

Jiří Šmejč

Over the past 15 years, Jiří Šmejč has been one of the most prominent entrepreneurs and managers in Central Europe. His name is closely associated with the sweeping development of the Home Credit Group - currently the largest company providing consumer financing in the world - and with the creation of the EMMA Group, which within a few years has become one of the leading investors in the European gaming market.

He comes from Karlovy Vary, where he attended a high school focused on teaching mathematics and physics. After graduating, he studied mathematical economics at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics at Charles University. During his studies he founded an association of individuals called BUNK, focused on software development for hotels and restaurants. Shortly thereafter, he founded a company named PUPP Consulting, specialized in the implementation of information systems in the hotel business, in which the most famous hotel in Karlovy Vary - Hotel Pupp - also held a stake. For two years he worked as CEO of the company. Subsequently, he founded the company Middle Europe Finance (MEF), which he also led as CEO. This company was focused on swaps and the consolidation of the fragmented ownership of shares after the coupon privatization. During the three years when Jiří Šmejč led the company and its associated MEF Holding, these entities controlled a portfolio of a wide range of industrial enterprises in the Czech Republic and gained great respect in financial circles.

In 1999, Jiří Šmejč entered the television channel NOVA in terms of capital and at the same time became CEO of its service organization Česká Produkční 2000. He also simultaneously worked as an executive director of CET 21, a broadcasting license holder and broadcaster. During this time, Jiří Šmejč contributed significantly to the executive management of the entire TV NOVA Group and played a key role in TV NOVA's transformation into the most successful and the most profitable TV channel in Central Europe. When Petr Kellner's PPF Group of also entered TV NOVA in 2002, both businessmen agreed on buying out the other shareholders. At the end of this transaction, Jiří Šmejč controlled a 34% stake in TV Nova Group.

In 2005, Jiří Šmejč and Petr Kellner concluded an agreement on the sale of TV NOVA to the American company CME for approximately a billion dollars and then unified all of their assets. Jiří Šmejč thus became a co-owner of PPF Group, in which he held a 5% stake. In autumn of that year, he moved to Moscow where he took charge of the Home Credit Group in Russia and subsequently of all of PPF Group activities in the Russian Federation. He transformed Home Credit and Finance Bank, originally focused solely on consumer loans at points of sale, into one of the largest retail banks in the Russian Federation in the following years. During his tenure, PPF Group became the largest private foreign investor on the

Russian market and acquired, inter alia, shares in Nomos Bank, the mining company Polymetal, the insurance company Ingosstrakh, and one of the largest retail chains of consumer electronics in Europe Eldorado. In most of these companies Jiří Šmejč not only directed the acquisition transaction, but was also actively involved in their strategic management. In 2012, Jiří Šmejč agreed with Petr Kellner on the division of joint property. By mutual agreement, however, he remained in charge of the Home Credit Group and became its CEO. At the same time he raised his ownership stake in it.

During this time, Jiří Šmejč founded his own investment group, EMMA. In the very first year of its existence, the EMMA Group managed to put together an international consortium of investors that won a tender for the privatization of a 33% stake in the Greek state monopoly gaming concern OPAP. Jiří Šmejč then headed the strategic decision-making during the major restructuring that OPAP has since undergone. Throughout this process, the cooperation with Karel Komárek's KKCG Group - which already owned the Czech national lottery company Sazka - played an important role. This resulted in the agreement of both businessmen to create a joint gaming holding, in which the EMMA Group holds a 25% stake. Thanks to the cooperation of both groups and an active acquisition strategy, the holding has since managed to add stakes in gaming companies in Austria (Casinos Austria) and Italy (LOTTOITALIA) to its portfolio, in addition to the Greek OPAP and the Czech Sazka. This fact makes the EMMA Group one of the leading companies operating in the European gaming market.

In addition to activities associated with the EMMA Group, Jiří Šmejč also founded and owns the private island hotel resort Velaa in the Maldives Republic. Velaa is considered one of the most beautiful tropical resorts in the world. He is also very significantly involved in his foundation, Sirius, which strives to help children who have not had good luck in life. This foundation, which is primarily about systemic change, not just about one-time assistance, is not only financed by Jiří Šmejč, but also personally run by him as the Chairman of the Board.

Overall, the business history of Jiří Šmejč is largely unique. He started literally from scratch - without investment capital, without assets acquired in the Czech coupon privatization and indeed without experience. Yet, step by step, he has managed to build a position of a widely recognized and reliable business partner.