

Zvonimir Gembec on Sysbee performance Q1 2020:

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Milan, 12 May 2020. With global economies facing a crisis of the decade, businesses and corporations entered a phase of the “new normal”. Many modern companies have adapted to remote work from home, and some are even slowly resuming their operations in the offices.

One of such small companies is a Croatian start-up called Sysbee. We’ve talked to the CEO of Sysbee, Zvonimir Gembec, and asked him all about how his company has been dealing with COVID-19 situation and even got a sneak peek into their future plans.

How did Sysbee perform during the first quarter of 2020?

Zvonimir Gembec: “Considering what is going on around us and in the world, we are performing pretty good. We are within a few percentage points of the budget plan, so yes, considering that we have more than half of the quarter that has been affected by the coronavirus crisis, it is more than satisfactory.

In fact, we did a good job in terms of the business continuity – we wanted to make sure that our work from home will not affect operations and that we carry on with all the projects as planned. So far, I’d say we’ve been successful, and everything is going as anticipated.”

Was Sysbee’s performance affected by the novel coronavirus COVID-19? What do you think would be the long-term effect of this virus on the web-hosting market?

Zvonimir Gembec: “Yes, I guess as it is with every industry, it has also impacted us. Like everybody else, we started to work from home, which normally causes psychological pressure. However, I would say it affected us in a positive way – we are functioning much better than we did when we were working from the office. We put in place more stand-up meetings - these were, in fact, zoom calls. These calls helped us to stay on track and not lose focus during the days of the lockdown.

At the moment, the government is loosening the lockdown here in Croatia, and we were able to return to the office this week. We are doing it gradually – this week, only half of the team got back to the office, and we expect the remaining half to join us during the upcoming week.

Regarding the impact of COVID -19 on business, we did not feel much of an impact as of now. Some small number of customers have lowered usage of our services, due to the fact that the industries they are in have halted their operations - tourism, event management, and so on. However, we saw an increase in

services from another type of customers, such as webshops, for example – so all in all, we did not see any major impact on our bookings and revenues.

We are, of course, concerned about the possible long term impact, especially about the last two quarters of 2020, and the first half of 2021. We can very much feel the impact of the upcoming recession in the economy, and the stagnation in new investments that will be postponed to a better time, and the like. In addition, the possibility of the new wave of infections might have some impact on the businesses globally.”

During the last quarter of 2019, you were actively involved in developing some new marketing activities, such as visiting conferences and publishing case studies on your website. Have you worked in this direction during the last three months?

Zvonimir Gembec: “Yes, we did - we have some more case studies, and we have also published a lot of new blog posts that we are very proud of. They are more technical than before, so, much more technical focus, and no more marketing fluff content. We have even started to get feedback and retweets on social networks of our content from some companies that we have mentioned in our posts.

We are also working on new explainer videos for all of our services, similar, but better than the one we have for Managed Gitlab, and also, we are preparing one more newsletter with a summary of our blog posts.

As a matter of fact, we have published one more blog post today - this one is regarding the DevOps culture: what it is, and what it brings. At the moment, we follow a weekly frequency of releasing posts on the web.

Following on this, we have also changed the agency that does internet advertising for us.”

I imagine all the conferences you planned to attend have been canceled. Have any of the hosts offered an alternative to attending the conference online?

Zvonimir Gembec: “Regarding offline conferences, they, of course, were canceled. The last one that we attended was in Zagreb, March 12th, and it was probably the last conference in the whole region. So, even conferences planned for this fall are either canceled or postponed until the next year.

We were, in fact, listening to some Zoom conferences that are taking place now instead of real-life conferences. In May, one of our technicians will be speaking in one of such conferences hosted by InfluxData. He will be presenting on a subject of our best practices, as described in one of our blog posts that was spotted by the InfluxData staff.”

Could you provide me with some updates regarding your Magento Enterprise Hosting and a Gitlab managed hosting products?

Zvonimir Gembec: “It is not much that it is going on with those products. We had some new customers

with both Gitlab and Magento optimized hosting, but it is not something that you will write home about. We will see what will be going on in the next few months with those products, and if they will not gain more attention, we will probably have to redesign or remove them from our offering completely. We will definitely leave them here for a couple of more months, and after that, decide what is next.”

What are the plans of Sysbee for the near future?

Zvonimir Gembec: “Our main concern is to stay healthy, both physically and mentally, and business-wise. As of last month or so, my main focus was to keep revenues and money flow on an acceptable level, and I plan to continue to work in this direction.

Our secondary aim is to continue with on-going marketing activities, and we also have plans to develop some new products and services, more suitable for this “new now” situation that we are all in, regardless if we want to admit it or not. I could not tell you what those are just yet, as, at the moment, it is more like just a direction that we want to follow.

We also plan to finish the AWS accreditation and acquire the company certification as the AWS partner; we are just a few exams away from that.

Last, but not least, we will also move to the new office at the beginning of June, which is much nicer, and much bigger than the one that we have now, and, more suitable for the work we do.”

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