Fibank: One of the Best Places to Work in Bulgaria

Tuesday 4 September, 2018

Interview with Rossitsa Toneva, Director, Human Capital Management of Fibank

What are the key characteristics of Fibank that make it stand out as a preferred employer in Bulgaria?

The most important thing that distinguishes Fibank from most employers I have worked with over the years can only be described as a phenomenon that can first be felt by the heart: **a unique spirit of attachment and commitment to a cause called Our Bank.** This exceptional spirit has penetrated deep into the corporate environment and the personal perceptions and attitudes of employees. It is obvious from the way people and teams achieve results, interact with clients, partners and with each other. Its brightest manifestations are most clearly and distinctly seen when we need to achieve high and ambitious goals, deal with new and different challenges, or overcome challenges together. Then, without any exaggeration, we are as one. Each of us individually and all of us together achieve the maximum, and sometimes the impossible. Fibank's history abounds in such examples. The core of the Bank's staff is genuinely proud to be part of this story, to meet vicissitudes and changes together, and thus to create real, often unique, high and valuable personal achievements. Overcoming challenges, on the other hand, gives us a sense of distinctiveness, charges us with energy, new expectations and readiness for even higher contribution and achievement. In my opinion, this spirit continues to be the main driver of the Bank's success and of the development of our team. You know, the most valuable things are felt, seen and understood mostly with the heart.

In your experience, what motivates employees to stay with Fibank in the long term?

The answer to this question is related to our distinguishing features as an employer. The unique spirit of attachment and commitment is, in fact, a function of several important factors that underpin the motivation and aspiration of people to be part of the Bank's team. Affiliation and employee satisfaction stem not so much from the good working conditions, but rather from more important long-term factors. First of all, this is the simplified and intensive communication between people, teams and, above all, between different hierarchical levels. Each employee of First Investment Bank can quickly and easily access managers at all levels, and receive immediate feedback at any time on any questions and matters that concern him or her. The other important prerequisite for motivation and satisfaction is the effective and pragmatic way in which escalated work, personal or other issues of employees are solved. Managers at all levels, including, above all, top management, are sensitive to employees' needs, and proactively seek feedback from them. Despite the fact that over 3100 people work in our Bank, we still really know each other – our names, life stories, strengths, areas for development, concrete achievements and contribution over the years. More importantly, we continue to be interested in each other, which makes us focused and effective when we need to take the right personal decisions and necessary actions. An important motivating factor for people is also the opportunity for personal expression and initiative. We are a Bulgarian bank and all processes, products and practices are created and developed by our people – by their creativity, knowledge, skills and hard work. This gives everyone who has the resource and desire to be an entrepreneur and innovator the opportunity to stand out, receive positive assessment and experience satisfaction with their achievements – usually in unbelievably short terms and in an incomparable way.

What are the corporate values of Fibank and do you invest in corporate social responsibility?

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We believe in people and in the power of their aspirations and abilities. We are convinced that there is no limit to their potential if they feel confident, supported and inspired. We are positive that the highest possible results are achieved through ethical and correct relations with our employees, our customers and our partners. We believe that the stable long-term development of the Bank depends on consistently investing in the development of efficient teams and individuals with strong personalities, as well as in creating an environment that encourages harnessing the full potential of dynamics and change.

We believe that good customer service is a function of the quality of our communication and interaction with each other; therefore we build and maintain relationships of supportiveness and empathy. We work with the confidence that our responsibility to employees, clients and society is just as great as the responsibility to ourselves. We strive to position the bank as a socially responsible institution. We invest in projects and initiatives to support Bulgarian sport, to encourage and support young talents, children and disadvantaged people. We work in partnership with foundations and non-governmental organizations, focusing on the creation of a social environment that fosters the development of young people in Bulgaria.

Tell us something about your positive practices and the ways of creating a successful business climate.

I joined First Investment Bank more than 10 years ago with the ambitious goal of developing new and modern human capital management processes and structures. Yet in the first few months I realized that a solid foundation and traditions already existed in the Bank that needed to be preserved and built upon. In practice, everything we have done over the years has been to channel into modern models and practices the most valuable achievement of Fibank: its unique team spirit. Our HR practices are based on two pivotal points: Business Support and High Added Value. Our activity as a department is subject to the understanding that human management is a core function of business managers within the organization. HR structures become strategic partners of the business only if they support it effectively, without interfering with its activity, thus proving their usefulness on a daily basis. All our HR processes, programs and practices provide targeted and active support to managers so that they can adequately perform their functions. In addition, we try to deliver added value by investing in the development of employee skills and potential, knowing that satisfaction of current employees is the best guarantee for attraction and retention of the best professionals in the future. Our policies and practices rely on flexibility and individual approach. We are currently developing complex programs and integrated HR solutions for training employees and managers, employee attraction and retention, continuity, recognition, internal social activities and initiatives to support employees and their families in important and challenging moments in life, measures and initiatives for linking business and education. In fact, these are all standard and well-known HR practices. The difference here is that we apply them more pragmatically, with the understanding that there are no good HR practices in their own right: they are only good and working to the extent they meet the specific business needs and achieve clear and measurable results. We are rarely satisfied with ourselves and do not always succeed. We face difficulties at times, but we are aware that no one has promised it would be easy.

Professional resume of Rossitsa Toneva, Director, Human Capital Management Department, Fibank:

- Master of Psychology, graduated from Sofia University, specialized in Labor and Organizational Psychology, Age Psychology, Social and Political Psychology.
- Certified and practicing trainer in Soft Skills Training, with over 120 training programs developed and a total of over 10,000 participants trained in internal and external trainings.
- Organizational consultant with experience in creating, implementing and measuring the effectiveness of projects related to organizational structuring, performance management, resource and potential assessment, training programs, development and motivation.

- Considers her sons Boris and Alexander, aged 20 and 16, her greatest achievement as a psychologist and manager.

The interview is taken by Bilyana Stefanova, Bulgaria Business Review Magazine

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