



Fireside Chat with Ovidiu Campean

Director, Global Head of Product at TORA

Ovidiu Campean is Caspian's Director and Global Head of Product. In this position, he both oversees and leads product development, implementing strategies to ensure that the Caspian asset management solution is on track and adapting to the unrelenting evolution of the crypto markets at large. He recently sat down to discuss his own experience in the industry.

In your opinion, what does it take to run a crypto trading platform?

Above all, probably dedication. Crypto trading is an entirely new domain, one that doesn't enjoy the same level of infrastructure as its legacy finance counterparts. We were aware, when putting together an institutional platform, that there was no template for how to build it, so a team with a vision was crucial to bringing it to life. Fortunately, we already had the talent, resources and technology from TORA, which served as an excellent springboard.

What sets an 'institutional' platform aside from a regular trading platform, in my opinion, is the incorporation of certain key modules. You're not just facilitating trading access, you're providing clients with a full suite of tools tackling compliance (both pre- and post-trade), API integration, trading algorithms, PMS, RMS, etc. There's the challenge of getting all of these working smoothly in the back end, and then, of course, you need to provide the best possible security and a user-friendly interface for the traders.

What is your role at Caspian? What are some of the challenges in the position?

I'm the Global Head of Product, a role I've held since the end of 2017. I'm in charge of driving the product strategy for Caspian.

One of the biggest challenges is establishing a strategy to lead the product in a proactive manner, considering the market dynamics are constantly changing. It's very easy to fall into a reactive state where you're simply putting out fire after fire and getting lost in minutiae. The way around this is striking a balance between these short-term 'tactical' projects and long-term vision, where you're working towards the roadmap and the desires of clients and stakeholders.

What makes Caspian unique?

Caspian is unique in that it boasts an expansive repository of sophisticated tools (such as those

mentioned earlier) for investors, whilst nonetheless ensuring that the pains of the transition into cryptocurrency trading are kept to a minimum. Caspian is a mature product that leverages 15 years of TORA's expertise in designing trading platforms. Competition, on the other hand, only began to design solutions in the past year.

How does working in crypto differ from your previous roles?

I've been involved in designing and building software platforms in the telecom, retail and financial industries for over 15 years. In 2008, I was hired by TORA (Caspian's parent company), where our focus was on building a similar solution to what we offer now with Caspian, albeit for legacy financial traders. In 2017, when TORA launched its joint venture with Kenetic to replicate TORA's success in the crypto markets, I joined the Caspian team.

They say a year in crypto is equivalent to 8-10 (the exact figure escapes me) in traditional finance. I'm starting to believe it: working in crypto is a lot more intense, major changes seem to happen on a weekly basis: new technologies and companies are constantly emerging whilst others are failing and shutting down. To survive, you need to stay ahead. It's far more challenging, but I'd say that it's equally rewarding.

From a development perspective, is Caspian different from your previous experience?

On the surface, a lot of the concepts are the same except for some nuances specific to crypto assets. The most notable difference is in the spread of information: community forums can be as important as Bloomberg in this space.

What are some of the highlights from your time at Caspian?

Last year was highlight after highlight – every step we took, from spec'ing out the product, seeing the first beta version and demoing it to the first potential clients (we must have done this about 250 times!) was a victory. The roadshows, the conferences and the networking were exhausting and oftentimes intense, but every small accomplishment was incredibly enriching.

What is a typical day in the office for you?

The morning begins with coffee, before tackling any client/prospect/partner meetings and calls. When these are out of the way, I focus on getting research done. In the afternoon, it's time for more coffee followed by roadmap planning and internal calls stretching into the evening.