

SMART INTERN — SMART MANAGER

Some might remember him from the SmartLynx Magazine Fall issue when he was featured as one of the talented young interns we got for the summer. Let us introduce Dāvis Nabutovskis – a strongly determined young professional who started out as our intern during summer 2017. As he confidently proved his qualities during this short time, Dāvis was invited to work at Smartlynx Airlines as Commercial Manager. How did he manage to prove himself in just a few months? Read our conversation with one of the most promising Smart Employees.



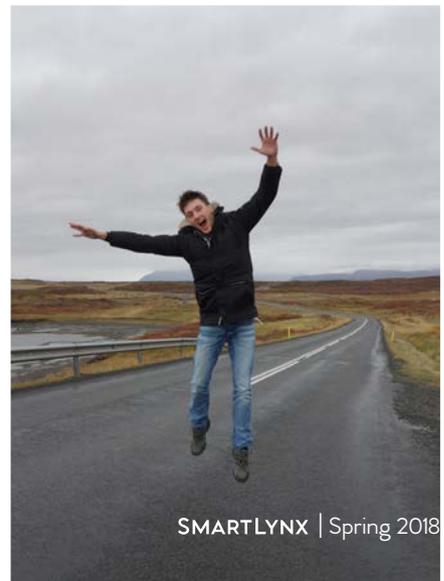
Why did you decide to involve in aviation industry? Is it a generational thing, or just a strong interest in the field?

I think a connection might be found with my very first flight that I was on. Since then, all things aviation started to interest me. Soon after I decided to attend the so called “Shadow Days” for young students at one of Latvia’s main airline companies, and that’s when I realized that this is the field I would want to connect my career with. Later on, when I was a bit older and started to take career aspect more seriously.



I went to the same event at the same airline company again, after which I decided to apply for an internship. But the funny thing is that the position I applied for was something I didn’t even realize it would be. I wasn’t fully aware of the job description but for some reason I was determined to apply and get accepted. I went to an interview and confidently defended my candidature for the position, all the while interviewers tried to talk me out of it by asking various questions on whether I really thought I would be the right person for the job. And that’s when I finally realized that I had gone to an interview for a position of receptionist which was usually carried out by a woman. But it all turned out even better as I thought- they advised me to go for an internship in the sales department. After a few weeks there, I had the chance to work at other departments as well. I started out in the Business Intelligence Department doing some analytical research tasks which was of great interest to me. After that, I interned at the Revenue Management where I learnt the basics of calculating overbookings for each flight. It was all about maths which also interested me greatly. But after gaining some experience in each of these fields of aviation business,

I realised that Business Intelligence was the one I was fond of the most. It’s all about doing analyses and researches of other aviation companies to make the right decisions on strategies for competing with them. After the internship was over, the Sales Department invited me back for a job. But I figured that it was too much analytics and absolutely no communication with people that I actually wanted. So I decided to pass on that, especially considering the fact that I was studying full-time.



So how did SmartLynx come into the picture?

Aviation still interested me, and some of my friends working at a recruiting agency knew that. So they noticed that there was a job opening at SmartLynx Airlines for a position of Sales Manager and contacted me about it. But the whole job description, requirements for previous experience did not fit to my profile at all. I was reluctant to actually apply but my friends continued to insist. So they sent me the task one had to do for getting an interview. It was an excel tab one had 24 hours to fill in. I decided to do it, and I actually did it for full 24 hours with no sleep whatsoever. One of the reasons it took me so long was because at one point the file broke down and I had to start anew. But the long time was mainly because I did not want to go the standard approach for solving the task. I decided to automatize the whole system just to prove that the process and approach of doing the task could be more effective.

I sent it in but was sure that I wouldn't get to an interview. But for my surprise, they called me back and I went to the interview the very same day they called. Because it was so sudden, I was sort of relaxed during the conversation, and it went pretty easy and light.

The worst thing about the interview was the part when they asked me questions on my experience in the field. Most of the questions I answered with "no" because as we all knew – I had no directly relevant previous experience for the position. And at the end of the interview I even dared to ask them quite a foolish, yet considered as a strategically successful question during interviews – "Why wouldn't you accept me for the job?" Everyone just sat back and blinked their eyes in surprise. And I don't know if it was because of that, or did they decide on it beforehand, they offered me an internship during summer. So I took the chance, of course.

And now you are not an intern anymore, transformed into a full-time SmartLynx Airlines employee.

Yes, when the internship came to its end, I was already invited to stay for an actual job. Currently I am in the position of a commercial manager which is basically the job I was applying for at the very beginning.



I guess that during the internship I proved myself worthy of the job by analysing the market, talking to clients and making decisions the right decisions.

My main job is to sell our wet-leasing service, and my personal goal, yet quite ambitious, is to aim for long-term leases. Currently I have reached only short-term deal, so I still have something to strive for. After all, I have to be able to sell everything we offer, even if it's of smaller range. Additionally to that, I am involved in extensive market researches, as well as helping to sell our ATO trainings for potential SmartLynx pilots.

So how is it – did the expectations match reality? Do you enjoy what you are doing at the company?

I really do like this job, especially for the fact that I have a great opportunity to talk to so many people with such great backgrounds and experiences in the field. And sometimes it seems a bit scary to talk

to them as it is no rare occasion I haven't got answers to their questions. But the only approach here is to honestly admit that you cannot answer that but you will look for answers and get back to them.

What I also appreciate is that in aviation sales do not mean lies, which is not a rare case for sales in general fields. When selling in aviation, you are just not able to lie – everything is honest and transparent. There are no questionable or dishonest approaches I have to practice during the sales. Therefore I consider this job as one with a great added value. At the end of the day – we do a good thing for people. We provide them with the opportunity to connect with each other, no matter what the distance is.

I also highly respect that I am able to meet with people who are the general decision makers, people who rank in the highest positions. And to meet such people, a lot of traveling is requested. I regularly look up and find potential clients, as well as »



valuable field workshops that are worth attending. Up until now, I have gone on business trips to Uzbekistan, United Kingdom, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, UAE and Greece. And currently I have reached a short-term lease agreement with a Greek company, which for me is not a lot but still something. What led me to my first sale of wet-lease was the communication I had with them. I kept it up regularly, so the deal was successful.

And one more thing I value highly in working at SmartLynx is the open communication among the employees. If there is anything I do not know or I want to discuss with someone – I will most definitely find help from my colleagues.

As you have travelled a lot for business, have you noticed some stranger characteristics in the business practices of other cultures?

Yes, most definitely! In Uzbekistan they respect subordination quite strongly. If you are a low-key employee, there is no way you will get to talk to the boss. And the fact that I went there, some guy from Latvia representing a company they don't know nothing about, and tried to meet the boss without just as much as not even make an appointment – that would not work for me. But I went there confidently and with strong ambition. And whether it was that, or the fact that I came a long and

difficult way – it worked. What I thought to be a 5-minute conversation turned into a full-day experience where I was shown all around the company by many people.

The journey towards any kind of success comes through the ability to endure failures. And the most important thing is to have people around you supporting you to come back stronger and bringing better results. Aleksandrs Gusevs who saw the potential, hired me and continuously supports me to learn from my failures and success. Fantastically experienced colleagues who have been in the company from the beginning and help quickly solve most challenging questions- Kiriks Matvejevs and Leons Matusevics. The professional commercial team of Ilga Smeile, Baiba Vitolina, Aija Tasmane, Gatis Nasteveics and Girst Jeske who overcome the daily commercial challenges. My gratitude for them is just tip of the iceberg as there are many more people who have been fueling my learning and growth in the company.

It's not, of course, the most professional business approach I could have practiced, but hey – I'm still young and maybe bold decisions are the right ones to achieve the set goals.

And in Asia they have this peculiar characteristic when they say yes to everything discussed, but when the time comes, so do the excuses. When you try to schedule a meeting, all of them are out of office at the exact time. Of course, when you get there anyway, they are right there. After that, the main thing is to not be afraid and walk in the office confidently, saying that you just have to see the boss. After all, my task is to show and present our company's name, to show potential clients what are we capable of and what we offer.

It sounds that there is a lot of interesting work you are currently doing, and most importantly – will be doing in the future. How do you see yourself in that?

I possess an entrepreneurial thinking, so my main dream and business goal is to own my company that operates in finance and aviation, as the field most definitely advances in Latvia and the world. But before that, I confidently see myself in SmartLynx Airlines for at least next 10 to 15 years. And I believe in the idea that if you work in aviation, you do it your whole life. I consider the field as one of such where we help people and the whole world.