

## **New generations, great skill! <sup>1</sup>**

### **Interview with Tomás Giovanetti, 22 year old CEO of a Corporate Gaming Company**

Founder & CEO of TGA  
MIT U35 Contest Winner



**By Adriana Cibelli**  
International Correspondent  
Buenos Aires, Argentina

**Tomás Giovanetti** is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Founder of TGA, a corporate gaming company focussed on transmission of contents, learning and strengthening of companies' positioning and image, that has presence in 7 countries around the world . Tomás is an MIT U35 Contest Winner for Latin America, and the creator of the first global bullying awareness video game. But the most surprising point is his age: Tomás is only 22 years old! For his managing team, Tomás has formed his BoD with experienced professionals from the corporate world and also some young and disruptive members. With this magnificent managing team, they seek “to stamp a mark on the world”, in his own words.

Despite his young age, he has a great track record as a speaker at several global events. He left professional tennis to dedicate to entrepreneurship, with total success.

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## Interview

**Adriana Cibelli (AC):** Tomás, tell me something about your life and how did you come to form TGA?

**Tomás Giovanetti (TG):** Well, I am the only child of a full-time mother and a civil engineer father who has his own engineering study. They always gave me everything, especially companionship and love.

I started at age 11 as a tennis player, trying to be a professional one, because I loved that sport and also because I wanted to do something interesting, I was bored at school.

I started to grow in the ranking, to improve and to compete more and more. This led to several school changes since I was unable to attend as a regular student.

At my 16 years old, the entrepreneurial bug had already bitten me and I didn't want to dedicate myself to tennis anymore. I knew I wanted to do something else and have great success.

I spent my free time playing online games, tennis did not allow me to have a socially active life, so when I was not training I had some time to dedicate to games.

On a trip to the USA for a competition, I decided to ask Google what I could do to earn money from home, but their recommendations didn't help me much! Nevertheless, I kept thinking and, being a big game consumer, I realized that gaming would be that I was seeking for.

I began to investigate the world of gaming in forums, Facebook groups, following youtubers and realized that I was not going to be able to tackle all the work alone, it required knowledge on several disciplines, it is a huge world! I discovered while researching that many people tried to make the developments by themselves, without a team, and it took them too long with trends changing so rapidly that they were not able to succeed... so I said to myself, this can't happen to me, I must form a team.

I was talking with several youtubers dedicated to games, until I found a youtuber who, for me, was the ideal, his name is Jordi and at that time he had a channel where in 20' he used to explain how to make a game for junior people in the activity, like me at that time. I started chasing him for a talk, until I did it! At our virtual meeting I didn't want to turn on the camera because I was 16 and he was over 40. But when I did, he told me "You're a kid!" (laughs)

I told him what I wanted to do he told me that it was great, then he asked me if I knew how to program, I said no ... if I knew how to make music, to which I said no ..., he asked me if I had money to invest, I also told him no ... then he told me that it had been a pleasure to meet me and that he could not do anything for me.

After a few weeks, he changed his mind and decided to help me, I think that it was because of my enthusiasm, undoubtedly. He offered me his mentorship, dedicating one or two hours a week. I was so happy, I loved the idea!! We started with the mentoring, he began to get more and more involved, the two hours became almost full

time work, we began to develop a horror game that dealt with the problem of bullying, which we call "You Deserve". That was the beginning of it all, 2016.

**AC:** Tomás, how did you get to develop the "U Deserve" game and who was the Project Manager of that project?

**TG:** We formed a team with people from all over the world, they were not looking for economic compensation but they wanted to be part of the team and appear in the credits of the game. This people were junior and horror video games are the easiest to develop.

We worked virtually, with a team in Spain that dedicated their mornings to this project and a team in Mexico that did its work at night. I worked at dawn too! My parents did not understand what I was doing online at that time!

The mentor guided me, but I was the one who coordinated the whole team. Meanwhile I continued to play tennis.

When the game was ready, that is, when we decided to launch it, it was just when I was going on a trip with my fellow students of secondary school.

The platform in which we were going to launch the game, at that time, required a certain time for game approval, the standard process used to take two or three months; they needed to check if the game was suitable for that platform and the final approval came from the community of players of the platform, they were the ones to decide. We submitted the game for approval on a Thursday night, I was suppose to travel on Friday and the game was supposed to be approved long after I returned.

On Friday I woke up with the game approved by the platform and all the main press media in Argentina calling me surprised because the game had passed the acceptance process in hours instead of months and that was something without precedents! They wanted to meet me on the spot! My parents didn't know anything about all this, and when I told them I was going to be on television, they asked me if I had robbed a bank! (laughs) That happened on 8/19/2016.

Obviously I had to cancel the graduate trip, my friends didn't understand the reason, it cost me a lot of relationships. As time went by, they understood it.

We finished first in sales on the platform worldwide in the first weekend and from then on I had a lot of press diffusion and I understood that gaming was much more than a game, it is a true communication tool.

**AC:** Why did you choose that theme for your game?

**TG:** As I went through so many schools, I saw a common denominator: many kids suffering from bullying, so I considered that I should do something for them. At that time I thought that if it were the kids who suffered from that reason, and they were the ones who played online games (there is a false concept regarding the gaming

consumer, consumers go from kids to adults and now I know), something had to be done to raise their awareness and help them.

At that point begins TGA, with the initials of my name as the company name, but today it means The Gaming Agency, a company dedicated to corporate gaming. It seeks to be a communication bridge between organizations and audiences through fun, trying to motivate behavior changes.

**AC:** Did you find a way for those who bullied to get involved in the game?

**TG:** Yes, we included many psychologists in the team. The game had a lot of impact at the time. Many people from far countries as Russia and many others wrote me thanking for the game, others criticized it, but each of them made their interpretation of the game, I got a positive balance, plus 100,000 people approved it and most of them loved it.

**AC:** How did you managed your start up being only 17 years old? Did you have a mentor? How did you do it?

**TG:** Yes, I had one, his name is Gabriel, he is the CEO of a major company in Saudi Arabia. I met him through a relative. He helped me to design and structure my company. It all started from a may be client call a client from the health industry in Argentina that knew about me from the media, that told me: "I saw what you did with the bullying, should you help me for a marketing campaign to raise awareness about having a healthier life? I replied that yes, of course, let's think about it!

I realized that gaming could be adapted to what we need to communicate and there is a long way to go yet. During the first three years of the company, we worked with freelance people whom we hired per development. In 2019 we had the first round of capital, and then things changed. We brought C-level people from important companies of Argentina and Latin America to work with us.

I consider that what we have achieved up to these days, could not have been done without this group of people we have in our management team and is also product of our past experience.

**AC:** How was the enterprise funded? The initial game paid what came next?

**TG:** Part of it was paid by successful first game, U Deserve. The business is supported by its own benefits due to the flow of operations. I'd better bet on committed resources more than on money from an investor. Going out to find capital does not appeal to me. My business is self-financing itself, it is a business with good margins. I looked for seed capital for the first steps.

**AC:** Where did you learn management practices?

**TG:** I always say that perhaps some games helped me to develop these skills. I have always considered being a leader, I don't like being a boss.

As an example, the game "Imperium", is a game for any age, where you can talk to other people and I'm sure it helped me with the development of my interpersonal relationships. I learned how to motivate people with it.

**AC:** How do you lead these people with so much experience?

**TG:** Mix between character and management. They are people between 48 and 50 years old who come from the corporate world. They had a very high opportunity cost coming to TGA, but were attracted by innovation and challenge. They have high commitment.

I have a team of mature people in their specific activity. I don't like micro management. We have a management meeting every week on Friday afternoons with area managers. We are always focused on team development.

During our meetings, each one exposes what has been done during the past week (sprint) and the rest of us gives feedback. That motivates us and allows us to manage our company.

We really use some kind of agility: mature teams, focus on people, weekly meetings for review, retrospective and planning for the next week's to do's.

The guiding idea is to work as a team. We meet in a nice place, relaxed, sometimes with a barbecue as a meal, others in the afternoon with some delicious croissants, but we work hard and that is essential for our company.

That is how my company is run.

**AC:** What is your role in the company?

I am the CEO, majority shareholder, chairman

**AC:** How do you project yourself in the future? How do you see the future of your company?

**TG:** I am a hyper ambitious person and I hope I can translate that into my company, grow TGA as large as possible. Today we have presence in 7 countries.

I do not want to put my company up for sale, I want it to grow, to acquire more value, and if it comes the day where there is an opportunity to sell it, may be I accept it.

Today my plan is to continue my personal development. In my spare time I study, I have one year left to finish my university degree on business administration at the University of Buenos Aires. I hope to graduate before being 24 years old.

Last year I won a nomination from MIT, as a U35 innovator in Latin America, may be after graduating I continue studying abroad.

TGA is what I always dreamed of and it is a great company.

**AC:** Which are TGA Product Lines?

**TG:** We have three active lines right now and one that is being launched soon, you are the one having the scoop!

They are:

1- *Branding games*: they are advertising games that communicate a company, its products or services, with its customers through fun. Some of them have the goal of join parents and children through fun, while they become familiar with the product or service

2- *Training games*: are the ones growing the most today, with large international clients, we take a theme, ex. cybersecurity, compliance, sales, industrial security, and design a training game for awareness of the company personnel on the selected topic. through games

3- *Community gaming*: they are similar at some point to U Deserve, we are always trying to put our grain of sand to solve social issues, always through gaming. On a detected problem, ex. the carbon footprint, we are developing an algorithm that connects with credit cards and analyze clients' habits and how they impact the carbon footprint and propose solutions tending to reduce it. For instance, proposing discounts in green markets or restaurants.

Next launching: *Educational games*: games related to the educational world, we still do not have a case, we are working on a case for a global medical association, we discovered that just as the game is used for marketing, for training, and for communities, gaming can be used to educate as well.

**AC:** How do you see a partnership between PMI and TGA to develop a product to learn Project Management's practices in a fun way?

**TG:** Yes, why not? With one of the big four consultancy companies, we are developing a game for a compliance methodology. We are looking for partners in the big companies segment to develop something together. If we could develop training in Project management associated or validated by PMI it would be something of great interest for us. It would be great!



## About the Author



### **Adriana Cibelli**

Buenos Aires, Argentina



**Adriana Cibelli**, PMP is Director of activePMO, a Project Management and Leadership consulting services and training firm in Argentina.

Adriana has a degree in Electronic Engineering from Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina, and a post degree in Design of Intelligent Buildings, from the same university and has managed projects for more than 20 years. She is a professor and director of Project Management and Leadership programs in some important Universities of Argentina and an International speaker. Adriana holds the Project Management Professional (PMP®) credential, the PMO-CP credential from PMO Global Alliance, and is an SDI Certified Facilitator from Personal Strengths©.

Mrs. Cibelli is member and volunteer of PMI, is current President of the PMI Buenos Aires chapter and has previously served as Professional Development VP and Governance & Policies VP in the same chapter. She is also coordinator for the C.A.P.A. committee with the goal of integrating efforts and sharing resources between Argentinian PMI Chapters.

Adriana has served as an international correspondent for the *PM World Journal* in Argentina since February 2020. She can be contacted at [adriana@activepmo.com](mailto:adriana@activepmo.com) and [www.activepmo.com](http://www.activepmo.com).