

For eSky - the sky is the limit!

The company that sells, among others, airline tickets even in North Korea. This year, eSky plans an expansion in the Americas, next year - in Asia.

The Internet is also available in North Korea! This information is known to the eSky Group, which sells airline tickets and travel packages.

Last year we sold one ticket in this country. Our services are used by clients from over 200 countries and dependent territories. In 2017, we had PLN 135 million and almost PLN 23 million of EBITDA profit, while in 2015, when we started developing a new strategy, it was PLN 90 million and PLN 8 million - says Łukasz Neska, the vice-president of the company from Katowice. The total transaction value increased from PLN 850 million to PLN 1.1 billion at that time.

New directions of expansion

The eSky Group, operating since 2005, has over 20 national domains, but the local address is not actually needed to sell a ticket. In Central and Eastern Europe, the company operates in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Turkey, and in Poland it still generates the highest sales, about 30 per cent revenues.

In Western Europe, a large part of the traffic takes place via the global eSky.com domain. Most customers come from Germany, Great Britain and Ireland. The company wants to develop in these markets, but it will start a marketing campaign in Spain. The reason for this is that the company has a wide experience in Spanish-speaking countries.

- In 2010 we started operations in Brazil. We are present on the markets of 13 countries of South America. We've opened smaller locations: Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, and even Puerto Rico, a dependent territory of the USA. In highly developed countries, among users with wide experience, our solutions work very well. Therefore, this year, with the exception of all of South and Central America, we will enter the USA. However, we will start with the Spanish-speaking community. Next year, we want to enter Asia, probably to Singapore - says Łukasz Neska.

He also says that eSky is a leader in Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, number two in Peru and Hungary, as well as in the top three in Brazil, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Entering a new market is not always associated with opening a new company. This was the case at the beginning of eSky's foreign expansion when the companies were established in Romania, Bulgaria and Brazil. Currently, eSky creates national domains, because some clients prefer to buy tickets from the local website.

Sometimes opening a new company is necessary to gain access to local payment and settlement systems. However, we prefer virtual entry on the market than creating a company. We want to operate through four local hubs: in Katowice, Bucharest, Sofia and Porto Alegre. We focus on automation and scaling - says Łukasz Neska.

The company has become an expert in entering new markets.

- We do it almost automatically. We move our model to a new place and launch it. During the process of launching the model in a new market, the involvement of engineers is not necessary because we have modular elements that can be connected by people without programming skills. Thanks to our skills and experience, after the decision to enter the new market, we only need about two weeks to start selling – says Łukasz Neska.

Successful expansion and new markets

The company starts operating on the new market from the sale of airline tickets. Then it introduces the service added in 2015 – the possibility of booking accommodation and additional items, including insurance (thanks to them, eSky has doubled its EBITDA profitability).

Currently, the sale of airline tickets generates 90% of revenues, but the sale of hotels and apartments is growing at a three-digit rate. We already have 1.1 million objects, we cooperate with 30 global and local partners, we systematically add more suppliers specialized in specific regions of the world, for example, recently we added a company with an offer in Russia - says Łukasz Neska.

The company focuses on automation. Many operations take place without human intervention, for example mapping new offers – placing accommodation points on the map. These points don't replicate other offers. With over 500 employees around the world (half of them are in Poland), one hundred of them are engineers in Katowice.

- We work on the basis of information – we get a million new data in an hour. We also need to provide customers with data in just three seconds, because if it takes longer, the prospective buyer will leave the website – says Łukasz Neska.

The company, the majority of which is owned by three founders and now members of the supervisory board: Piotr Stępniewski, Łukasz Habaj and Łukasz Kręski, has Wirtualna Polska in its shareholding (6,3 per cent) since June last year.

We aren't looking for a trade investor, but we don't rule out another investment round. It's also very likely that we will buy a company from Central Europe from the market in which we are absent or we have very little activity. The main strategy is organic development, but if the opportunity comes, we will use it. We are in many discussions, but I think it's not going to be finalized in the near future – says Łukasz Neska.

eSky – a good example

DAWID PAPIEŻ, Google Polska employee, responsible for companies dealing in retail trade and export.

We started working with eSky a long time ago when the company was only a few years old and planned international development. Thanks to the use of web analytics to determine customer trends and needs in different countries and through search engine advertising, we've managed to quickly develop the company not only in Europe but also in other places, for example – in South America.

For many years, we've been working with Polish companies to reach foreign markets, and in the last three years, we've intensified cooperation. We've noticed the huge dynamics of the development of Polish start-ups in reaching new markets. The history of eSky shows that planning global expansion from the very beginning of the company's existence is very important, and also shows the huge potential associated with the effective use of online tools. Companies that use them notice significantly faster development and greater exports. That's why we directly support Polish companies in using these opportunities.

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