

## “Employee Safety, Front Line Supplies, Preserving Production and Group Survival” — Metinvest COO Oleksandr Myronenko on Wartime Priorities for Forbes

At the Forbes CEO Summit 2024, held in Kyiv on 1 November, Oleksandr Myronenko, chief operating officer of Metinvest Group, spoke about the Group’s priorities during the full-scale Russian invasion. He discussed navigating the challenges at the onset of the war, the importance of leadership within the organisation and the essential qualities needed for modern leaders.



During the summit, 38 representatives of Ukrainian companies from various sectors of the economy discussed the macroeconomic context, geopolitical challenges and best practices for business executives. They also explored ways to inspire new ideas, maintain good health, sustain high productivity and lead a balanced life.

Oleksandr Myronenko participated in the “Insights for CEOs” session, which focused on the challenges and opportunities anticipated in 2025: monetary, fiscal and regulatory. The discussion also covered the main issues faced by Ukrainian CEOs, along with strategies and tools designed to help them overcome these obstacles.

According to Myronenko, on 24 February 2022, medium-term investment and production planning became obsolete, as did the established priorities and objectives within the conservative metals and mining industry.

Since the beginning of the full-scale war, despite some uncertainty, all of the Group’s executives have remained at their facilities 24/7. Since then, Metinvest has identified three main priorities: ensuring employee safety and providing maximum support to people in combat zones, preserving production facilities and ensuring the Group’s survival. The Group has organised its work around these priorities.

The most difficult situation at the beginning of the war was in Mariupol. The Group maintained communication with the management teams of Ilyich Steel and Azovstal as the city was surrounded. They organised the evacuation of people to Berdiansk, where buses sent from Zaporizhzhia were waiting to transport employees to safer locations.

Oleksandr Myronenko stated: “Our worst experience was in Mariupol. We evacuated people from the besieged city, provided accommodation for them in Zaporizhzhia, Kamianske and Kryvyi Rih, and worked to help them adapt and find employment at our active facilities.”

In Kryvyi Rih, the Group mothballed its operations at facilities near the front line and evacuated staff. Meanwhile, plants located further from the combat zone continued production.

Metinvest implemented a similar approach at its facilities in Zaporizhzhia, while in Avdiivka, operations continued until the summer of 2022, when the front line moved closer to the city.

Currently, Pokrovsk is a hotspot. The management of Metinvest Group visits these facilities every two weeks to ensure staff welfare.

The chief operating officer noted: “Cabinet-style leadership has not taken root in the steel industry because you need to understand what is happening in each shop. You must be aware of the issues and solve them together with the enterprise directors and shop management. It is essential to involve the entire team in addressing challenges, because when people do not feel included, they do not understand the purpose of their work.”

The Group has protocols in place to prevent staff losses and maintain production capacity. At continuous production facilities that can never be left unattended, Metinvest provides shelters and equips employees with bulletproof vests and helmets so they can continue working during air raid alerts. Employees who can interrupt the production process head to bomb shelters until the alert is over, as they did in Avdiivka.

Metinvest avoids placing military facilities at its production sites to avoid placing them in harm’s way. Instead, it sets up separate sites outside its main facilities to manufacture items for the military, including shelters, mine trawls and other essential supplies for the front line.

Oleksandr Myronenko believes the key qualities that enable business leaders to be effective combat CEOs are the courage to make swift decisions and take responsibility for them, as each decision can impact both production and people’s lives.

To foster a culture of self-development, senior management should encourage individual initiative and always remain open to people’s opinions. Oleksandr Myronenko added: “Even if you do not agree with an idea, you should give a person the opportunity to implement it and see the outcome.”

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