

BUSINESS IS LIKE A MULTIPLE-STAGE BICYCLE RACE

ACTION President & CEO Piotr Bieliński could easily pen a book on “How to Use Opportunities and Challenges in Business”. So far, he has no plans to do so, but he says that doing business is like taking part in a never-ending Tour de France – every stage brings a new lesson to learn from.

There are few business leaders in Poland who have successfully navigated all the ups and downs of the Polish economic transformation. Among them is Piotr Bieliński, CEO and founder of ACTION. Starting out as an IT distributor, the company has now evolved into a dynamic, value-added generating group with a strong brand portfolio, including Activejet, Actis and Actina, and the net profit of PLN 185 million in 2020. Like to everyone on the market, the pandemic came as a complete surprise to both the company and its CEO but dealing with the unexpected – not. This is because of its experience gained on track, readiness to act quickly and the unrelenting fighting spirit to take challenges head-on.

Bieliński spotted a business opportunity right at the very beginning of the Polish transformation. It all started with distribution of IT equipment, then home appliances, white goods and mobile phones followed. In 2004, the company relocated to the new office, which involved changing the IT system that was to be implemented by a renowned WSE-listed company. But it ended in total failure, which pushed ACTION almost to the brink. It was a valuable lesson: you may work hard for your success but you need to always be ready for unexpected challenges. ‘Difficult situations, beyond your control, are unavoidable. What matters then are your people and remembering that you can’t give up but need to find a way out and move forward,’ Bieliński says. It is no coincidence that he stresses the importance of the team – out of around 600 people employed in the company today, 200 have been with ACTION for over a decade while 50 joined more than 20 years ago. Another big challenge was the sanative procedure. Initiated due to external factors, it was successfully closed in 2020.

But it wouldn’t be fair to talk only about the challenges faced by ACTION and its CEO in the 30 years of the company’s history. The list of successes is just as long, if not longer. In all this time, ACTION has become one of the market leaders, its IPO in 2006 was the highlight of the year and the company blazed many new trails. Over the last 12 months, ACTION shares quadrupled in value. CEO Bieliński says that lessons should be learnt also from successes. He has an open-door policy. All employees are encouraged to come in and ask questions to draw on his years of experience. And he compares business to a multiple-stage bicycle race.

‘I often say, not only to my fellow cyclists but also to my colleagues: ‘Don’t be defeated by failure!’ This is just another stage you have behind you, there are many more ahead. Every stage brings an opportunity to learn and grow,’ ACTION President & CEO concludes.

PIOTR BIELIŃSKI

Two-time winner of ‘IT Person of the Year’ title, shortlisted in the ‘EY Entrepreneur of the Year’ contest. An avid cyclist, in 2017 he won on the distance of 120 km in the UCI Mountain Bike World Cup in his age category, and the year after he became Poland’s Mountain Bike Champion.