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10 QUESTIONS WITH KATEŘINA FORSTINGEROVÁ



By František Bouc
Staff Writer, *The Prague Post*
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Sometimes it is easier to earn recognition abroad than at home. Brno-based IT firm Moravia Worldwide is a case in point. Though little known here, Moravia Worldwide recently ranked among the top 15 companies in the world in the field of software localization and translation. In an interview with The Prague Post, Moravia Worldwide's CEO Kateřina Forstingerová talks about the strengths of the company, how they enabled it to succeed in international markets and what other firms should focus on in order to pursue global expansion.

1. Moravia Worldwide is a thriving company, recently ranked among the top 15 companies in your industry globally, but we know very little about it. Can you briefly describe what you do?

We help companies earn international revenues by preparing their products for local markets. Our customers are usually U.S., West European or Japanese large multinational software and life sciences companies. These companies spend a lot of time and resources developing software products and medical devices,

and turn to Moravia to fine-tune them so they can sell their products in local markets outside of their home countries.

We essentially translate software user interfaces supporting technical and marketing documentation, Web content, etc. If you have ever used a commercially available PC or Mac software application in Czech — or French or Japanese for that matter — it may be our work. If you have an implanted pacemaker, your cardiologist may have referenced the instructions we translated.

2. So, you are a translation company?

We are a global company, and translation is a very important part of what we do, but it's much more than just translation. This process is known as 'localization' and involves the integration of various professions such as translators, software engineers, software testers, documentation managers and project managers.

3. What prompted you to adopt this seemingly constant growth path and geographical expansion strategy?

Well, we grow with our customers and their needs, so our growth is the result of meeting our clients' growing needs. I think in this sense the localization industry is like any other: You can't stay the same. You either grow, or you lose out to those who do grow. In the early 1990s, when we were still a small local company focusing only on Czech and other Central and East European languages, we set our minds on growth — partly out of enthusiasm for what we do, but partly from necessity. We wanted to be a major player. Today, we work in almost 50 languages, and this has led to rapid growth and the need to have a global presence outside of Brno. Now we have offices across Europe, in North America and Asia.

4. Moravia Worldwide was the first Czech-based company to open an office in Tokyo. I understand that Prime Minister Jiří Paroubek met you during his recent trip to Japan and congratulated you on your strategy in the region. How did you manage this expansion in Asia?

Meeting the prime minister and receiving his congratulations was a privilege, and encouraging for our staff in Japan as well as our worldwide locations.

To answer your question, managing expansion in Asia has been challenging. Our strategy is not to expand in every country, but rather in regions. Each of our Asian offices has a different function — our Japanese presence in Tokyo is primarily to be close to our Japanese customers. Our Chinese presence in the city of Nanjing is a fast-growing Asian production and testing facility. Effectively, we build something we call a 'follow the sun' model. That is, a production model which can run 24 hours a day across different time zones to support our worldwide client base. So it is crucial for us to be in Asia, too.

5. You are attracting an interesting mix of nationalities to work in your headquarters in Brno. Where are they from?

We love having international staff in our offices: Our expatriate colleagues bring new cultures, new perspectives, new management approaches and of course new languages to Moravia. We now have about 15 different nationalities working in our headquarters in Brno, including staff from the United States, Canada, Sweden, Norway, Portugal, France and others. Our human resources department helps with the settling-in process through integration programs such as temporary accommodation on arrival, Czech lessons for those interested, etc. Integration is facilitated also by the fact that English is our corporate language.

6. Your industry is currently undergoing unprecedented change marked by major acquisitions and consolidation. How do you view Moravia in this respect?

Yes, recently, the 'No. 2' company bought the 'No. 1' company and the 'No. 3' company grew through other acquisitions. What is clear is that an

Kateřina Forstingerová

- **Job title:** CEO and General Manager
- **Age:** 36
- **Nationality:** Czech
- **Education:** Faculty of Arts in Brno, south Moravia
- **Previous job:** With Moravia Worldwide since graduation

investment of this level in our industry is a positive development. Investors and other 'outsiders' will become more aware of our industry due to the size and value of these mergers and acquisitions. Despite this, our industry is still relatively small, and there is sufficient space for growth for a wide range and number of companies. As with any other business, buyers will always want a choice, so we see opportunities ahead.

7. In 1999, you were voted the first-ever Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year in the Czech Republic. When you look back, how have you changed as an entrepreneur since then?

I was, and of course still am, pleased with the Entrepreneur of the Year award, and I've always considered it as an appreciation of our whole team. But I don't see it as a reason to change — we still strive to do a great job for our clients, now as then. The real award for us is that we enjoy our work, do more, have fun and our customers are happy. I see any award the company receives as something won

by our whole team and confirmation that we are moving forward in the right direction and with the right strategy.

8. You are a successful woman entrepreneur in an IT and life sciences services industry. Do you believe this is an advantage or a disadvantage?

I have very strong views on this: I think it does not matter whether you are a man or a woman. What is important is how competent you are.

9. Where do you see your company in five years' time? Are there new major developments planned?

When I look back, five years ago we were still primarily a Central and East European company, and we were thinking about entering the U.S. market and only dreaming of Asia. This is now a reality and [Moravia] is a leader in many aspects in our industry. Today, there are companies that are following in our footsteps and mimicking our strategies, and we take this as proof of our leadership. We expect that we will continue to be copied by

other companies in the industry. As in the previous 15 years, we plan to follow our clients and their needs, and this will mean further growth and investment.

10. What recommendations would you give to other companies from Central Europe that want to grow internationally?

What many companies underestimate is that international expansion — opening offices in locations like North America, Western Europe or Japan — is expensive. You need to have a clear strategy and plan. You need to build production in cost-effective regions, such as our home region, and locate activities close to your customers. You need to integrate the teams well. My message would be 'It can be done,' but you really need a plan with milestones, go and no-go points and ultimate goals. There are good historical examples — companies like Baťa or Škoda, once regional, are now known internationally. And one day, Moravia will be too.

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About Moravia Worldwide

Moravia Worldwide is a leading globalization solution provider, enabling companies in the information technology, e-learning, life sciences and financial industries to enter global markets with high quality multilingual products. Moravia's solutions include localization and product testing services, internationalization, multilingual publishing and technical translation. Testing and engineering services are provided by our dedicated QASight business unit. Industry leaders rely on Moravia Worldwide for accurate, on-time and economical localization. Moravia Worldwide maintains global headquarters in the Czech Republic and North American headquarters in California, with local offices and production centers in Japan, China, Ireland and throughout Europe. To learn more, please visit www.moraviaworldwide.com.

CONTACT:

Corporate Headquarters

Moravia IT, a. s.
Hilleho 4, 602 00 Brno, Czech Republic
E-Mail: europe@moraviaworldwide.com
Tel: +420-545-552-222, Fax: +420-545-552-233

North America

Moravia IT, Inc.
199 East Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, CA, 91360
E-Mail: usa@moraviaworldwide.com
Tel: +1-805-557-1700, Tel: +1-800-276-1664
(toll-free), Fax: +1-805-557-1702

Ireland

Moravia IT, a. s.
Unit F3, Nutgrove Office Park
Rathfarnham, Dublin 14, Ireland
E-Mail: ireland@moraviaworldwide.com
Tel: +353-1-216-4102, Fax: +353-1-296-4378

China

Moravia IT (Nanjing) Co., Ltd.
9/F, Tower A, New World Center
NO. 88 Zhujiang Road
Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, China 210018
E-Mail: china@moraviaworldwide.com
Tel: +86-25-8473-2772, Fax: +86-25-8473-2442

Japan

Moravia IT Japan
Shinji Building, 5F, 4-3-29 Yotsuya
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, 160-0004, Japan
E-Mail: japan@moraviaworldwide.com
Tel: +81-3-3354-3320, Fax: +81-3-3354-3325

