

A global tech conference from Bratislava taking things to the next level

ReactiveConf is a three-day European-wide web and mobile development festival in the heart of Europe made for functional developers. It's a space where world-class JavaScript experts share their unique insights, daily hacks and lead powerful workshops. ReactiveConf's 4th year is taking place in Prague this fall on October 29-31, and we interviewed Michaela Vlčková, its Chief Visionary Officer, about how it has evolved.



MICHAELA VLČKOVÁ
Chief Visionary Officer
VacuumLabs



What was the reason for such a content-specific conference in Europe?

People are building brand new services and products that didn't exist before. Entire industries are becoming digitalized. The logical next step is the arrival of new technologies — that is what happened back in 2013 when Facebook introduced React.JS. Two years later, our founders, Samuel Hapák and Matej Ftáčnik, decided to create a conference that would be introducing new technologies to regional developer talents. Rethinking the web development and React.JS were the main themes of the conference.

How was the first year?

It was a one-of-a-kind experience. It took us 90 days to organize the very first ReactiveConf in Bratislava. We had more than 500 attendees and 21 speakers from companies like Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo! and Netflix. Positive feedback was overwhelming both from the attendees and the speakers.

Can you tell us more about your journey from event director to Chief Visionary Officer?

It was crystal clear that there is a community here that supports us and is hungry for high quality web development content. We had over 750 attendees in 2016 with more than 30 amazing speakers. For me as the event director, this was a test run. My team has gained valuable experience, we've had our ups and downs with some emotions in play and we've learnt a lot.

We worked with big names from Google, Microsoft, Skype and Airbnb. In 2017 I became a Chief Visionary Officer and we decided to rebrand and to change the narrative.

Rebrand how? What has changed?

Besides changing the logo, we had a feeling that we wanted to move beyond organizing just a conference focused on one, two or three technologies. We wanted to create a space where people could meet, talk and discover what's new, what's driving the world of development and what could, in the space of a few years, change how we work. 'Discovery' has become an important keyword for us and our narrative. That's why, in 2017, we added a new stage: the Discovery stage. With discussions and panels it became our discussion platform to drive discovery and inspire – both us and our attendees.

With the new mission in mind, how did it go?

It was inspiring on so many levels. In 2017, the attendance surpassed 1200 with a little over 50 speakers – some of them even returned to speak again. The Discovery stage was well received and we organized free workshops for 400 attendees during the festival day. The attendees had numerous options how to spend the day — having fun, networking with new people, chilling in our ReactiveCinema or getting a cup of coffee with the speakers. Thanks to the support of the

ČSOB foundation, we invited 200 students from the Czech Republic and Slovakia for free and they had a chance to learn from the best. It truly was a highly interactive conference.

What are your ambitions for this year?

We want to continue to build on our experience from previous years to connect people and the community. That's why we're focusing on community, education and opportunities right now. ReactiveConf will be taking place in Prague for the first time, a beautiful city full of inspiration. Our venue, Forum Karlín, will house both the main and the Discovery stage, workshops as well as all the activities during the Festival day. We're super excited to keep on building ReactiveConf as a 'highly interactive conference'.

Can you share one exceptional story from the past four years?

There's one powerful story I can share. In 2015 we had a speaker from the US, Guillermo Rauch, whose talk inspired Javi Velasco, one of our attendees. Fast forward to 2016, Javi has won our Lightning talk competition and so he became our Lightning talk speaker. His talk has caught Guillermo's attention and just days before Javi's talk on our 2017 Discovery stage, Javi was having his final interview to join Guillermo's company. And yes, they're working together now. We like to think that we've had a little bit to do with all this. It's our greatest strength: to inspire and connect people.

BIOGRAPHY

WORK EXPERIENCE

- Chief Visionary Officer, VacuumLabs (April 2016 – present)
- Consultant, The Spot Slovakia (June 2016 – present)
- HR Manager, Mondieu (April 2015 – April 2016)
- Commercial Loan Specialist, TAB - Financial (August 2011 – December 2013)
- Manager, Deecom Store, s.r.o. (August 2011 – August 2013)

EDUCATION

- Biskupské Gymnázium Bohuslava - Balcína (1999 – 2007)

