Interview - Ilmo Hakkarainen, Country Manager / Operatively responsible for

both depts at Exide Technologies Oy

So first, for how long have you been in a managerial position?

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I have been in a managerial position for over 30 years, mainly in Finland,

but also in the Baltic States and Russia.

In your opinion, what diﬀerentiates a good manager from a bad?

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I think that a good leader is able to choose and keep good employees for

long, and has the courage to get rid of the people that aren't good for the

company. A good leader has to know him/herself well, be confident but

can not be too selfish. It is also important to promote people when they

perform well, but on the other hand one must be able to criticize

employees when they don’t perform as expected. Therefore it is crucial for

the manager to be able to set goals that are challenging and reachable.

A good leader has the ability to motivate employees and to get along with

people.

What do you think is the most challenging part in your position?

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The most challenging part is to fire people if they don’t perform well.

How do you measure the success of your team and individual team members?

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The success is measured by numerical budgets individually and in the

teams. Also how the share of wallet develops in the most important

customers and customer groups over time.

On top of this in mid-year and end-year reviews we have qualitative goals

which are expected to be reached.

How do you keep your employees motivated?

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In my opinion it is important to concentrate on the essential things and

not to micromanage. I also let people be themselves as long they behave

well towards the customers and their colleagues. It is important to thank

people for good performance, and defend them against unfairness by the

company / customers. Also the fair bonus schemes keep the employees

motivated.

How would you describe your leadership style -> has it been eﬀective?

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I would say my leadership style is quite flexible as long as the results are

reached. The employees have clear goals but they have the freedom to do

their work independently. In my opinion, open communication with the

employees is extremely important.

As time has passed I have become tougher if people don’t reach their

goals. My way of working has proven to be eﬀective as our country

organisation has grown fastest in the whole group and the operating

earnings are among the top 3.

What are the challenges you have had and how did you overcome them?

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The biggest challenges that aﬀect my job today are tough competition in

the market and the Finnish economic situation.

A good Nordic team helps with handling the pressure, we support each

other in diﬃcult situations and talk openly with each other. Also talking

about diﬃcult things outside the oﬃce with friends and relatives who

have been in similar situations is helpful.

If you were to start your career from the start, what mistakes would you not

make again?

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There are of course lots of mistakes that could have been avoided but not

major ones. Something I would change is that I would not postpone

certain harsh decisions as much.

What advice would you give to someone who aspires to be in a similar

leadership position?

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Advice I would give to someone who aspires to be in a similar leadership

position is to make sure one understands the principles of micro and

macro economics. To be prepared to admit mistakes and change opinion

when needed. Do not be afraid of making diﬃcult decisions. Keep yourself

in reasonably good physical shape, strive for a good social life and be

optimistic about the future.