interview with Alexander Sheyko. Sheyko was a real legend to me then. At that time he might be the only person in the country who had a degree in advertising. The interview was held like that. The car dealership in Mashinostroiteley Str, some café. I arrived in the morning, well-prepared, dressed in my best suit. There was some guy with an earring sitting in front of me, chewing scrambled eggs, muttering something and asking me some questions. At last he said: “You can start on Monday”.

My salary was 300 dollars. It was really good money. At my best times it was my salary plus fees. The Imya paper was about to shut down but I had another job offer from the National Assembly Newspaper - to head an information department. They proposed just mad money. However, I got interested with Atlant-M's proposal. First of all, cars. Secondly, I understood the work of a PR manager quite well as I knew what journalists needed. I knew what a PR manager should provide to make a journalist do what he needed.

PR PRINCIPLES

I implemented a straight-forward approach: “We never pay for published articles.” If you want to write anything about us, go on, please. If you don't want to - for the sake of God - it's up to you. At that time there were about 900 000 personal cars in the country, 40 % being of Volkswagen brand. I had a certain idea to keep to: “Guys, do you want to shut out 40 % of your readers of useful information? Go for it. It's none of our business.” As Dovlatov said: “I don't worry what is written about me. I am worried when they do not write about me.” Churchill shared the idea: “All publicity is good, except an obituary.” We were ready to see anything about us in the paper. We weren't going to pay for that, though. They started writing about us. For free.

In 1999 Atlant-M became International Automobile Holding as it positions itself today. So far, it is the only company in the CIS which operates at three markets. It's Atlant-M specialness. There are bigger companies but

their target market is Russia. The markets are different: everything from the legislation and up to the national set of mind has its peculiarities. When the holding was formed, it was necessary to create a single structure as an add-on over all the brands to unite all the departments and divisions. There is a good word in English - back office. Businesses are not particularly fond of it as a back office does not make profit, it just spends resources. You can hardly get away without it, though; as it forms the company's added value.

At the same time we needed another department to care for marketing. Alexander Sheyko became its head.

ABOUT BRANDS & MANAGEMENT

In 2007 we rebranded the company. Now all the companies are called Atlant-M. Before 2007 the companies of the holding had lots of names: Atlant Motors, Holpy Avto, etc. There were signs of brand erosion. When Oleg Husaenov realized he needed the single brand, he had to find a person responsible for that. So, I became Atlant-M brand-manager. By the way, the name of the company Atlant-M International Automobile Holding is completely my idea. I made it up.

The holding's logo has its story as well. Everybody knows Nike logo drawn for 30 dollars by an American sophomore. Our story is quite similar. Atlant-M's logo was drawn by Husaenov's classmate - Sergey Elistratov who heads Atlant-M Borovaya Ford division now. He just drew it, That's all. Half human, half beast, not implying anything special. However, the logo turned out to cover so many symbols and senses! There were different guesses and attempts to decipher it. There is no official interpretation of the logo. People see what they want to see.

HOW TO GET GREAT RESULTS FROM SMALL THINGS

From 2000 till 2002 we were a rather small company which pretended it was large. At that time we had tree dealerships - in Minsk, Moscow and Kiev. A pattern of a future large holding was formed then. Let's have an example. Literally saying, Husaenov took an egg package which could contain 30 eggs, put it on the table and said: "That's our company." At that time there were just five "eggs" there. Everybody was sure there would

be 30 at some point. The structure had to be filled up. It's what Husaenov has done.

In 2005 the Board of Directors stated that the company needed a brand as it's hard to get enough customers, profit, etc without it. By 2007 the concept had been formed and all the holding divisions had been rebranded. Officially, there is no holding. Every dealership is still an independent legal entity. Nevertheless, it's clear that all of them make up Atlant-M Holding. The most interesting fact is that before 2008 we had not spent a cent on advertising. The company's image building was my challenge and I managed it using just PR and event methods. From 2000 till 2007 the total spending on brand promotion amounted to, let's say 50 000 dollars. Some companies spend more on stationery.

After rebranding in 2008 we held the first large ad campaign in three regions which promoted Atlant-M as a single organization. In our opinion, it was rather expensive - about 1.5 million dollars. Unfortunately, the wrong time was chosen. In September the campaign was launched and in October the crisis broke out. Nevertheless, the effect was good. I ordered a research of the advertising campaign efficiency at the International Agency of Marketing Researches (IAMR). Their report clearly stated that a level of the brand recognition had significantly increased. A degree of trust had surpassed all other car brands including Toyota, which was the market leader at that time. We promoted Atlant-M trademark which covered all the car brands we sold as an umbrella.

In 2005 Husaenov invited hyped up branding consultant, Thomas Gad. He is said to have come up with the famous slogan for Nokia - "Connecting People". However, being an honest man he admitted that he had been part of the team. Frankly speaking, I considered him a phoney at first. Only recently I've got that he is just far ahead of us. His ideas were too innovative and bold for us. He created the current brand for us - its meaning, message and main idea. Loosely speaking, he has made a cover out of a number of pieces. His creation serves well. A cool thing - warm and good-looking. By the way our slogan "Atlant-M - an expert in choosing a car" is his idea.

There is the Pareto principle also known as the 80-20 rule: 20% of our clients make about 80 % of our profit. That rule is universal. It works in any country and in any industry 100 %. We need 20% of our potential

customers to know about us. How should we find them? Why does a person need to turn to Atlant-M? Because we are just experts. A person need to care about nothing. Any ideas about a car? That's a tough question! Never fear! We'll do it ourselves!

SERIOUS GAMES FOR SERIOUS PEOPLE

There are so called opinion leaders and we needed to find people who would hold the company structure. It's clear that everybody wants to find such people as well as these people realize quite well that they are special and know the price for their efforts and their time. That's why it is quite difficult to invite them to some events. Either people won't come or they will send somebody instead. There must be something extraordinary to hook them. Husaenov set us the task and we managed to cope with the problem. Today there are several events, organized by the holding, which surely pull people out of their offices. The first is Christmas Tennis Competition. It seems that commonplace but the event has a mad popularity. This year it will take place for the 10th time. In 2001 there were just 30 participants. At the first competition the first prize was just a bottle of Johnnie Walker Black Label whiskey. The competition was held in the Tennis Palace. After games a banquet was given, all the guests wearing sports clothes. Now it is the biggest amateur competition in Belarus. People arrive from Moscow, Kiev, St. Petersburg. More than 150 people take part in the qualifying rounds and the competition itself. These players are not just common people, they are those who can "manage problems" and we have qualifying rounds for them. The main draw is for 96 players. There can't be more participants as the event takes just 3 days. The players are billionaires, they keep to a minute-by-minute schedule and spending a week here is just too much. I think the annual income of 60 % of participants exceeds 100 000 dollars, 15-20 % - 1 million and 5 % of players get about 1 billion.

All these people begin to remind us of them half a year before the competition. They wonder whether we haven't forgotten about them. The main schtick of the competition is that it is both doubles and veteran. It is for people over 35. The game level is very high. A player has a choice - either he brings a co-player or we provide him with a professional tennis player who makes Belarusian top-50. All stars of Belarusian female tennis players

Ilya PROHOROV
Brand-manager
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Holding Atlant-M,
Minsk

participate in the competition: Tatyana Puchek, Viktoriya Azarenko, Olga Govortsova... These are top rackets earning millions. Of course, there are non-public competitions where one can play with all those stars paying money. Participants of such competitions pay fees to make the prize fund. We also pay to the top professional players for participation but this sum is just nothing for them. Our participants pay nothing. They are provided with everything - accommodation, food and drinks, as well as a banquet organized in a posh restaurant at the end of the competition. They have a chance to communicate and meet people they are interested in. As well as play with a beautiful girl who goes in for tennis professionally, win and get the prize, of course.

The most important person, who made that idea came true is Semen Izikovich Kagan. I think him the most respected and the most unappreciated person in Belarusian tennis. Maybe, that's because he is difficult to deal with. When I started working with him, we shared mutual aversion. However, thanks to God, we feathered in and made a perfect team. He is engaged in managing the main draw, matching pairs - it's pure and simple politics and extremely subtle diplomacy. We have been organizing the competition for 10 years already and I like it. Of course, it's not "Big Hat" competition as in Kremlin but it's similar to it in every way, though smaller in scale.

I've heard many favorable reviews, including those from our boss Husaenov. It's clear, that if people are engaged in anything they won't see its shortcomings at once. They will mention them later. Later they tell Husaenov that our competition is one of the best amateur tennis events. Tennis is a splendid sport. An up-scale one. If you can play tennis, you'll have good connections. Husaenov, Savitsky, Pyrko - all of them play tennis. However, there is a more high-class sport - golf. Husaenov once said that when you play tennis, you have a rival in front of you and you try to defeat each other. When you play golf, there is a partner next to you, you look in the same direction and play against the hole. If there is a golf course in Belarus, I think, we'll make something up.

Ilya PROHOROV
Brand-manager
at International
Automobile
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SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE

We can't cover all the sports. Besides, there are people who don't go in for sports. There needs to be something else to attract them. Once

Husaenov asked to think up an event for those who can solve problems. That shouldn't be a large-scale event. Not 100-200 people, just 20-30 persons and we came up with "Soldiers of fortune".

The idea was to pull people out of routine environment. To make them do something they had never done before. A two-day event focused on hazard and striving for victory. It was a quest, you take part, walk through levels; you need to find some parts and put them together to make the whole thing.

In April 2007 we gathered 30 players and brought them to the shooting ground in Minsk premises, handed out uniform, divided them into teams, provided military UAZes and set the task - to find five destinations and gather artifacts. The first team to complete the quest wins. The game was on the territory of Belarus. The area was quite large, though. The initial point was in Minsk, while the final destination was in Lepel. The way there, however, was not direct and players had to follow forest, "secret paths". We hired actors who were to give prompts to players. For example, participants had to find, let's say a hermit, solve some puzzle and get some hint as what to do further and continue the quest. I saw myself as hazard and adrenalin were boiling over. Some players ran out of petrol, they rushed to some filling station in Vitebsk province. There was a queue there. They came up to the fuel filling column, pull a nozzle from some dude, who was refilling the car, refilled their own car, shovered him a C-note, got into the car and flew away. Holy mother of crap!

Everything was thoroughly organized. Everyone was given NATO MREs. A normal meal: the first course, the second, the third, chocolate and a special device for heating the meal. Drinking water. Everybody got a duffel bag containing a spoon, a mug etc. Every unit had a cell-phone as a means of communication, a ground sheet, an entrenching tool and a map-case with maps. The night was to be spent at the special base. In general, it was a complete reality-show.

The next day was to be the final battle. Our soldiers had to gather things which would help them to combat the world terror. We hired guys who used to be scouts. The participants played a gripping game of strike-ball. With smoke-puff charges, grenades and lots of shooting.

There were several players from Petersburg who were to leave in the

afternoon. So, we arranged a chopper to bring them to the airport. It turned out to be the greatest delusion that a chopper could land at any place. In fact, it can land only at some special grounds. We chose an area, encircled it, a person with special orange smoke candles managed the landing. Defeating the world terror happy guests spectacularly left home.

For years passed but people still tell Husaenov how cool it was. Several times we were about to repeat the event. The crisis, though... The event was not of cheap ones.

We have prepared a scenario of a similar thing. It is called Stalker. There are interesting places in Belarus. For example, a former missile base which is now deserted.

NO ONE HAS DONE THESE THINGS YET

Yuliya Kazharskaya is a corporate relations director of the Atlant-M in the Ukraine and a very creative person. She has a number of uncommon events to boast of as well. For example in 2007 she came up with the idea to create Atlant-M reef. The Black Sea faces an ecological problem. The sea wild life dies off and it's not the man's fault. First of all, the water is saturated with sulphuretted hydrogen even at the depth of 15 meters. Secondly, because of the sea currents sandy bottom is washed out and sea species had nothing to scramble to. Yulya met scientists from Crimean division of the biological department of the MSU who told her of the Black Sea challenge. Yulya came up with the solution: if there were no natural reefs, we would make artificial ones. Seaweeds, shrimps and species of the kind would make it their habitat. How to make an artificial reef? Quite simply - concrete cubes are thrown into the sea. Yulya wondered: "Why are we to launch just simple cubes? We'll cast letters that make the word Atlant-M, put them at the sea-bed and make it an event." It was October. The weather was just awesome. VIPs arrived. They were provided with diving equipment. After a short training they dived themselves, released tows from the cubes which were lowered in the water by a marine crane. It was really an exceptional event. Atlant-M's creating an artificial reef evoked much response. It entered the CIS Book of Records. Now researches are being carried out on the reef, scientists are watching its stocking process.

This year in honor of the holding's 20th anniversary, also in October, we

will repeat the initiative. We will plunge “20 Years” phrase. Yulya is inviting representatives of car brands we work with - Volkswagen, Ford, Mazda, Nissan, Toyota, Skoda to join us. They will plunge their own brands in the sea. Nobody has done it before.

In the Ukraine the State Scenic Reserve Aya Cape is closed for visiting. It is possible to follow only special tourist routes there. Yulya worked out a special route called Atlant-M Path. It runs through marvelous places. The route is very popular with tourists and is included into a special travel guide.

For the first time in the Ukraine the Federation of Alpinism and Rock Climbing issued a certificate, for a rock climbing route running on the left side of Shan-Kay central wall. The route length is 250 meters, the average angle being about 100 degrees. It's a route of the highest difficulty level and it is called in honor of Atlant-M. Yulya worked it out and rock-climbers made it real.

So, we work that way. At the highest difficulty level. We have many ideas to share. For example, to organize an expedition to Antarctica. Impossible? It just seems so. There is nothing impossible. At least, for Atlant-M.



Fair Business Stands High

Vladimir
RYBALCHENKO,
Director General
of OAO KAD-
Lenoblast, St.
Petersburg

Our partnership with Atlant-M was instigated by Aleksey Ivanovich Akulov, who used to be a vice governor of Lenigradskaya oblast and its representative in Moscow. He knew we were engaged in developing the area adjacent to the Eastern traffic semi-circle of the rotary circling St. Petersburg. Atlant-M was interested in buying lots at this territory to expand its

business. Akulov introduced us and they turned to us to buy a lot to build a car center there. The first person I met was Alexander Pyrko. From that time he represented Atlant-M in all the projects. Our cooperation was both efficient and pleasant.

I remember shaking hands with him. I liked him at once. Alexander is an open and charming person. There were other factors as well. I realized that Atlant-M is a trustworthy partner. Buying and selling land parties need to trust each other at some point. We gave each other a word and that was enough to trust the partner. In business a fair play of the kind stands high. Mutual trust which appeared quite quickly is not a usual event in our business. The business world is a game with rules of its own. Frankly speaking, sometimes even the most experienced players can make a bad shot. Atlant-M is more a Moscow company. We, on the contrary, are from St. Petersburg. There has always been a silent competition between our cities. As well as mutual suspicion. In fact, dealing with Alexander Pyrko we've never had those feelings.

Citizens of Moscow and St. Petersburg always seemed different to me. We are less likely to show off our achievements. Usually a Muscovite spits out everything about himself. I've met such dudes: "Hello! My name is Ivan. I have a yacht and a chopper." I do not exaggerate, it happens like that. There are no such boasters in Atlant-M team. That was what I liked about our partners. Usually Muscovites consider St. Petersburg provinces. If we mention finances and politics it stands true. However, neither Pyrko, nor his team showed some superiority. They are civilized and sensible people and treat partners with due respect. It stands high as well.

Unfortunately, I had no chances to know Alexander Pyrko closer. We both have a very busy schedule as well as we both lack free time. Although several times we drank wine in my office and had a heart-to-heart talk.

Colleagues from Atlant-M never forget to congratulate me with holidays. It kinda wins over. Their presents are always uncommon and useful. Usually office presents are quite standard. They are often regifted. Atlant-M employees, on the contrary use a bit of fantasy and gifts from them are usually kept at home. For example, once I was given an original set - a lovely day planner, a leather wallet, a purse for a small change and a business card case. The presents were nice to look at and quite convenient, so I

Vladimir
RYBALCHENKO,
Director General
of OAO KAD-
Lenoblast, St.
Petersburg

started using them at once. Another time I was gifted a posh meat cleaver. I quite often use it preparing meals.

I have met Oleg Husaenov just once. It was an informal meeting just between Oleg and Vladimir. We had a very sensitive matter to discuss (I can not disclose it now). However, I've got quite nice impressions from meeting him.

Husaenov is an outstanding person. Hardly everyone is able to create such a business from scratch. They've built it themselves. The corporation is financially strong. I have seen a foreign magazine which listed Husaenov in top 100 Russian businessmen. By the way, he never boasts of that.

Now our relations with Atlant-M have intensified again. The company hasn't developed the area it got as soon after that the crisis burst out. Now we are planning to develop neighboring areas together. So, we again meet and talk business.

Of course, everybody faces communication difficulties. As well as troubles, arising in communication are quite similar. We have worked with large companies like IKEA and individuals. We encountered similar problems. However, ways to solve them depend on people. As for Atlant-M, they have always been trustworthy partners.

I wish Atlant-M to celebrate their 20th anniversary! From my side, I vow and declare that I will go to Kuybyshev storage pond with them as we have planned. We'll fish, boat, sit at the fire and certainly talk of something different from business. All Atlant-M representatives I met are very interesting and practically intelligent people beyond Moscow standards.

Vladimir
RYBALCHENKO,
Director General
of OAO KAD-
Lenoblast, St.
Petersburg



Creators

Timur SYSUEV
Partner of
Bizneskonsalt
legal company
Minsk

In some 1994 at the dawn of my legal experience, a friend of mine offered me to meet Atlant-M Holding director Oleg Husaenov as at that time they faced some legal problems: the president's decree defined a value added tax and excises for cars imported from abroad.

Now it's all out of date but at that time the holding had some issues

with Customs clearance as customs officials demanded to pay additionally a rather significant sum of VAT and excises.

I knew the holding by name - because of the commercial on TV. The video final shots showed some dude lighting a cigarette with a lighter resembling an Olympic torch.

That's what I knew when I arrived at the meeting with the company's director.

Atlant-M's office was situated at Kasintsa Str, 21 on the second floor of the dormitory of the Institute of Labor and Social Relations. Employees occupied desks in extremely small rooms, which hadn't been repaired for a long time and did not suit to being an office. If I am not mistaken Atlant-M kept that office till 2000.

What struck me then? When I met Oleg Ilgizovich, he made a great impression, being a quiet and pleasant person. His office was that straight and narrow that one had to edge past his desk. I remember wondering why they were working in such an uncomfortable office. Oleg Husaenov had been named the best businessman of the country for several times which implied he was a well-known, powerful and prosperous person and Atlant-M kept on staying at the office in Kazintsa Str. However, he wasn't preoccupied with his office furniture. There was a desk, a chair and a computer - that was quite enough. Just later when I got familiar with both the corporate philosophy and the leaders' convictions I realized that it was just a definite life stance. First of all, they pay attention to the company's development and sensible investments and later to an exterior component. The holding's priority was to buy facilities, equipment, to build car centers, to get the business up and running.

...At the first meeting which preceded our partnership we were asked whether we could challenge the customs officers' claims, including trial procedures. We filed two suits and won them both as the decree, defining the excise duties contradicted to the law. It was possible to win legal trials basing on the contradiction between a law and a decree at that time. Today it is almost unreal.

After the first successful experience in being partners we agreed on further cooperation and as the time showed we managed to achieve confidential relations, which was of vital importance. If there is no trust be-

tween a client and a legal representative, no matter how copper-bottomed and important the client was, the cooperation wouldn't last long.

When dealing with a client you pay attention to the impression he makes, how he speaks, behaves, whether it is interesting to talk to him, as communication with him is never limited just to professional issues. You touch other issues, if that's interesting, the relations will be close, if not, they will include only solving professional problems.

And you know what? It was interesting to deal with all Atlant-M representatives I met - Oleg Husaenov, Sergey Savitsky, Alexander Pyrko, Timofey Martsynkevich, Viktor Astreyko. Addicted to their business they told about it in a way that made others got interested in it. Why would I, a lawyer, find it interesting to listen to people dwelling on marketing strategies or brand development? However, when Oleg told about it, clearly and rousing, I had every intention to get into the topic, to read some book on business, personnel management - on everything I would never read because of hard work.

Husaenov can literally charge people with energy! I used to leave the office full of energy as if after a work-out, just speaking to Oleg Ilgizovich at 8 in the evening. I was amazed at his interest in all the gadgets as well. 10 years ago Atlant-M installed a rather expensive software program of control and accounting which would allow tracking movement of goods, tangible assets and financial flows in real time. The program was rather difficult: to master it one needed to spend too much time. I remember all the employees I contacted at that time groaned and grudged that the soft was difficult and it took lot of time to learn to use it: "We can not get used to it. Besides, it is that expensive, why spend so much money when there are cheaper Russian programs? " "That program is an engine which will pull us to a new level!" - answered Husaenov:

As time showed computerization of management and control processes really gives an impulse to further development. Now Atlant-M employees can hardly imagine how to work without the control system. People are conservative and are quite cautious of innovations. So, when a person can think 10 steps ahead and keep abreast of the developments, it's a very useful trait!

I would like to recall another bright Atlant-M representative - Alexander

Pyrko - God grant him good health! When I just started to work with the holding, my first car Volkswagen was a used one. When I became more solvent, I decided to buy a new Mazda 626 in the car showroom. I talked with Pyrko about it discussing among other things a color of the car. San Sanych told me:

- Timur Valeryanych, you need a white car!

- Oh yeah?! It will be dirty all the time!

- You don't get it, I'll explain everything. It will be a white car, but it won't show as much dirt!

- For real? - asked I, a bit puzzled.

- Piece of cake! - promised San Sanych.

I must admit I would never choose a white car myself, as I consider that color to be girlish. However Pyrko was so convincing: "A white car is a tough car for a real man! So, I bought a white Mazda... You know, I was fed up with washing it. How on earth could I believe that it doesn't show the dirt? I trusted the expert too much. My car was white for a single time - when I was taking it from the showroom. The rest of the time it was grey.

We have been cooperating quite closely for 15 years, especially when the holding started expanding and went beyond Belarus territory. We finalized their first deal in Russia buying a facility in Bazhova Str, in Moscow in 1997, which is now a dealership. I remember quite well that everything was done in a rush. Oleg Ilgizovich called: "You need to be in Moscow in a day. It's a burning issue." When my partner and I arrived at Bazhova Str and saw the building the company was about to buy (it was owned by OAO Mosovoschtrans) we were shocked. That picture is embedded in my recollection for ever: a Soviet vehicle park, encumbered with rusty truck cabins and ancient tires. It's a pity I hadn't made a photo. Looking at the Volkswagen dealership now I realize that it was quite meaningful. It was creation. Sorry for being childish and naïve.

I remember quite well the first deal in the Ukraine at the end of 1999 or at the beginning of 2000 to buy a local importer. If to win a market in Moscow they started from buying facilities to build a dealership later, in the Ukraine it was quite different. Atlant-M entered the local market buying one of its players. Before finalizing the deal specialists had to follow standard matching procedures. Financial experts took care of finances,

marketing specialists of marketing and the legal representatives were set a range of tasks as well. We arrived to the Ukraine by car at night and spent the rest of it in a rented 3-room apartment, meant for my colleague and I as well as for other seven people from different departments of Atlant-M. Now when I got older, such overnight accommodation would hardly be comfortable while at that time it was just cool.

Today, recalling all of that I think that it is excellent when clients set tasks which allow you to learn something new. Knowing legal theory, legislation, laws is just half the battle. Experience comes with practical activities. The more difficult the tasks are, the better it is for professional development and growth. It's not just a compliment to Atlant-M. It is my professional opinion.

These days for a number of reasons the holding demands our services not that often, as the business is up and running and all the current issues are managed by their corporate legal counsels. Nevertheless, we are still on good terms and for Atlant-M's 20th anniversary I would like to wish to all its employees - former, those who are working for the company at the moment and those who will come to the holding in future - to take pleasure in working and enjoy its results!



Without Figures

Igor TIHONKOV
Managing Director
of Avangard Bank,
St. Petersburg
branch

I am recalling Atlant-M in 2000 when they opened a dealership in St. Petersburg. The facility for the car center was under repair. Looking in there I was just shocked. It was a true parking shelter and I could hardly imagine that there would be a posh car showroom at that place. However, Avangard bank believed in the company's idea. So, our partnership started.

At first we set up an account for the company, and then opened a cashier desk at the facility. After renovation the parking shelter looked fabulous. Customers did not want to leave the showroom. Rows of shining cars were attracting glances, there was a coffee flavor in the air, and impeccably dressed sales-managers rushed about. Some time later Atlant-M got to its feet and we provided them with a credit. We are still partners now.

Before I got on friendly terms with Atlant-M Baltika team, there had been several different persons at the director position. At first relations with Alexander Pyrko were everything but honeymoon. We wrote to each other like Gogol and Pushkin. He started writing letters about unsatisfactory bank servicing. Nobody had ever complained of that. What I disliked most was that all complaints were in written form. So, I decided that the best way out would be to meet Pyrko in person. When I arrived at his office and asked what was going on, he answered straight forward: "Why do you need such a capricious client?" I was at a loss at first but then got that there was something strange about it. My suspicions proved true. Speaking to me Pyrko gave some hints that the company intended to work with other banks.

We talked for a long time and I left satisfied with the conversation. Partnership with some other bank failed. Our relations, on the country, have become even closer since then.

Most of the time I work with financial experts. For example, some time ago we met with Dmitriy Lazovsky who is a deputy director of Atlant-M Baltika and discussed a possibility to increase their loan volume. He admitted Atlant-M making another attempt to work with some bank. "Although we are discussing credit conditions with them, we wouldn't like to cancel anything at your bank, till we learn their decision." - explained Lazovsky. They didn't weasel out or tell a lie. Frankly, Atlant-M hasn't had a chance with that bank either. Maybe we are destined to work together. Let alone the relations which have become even more cordial.

For example, knowing Pyrko's passions, once I invited him to a cigar evening in German consulate. The party was best remembered for people's stories about German business. It was very interesting. Atlant-M cooperated with Germany, dealing with Opel cars, so Pyrko had a number of stories to share. It is more difficult to get in touch with Lazovsky because of his less availability. Nevertheless, from time to time we make attempts to talk informally.

There are always some holiday gifts for my friends and partners from Atlant-M. I prefer to add a bottle of good wine which I choose myself to a standard set with a bank logo. I know quite well what people I work with like. I like corporate picnics as well. Problems are solved more effectively when accompanied by tasty shashlyk and good chat.

I would like to dwell on presentations as well. I remember the Hummer presentation, which was organized in the wild somewhere in the premises of St. Petersburg. I haven't seen a more exotic event! When we arrived there, the first thought that came to mind was we were in the real war actions: khaki-colored choppers were cruising in the sky, APCs with soldiers aboard were rushing about the stiff terrain.

We got into the car and moved along the field road. When a Hummer was literally flying besides the armored vehicles, we realized it was an off roader. It managed ravines and trenches and wasn't in the least inferior to military vehicles. There was power and strength in everything.

The trip was followed by another surprise. A field lunch. A real beef & chickpea soup in churns, plov, bars of chocolate and, some alcohol, of course. We enjoyed the whole event as children.

If we are to talk about communication difficulties, we were scared just once. A very tricky situation was in 2008 when Atlant-M decided to open another dealership in St. Petersburg. Because of the crisis the company's profit decreased and they had to put the unfinished construction project on sale.

We thought hard how our partners would manage the situation. Atlant-M turned out to be a trustworthy partner. The market flattened out and we calmed down. It seems to me that if they waited a bit, the car showroom could become their third posh facility in St. Petersburg. However, what's done is done now.

The company's financials which flow through Avangard Bank make up a handsome sum. However, figures are not the only thing that counts in partnership with such a client. Atlant-M is definitely a trustworthy company. We trust them as ourselves. The thought that we've done something to help our partner prosper is encouraging.

Igor TIHONKOV
Managing Director
of Avangard Bank,
St. Petersburg
branch



Accompanied With Flashing Strobes

IN A VENT CHAMBER

Not everybody knows that initially the management office in Mashinostroiteley Str was situated in a ... vent chamber. You see, it used to be a gym with a small room besides the main hall meant for a vent chamber. The equipment was taken away, the purpose of premises

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was changed while the sign plate remained. That's why Sergey Savitsky who was the company's director managed everything out of the vent chamber.

At first I was greatly surprised at an uncommon (as it seemed to me) hobby of Sergey Savitsky: starting from the very first day and up to the present moment he writes down all the conversations he has with people. He must have notes of 10 years ago or even earlier time. Absolutely any conversation, however short it would be, with any person he schemed down on a piece of paper and put into the definite file.

Before I came to the holding I had had an advertising experimentation studio and had asked Sergey Savitsky about renting a part of the premises. We talked about that in the very vent chamber: I had bought wall-to-wall carpeting, office furniture, paid for the landline and all of that was written down by Savitsky. Several years later I had to close down the company and sold everything. We talked with Savitsky about the price (it seemed to me that the carpeting cost 200\$), and he said: "Hold on a bit!" and took out his papers and reproduced our conversation about buying-selling-renting in the same words. The carpeting turned out to be 300\$. I think Savitsky wasn't particularly happy to have opened his notes.

Later I started working for Atlant-M and there were three people in that vent chamber: Sergey Savitsky, financial director Anatoliy Grek and I.

Once I arrived to work and saw a new Passat of Sergey Savitsky at the office - he was the only person in Belarus to drive such a car. Yuriy Lihuta who used to be a journalist for Avtobusiness weekly with his colleague were sitting in the car gesturing for me to come up closer. I approached the car. Terrified Lihuta shouted that they had decided to make a test drive but the intrusion protection had gone off and they had got trapped inside. The car was brand new and Yura was afraid to touch anything not to Lord forbid! break anything.

There weren't cell-phones at that time and Lihuta pleaded me to ask Savitsky what they should do to unblock the car. I am rather slow-paced to be frank. I came to the vent chamber, told Savitsky what had

happened and asked what to do. Savitsky answered: "They need to put in a security code, pressing the button". I sauntered downstairs, came up to the car and told Lihuta: "You need to insert the code, pressing the button". I must tell you the sun was shining brightly that day and it was very hot. People staying in a closed car were not enjoying the situation in the least. So, I told the dudes about the magic button. They wanted to know where that damn button was. I came to Savitsky again and asked: "Where is the button?" He answered: "It is under the steering wheel". I went downstairs and told the guys: "The button is under the wheel". They didn't give up asking questions: "What's the code?" I climbed the stairs and enquired about the code. - "41" At the car: "41" - "It doesn't help". I made a courier for about two hours. Finally, I pulled Mr. Savitsky from the activity he was engaged in, and he went downstairs. It turned out that to release the prisoners it was enough to pull the car handle twice.

THE STORY IN WHICH WE FLEW TO THE SKY

When I worked in the marketing department (we were to bring new dealerships to the market wherever the holding opened them), I forbade using the word "impossible". If we have come up with some idea, if we have decided that it would work, it means there must be ways to realize it. Frankly, the outcome may not come up to expectations but to err is human.

Ideas came different ways. Usually I tried to imagine myself in guests' shoes, reflected about things that could surprise me. In general, when I came to some city, I had to become its native citizen, learn lots of information and catch the city area. I had only two weeks for that! Let's imagine you are going somewhere by taxi. If you draw out a driver, he can spit out lots of useful information. In fact, anything can be the clue to a gorgeous idea. Once when we were preparing an opening event for a new dealership in St. Petersburg, I sat down in the middle of the hall, looked up and thought that it would be great if the roof slid open and the audience saw the starry sky. I made the idea real. How? Quite easily, by

the way: I rented a projector in the planetarium. At a fine moment during the ceremony guests just rested speechless when they realized that the roof was sliding away with a terrifying rasp (there was the corresponding background music) and saw stars above them. Certainly, they were struck by what they'd seen. It was cool! Unfortunately, not all ideas have come up to my expectations.

THE STORY IN WHICH WE FALL THE LOWEST OF THE LOW

Once I was to bring to the market a new car center in Energhetikov Ave, which was in St. Petersburg as well. It was at the beginning of 2000. All the ideas were usually brainstormed at the very scene, as staying in Minsk it is impossible to invent something which would take place in St. Petersburg or some other city. I need to look around the place, find something peculiar to make the event interesting and natural.

The dealership was to open April, 1. There were no implications; the event was to be April 1 by sheer chance. I arrived in St. Petersburg in the middle of March to manage all the creative and organizational activities. I was accompanied by some girl from the marketing department, Vasilisa, by name. She didn't took initiative, just followed my directions. I was wondering all along what special we could do. Energetikov Ave? Maybe to make a pun about it in some way? What way? A slogan appeared at that moment: "Atlant-M in Energetikov Ave is the most energetic dealership". ("Energetik" in Russian stands for a person busy in energy development.) Something of the kind. To show its energy power to everybody I proposed to surprise people coming to the opening ceremony with green leaves appearing in the trees overnight. My idea was to green up all the trees in the avenue, implying that the spring had come ahead-of-schedule at the energetic car center premises. That would definitely attract attention of possible buyers and journalists.

That was just the beginning, though. As the car centre was at the car market territory, we wanted to think of something to give people a hint that cars could be bought not just at the market but at the center as well. I remembered being at some Volkswagen event in Germany and their

idea appealed to me. The guests were brought to the forest where they were stopped by frowning people in the uniform, frontier guards, maybe, and asked to show their IDs. The guests were confused: “What is going on? What have we done wrong? The frontier guards suddenly smiled and began dancing. They turned out to be artists. So, I decided to use that overseen go at the center opening event in Energetikov Ave. So, I told that we needed artists dressed as the road police who would stop all the cars of our brand, ask to show driver license and then suddenly start to dance step, congratulate with April, 1, give hand-outs and tell drivers about a new dealership where they could buy a car.

Unfortunately, I had to leave for Kiev as something important was scheduled there. So, I wasn’t present at the opening ceremony. I called the shots and left feeling free. When I returned two weeks later and wondered how it had been, they told me: “A complete nonsense! You are always thinking up some rubbish”. I was astonished and wondered how it could happen. It was no brain wave but it must have worked”. The only task of my assistants was to have brought all the components of my idea together and in fact, they had completely failed it.

I inquired into the details and what I learnt explained everything. The guys turned out not to have had the trouble of greening up all the trees in the avenue. They had found out a nice pretext that it would be very expensive and it just wasn’t worth it. So, they had greened up just several trees at the center’s entrance, some bushes, to be more precise. That wasn’t all. To fix leaves so that they would seem real they needed to turn to a special advertising agency which provided such services. My guys kept to their previous idea that it would be expensive and had done everything themselves, in haste, till their patience wore thin. Further it went from bad to worse. Artists gave up wearing the road police uniform as they were afraid that furious drivers they were to stop would punch them. Whom the guys were to ask? Of course, the real road police. The latter really stopped cars, asked to show the papers. The step idea was killed by the artists either. They just congratulated drivers with April, 1, told that a new car showroom had been opened

and rushed away. Road police officers at first stopped and congratulated drivers, then they got annoyed with that and began checking drivers for speed limits and handed out fines.

So, it was like we came up with a rather mediocre idea of pulling a new Atlant-M dealership in Energetik Ave in St. Petersburg.

THE STORY IN WHICH WE WERE “LEASED OUT”

When we held a successful presentation in St. Petersburg (a starry sky was a perk there), GM representatives were delighted with what they had seen and admitted not having seen things of the kind before even in the US. They found out whose idea it had been and asked Oleg Huseynov to “lease us out” to help them bring to the market five new brands of their own - Lacetti and some others.

The presentation was to be of large-scale: there were five new models to be represented during five hours. The cars were to arrive at the display platform, so, the settings had to be changed every hour. We changed it with the help of all possible technical tricks. We used big screens, video projectors and what not. There were many interesting perks there. For example, we decided that during the presentation of a model an unaccompanied choir would sing a song about a blizzard and at that very moment there would be an exuberant burst of confetti. So, we ordered a cannon and I asked its technicians: “If it goes up to eleven will it be WOW?” They said: “Indeed! All the salads will be covered with confetti.” I insisted, though: “Rubbish! To make an effect it should go up to eleven!” During the presentation when artists began singing, I gestured: “Shoot”, the wonder machine went “Crack!”, spit some confetti and broke down. I was just mad at that moment. However, in general the presentation was a success: guests and GM representatives hadn’t learnt about a confetti shower idea and liked the event all the same. Several representatives of the American party approached me later and told that they would ask me to make a presentation in the US. It was a nice compliment, I think.

Preparing that presentation our team did our best and wound up its

brain. To organize a parade of cars followed by fireworks in the centre of the city we needed a bit of free space in front of the car centre. That was the centre of the city, the avenue Putin followed quite frequently, saying nothing about public traffic- busses and trolleybuses - which in general are impossible to stop. Local guys warned us that even if the road police was paid mad money, they would never cordon off the avenue. It's a typical example when local folks say that it is possible no way and we, Belarusians manage to achieve the result. What's the secret? It's necessary to know people's psychology: to pay here, to laugh there, and to give an invitation to the presentation - anything can be settled in that way. So, without great problems we managed to cordon the avenue for 15 minutes and citizens of St. Petersburg enjoyed a fab parade of cars and awesome fireworks.

Another emergent situation could spoil that presentation but we managed it as well, due to a company-style creative approach. There should be many Belarusian artists at the presentation. In due time the bus with local stars set off, but everything went wrong from the very beginning: at the border they had a flat tire, and then the bus broke down at some small town. I remember being called at six in the morning: "We have problems. We've got trapped here and we won't make it in time". We sent another bus to bring the artists and thought what we could do to save the situation. And again, for local guys it was just impossible that a bus coming late would arrive in time. We are from Atlant-M. There are no impossible tasks for us!

There were many ideas, we though about a plane or a chopper. Finally, we found a really ingenious way-out. However, it was quite simple: we asked the local road police to escort the bus and they arrived in of St. Petersburg at 150 kilometers per hour. We sent an official letter on behalf of GM management but as everybody was busy, we had to manage the situation ourselves. We just took a GM headed paper, counterfeited the CEO's signature, edited it in Photoshop and sent by fax to St. Petersburg division of road police. They called to Pskov and explained to their local colleagues what to do. Escorted by police cars with flashing strobes, our

artists arrived in time. They arrived at the same moment as the first guests were entering the hall. Even if Belarusian artists hadn't managed to arrive in time for the show, we had a plan B. We always keep in mind that something unforeseen can happen.

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