



## "A THOUGHT THAT SPURS ON CHANGE"

Maria Lukyanova, T&D manager, psychologist, and a speaker on the SIBUR Business Practices platform, talks to us about the secrets of learning successfully.



**MARIA LUKYANOVA**

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T&D manager, psychologist, and a speaker on the SIBUR Business Practices platform

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**– Maria, how long have you been involved with the SIBUR Business Practices project, and how effective do you think this platform is for the industry's future development?**

– I started to teach on the SIBUR Business Practices platform in January 2020, and just like that, we have already done two series together. In today's digital world, it is simply impossible to not study: everything is changing very fast, including in business. While in the early 1990s or 2000s a book would suffice, today there is very little information that you can find yourself, as this information goes out of date too quickly. The SIBUR Business Practices platform allows you to gain the necessary knowledge and skills from industry experts, while saving time on repeating other people's mistakes, which translates to better-quality business and finding solutions to the number one task – increasing your bottom line. Learning on the job is the right way to go; it is also a form of motivation. As someone with 16 years of experience in employee training, I can say that employees often see training as a waste of time, and do not grasp the importance and value of it. I think it is really cool how you have the opportunity to choose a topic for yourself, the lessons do not last all day – they are compressed down, the information is given in bitesize chunks, and you can decide on the key points for yourself. Nobody is waiting to be invited, assigned, or forced to take the training; instead, they are free to choose any webinar, which allows you to really strive to improve the quality of your work and pick up new skills without having to spend a lot of time on it.



*Nobody will see Hints for Successful Negotiations and Handling Objections as a waste of time.*

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THE SIBUR BUSINESS PRACTICES PLATFORM ALLOWS YOU TO GAIN THE NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FROM INDUSTRY EXPERTS, WHILE SAVING TIME ON REPEATING OTHER PEOPLE'S MISTAKES, WHICH TRANSLATES TO BETTER-QUALITY BUSINESS AND FINDING SOLUTIONS TO THE NUMBER ONE TASK – INCREASING YOUR BOTTOM LINE

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**– What do you think of the webinars that have already taken place? How much has the audience and the topics of the classes changed over these two years?**

– I am very pleased to see that SIBUR's people and partners come to more than just one class. I see how the platform's users take a conscious approach to their training. This means that the audience is interested in the expert and the topic, that the knowledge and materials we share are useful for our audience, that the professionals taking part are keen to develop with us. I think that is really great! This year, we have piloted a number of new topics. I like that some of them (regarding, for example, management or sales) can be taken by people who at first glance have nothing at all to do with the subject matter. I have seen time and time again how specialists from the technical department take HR management training – these are people who potentially see themselves moving up the career ladder in the future – or how an engineer attends Hints for Successful Negotiations (<https://businesspractices.ru/programs/webinar/522/>) webinar, which we run for sales staff and managers. This tells me that the audience is very diverse and has a real interest; it is not only a narrow slice of people who need to learn about a given topic. Employees view these webinars as a way of supercharging their careers or of switching occupations within their companies. At first, it was odd to see an engineer at a webinar discussing cold calling. But then I adapted to it and now I talk about how to apply this new knowledge in your working life: Hints for Successful Negotiations and Handling Objections (<https://businesspractices.ru/programs/webinar/480/>) are two sessions that nobody will find a waste of time.

**– Which webinars stand out in your mind? Were there any questions from the audience that caught you off guard, pleasantly surprised you, or prompted you to change the programme?**

– For me, every webinar feels like my first. There are new participants, and I want to inspire them with something that will help them



with their day-to-day work. Students also ask unusual questions; however, it is not typically during the webinar, but after it: I often receive emails from people asking for one-to-one advice. One webinar participant wanted help identifying managerial potential in their team members, so I sent them the link to Methods of Staff Assessment (<https://businesspractices.ru/programs/webinar/391/>). I really like the maturity of our leaders and the way they take their occupation seriously. Training gives managers the opportunity to improve the relationships between team members and between departments. In terms of feedback, students have been asking for not just one webinar on a given topic, but several, so that they can immediately put their new skills to work. We always run practical exercises at every webinar, but we are limited to an hour and a half, so they would like the opportunity to practice these practical skills more actively and ask more questions.



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**– The top webinar of all time – Emotional Quotient (<https://businesspractices.ru/programs/webinar/521/>). What does this training session involve, and what are the benefits?**

– This training session is really very popular, and it was one of the first ones we offered. I hope to improve it next year by adding new techniques. I want our webinars to be as exciting and engaging as can be. I think that emotional quotient training has gotten so popular because our emotions affect all aspects of our lives. We all wake up in a certain mood, then something happens to us on the way to work: all this can influence our emotions, which has a knock-on effect on how we look at information at work, on whether we take things positively or get upset, and on how our negotiations with a partner or client will turn out. At school, we were never taught how to manage our emotions, but anyone can master these techniques today!

Emotional quotient involves being mindful of your emotions and keeping them in check. In essence, the more you develop this skill, the more you become invulnerable to manipulation and pressure, the less you become dependent on circumstance and the people around

you, and the more difficult it becomes to provoke you into an emotion that can worsen your well-being or relationships with others. In our professional context, we learn to become aware of and understand not only our own emotions, but also those of others. This allows us to negotiate well and quickly slot into a new team. A US study of successful people once showed that it was not IQ but EQ that helped people to move up the career ladder and achieve results. You can be super smart, but at the same time if you are insensitive, lacking empathy, and cold, then you just stay at the same level, because there are people around you who have a much larger range of emotions. Emotional quotient involves controlling your emotions and influencing another person without manipulating them.

**– Which training sessions do you have in store for the near future? What should we keep a lookout for?**

– All our webinars can be split into three categories. The first category is focused on management, with the core task of making better managers. People often grow within an organisation: yesterday they were just a specialist, but today they are responsible for a team, and few people have the necessary managerial skillset. Webinars like Effective Leadership (<https://businesspractices.ru/programs/webinar/481/>) all fall under the first category: this one is dedicated to teaching our people how to properly build relationships in a team, how to set tasks, and how to oversee them to completion. The second category is related to Sales: we aim to help partners and colleagues boost their sales performance by leveraging the tools learned during the webinar. The third category revolves around stress management (<https://businesspractices.ru/programs/webinar/499>), emotional quotient, and time management. These are personal development webinars, and their task is to boost our productivity in everyday life so that we get less upset, do not burn out, and do not succumb to emotions or manipulation. I believe that personal development webinars should be a priority for all professionals, no matter what the field. Today we are much more prone to depression and burnout than our parents' generation. Even a time management webinar is not just about planning your day, but how to live without burning out. Although I really like Sales, I would say personal development webinars should be mandatory, as they prevent problems from arising.

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– **By and large, professionals are usually very busy, and the list of webinars to choose from is huge. Could you walk us through building the right self-learning strategy?**

– Before signing up for any training, ask yourself: “Why do I want to learn about this topic, what do I want to take away from it, what goals will I achieve through this training?” A passing interest and achieving a goal are two completely different things. If you set yourself a goal, your self-motivation will be stronger.

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During the session, despite the fact that there is a presentation, be sure to write down any and all valuable thoughts by hand. There is a study that shows when we write something down, we remember it better, which means that the time spent learning will be more useful. Alternatively, when we type text on a phone or tablet, we are only observing, only our visual memory is working. For this reason, it is much better to write things down by hand, with pen and paper. Here is another top tip: be sure to ask questions to whomever is leading the session. According to the statistics, on the whole only 10% of participants ask questions; the rest, it seems, are worried about making a mistake or looking incompetent in front of their colleagues. But in fact, by not asking important questions for yourself, you limit your ability to develop and better understand the topic.

At all webinars recently, I myself have been asking one question to the audience: what key thought will you leave here with today? If you do not sum up the conversation for yourself, it will fade into the background. So yes, attending the webinar is well and good, but as soon as it ends, we dive straight back into work and forget everything. I ask all participants to reflect and write down their own takeaway in the chat; it is not for me, but for themselves – it is a thought that spurs on change.

The most difficult thing to do is probably to select at least one tool from the programme and start using it immediately after the webinar. Unfortunately, despite the fact that we are all adults and organised people, we sometimes lack self-motivation. It is at times like these we must come back to the first point: what was your goal? It is crucial to start training with the question: “What do I want to get out of this as the ultimate and ideal outcome for myself?” I work in training, but I study and develop myself a lot, too. If you want to develop in your career and be successful in your line of work, learning is now an everyday reality, much like any other action that you would do every day of your life. Not learning means that in the future, you will simply not keep up with those who press forward. You need to accept this reality and find time: this is the only way to unlock growth and development as a professional.