



HAPPINESS IS NOT FAR AWAY

Leonid Shergin, Director for Production and Operations at SIBUR's BIAXPLEN, on work–family balance, living in two cities, and his secret to happiness.

About relocations

This is my second time moving to Moscow. The first was when I came here from Perm in 2013 and worked at SIBUR's Energy Centre for two years. Then there was Tyumen and after that Perm again, this time – as a facility's chief engineer. Two and a half years later, I got another offer to work at SIBUR's corporate centre at BIAXPLEN.



The goal of the job was an interesting and challenging one: to build a cohesive team bringing together specialists from five of the Company's branches located in five different regions. By that time, I was acquainted with many BIAXPLEN employees, but still decided to go on a business trip to test the waters and make up my mind. Since March 2018, I've been working at BIAXPLEN and living "between" two cities: Moscow and Perm. Back in the Urals, my family is holding down the fort: my mother, wife, and three daughters.

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About choice

Leaving the place where I'd worked for my entire life was the most difficult decision of my career. However, the prospect of growing old doing the same thing in the same place was becoming less and less appealing past a certain point.

When the outcome and the set of actions to get there are clear, it dampens my drive. I need to be challenged, and BIAXPLEN, with an almost complete one-eighty change in terms of responsibilities, was quite a challenge. Moreover, my higher-ups gave me a carte blanche to develop and implement new rules and chart the subsidiary's new path together with the team. Initiative is encouraged, and market response is used for measuring performance as opposed to management approval.

About responsibility

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It's easy for me to explain what I do to my children – all I have to do is point at the BOPP film my youngest daughter's favourite sweets like ice-cream, chocolate or cookies are wrapped in. At first, she thought I was a confectioner, but later, of course, she understood that I was responsible for the packaging, which extends shelf life and ensures product quality. It is good to know that my family enjoys the fruits of my labour. It motivates me to do my absolute best so both they and the rest of consumers can have the highest quality products.

About motivation

I make a point of seeing things through to the end. Less talk, more action. Each minute needs to lead up to a concrete, tangible result.

Sometimes a team can feel apathetic about a task that they've repeatedly failed to complete. In that case, they need to be shown that the task is achievable, because often the root cause of failure is low engagement and not seeing the purpose.



In Perm, there is a riverbank statue that says HAPPINESS IS NOT FAR AWAY. BIAXPLEN's conference rooms now each have a replica. I believe only we determine how many steps away happiness is. You can spend your life complaining, or you can believe that there will be better days, and it's your responsibility to make them happen. I think you should never say that something is impossible – it just may require more time and effort.

About enjoyment

I recently helped my middle daughter, an excellent piano player, learn guitar. She started at 15, and now each time I come home I listen to her play, and each time she gets better. It gives me great pleasure to teach someone the basics, show them the right direction, and watch them self-improve.

Once a fortnight, I take my family to our country house that I've been building for seven years, and which already has a steam bath. There is no better feeling for me than to see their happy faces during these outings.



About being active

I prefer going on foot whenever I have the time and opportunity. I also enjoy driving, and on weekends my daughter and I like to mountain bike our way through the forest. I sometimes ride a scooter to work, which is a great way to have fun for both my colleagues and me. Really gives you a sense of freedom. It also reminds me of my carefree childhood days when I was overflowing with energy.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO WORK IN A GOOD TEAM. AS FOR BIAXPEN, I FEEL A DEEP CONNECTION TO THAT PLACE AND TO ITS PEOPLE, AND IT SHOWS IN MY WORK.

I start every morning with exercise. It's a set of movements that I've picked up over 10 years, they give me a great mental and physical boost for the day. This habit has become so firmly ingrained that I just can't leave home without exercising first, even if I had a four-hour flight or a sleepless night before that.

Moscow is a great city for those who like to walk. When my wife comes to visit, I always arrange for a theatre, a restaurant, and a nice walk in-between. When it's a family visit, we make sure to go to a park.

About time

After I became a "business travelling dad", I started valuing every second of the time with my family. When you're there every day, you don't notice your kids grow up, but when you only see them a handful of times per month, you really feel how fast the time flies. You want to do as much at home and at work as you can.



About empathy

Having a family that is mostly women has made me a great empathiser. This allows me to hone in on and predict our clients' expectations. Many clients don't come to us with a ready specification, but with a need for a solution.

I also think that I'm good at spotting brewing conflicts or missed opportunities in the team. It is important to remember that everyone has problems that they're dealing with and that affect their productivity, and to support them in their time of need.

About support

My family is my anchor and a constant source of support. It's important to maintain harmony, share concerns and pay attention even

when apart. As you can imagine, we love going on vacations together. It has been four years since the birth of our youngest daughter, and I try to arrange it so she spends each birthday in a new country. Our own Perm Territory has its sights too – this summer, for instance, we plan to visit its nature reserve.

About taking a personal approach

Usually, our seaside holidays are 20% swimming and sunbathing and 80% sightseeing. In planning our routes, I try to stay off the beaten track, explore the boondocks, get a feel for the local life and a taste of the national cuisine – in other words, to see a lesser-known side of the country. This way, we're able to get a lot more out of our trips than if we stuck to brochures and guides.

WHEN IT COMES TO KEEPING CLOSE TABS ON CLIENT NEEDS, BIAXPEN IS ONE OF THE BEST, IF NOT THE BEST.

The same goes for work. You can attend official meetings and let it be it – or you can go the extra mile and spend some time going around the facilities and talking to people. Ask them how they are, find out about their struggles. It's moments like these that show if our corporate values trickle down to the staff who are down in the trenches.

When it comes to keeping close tabs on client needs, BIAXPEN is one of the best, if not the best. We make developing new products at SIBUR's scientific centres – PolyLab and NIOST – a collaborative process with our clients, and growing our range of films with tailor-made solutions also helps us better deliver on the market needs. I am proud of my work and of the client-first mentality in our Company.

About happiness

Our family likes taking pictures of rainbows. We do these little photo hunts that have already become somewhat of a tradition. When you stand there in an open space and this wonder of nature appears in front of you, it really makes you appreciate how vibrant and colourful life really is. If you are lucky enough to see a double rainbow, be sure to make a wish.



For me, happiness is about harmony with myself and my family. It is important that the people closest to me are healthy and surrounded by love and care. It is important to spend time together. It is important to work in a good team. As for BIAXPLEN, I feel a deep connection to that place and to its people, and it shows in my work.