



## **BEING PREPARED FOR ANY CHANGES**

Marina Medvedeva, Member of the Management Board – Managing Director at SIBUR, talks to us about her choice of path in life, love of collecting, and drive.

### **Choosing a path in life**

As a teenager, I really wanted to be an archaeologist. I read history books about excavations of the Egyptian pyramids or artefacts discovered in ancient Mayan settlements. But real archeology is about constant trips, expeditions, which, although very fascinating, mean you have to live in challenging field conditions. Life took a different course, and I elected to study law.

By sheer coincidence, I started working for a small oil company as a student, when new Russian laws regulating subsoil use just began to take shape. At some point, I had a three in one mix: academic knowledge, plus practice in a related industry, plus the emerging regulation.



*On the road to Usinsk. Who knows where it is on the map of the country?*

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My first job in this area was a project with a small British company that came to Russia with its technology of recovering plugged oil wells that had been dismissed as unprofitable. They leveraged the technology to not only resume production, but also maintain it for several years. By squeezing out the oil drop by drop, so to speak, they produced quite a solid total output. We were working in Western Siberia and Kazakhstan, and in a few years I visited such amazing cities, places you normally only see on a map, like Usinsk, Ukhta, Syktyvkar, Nefteyugansk, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Volgograd, Perm, Shevchenko (now Aktau), Guryev (now Atyrau), and many more. It was incredibly interesting: all the legal nuances and conflicts, the licencing of activities, obligations of the subsoil user, obligations of the company, I could go on. On top of this, there were really interesting people, stories, and events. At the same time, we were also actively using Production Sharing Agreements (PSAs) – they are a special form of state support via tax breaks until the start of the project's payback period.







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In my first team I met and made friends with a foreigner who actually still lives in Russia and loves it here. We did not just become friends: he became my mentor for many years, and his support, advice, and guidance contributed in certain ways to my professional and personal growth. Later, he and I helped found LUKARCO, a large joint venture that is still working with LUKOIL on Caspian projects.

Afterwards I was lucky enough to have the interesting experience of working at TNK and TNK-BP. In addition to upstream projects themselves, the TNK, BP, and Sidanko merger in 2003 was an unforgettable experience. There I was involved in drafting and submitting documents to the European Competition Commissioner's office. Just imagine the costs of making a mistake if something was drafted or filled out incorrectly! To this day, you can still find my name on the office's website. On the whole, the merger gave a powerful impetus to the development of the companies involved – just imagine the number of new practices, IT products, and management approaches shared! Every day, we studied and learned from each other, absorbed examples of best practices, and were on an emotional high.



*With colleagues at the Volgograd oil depot, 1998.*

Here is another interesting story: before joining TNK, I worked for a Canadian investment company that focused on Russian oil and mining projects. My most valuable experience there was working on obtaining a decree from the then-President Boris Yeltsin on the extraction of minerals under a PSA at the Dukat field in the Magadan Region.

For a lawyer, participating in these kinds of projects is not just a fantastic experience but also a very rewarding one.

## Childhood

For me, and as often the case, sports helped to form a sense of purpose. I did synchronised swimming for almost six years. It is a unique sport that offers a wide range of opportunities: you can hone the skill of taking responsibility for your individual result in solos, and develop the skills of communication and support in duets. This is even truer for teams where six or eight people perform together: imagine the degree to which your movements are synchronised, the rhythm, and the way you need to understand each other. And the very name “synchro” implies an action intertwined with the actions of others – your end result depends on it. On top of all this, sports help children to plan their day: school, practice, lessons – these are all structured events, calculated almost to the minute. We can safely say that it teaches you discipline.

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I had a very fulfilling and varied childhood: we went hiking and I went to pioneer camps. For several years in a row, I went to the pioneer camp run by the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences. They used quite innovative approaches to teach children how to be more creative: we staged plays and “amateur circus” performances, and the camp leaders and teachers used to tell us exciting stories around the campfire in the evening. I really liked to sing and had lessons, and in one of the productions I performed a singing role from Maksim Dunayevsky’s famous musical Mary Poppins, Goodbye. I remember I came back from camp, and the teacher at my singing class got me to sing children’s songs – I was so offended, I thought that I had outgrown it! (She laughs) I already considered myself quite an accomplished, strong singer. But, unfortunately, vocal cord problems put an end to my singing classes. Now the only time I sing is at karaoke, and that is far from a common occurrence.

## **Free time**

Free time is very traditional for me: reading books, going to the theatre, cinema or concert, and I am often sure to go on interesting trips.

By the way, I am currently reading the memoirs of uncle Alexander Romanov, cousin of the last Russian Emperor and father of Irina Yusupova, about the events preceding the fall of the Russian Empire. I really like his writing style and, of course, his fascinating insights, as a member of the fallen dynasty, into the events leading up to the Russian revolutions in beginning of the 20th century, and how history is shaped by the specific actions taken by individuals in specific situations. It gives me once again reason to believe that history does not happen by itself, instead people create it. Some create it very well, while some cause tragedy for a large number of people.





*Museum of the World Ocean, Kaliningrad. This is the same submarine my dad was on in 1963.*



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I also like to get out for a few days to somewhere interesting. This year I managed to travel from Moscow to Vyborg for the May holidays – I had wanted to visit for a long time. A little later, I went to Patriot Park. I highly recommend it to everyone, it was a once in a lifetime experience. In the Second World War exhibit, where each step is a day between 1941 and 1945, there is an interactive panel displaying archive photos of servicemen who made the ultimate sacrifice in the war. You can search for a relative, read about them, see where they were sent during the war, and even light a candle – your own eternal flame – in memory. We found our grandfathers and their friends, some of whom I even remember from my distant childhood. Our guide said that the museum is only a year old, but she has seen just how many of these candles have appeared as people come and pay their respects to their relatives.

Travel lets you refresh your senses and expand your horizons. It is important for me to read up on the place we are going before the trip, and after we arrive, I like to take in their way of life and culture to learn what historical processes took place there and how people live. This kind of trip is a way of switching off from everyday life. Business trips are a different matter – there is a different rhythm, but you still get a change of scenery, which is a good thing.



*My "girls": mother and daughter.*



If we are talking about my everyday free time rituals, then I have two big and beautiful Maremmano-Abruzzese sheepdogs, and I enjoy walking them so much. Since I was a little girl, we have always had animals at home. Now that we have a summer house, we first decided to get one of these white-furred beauties, and then she had puppies, so we ended up with another. They are guard dogs and friends.

Hobbies

I am not a die-hard collector – I love vintage things of different sorts. As a child, I collected those run of the mill pocket calendars. Some had photos of famous artists, some from the company ZarubezhTorg had very beautifully framed landscapes, others had cities from foreign countries showing how beautiful life was like there, and even milestone events in the USSR’s history got their own calendars. The coolest and most valuable ones had photos of Japanese women – and those were holographic images. I recently found a shoebox for a pair of super-trendy Adidas trainers where I kept my calendars – it turns out I had several hundred of them. My oldest one is from the beginning of the 1960s. It was so nice to feel that spirit of collecting again, to return to my childhood and to all those events.



Calendars from Marina Medvedeva's collection.

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In the last 18 months, I became interested in collecting vintage porcelain figurines from between the 60s and 80s; I am talking about Olympic bears, villagers, skiers, and so on – all in the spirit of the era. My collection is still small, but this is a good hint if anyone is looking for a safe gift that is bound to please! I also have a collection of matchboxes. With these, it is more about the places I have visited: from all my holidays and business trips, I pick up (or friends give me) matchboxes with pictures of places, cities, or even just restaurants where we had dinner. By the way, it has now become more difficult to collect them: they used to be given out freely at every cafe, but with the ban on smoking in public places (which, to be honest, I actually support) they are no longer easy to find. My collections take pride of place in the house: my matchboxes fill up glass vases and my figurines are sat in a glass cabinet, but I still need to find a place for my calendars.

# Dreams

My biggest dream is for my child and for everyone’s children to live an interesting and safe life, where nothing can negatively affect their health or world view. That is my greatest wish. If we talk about something a little more down to Earth, then I would like to be a strong, healthy, and energetic person, who is productive, has something to offer, and is interesting for some years to come, and of course, I would like to enjoy every day.