

A high-angle, rear-view photograph of two rowers in a racing shell on a body of water. The rowers are wearing blue and light blue athletic wear. Their oars are extended outwards, creating a symmetrical pattern against the dark water. The boat's hull is visible in the center, pointing towards the bottom of the frame.

ENGAGING ORGANIZATIONS, MYTHS & FACTS



Meeting with engaging organizations in Europe
and management experts

#EngagingOrganizations

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INTRODUCTION

A LEARNING EXPEDITION ACROSS EUROPE, IN THE SEARCH FOR ENGAGING MANAGERIAL PRACTICES

Did you know that 85% of the world's employees report feeling disengaged at work (Gallup, 2018) ?

Each day sees its share of press articles and publications commenting on the decline in engagement. *Burn-out*, *bore-out* or *brown-out* are the most prominent and mediatized symptoms.

The roots of disengagement are also reported to us in abundance: aspirations out of step with the company's activities; work-life balance undermined by hyper-connection; the content of work made empty by the excess of processes; the dilution of responsibility in overdeveloped operations matrices; a subordination link that remains strong and limits autonomy ...

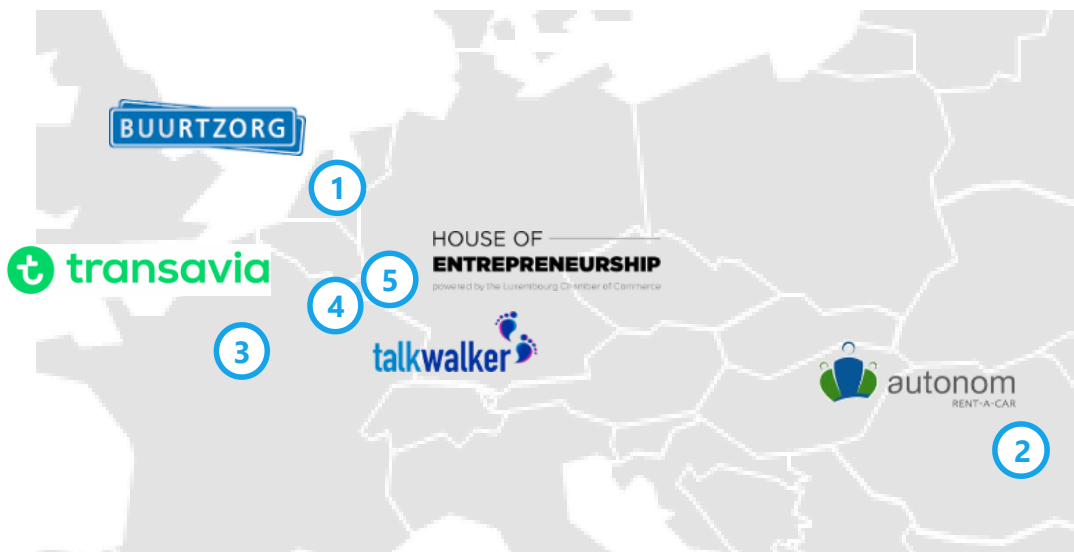
Finding the key to just engagement is becoming paramount; if disengagement is expensive, it has also become clear to us that the success of a company will depend increasingly on the level of engagement of its teams. Tomorrow, engagement could make the difference.

This ambition often relies on a delicate balance: one between disengagement and over-engagement; between the involvement of the individual and the responsibility of the company; between rational and emotional (existential) factors; between sincere approach and efficient back-thinking.

Start-ups have frequently been praised as models of engagement, overlooking the sometime pernicious consequences of their "chilled management". Are there not also lessons to be learned from large organizations?

True to our idea of ensuring positive, fruitful and long lasting transformation of a business, we have been researching management practices and organisational structures that generate engagement.

Looking to meet European companies that are considered “engaging”, we interviewed the leaders of five such companies. Our goal was to analyse their management practices and understand how they achieve such engagement. Although rather diverse in terms of size, history, sector, and culture, these companies display significant similarities.



Finally, we asked experts to address the notion of engagement from their respective academic, operational or philosophical angle.

We are pleased to share with you the results of these meetings.



OUR VISION OF ENGAGEMENT

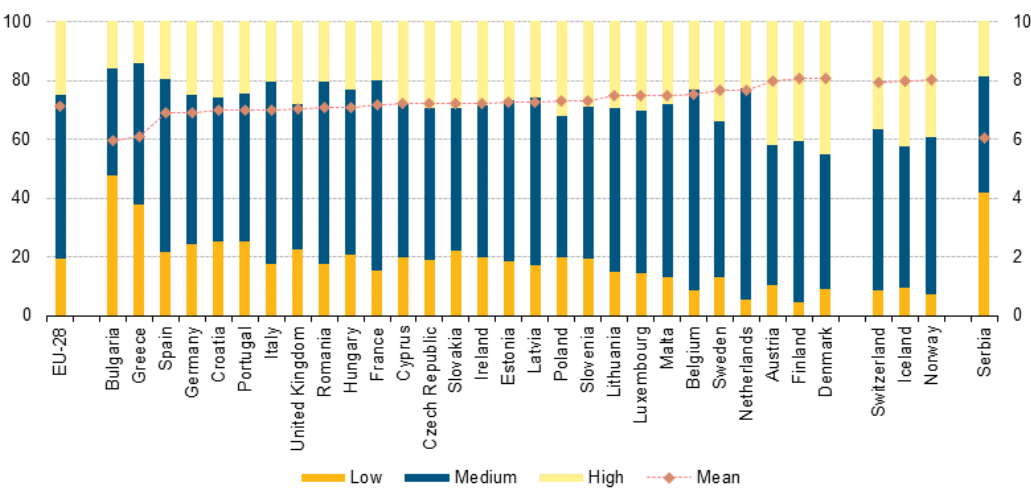
YOUR EMPLOYEES MIGHT BE SATISFIED, BUT IT DOES NOT MEAN THAT THEY ARE ENGAGED

**“Gallup institute defines engaged employees as those who are involved in, enthusiastic about and committed to their work and workplace.”
(Gallup, 2018)**

PEOPLE ARE GLOBALLY SATISFIED WITH THEIR JOB

Job satisfaction levels are quite high in most areas of the world, despite a few discrepancies that can be seen depending on where people live or the type of job they have.

On a scale from 0 to 10, European workers rank their job satisfaction at 7.1 (Eurostat, 2015). In France, 70% of employees say they are satisfied with their job (Korn Ferry Hay Group, 2015).

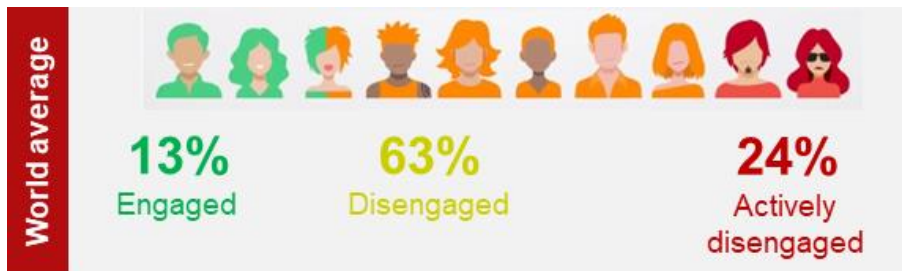


Job satisfaction by country in Europe, Eurostat

However, measuring the percentage of employees who are not dissatisfied is not enough. **Your yearly employee survey will not tell you how involved, committed, or enthusiastic your teams are**, and it will often hide low levels of engagement.

BUT EMPLOYEES ARE MUCH LESS ENGAGED THAN WE THINK

Does being “satisfied” mean something when only about 10% of European workers are “engaged” at work, 13% worldwide (Gallup, 2018)?



Results of Gallup Worldwide study on Employee Engagement

Being “satisfied” does not seem to be enough when the future of your business may depend on your employees’ capacity to be creative, to cooperate within complex ecosystems, to continue to learn everyday, and to continuously engage with your customers to gain their trust.

A disengaged worker is only trading time for a salary. He might even act against his employer’s best interests, considerably impacting the company’s results. As for the over-engaged worker, he might put both his health and his organisation at risk.

The concept of employee engagement has been used since the 1990’s to understand and describe **the nature of the relationship** between an employee and its organization. While its definition, drivers and outcomes are still being discussed, we chose to refer to the general agreed upon definition below.

Engaged employees have a positive attitude towards an organization and its values, they will demonstrate commitment and dedication towards work activities. There are specific drivers to their engagement, which will lead to a higher performance for the organization.

FAILING ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT DRAMATICALLY AFFECTS PERFORMANCE

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT LEADS TO HIGHER ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Since the 1990s, an ever-growing number of news articles, white papers and books insist on the positive correlation between employee engagement and a company's performance.

An analysis of 214 studies focusing on employee engagement showed that engagement "was found to be **positively associated with individual morale, task performance, extra-role performance and organizational performance**" (Bailey et al, 2017).

The scale of the correlation between employee engagement and organizational performance is huge. French newspaper "Le Monde" estimates disengagement to cost French companies **around 60 billion euros a year** (2016). Gallup states that it costs \$7 trillion per year worldwide (2018).

6 TANGIBLE BENEFITS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT*

1	BETTER RETURN ON INVESTMENT	4	INCREASE IN OPERATING INCOME
Fortune's 100 Best companies to work for showed that these companies returned 5 times as much to investors as the market in general		Companies with high levels of employee engagement had a 19% increase in operating income over a three-year period. Those with low levels had declined by 33%	
2	CUSTOMER SATISFACTION & LOYALTY	5	IMPACT ON THE ORGANIZATION'S PRODUCTS AND SERVICES
Customer data collected across 24 different studies and 20 different organizations showed positive relationships		88% percent of fully engaged employees believe they can positively impact the quality of their organization's products and services	
3	LOWER LEVELS OF SICKNESS/ABSENCE	6	ADVOCACY OF ORGANIZATION AS A GOOD PLACE TO WORK
Actively disengaged employees miss more than 6 days of work per year. Engaged employees miss fewer than 3 days on average		67% of engaged employees actively advocate their organization as a place to work compared with only 19% of not-engaged employees	

**Well-Being and Employee Engagement, Johnson et al, 2017*

THERE ARE RATIONAL AND EMOTIONAL DRIVERS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT DERIVES FROM AN OVERALL EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE INFLUENCED BY A SUBTLE MIX OF FACTORS

Enhancing employee engagement requires a thorough analytical approach that **encompasses all dimensions of the employee experience**.

An analysis of both rational and emotional forms of engagement amongst 59,000 employees worldwide revealed in the early 2000's how **emotional engagement is four times more valuable than rational engagement in driving employee's effort** (CEB, 2004).

But when it comes to the specific point of retention, **the most significant criterion that drive employees to stay** are compensation and benefits (rational levers).

Both facts illustrate well the complexity of employee engagement and the necessity to adopt a holistic approach when trying to understand what makes organizations engaging.

OUR PARTNER *WELLBEING SOCIETY* HELPED US EXPLORE ALL DIMENSIONS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

To understand the roots of employee engagement, we turned to our partner *Wellbeing Society*, an NGO dedicated to well-being at work.

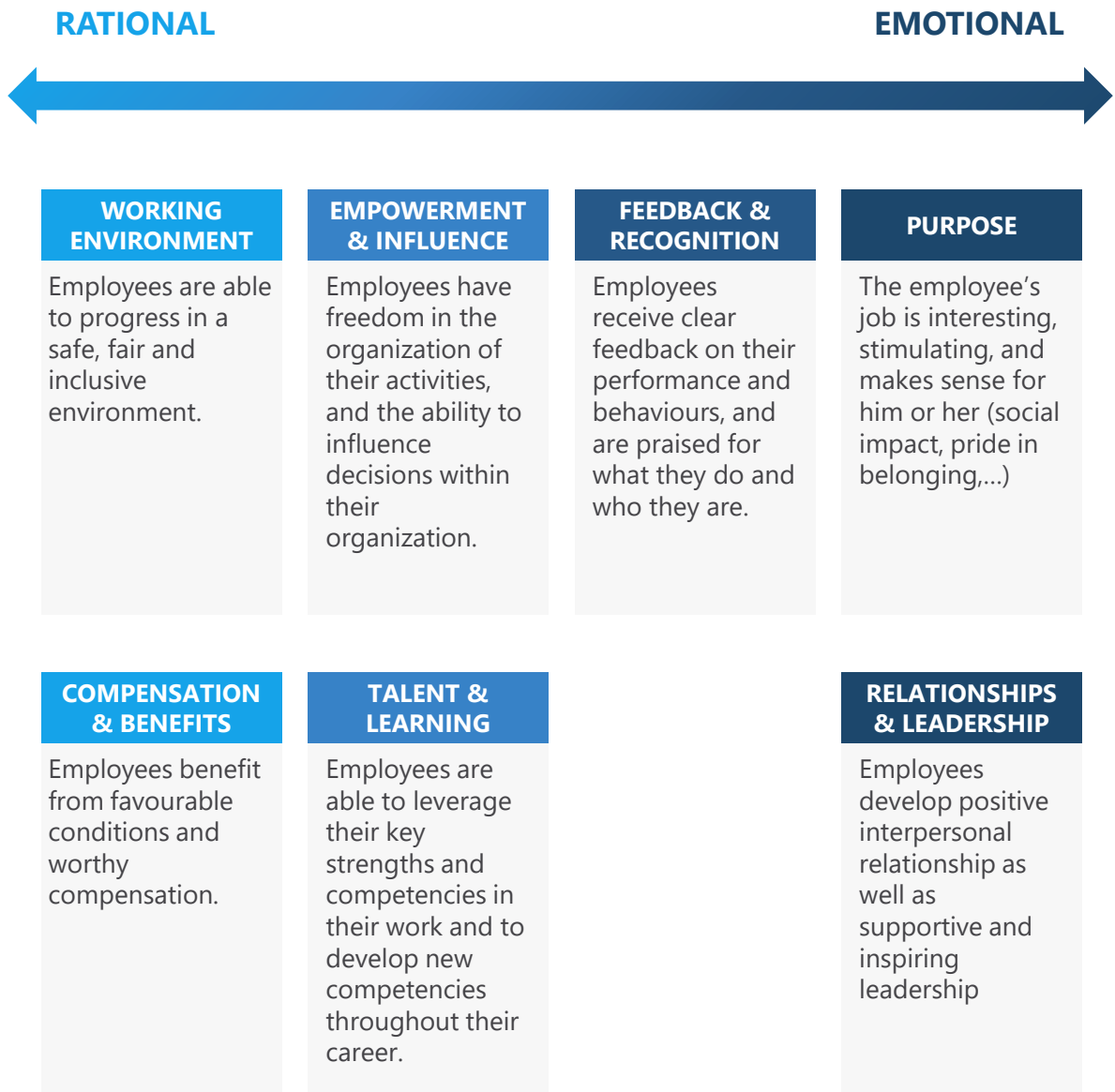
After reading around **ten thousand research papers** on well-being, they came up with a framework of 7 levers. We used this framework in our study to analyse the management cultures and practices of the organizations we met.

We chose to use *Wellbeing Society's* 7 levers to understand what levers were at work within the engaging organizations we met.



Wellbeing Society is a "do-tank" that democratizes scientific research, shares good practices and designs methods to help organizations offer better standards of well-being and engagement.

THE 7 LEVERS OF ENGAGEMENT, INSPIRED BY WELLBEING SOCIETY



LOOKING FURTHER INTO THE EMOTIONAL SIDE OF ENGAGEMENT

Why are employees in some organizations so engaged, even when none of the previously mentioned engaging management methods are leveraged and working conditions may appear unacceptable?

It is undeniable that there is an element of passion in the work we do. In an environment involving complex human relationships, **emotional factors might overrule the best analytical framework.**

The **power of leadership**, the **desire to please** oneself, the boss or the team, or the **devotion to a higher purpose** could be levers of emotional engagement that still remain far beyond our understanding.

THREE LEVELS OF PURPOSE

The purpose model theorized by Autissier and Wacheux in their book *Manager par le sens* (managing by purpose) can help us better understand the emotional side of engagement. According to the authors, there are 3 levels of engagement : purpose can be found **if at least 2 of the 3 levels are fulfilled.**



The Three levels in the search for purpose, according to David Autissier and Frédéric Wacheux

When analysing the cases of our study, we asked ourselves a few questions in order to better understand how the assessed companies would fulfil the third level mentioned in the above framework: **making employees devote themselves to a higher purpose.**

- Is the cause noble (being associated with a societal or environmental cause and/or aspiring to make an impact)?
- Is the brand strong (sense of belonging to a renowned company)?
- Does it involve surpassing oneself to achieve a higher goal, to strive for perfection (like in a sports competition or a high performing musician)?

We then looked for the most existential side of engagement and questioned, from a philosophical point of view, the relationship between an individual and their organization, as well as the different profiles of engaged employees.

A PHILOSOPHICAL OUTLOOK ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

PHILONOMIST'S POINT OF VIEW

ENGAGEMENT: TAKING THE LEAP. COMPANIES IN THE AGE OF ITCHY FEET

As society continues to gradually grow into a cluster of independent individuals, companies increasingly struggle to get employees to be fully engaged at work. Work, once a lifelong occupation, is fast dissolving into a series of temporary and abstract relations. Yet we still yearn for commitment, in love and at work. How can we rediscover ways of achieving this more tangible and long-term form of freedom which, according to the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, holds the key to self-fulfilment?



Anne-Sophie Moreau
Editor-in-Chief of
Philonomist

They say romantic love lasts three years. And at work? How many harsh words and rejected suggestions can you put up with before your enthusiasm implodes like a French soufflé? We've all been there: suddenly, you lose the will to give your best – if you ever had it in the first place... Of course, some alliances are merely circumstantial. Employees can be bound to employers for financial reasons, or because it's in their interest to do so for the time being. Eternal bachelors have Tinder; slashers have their temporary contract. But at the end of the day, it's hard not to expect anything from the work we do. You might well have negotiated a nice salary and told yourself to just "think about the money"; when you first show up at work, it's hard to repress that jittery feeling that you might be happy this time, and that the old you, once sluggish and disengaged, might finally hatch into one of those radiant individuals who can't wait to get to the office in the morning.

It's therefore all the more disappointing when you realise, years, months, or even weeks down the line, that the thrill is gone... There can be several reasons for this. Boredom is one, as is the realisation that the organisation you initially believed was perfect is in fact full of flaws. But these particular cases shouldn't distract us from a much wider upheaval, which is weakening the ties that hold employers and employees together: the world of work as we know it is breaking up. How can employees be loyal to one company when all they hear about is change and auto-entrepreneurship? Were they not told they'd need to change companies, and even professions, several times in the course of their life? Sometimes it seems the ideal employee's main attribute is their "employability" - in other words, their capacity to leave the company of their own accord.

“Today's business leaders aren't looking for mercenaries; they're looking for loyal advisors.”

You might think companies benefit from this new-found flexibility; but they too suffer from it. Businesses struggle to retain their best talents, each one grappling with their very own brain drain... Nor does the constant turnover encourage teams to show initiative, which has become essential for any company's success: in a world where consumers want to live differently, creativity is everything, as is the full commitment of employees, who can only save their employers from an uncertain future if they share the same desire to shape it. Today's business leaders aren't looking for mercenaries; they're looking for loyal advisors. They're not looking for pawns they can move around like in a game of Risk; they're looking for people who are strong, demanding, capable of speaking their mind, and who will hopefully remain by their side in the long run. They need fully-fledged humans capable of taking a step back from the rational selfishness that today's society is so keen to sell.

So what is true employee engagement? Let's take a closer look at some of the specific cases in which employees are said to be fully “engaged”. Of course, there will always be a few fanatics who recite their company's values like a mantra and make a poster out of its organisational chart. But in everyday office life, engagement tends to be more discreet, for the simple reason that it can appear to be useless, and contrary to economic rationality.

“The effort made by employees who are truly driven will often be of the invisible, intimate kind, far removed from any measurable performance.”

A fully engaged worker is someone who spends just a little bit longer at work to make sure their client is happy, even if it means delaying another project; who takes the time to read a complicated book just to find ways of improving a product; and who won't receive any immediate reward for their effort, because they largely go unseen. Engagement at work often takes the shape of a purely professional, and fundamentally disinterested conscientiousness. The effort made by employees who are truly driven will often be of the invisible, intimate kind, far removed from any measurable performance – which makes it all the more laudable. Disengaged workers, on the other hand, simply apply an efficiency principle which economists place at the heart of all rational behaviour: constrained optimisation.

As functioning *homo oeconomicus*, they'll minimise their effort as much as is possible without compromising the result (keeping their job, being payed). In other words, a purely economic logic would have us do the strict minimum.

This is why employers are so easily tempted by systems of individual performance review and rewards. But it's not hard to see how this approach which is supposed to address the problem only makes it worse. Why? Because it further reinforces society's tendency to reduce individuals to mere monads driven by self-interest, and undermines the possibility that they might identify with a common goal. At the end of the day, quantitative measurements do nothing to encourage commitment. No matter how big they are, bonuses will never be able to replace the professional bond once it's been damaged. When relationships break down – in love and at work – we turn to contracts. Nothing says “impending divorce” more than keeping tabs on who did the washing up... To approach the future with serenity we need to cultivate what we have in common, not quibble over who did what.

“To live a fulfilled life, individuals must embrace what Kierkegaard calls the “ethical stage”, i.e. work towards a long-term goal, even if it restricts the number of possible paths one can take.”

Individualism only makes the employer-employee relationship more strenuous. Yet both would gain from preserving this relationship. Like serial seducers, 21st century workers like to see themselves as free agents, but risk growing tired of the flirting joys of freelancing. As they grow bored of the infinite possibilities open to them, they can soon end up stuck in what Søren Kierkegaard called the “aesthetic stage”. In his *Diary of a Seducer*, the Danish philosopher acutely described the sense of despair that can result from the constant quest for novelty. It often comes with a feeling of anxiety that simmers under the surface of an ironic attitude - that distant demeanour you see in serial seducers and their professional counterpart, the “job hopper”. To live a fulfilled life, individuals must embrace what Kierkegaard calls the “ethical stage”: work towards a long-term goal, a lifetime project that will define one's existence and give it substance, even if it does restrict the number of possible paths one can take. In other words, to *commit*. Kierkegaard saw the act of marriage as a perfect example of this sense of duty and responsibility which constitutes the ethical life. Freedom can't remain an abstraction - it must take shape in a chosen path.

Does that mean irresolute auto-entrepreneurs would be better off jumping into permanent contracts? And showing blind loyalty towards their employers, in spite of everyday trials and tribulations? For such a relationship to work, companies first need to reinvent themselves: they shouldn't be prisons where workers get stuck; nor should they be mere crossroads where people come and go. They need to grow into places where individuals find fulfilment by investing in real projects - which means giving them a sense of responsibility which is often lacking elsewhere. Mature adults will readily give up on freedom if it is superficial and devoid of meaning - as long they gain true autonomy in the process.

FOR EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO THEIR NEEDS, A PHILOSOPHICAL GUIDE TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

To meet the challenge of employee engagement, 21st century companies need to accept that each personality is different; that according to their respective temperament and ideals, employees will struggle in different ways, and that it's up to the employer to take their unique outlook into account to get the best out of them. There are as many forms of disengagement as there are sources of motivation and fulfilment. To better understand these diverse approaches to work, we've identified four philosophical types of engagement, which can be divided along two lines:

1st divide: "Idealism or pragmatism"?

Some people are incorrigible idealists, always searching for a cause; others find fulfilment in a job well done, regardless of any revolutionary considerations.

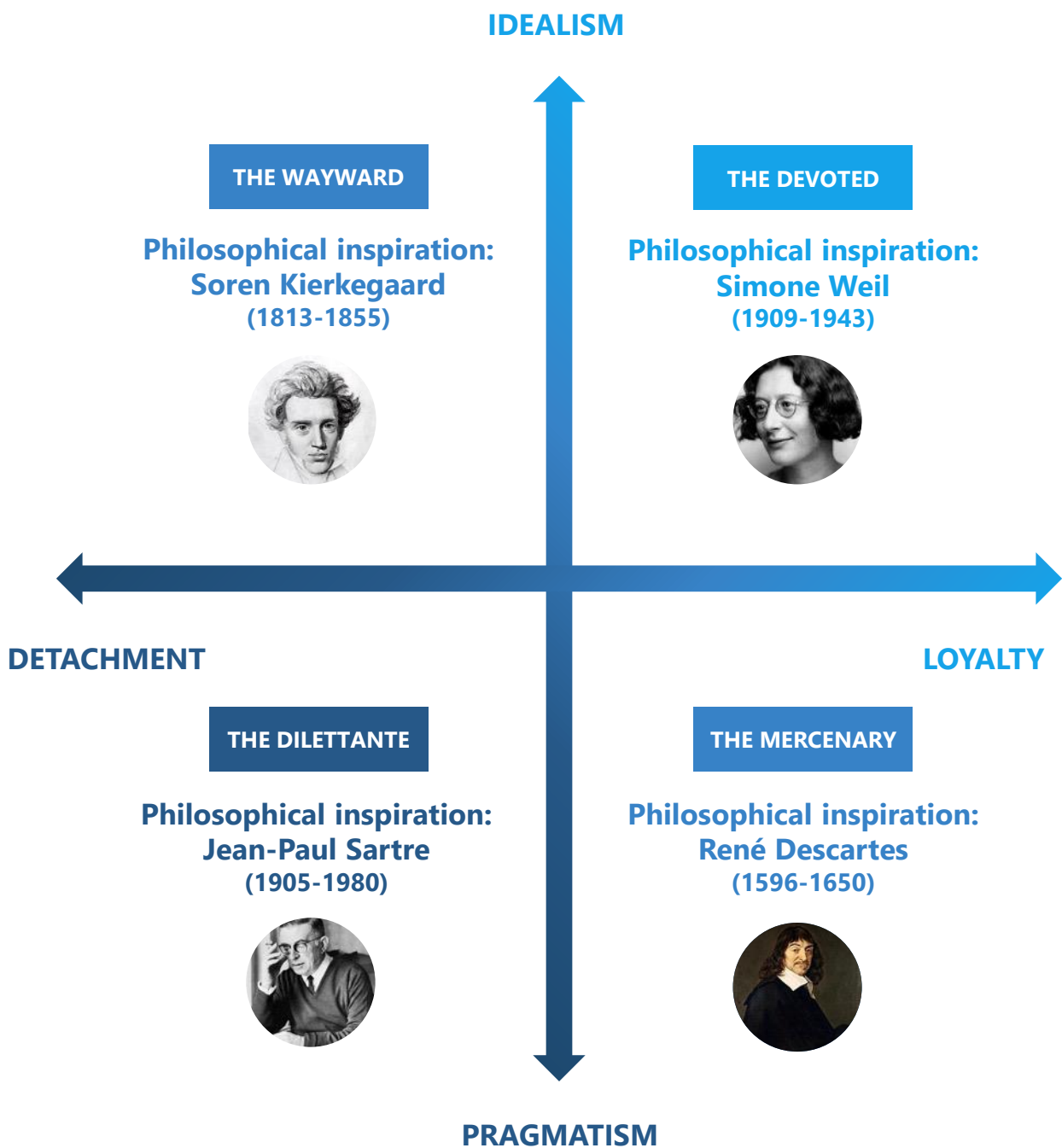
2nd divide: "Loyalty or detachment"?

Some people have itchy feet and often feel the need to set new targets; others prefer to take ownership of a project and work at it for as long as possible.

The 4 profiles of engaged employees

Put together, these two lines give rise to four distinct personality types, each with a specific approach to work, and life in general... For them to find fulfilment, they need to be recognized.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL MATRIX OF ENGAGEMENT



1. The devoted

Loyal idealists are noticeable because of their sacrificial temperament. Give them a lofty cause, and they'll happily give their all. But their sense of fulfilment can prove fragile, and should therefore not be taken for granted: loyal idealists can struggle to overcome practical hurdles with distance and peace of mind, and are likely to over-invest in their mission at the expense of their own health.

Like the French philosopher Simone Weil, whose desire to share the plight of the working class ultimately led to her death, loyal idealists are particularly prone to "burnout". This kind of commitment isn't easily measured or compensated, for it touches on the absolute. As Simone Weil put it, "workers need poetry more than bread". In the same spirit, loyal idealists yearn for a life project; they yearn for meaning.

They don't need a fancy company car and or hefty bonus to commit – but they do need to learn how to preserve their energy, and to do things more simply, especially when working with less inspired peers.

2. The wayward

Detached idealists aren't unlike Kierkegaard's seducer in *Either/Or*: easily smitten by the first "disruptive" start-up, they tend to see every new project through the enchanted lens of a Casanova, each beautiful in its own way and ripe for the picking.

Their kryptonite, of course, is boredom. With time, they tend to gradually lose sight of the social relevance that initially made the project so appealing. So watch out for the "boreout" syndrome!

Detached idealists don't lack passion, but opportunities to unleash it. Managers should therefore try to spice things up in the office, by giving them new projects to work on.

3. The mercenary

Pragmatic loyalists are like mercenaries. They needn't engage in metaphysical meditation to invest in a project. They'll gladly take their cue from the 17th century philosopher René Descartes, who once chose to be "as firm and resolute in [his] actions as [he] was able, like a traveller lost in a forest who ought not to wander from side to side, far less remain in one place, but proceed constantly towards the same side in as straight a line as possible, without changing their direction for slight reasons". Why? "For in this way, if they do not exactly reach the point they desire, they will come at least in the end to some place that will probably be preferable to the middle of a forest" (*Discourse on the Method*).

As long as they have a goal, the mercenary will commit to it. That doesn't make them cynical, even less dishonest. It's just that they know how to stay the course. Never mind all that existential nonsense – loyalty is key. There's no need to bore them with lectures on the company's philosophy and core values... Pragmatic loyalists will have already understood them, and as long as they're allowed to do their job thoroughly, they'll probably embody these values better than anyone else. Problems only arise much later in their career, after many years of service: that's when their enthusiasm might start to fade.

Even the most loyal employees can fall prey to a "brownout" – that gradual but insidious form of disengagement – if instead of being encouraged to think for themselves, they're treated like machines.

4. The dilettante

Our fourth type is perhaps the most light-hearted: the “**detached pragmatic**” is very much like the waiter famously described by Jean-Paul Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*. They move from one job to another without ever fully committing to any; but it's this very sense of detachment that enables them to play each role to perfection. “All his behaviour seems to us a game” is how Sartre describes the perfect, almost artificial movements of a waiter as he moves from one table to another. “He applies himself to changing his movements as if they were mechanisms. [...] He is playing, he is amusing himself. But what is he playing? We need not watch long before we can explain it: he is playing at being a waiter in a café.”

In a way, employees who regularly change jobs could be portrayed as suffering from chronic commitment phobia. How can they do their job properly if they don't find meaning in it? But we shouldn't be so quick to judge: by refusing to care about the ultimate purpose or direction of their career, detached pragmatics can find great joy in the present moment. Combined with a benevolent form of indifference, that can make them surprisingly wise. In the absence of ultimate *meaning*, they know how to perfect *form*; or as Nietzsche said of the Greeks, “they're superficial – out of profundity!”

Employers need to respect that way of being, and avoid asking them to carry out long term projects without offering the right kind of compensation. Detached pragmatics are like Hollywood actors: no role is too difficult – as long as they're paid accordingly! For them too, acting is an art... but it can prove tiresome.

Philonomist.

Created by Philo Editions (Philosophie Magazine editor), Philonomist is a new digital media which brings a human science and philosophical point of view on organizations, work and the economy. Since January 2018, Philonomist is used as a collective intelligence platform to support tailor-made transformations of organizations.

3

KEY FINDINGS

UNDERSTANDING WHAT MAKES AN ORGANIZATION “ENGAGING”

In order to grasp what makes an organization so engaging, we have met with leaders from 5 of these engaging organizations, renowned for their high employee engagement rates. Thanks to our 7 levers matrix, we have analysed their management practices. We then met with management experts to provide an external point of view.

STEP #1: UNDERSTAND THE COMPANY’S IDENTITY, THE CHALLENGES IT FACES AND HOW IT TACKLES THEM

Each company studied was carefully selected for its outstanding performance in terms of employee engagement.

For each company assessed, we investigated the context of the company. We analysed its activities and its organization to understand who it is and what it is doing.

We then focused on the main challenges it encounters (notably engagement challenges) and how is it tackling them (notably through its management practices).

STEP #2: ANALYSIS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ACTIVATED

The second part of each case study is dedicated to the analysis of the management practices implemented.

We listed the levers of employee experience (from the Wheel of Engagement) activated by the practices and we assessed how each lever was activated to generate employee engagement.

STEP #3 : CHALLENGE THE CASE WITH EXTERNAL EXPERTS

We gathered a board of experts from our Eurogroup Managerial Innovation Lab, from top management universities across Europe and other partners to enlighten our analysis and challenge our findings.

THE ENGAGING ORGANIZATIONS WE MET



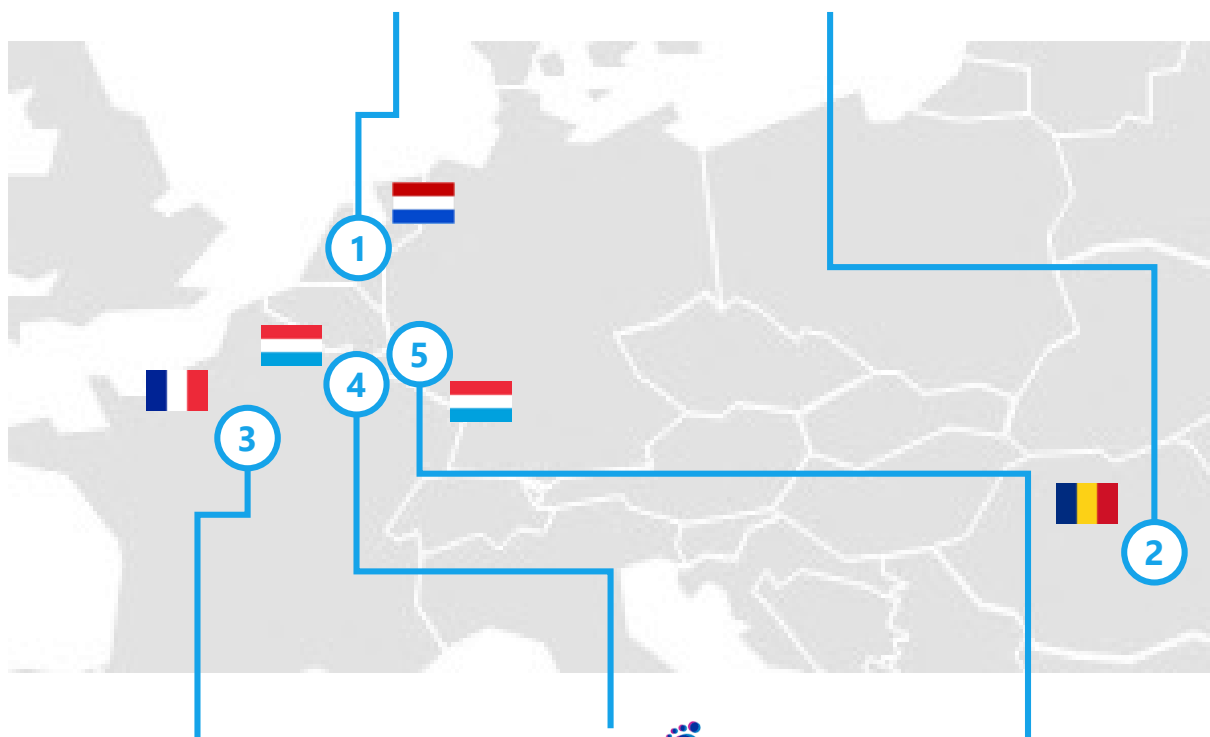
**Self-steering teams
focusing on the
purpose: delivering
high quality home
care**

**Sector: home care
Staff: 14 000**



**A flat organization
that empowers
managers to focus on
people development**

**Sector: mobility
Staff: 300**



**A strong alignment
between external and
internal brandings:
“Make low cost feel
good, make our staff
feel good”**

**Sector: airline
Staff: 1 150**



**Nurturing employee
engagement within
hyper growth context**

**Sector: marketing
Staff: 250**



**Developing team
engagement within
the constraints of the
public sector**

**Sector: parapublic
Staff: 30**

OUR BOARD OF EXPERTS



David AUTISSIER

David teaches management and change management at the undergraduate and graduate level at several renowned business schools such as IAE Gustave Eiffel University Paris Est, University Paris Dauphine, ESSEC, ESCP, and ENA. His academic work concentrates on fostering the capabilities that influence a company's ability to change.



François-Xavier DUPERRET

François-Xavier is a partnering director at Eurogroup Consulting. He is in charge of the Talente department which helps managers and leaders with their personal and professional developments. He specialises in change management and managerial development. He works in assessment, management consulting, coaching and has contributed to multiple publications on management.



Charles MERLIN

After working for two start-ups, Charles Merlin founded Wellbeing Society to support organizations of all sizes to change how they work on and improve their employees' wellbeing. Based on scientific research and with the help of researches, he designs strategies to improve well-being at work and well-being within cities. He is working with companies such as AXA, Orange and Société Générale and has built a well-being indicator for the city of Lyon.



Cécile MICHEL

Cécile is a partner at Eurogroup Consulting and has always advocated for a human centric approach. She leads the Firm's Managerial Innovation Lab, a prospective and experimental think tank designed to bring about new managerial approaches and reinvent change management methods.



Anne-Sophie MOREAU

Anne-Sophie Moreau is the Editor-in-Chief of Philonomist. After studying at France's ESSEC business school and graduating in philosophy from the École Normale Supérieure (ENS), she joined Philo Éditions (the editor of Philosophie Magazine) in 2010. A year later she oversaw the launch of the German version of the publication, Philosophie Magazin, for which she served as the editorial supervisor. Anne-Sophie is now in charge of Philonomist, the online media specially created by Philosophie Magazine for the world of business and economics.



Pierre-Antoine PONTOIZEAU

Pierre-Antoine is Director at Eurogroup Consulting and has worked in consulting for over 25 years. He guides businesses and leaders through major transformations : mergers, new strategies, performance systems.



Céline TOSI

Céline is a Director at Eurogroup Consulting and has specialized in accompanying HR and management transformation. A member of the Managerial Innovation Lab, she conducts cultural diagnostics, accompanies business transformation and hosts management conferences.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT ENGAGING ORGANIZATIONS

Engagement is complex and driven by a variety of factors. It is hard to accurately measure and has to be considered as a dynamic factor that becomes relevant when monitored over time. Nevertheless, we would like to share a few key findings and open-ended questions.

AVOID THE IMPERATIVE OF HAPPINESS

A growing number of organizations are trying to make their employees “happy”, notably by hiring “Chief Happiness Officers” and bringing fun to work. While it is reassuring to see companies caring about their employees’ happiness, we believe **it is not an organization’s duty to make its employees happy, nor is it a duty for an employee to be happy at work.**

We consider happiness to be a personal and subjective concern. Given that happiness has remained an unachieved quest for humanity since the ancient times, we doubt that work will solve it. Additionally, we have not identified a widely recognized definition of happiness, nor any satisfying way of measuring it.

As brilliantly demonstrated by Eva Illouz and Edgar Cabanas in *Happycracy, how the Science of Happiness Controls our Lives* (2018), initiatives to make employees happy tend in fact to make them less happy! Indeed, **promoting happiness at work implies a moral obligation for people to be happy at work and suggests that those that are unhappy are failing.** Thinking that work has to make us happy would then be the best way to be unhappy at work.

Every engaging company we have met has strived to meet its employees’ aspirations. None has endeavoured to make them happy. For instance Autonom chooses to improve its employees life through a stable professional situation and by paying attention to their health and education.

DO NOT WONDER ABOUT SHORT TERM “RETURN ON ENGAGEMENT”

Satisfaction surveys are evolving into **engagement surveys and employee promoter score surveys**. There are now technologies that allow us to measure employees' moods or engagement on a day-to-day basis. We can relate that many HR professionals and managers are eager to acquire these kind of tools from the “Happy Tech”.

Can these measures help set into motion key drivers of engagement ? The dynamics of engagement are highly subjective and, we believe, not fully mastered. As we show in this study, **engagement depends on a wide range of rational and emotional factors**, which impact everyone differently.

Seeing that engagement is an unpredictable, subjective notion and that *employee promoter scores* have proven rather volatile, we ask ourselves this question : **Are we not mislead and delusional in searching for a short term return on engagement ?**

Also, as shown by Bernard Coulaty in *New deal of employee engagement* (2016), it would be wrong to think of engagement as a simple “what do I do for what I get” equation. We agree with the author's insight that **looking at engagement as a transaction can only be deceptive for both sides** and “doomed to fail sooner or later”. Within this perspective, the employer will tend to think it is too generous and the employee will tend to think the deal is unfair.

Looking for a return on engagement might also be misleading because it makes us think of engagement as linear, a trend that goes up or down depending on how it is fuelled by the organization and the manager. Alongside David Autissier, we believe engagement may be cyclical. **We should therefore seek to create the right conditions for engagement cycles to be triggered** rather than look at engagement as data that needs to increase consistently.

None of the engaging organizations we met are measuring engagement more than on a yearly basis, and some are not measuring it at all. Their management practices are made to **create the conditions for engagement to happen, rather than trying to convince people to become engaged**.

RESPONSIBILITY ONLY WORKS IF IT COMES WITH REAL AUTONOMY

Managers know that autonomy and responsibility are effective ways of engaging their teams. However, we have witnessed many cases in which organizations promote responsibility without allowing their teams to be really autonomous, to take bold decisions, to try and to fail. We believe that **teams are engaged when they are given real autonomy within a well-defined playground.**

It comes with **the right to make mistakes**. How can I feel responsible for my decisions if I know I will still be closely monitored and consistently penalized for my mistakes?

It also comes with a very **clear definition of the impositions and the room to manoeuvre**. How can I be responsible if I am not aware of the decisions I can take and those I cannot?

Without any right to make mistakes and a clear definition of the scope of autonomy, urging employees to take on responsibilities can only lead to an **internalisation of the previous managerial constraints**, leading to increasing pressure while pretending the opposite.

The Buurtzorg case has also been praised by Frédéric Laloux in *Reinventing organization* (2014) as a powerful example for the autonomy given to its teams. Indeed, while teams are responsible for 90% of the decisions they make, this happens within a strict framework of rules (teams cannot exceed 12 members, for instance).

Buurtzorg management has never interfered in any decision that was within the teams' scope but has also never made an exception to the framework. **Teams feel responsible because the scope of autonomy is consistently respected.**

ALIGN WHAT YOU DO AND WHO YOU ARE

There is no doubt that **purpose and environmental and social impacts matter more and more in the attractiveness of a company and the engagement of its employees.**

“What is the point of riding a bike to work when we are working for a company whose activities contribute to global warming and natural resources depletion?” asked several thousands French students in a manifesto in 2018. Student climate change strikes all over the world are also a vivid illustration of **the will of many to work within organizations that have a strong sense of purpose.**

62% of UK students want to work in an organization with a positive impact (Global Tolerance, 2015). Talents will for sure be more and more attracted towards “purpose driven organizations” (as proposed in the coming “Pacte” law in France), or at least ones that contribute positively to society or the environment.

As seen in the Buurtzorg case, nurses are particularly engaged because the organization allows them to **dedicate themselves to the purpose they are looking for in their job:** delivering high quality healthcare for everyone.

Positive actions led by the organization outside of its core business have also shown to be very engaging for the teams. For instance, 65% of employees having participated in skill-based sponsorship activities said it strengthened their sense of belonging to their organization (Ifop, 2019).

We were also surprised to see that even when the purpose is not “positive” in itself, **the fact that everything the company does is aligned in a crystal clear manner with its values is highly engaging.**

Talkwalker has made a point in being very transparent about what they are and what it means to them (“we are not a start-up anymore, which means new ways of working”), trying to avoid misconceptions for employees while maintaining engagement in a period of strong growth.

Transavia believes in and strives to offer a collaborative experience comparable to that offered to its customers. The company cultivates a friendly state of mind, a "family" culture, based on the principle that this freedom of spirit and informal tone needs to be fostered internally before it can radiate externally. The company relies on a management approach modelled on its corporate identity : "Make low cost feel good, make our staff feel good": management proximity, participatory innovation, simple and efficient digital tools...

At Autonom, the values of the company are prompted in every office, every decision abides by these values, managers are assessed on how they contributed to it, and candidates are hired based solely on the cultural fit. The thesis paper written on the case shows **how every ritual of the company (innovative or not), is directed towards contributing to its values.**

This vision of engagement produces impressive results, but it also requires total adherence to the values of the company.

Could such a requirement become a factor of exclusion, ostracising individuals that do not totally adhere to the company values ?

Is "Engaged or out" the new "up or out"?

WHAT WILL ENGAGEMENT LOOK LIKE TOMORROW?

As of today, there might still be less enjoyable and financially rewarding jobs in the future, for which it will be harder to engage.

Does an organization need to engage everyone without exception? Will we see “two-tier engagement policies” emerge?

Younger generations are said to be keen to switch jobs more and more regularly.

How will we reconcile a long term vision of engagement and a short term vision of motivation?

36% of the US workforce is already freelancing, found an Upwork & Freelancers Union report in 2018.

How will we manage engagement in extended organizations with half of the workforce independent? How to engage with a vanishing subordinate relationship?

Remote working and technology allow us to work from anywhere and to be always connected. Meanwhile, work-life balance is becoming the number one job satisfaction factor.

How will we engage tomorrow when the workspace and the worktime frontiers are becoming blurred?

4

CASE STUDIES

BUURTZORG

SELF-STEERING TEAMS FOCUSING ON THE PURPOSE: DELIVERING HIGH QUALITY HOME CARE

DISCOVERING BUURTZORG AND ITS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Buurtzorg founders designed an innovative organizational design based on a multitude of small autonomous teams driven by a strong purpose: delivering high quality home care for everyone. Now, with over 14,000 nurses within their ranks, it has become an inspiration for the home care sector in the Netherlands and beyond, and a renowned model for “Teal” organizations (Laloux, 2014).

OUR INTERVIEWEE



Gertje van Roessel
International Director

A consistent model from the start, that has enabled Buurtzorg to conquer the local market and beyond

Buurtzorg is a Dutch not-for-profit company founded in 2006 by Jos de Blok that provides home care services. Its organisational model has been designed, since the beginning, to support the purpose of the company and its patient-centred culture (patients at Buurtzorg are called clients), and it has not changed since its inception.

Based on autonomous teams of nurses without any management or hierarchy, but **supported by coaches**, the model has enabled Buurtzorg teams to **take over the local market**, where they now operate 15% of home-care services in the Netherlands and abroad, and earned €400M in revenue in 2017.

The challenge of overthrowing the rationalization of homecare

Back in 2006, the home care industry in the Netherlands went through decades of cost reduction. This led to dehumanized services and large call centres that planned and organized nurse's work, which was very segmented.

Patients were dissatisfied with services that had no follow-up (there was a different nurse every time) and very few human relationships. Nurses were considered to have little value-add and so did not see the purpose of their work.

Buurtzorg's model proved that personalized high quality home care could be less costly and more efficient.

BUURTZORG

SELF-STEERING TEAMS FOCUSING ON THE PURPOSE: DELIVERING HIGH QUALITY HOME CARE

Buurtzorg's management practices

Buurtzorg implemented a revolutionary organizational model that reversed the trend of home care services and inspired many of its competitors worldwide, mostly based on **self-steering teams** and a **processed decision making methodology**.

Self-steering teams

Teams consist of 10 to 12 nurses with complete autonomy on how they organize their work to deliver home care services in their area. An area generally covers a neighbourhood of 15-20 000 inhabitants and takes care of 40 to 60 patients.

When teams exceed 12 nurses, they have to split the team or create a new one, within a new distinct area (two different teams never cover the same area).

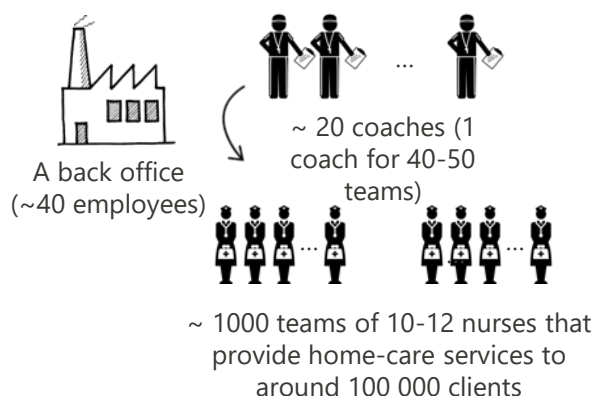
Teams take collective decisions on hiring, firing, choosing an office, allocating their budget for transportation or education, splitting or dissolving the team, etc. The central office provides the tools and support with the intention of relieving teams from burdensome administrative or technical tasks.

A digital platform helps teams share practices and learn while being spread across the country.

A processed decision-making methodology

Nurses are trained on a **Buurtzorg methodology based on non-violent communication** (Solution Driven Method of Interaction - SDMI) to avoid conflicts and facilitate decision-making. Since coming to unanimous decisions can be delicate, the method proposes that a decision is taken when everyone can say "I can live with it".

A coach is assigned to each team to introduce the rules of self-organization and support the team on how the model works. The coach does not interfere in the activity of team (he/she is not a manager).



BUURTZORG

SELF-STEERING TEAMS FOCUSING ON THE PURPOSE: DELIVERING HIGH QUALITY HOME CARE

ANALYZING THE LEVERS OF ENGAGEMENT ACTIVATED AT BUURTZORG

ENGAGEMENT LEVERS	WHAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ACTIVATE THESE LEVERS
PURPOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Buurtzorg's mission statement has been clear and unchanged since 2006. It drives all of the company's activities and model. ▪ Employee engagement is particularly strong as Buurtzorg enables nurses to dedicate themselves to the job they chose to do, while other businesses in the industry fail to do so. ▪ Everything at Buurtzorg is made to allow nurses to achieve the purpose of the company: very light back office, very limited set of rules and bureaucracy.
EMPOWERMENT & INFLUENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Team members have a high degree of influence on decisions within their organization, as nearly 100% of decisions are local. ▪ There is no manager within the team and hardly any within the company, only coaches to support the teams. ▪ All decisions made in the team are bound to a set of rules allowing anyone to speak up and influence decisions, the SDMI. ▪ Teams are fully autonomous in their scope and responsible for their clients, there are never two teams serving the same scope.
RELATIONSHIPS & LEADERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The autonomy of the teams and their collective decision-making produces a strong sense of belonging and solidarity. ▪ If the teams follow the SDMI, there should be no interpersonal issues that cannot be solved. In a job which can be highly emotional, it is critical that team members can support each other. ▪ The engagement of the teams is also boosted by the inspiring leadership of the founder, Jos de Blok, who frequently publishes insights on his blog to inform and involve nurses in the decisions made at the company level, often asking for direct feedback. ▪ In order to help nurses feel as though they are part of something bigger than their team, a social network brings together all nurses and is widely used to solve day-to-day problems.
TALENT & LEARNING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Every nurse is empowered to be skilled on every type of treatment, which implies a significant investment on training. ▪ Nurses develop competencies throughout their career as they practice a large set of skills within their job. ▪ Their growth relies on peer-training, an e-learning platform and the social network.

BUURTZORG

SELF-STEERING TEAMS FOCUSING ON THE PURPOSE: DELIVERING HIGH QUALITY HOME CARE

THE EXPERT'S POINT OF VIEW



Céline Tosi

“For Buurtzorg, the patient is a client: he is not bound, he should have the choice. This is not trivial, it implies an ability to listen, be receptive and present, both with oneself and with others. A posture made possible thanks to ways of working and an organization from which we can draw some lessons.

This model relies on a trifactor of empowerment/trust/autonomy: everyone belongs, feels useful and valued for their contribution.

The nurses are the experts (of the act and of the relationship), the coaches ensure everyone takes a step back and reflects (individual and collective distancing), and the back-office focuses on lightening administrative tasks. Management layers are also limited to the strict minimum. The model does not allow for infantilization and automatic subordination: it encourages everyone to reflect on and question their behaviour, respecting everyone's area of expertise. In this respect the system is, by nature, entirely devoted to providing excellent quality of service and strong relationships.

Moreover, in a context of intensified rationalisation, Buurtzorg has had the courage to believe in **reviving the identity of the profession**: the importance of the relationship between patient and carer is undeniable and by asking the nurses to remain “generalists” (as opposed to subordinates carrying out medical acts), **the company has managed to activate the meaningful driver that is purpose; thereby reinforcing employee engagement and customer loyalty.**

The model bears limited business rules or unnecessary activities: **any decision which can be decentralized is**. A few golden rules have been established (8 to 12 people teams, team distribution organized to facilitate local social networking) and, Buurtzorg chose to invest in conflict resolution techniques and non violent communication trainings. This dedicated choice strengthens the coherence of the model, since non-hierarchical decision-making can be complex and decisions should not be imposed.

By making patient knowledge a priority, Buurtzorg has had the courage to go against the flow, when over-rationalization, which was favoured by the market, showed signs of weakness. By respecting the identity and particularities of the job, trusting and supporting its teams, the company has managed to win 20% of the market and is an inspiration for many sectors internationally who are looking to manage transformation through innovative practices. “

BUURTZORG

SELF-STEERING TEAMS FOCUSING ON THE PURPOSE: DELIVERING HIGH QUALITY HOME CARE

OUR FINAL WORDS ON THE BUURTZORG CASE

Everything Buurtzorg does is intended to **enable nurses to be dedicated to the purpose of their job: delivering high quality home care for everyone**. In an industry in which nurses were very often hindered from doing so, we can easily understand why they are so engaged to work at Buurtzorg.

The magic was to build the simple but very innovative organizational model that allowed the restauration of the purpose. The trade-off between more autonomy and more responsibility is a new paradigm for employees. It involves new constraints of self and team accountability. By providing **complete autonomy** to employees **inside very clear boundaries and a consistent framework**, Buurtzorg made nurses jointly responsible for the success of their team and managed to allow for real autonomy while preventing the addition of additional burdens to the teams.

The Buurtzorg model **inspired many other companies**, raising the interest of other organizations across the globe. The board now helps other organizations to change their management structure and implement a similar model. They have official partners in the care sector in France, the UK, Germany and China.

There are many parts of the Buurtzorg model that can be inspiring for other organizations, starting from the SDMI methodology. **Returning to their organizational model designed from the start, and being fully driven by the purpose might be a bolder move for classic organizations.**

AUTONOM

A FLAT ORGANIZATION THAT EMPOWERS MANAGERS TO FOCUS ON PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

DISCOVERING AUTONOM AND ITS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Autonom is a family-owned car rental company with an organization designed to empower managers and foster employees' personal development, with clear values and a strong customer-centric culture. Its very own tailor-made model has been designed by two management addict founders who were inspired by several management doctrines. It has allowed the company to reach record high employee engagement and customer satisfaction levels, and to impressively compete in its market.

OUR INTERVIEWEE



Dan Stefan
General
Manager,
Co-founder

A family owned business with record high engagement levels

Autonom was created in 2005 by two brothers: Dan and Marius Stefan. They originally worked in the car rental sector and have since developed new activities within the industry such as leasing, fleet management, chauffeur services, etc. In 2017, turnover reached € 22M for more than **300 employees** across 11 business lines.

Autonom managed to obtain the **best employee engagement rates three times in the last five years in Romania**, according to Aon Hewitt's Best Employer Survey. **89% of Autonom employees said they were engaged or highly engaged in 2017**. This result is improving year upon year.

The challenge of growing with a focus on people development

In 2005, Autonom began with 5 cars and the ambition to scale up quickly while developing its employees. The mission and vision of the founder was **"our success is measured by customer satisfaction and the development of our colleagues"**. Business growth, profitability and financial stability are all natural consequences of the two."

AUTONOM

A FLAT ORGANIZATION THAT EMPOWERS MANAGERS TO FOCUS ON PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

Autonom's management practices

We were impressed by two key traits of Autonom's organization, which were also well documented within a thesis paper dedicated to the company, during which all employees were interviewed (Pălărie, 2018): the **level of autonomy given to managers** and the **focus on people development**.

A high level of autonomy given to managers

The organization is very flat with **only 3 hierarchical levels**: the board (3 people), managers and employees. All managers report directly to the board (no manager of managers). **The company considers itself a network**. Each branch and function is managed as a small company with its own P&L, to which the manager is accountable.

About 90% of decisions are taken locally, without any intervention from the board. Managers report to the board daily only on their contributions to and achievements in accordance with the company's values. It aims to both promote transparency and encourage managers to self-assess their performance (some managers even send their reports to all of the other managers).

Profits are also shared within the branch, in order to make the teams accountable for their results.

Autonom Mission and Vision

Autonom is a **family company** focused on long term development. Our success is measured in **customer satisfaction** and in the **evolution of our colleagues, business growth, profitability and financial** stability are all natural consequences of the two.

Autonom's vision is to be an authentic business model.

1. Our management system is based on **our values** and on **autonomy**
2. Autonom is a **learning organization**. We encourage the **personal development** of our colleagues and we endorse the continuous transformation of the company.
3. We have a **positive impact** in our society and environment.

Autonom's mission and vision, as prompted in every office

AUTONOM

A FLAT ORGANIZATION THAT EMPOWERS MANAGERS TO FOCUS ON PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

The focus put on people development

At Autonom, **there is no HR department. Managers dedicate 30% of their time to people development**, including HR activities. All employees are encouraged to read books to stimulate their minds (1 book per month).

Bookshelves are available in every office and a list of recommended books is given to each employee. Branches have an unlimited budget to buy new books.

Through the **Autonom foundation**, the company finances projects supported by employees to contribute to education in Romania (after school support to kids, etc.).

Our values are:

Honesty and **Integrity** are the fundamentals for developing our company

We do what is **necessary** to help our clients.

We are a **team**. Our secrets are - respect, good manners and a friendly smile.

We are **adaptable and flexible**. Simplicity is our way.

We evolve every day.

Autonom's values, as promoted in every office

AUTONOM

A FLAT ORGANIZATION THAT EMPOWERS MANAGERS TO FOCUS ON PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

ANALYZING THE LEVERS OF ENGAGEMENT ACTIVATED AT AUTONOM

ENGAGEMENT LEVERS	WHAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ACTIVATE THESE LEVERS
EMPOWERMENT & INFLUENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong autonomy is given to managers to make decisions about their own branch. The headquarter rarely interferes on manager decisions (less than 10% of the time) even less so given that there are few functional departments. ▪ Managers and employees are empowered by the financial results of their branch as they benefit from a profit sharing system that can make up a significant amount of their total package. ▪ Each employee is strongly encouraged to propose at least one idea per month to improve the company. Ideas successfully experimented at branch level can be generalized to all branches.
TALENT & LEARNING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Each employee benefits from more than 80 hours of training per year (with a mid-term objective of 100 hours). ▪ Strong feedback culture: each employee has a 4-hour feedback meeting every 6 months. ▪ All employees are strongly encouraged to read books for their personal development.
RELATIONSHIPS & LEADERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transparency is a core value at Autonom: 90% of information – including wages – is accessible in the information system. ▪ Managers strongly focus on employee development as there is no HR department, only 3 hierarchical levels in the company and they spend 30% of their time on employee development. ▪ Every decision taken on people management should be driven by the company's values. Each day managers report on how they contributed to the implementation of the company's values.
PURPOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Autonom's management system creates purpose for its employees because it puts into practice the company's mission and values. ▪ All of the practices described above were chosen because they contribute to the implementation of the values. As a result, employees can easily understand the company's mission. ▪ The values are posted everywhere in the company's offices and the founders emphasize them at any and every opportunity. ▪ Recruitment is based solely on the fit with the values, without any CV. The try out phase is then a strong test for both parties.

AUTONOM

A FLAT ORGANIZATION THAT EMPOWERS MANAGERS TO FOCUS ON PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

THE EXPERT'S POINT OF VIEW



**Pierre-Antoine
Pontoizeau**



First lesson: Autonom succeeds in ensuring full consistency between its name and its customer promise: autonomy, the manner of organizing oneself with small branches that develop autonomy and managerial values that embody autonomy daily. While large companies could lose their employees between their brand, their mission statement and their managerial values, Autonom establish a simple concept that favours engagement.

They sell autonomy to their clients, they organize the company with autonomy and they testify daily on their commitment to promote this company value. Autonom demonstrates that aligning managerial values and brand identity is a strong lever of engagement for employee.

Second lesson: employee engagement cannot be decreed, this is embodied in the leader's behaviour.

Employee engagement starts with engagement of leaders. At Autonom, founders are engaged alongside managers because the organizational hierarchy is flat, they want to be on the same playing field as nearby teams.

Even though results matter, this is a consequence and the founders focus on propagating their entrepreneurial spirit towards the empowerment of managers. They build engagement by insisting on human adventure rather than business adventure.

Third lesson: By creating a company that pledges to develop everyone, Autonom's founders created an engaging company.

This model generates cleavages because they recruit personalities instead of skills. Employees can decide whether they want to develop themselves or not, this free choice is a strong marker of engagement. Autonom aims to arouse intellectual curiosity.

However, they fully recognize that this model can't please everyone. As a result, a large portion of recruits leave the company during their probationary period. It's not a sign of failure but a matter of mutual selection. //

AUTONOM

A FLAT ORGANIZATION THAT EMPOWERS MANAGERS TO FOCUS ON PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

OUR FINAL WORDS ON THE AUTONOM CASE

Autonom has designed an innovative management model that perfectly supports the company's development and growth. To us, Autonom's key strengths in generating engagement rely on 3 dimensions **autonomy, employee development, and purpose**, supported by a key set of values:

- **Autonomy** and responsibility is promoted within teams thanks to the limited involvement of the HQ in decision-making, empowering the manager and his team to achieve results.
- A manager's top priority is **to develop his or her employee** ahead of growing his or her business.
- The mission and the values of the company which are actually put in practice enable employees to find **purpose** in their work.

This culture is at the same time very engaging and very demanding for employees and managers. According to the CEO the number of employees leaving the company at the end of their probation period is quite high. But it generates an outstanding level of engagement, **with 89% of employees engaged** inside the company, leading Autonom to win several awards for employee engagement, customer satisfaction and business achievements.

TRANSAVIA

**A STRONG ALIGNMENT BETWEEN EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL:
“MAKE LOW COST FEEL GOOD, MAKE OUR STAFF FEEL GOOD”**

DISCOVERING TRANSAVIA AND ITS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Transavia, the Air France-KLM company, has reached exceptional results within the group and has set itself apart through its management practices. Transavia France, founded in 2007, now counts almost 11,500 employees (ground and aircrew), exhibits double digit growth and last year conveyed over 7 million passengers.

OUR INTERVIEWEES



Hélène Clavé
Human Resources
Director



Maelle Rimbault
Head of Internal
Communications

To keep up with this sustained growth the company relies on a management approach modelled on its motto: “Make low cost feel good, make our staff feel good”.

A strong brand and an efficient low cost model

Transavia France is the French division of Transavia and is almost exclusively owned by Air France. It's sister company Transavia operates in the Netherlands. The latter, a historical company whose first planes took off in 1966, is owned by KLM. The two companies share a name, a business model, a website, and an image. The 35 aircraft fleet of Transavia France takes off from Paris, Lyon and Nantes.

While ten low-cost companies have closed their doors since 2017 (weakened by, among other things, increasing competition, the current uncertainty regarding Brexit and the price volatility of petrol), **Transavia sets itself apart though a strong brand and an efficient business model.**

The company ranked 6th in Capital's 2018 list of best employers of the aeronautic, naval and rail sectors. And it achieved a 9% margin in 2018. Transavia was awarded best low cost airline for the 2nd year in a row in 2017.

The challenges of exponential growth

The company has experienced 10 years of sustained growth and is anticipating further acceleration: the reception in 2019 of 5 new aircrafts will enable the launch of 14 new routes, the growth target has been set at 17%.

TRANSAVIA

A STRONG ALIGNMENT BETWEEN EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL: “MAKE LOW COST FEEL GOOD, MAKE OUR STAFF FEEL GOOD”

Ben Smith, the new General Director of Air France KLM, seems to be willing to bank on the new company and may support an even greater expansion than the 40 aircraft limit negotiated with the pilots' unions.

Such growth plans, combined with the fact that 80% of its workforce are flight crews, means the company's main challenge is to maintain its successful approach: **a simple and efficient organisational structure coupled with a digital, friendly and empowering company culture.**

An in-house DNA consistent with the external branding

For Transavia **the holidays start on the plane** and the journey has to be a fun, pleasant and enjoyable time. This entertaining and friendly approach is embodied by the commercial flight crew: personalised announcements, fancy dress, animations, Women's day, inauguration flights, Halloween, birthdays, Movember, the World cup - every event is seen as an opportunity for a "Transavia moment".

A network of **35 ambassadors** promotes these initiatives to all staff members and suggests daily activities on the internal social media network. These activities are widely shared on public social media networks and contribute to the image of the brand. They also help flight crews make on-board sales (they receive part of the takings).

To motivate this additional commitment asked of the teams (which provides the passengers with an enjoyable flight) the company strives to offer a similar experience to employees. The company cultivates a friendly state of mind, a "family" culture, based on the principle that this freedom of spirit can only exist externally if it is also alive internally.

A good example of the friendly and direct external communication is the launch of a series of videos which highlight the careers offered at Transavia and the great atmosphere of the company. The "**Saga expérience collaborateur**" is broadcasted both on its internal social network and on YouTube. Another sign of this positive and friendly image is the feedback during work interviews: applicants often mention the "likeable/friendly" image they have of the company as clients.

TRANSAVIA

**A STRONG ALIGNMENT BETWEEN EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL:
“MAKE LOW COST FEEL GOOD, MAKE OUR STAFF FEEL GOOD”**

Accountability and autonomy

The freedom of tone and the sense of initiative that are promoted by the company are also embodied in its management methods. This young company has **few hierarchical levels** and is committed to keeping this "flat" organization, despite a sustained growth that could lead to additional layers of hierarchy. **Empowering managers and increasing their responsibility is a priority for Transavia.**

Often fairly young and in-house profiles, these managers can be called to lead large teams (for instance the engineering manager was promoted in-house at 25). Even if certain rules are essential ("safety first"), the company is committed to **building management through trust rather than control and constraints.**

The management committee is accessible, open to all, anyone is welcome to present their ideas and projects directly. For instance, an employee who had been in the company for only two months submitted to the management committee the new gender equality index and the wellbeing at work agreement, a project she had lead. The flight captain and his team are also empowered through the liberty they have regarding inflight entertainment and through their role as the company's sole representatives during stop-overs (the ground crews being outsourced, they are de facto the Transavia representatives on site).

Inclusive innovation

The company believes in innovating to differentiate itself and relies on its employees to achieve this. Thus, a team of young employees with less than 4 years of seniority and representing all areas of business have put together the TO Lab, **a group of intrapreneurs.**

The TO Lab team notably launched "I Nov You", an **innovation contest that mobilized all employees** and was a great success. The TO Lab team selects the winning projects and invites the project leaders to present them to the management committee. The employee who suggested the idea and a sponsor from the TO Lab pair up to incubate and launch the selected project. The TO Lab also often welcomes **start-ups** who suggest potential innovations to the company.

TRANSAVIA

**A STRONG ALIGNMENT BETWEEN EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL:
"MAKE LOW COST FEEL GOOD, MAKE OUR STAFF FEEL GOOD"**

Digital at heart

"Digital is everywhere, improving productivity, punctuality, enhancing fluidity and lowering costs," said Nicolas Hénin, sales director, in a recent interview by Tour Mag (2019).

Undeniably, the company's ways of working and their customer relationship are close to 100% digital. The flight operations are being digitalized progressively and **the cockpits are now entirely digital. The main HR processes are (or are in the process of being) digitized** (payroll, electronic safe box, performance evaluation, etc.).

With aircrews flying all over Europe, the company has found a way, thanks to digital, to **maintain proximity with all of its employees**. One month was enough to build (from scratch) the **internal social network "Workplace"**, with the help of 60 aircrew ambassadors and a strong commitment from the managers. In just two weeks, 90% of employees had already created their profiles. Three quarters of them are active on the platform every week.

Once a month, the general manager Nathalie Stubler addresses the employees through a **"Captain speaking"** session, both in front of the teams and live on the social network. The questions are never moderated. The last episode was watched by 800 employees.

This social network is also a very efficient way to **get feedback** from those who are in direct contact with customers and operational issues. For instance, a flight crew used the social network to suggest ideas on how to reduce the company's environmental footprint.

TRANSAVIA

**A STRONG ALIGNMENT BETWEEN EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL:
“MAKE LOW COST FEEL GOOD, MAKE OUR STAFF FEEL GOOD”**

Quality of life at work, redistribution and solidarity

Transavia considers that while its prices are *low-cost* without much leeway, **the social contract between the company and its employees cannot be *low-cost*.**

The company has recently signed a **four-year wellbeing at work agreement** covering all populations, which focuses on work-life balance, gender equality, work environment and parenthood. Groups of employees are in charge of working on the layout of the workplace and have *carte blanche* on the subject (eg: Christmas trees can be found on the ceiling).

The company offers working conditions that are above market standards, and a fair redistribution of profits. Profit-sharing is regulated through minimum caps, thereby flattening the redistribution in favour of lower wages.

The company also supports its employees that get involved in **social causes** and subsidizes their projects, in particular for children's aid and health. It has for instance conveyed 80 children to Lapland in 2018 with the *Louis Carlesimo* association, and also supports *Stewardess against cancer* and *Movember*.

Finally, the company puts emphasis on being a **learning organization**. The company recruits mostly young profiles and **invests in their training** in order to help them grow; even at the risk of seeing them fly away to competitors years later.

TRANSAVIA

**A STRONG ALIGNMENT BETWEEN EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL:
“MAKE LOW COST FEEL GOOD, MAKE OUR STAFF FEEL GOOD”**

ANALYZING THE LEVERS OF ENGAGEMENT ACTIVATED AT TRANSAVIA

ENGAGEMENT LEVERS	WHAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ACTIVATE THESE LEVERS
EMPOWERMENT & INFLUENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The hierarchical structure is limited and managers are empowered, entrusted with responsibilities, leading sizable teams at a young age. ▪ The executive committee is accessible, open to all and everyone is encouraged to come and submit projects. ▪ The social network allows everyone to submit their ideas to improve the running of the company . ▪ Employees are encouraged to innovate within the TO Lab and via the "I Nov You" contest. The company gives them the mandate and the means to implement the projects selected.
WORK ENVIRONMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The company believes in and strives to offer a collaborative experience comparable to that offered to customers, through simple, digital and efficient tools. ▪ Employees are free to adjust and adapt their workplace. ▪ Working conditions are comparatively more interesting than the low-cost market standards, and the company strives to achieve a fairer redistribution of profits. ▪ Transavia offers mostly medium-haul flights which guarantees an improved work-life balance (roundtrip in a day).
RELATIONSHIPS & LEADERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proximity with the Executive Committee and the general director is preserved and cherished, in a context of strong growth, thanks to the social network. ▪ The social network also promotes transparency and helps involve the employees in the decision-making. ▪ The company strives to keep alive the "Transavia atmosphere" and the fact that everyone is encouraged to express themselves. ▪ The management is built on trust rather than control and constraints.
PURPOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aviation and airline professions are often passionate, sector-enthusiast activities. The company believes in this mandate : bring people together and enable them to discover more. These jobs are still today the stuff of dreams, embodying a certain prestige; this still attracts many a candidate!

TRANSAVIA

**A STRONG ALIGNMENT BETWEEN EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL:
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THE EXPERT’S POINT OF VIEW



**Cécile
Michel**

In my opinion, the strength of Transavia's cultural and managerial model lies in the coherence of its managerial practices and the consistency between these practices and its overall strategy. There is a strong alignment between its internal practices and external practices (symmetry between the client promise and the employer promise). The engagement drivers used by Transavia are complementary and create a virtuous cycle.

Aware of this, Transavia has adopted a comprehensive approach in order to ensure greater efficiency. Indeed, I agree that empowerment cannot be achieved without trust nor a friendly atmosphere reached without some form of autonomy.

The strength of this model is also that it has managed to find the right leading-edge drivers. Transavia is a company ahead of its time! While, in recent years, in order to meet the expectations of employees, companies have focused closely on the notion of happiness in the workplace, the same cannot be said about freedom at work. As it is freedom, and even more so the freedom of tone of the Transavia teams, is not as common as companies are willing to admit. It meets a growing need amongst the young generation, rooted in the “me” culture (each has their own lifestyle and way of doing things). This gives Transavia a very innovative image in terms of management.

The originality of the model is also based on the empowerment and autonomy given to many employees, not just a small group of employees (mainly managers). They are frequently invited to be proactive on various subjects: they can chair and be ambassadors for programmes, lead projects via dedicated schemes such as the TO Lab. Empowered and able to work in close proximity with the top management, they are part of the decision-making process of the company.



TRANSAVIA

**A STRONG ALIGNMENT BETWEEN EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL:
“MAKE LOW COST FEEL GOOD, MAKE OUR STAFF FEEL GOOD”**

OUR FINAL WORDS ON THE TRANSAVIA CASE

Transavia is an interesting example of an engaging organization, for multiple reasons :

- **A “flat” structure** and transparent ways of working which prevail despite sustained growth, which is what ensures such steady growth;
- A desire to address equally with **thoughtful intentions its customers and employees**; and a strong porosity between external and internal events and communication (in-flight animation videos published on the internal network which become means of communicating externally, external digital applications that dictate internal digital applications);
- **The freedom of spirit and empowerment of management** and employees, which are an integral part of the Transavia model and its management methodologies;
- **The “magnetic” aspect of the airline sector** which is attractive and engaging, comparable to the appeal of social or environmental organizations (such as our Buurtzorg case).

None of the drivers of engagement used by Transavia seem to be out of reach for other organizations. This type of engaging organization is a **clever blend of different drivers of engagement which evolve as the company grows** and succeed despite limited means.

Finally, in this case, as in most of those we have studied, the **example given by leaders appears to be the key to engagement.**

NURTURING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT WITHIN A HYPER GROWTH CONTEXT

DISCOVERING TALKWALKER AND ITS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Talkwalker is a successful B2B SaaS start-up whose rapid growth over the past few years has provoked changes in the company culture. The founders decided to get a handle on the culture quickly to avoid any negative impacts of this shift in employee engagement and to secure the growth in headcount.

OUR INTERVIEWEE



Matthieu van Roy
Head of Human
Resources

An international start-up based in Luxembourg

Talkwalker was founded in 2009 as a **start-up** in Luxembourg by two co-founders.

It offers a powerful suite of B2B **marketing analytics software** that enables brands to monitor and analyse their presence on the internet, and on social media in particular.

More than **2,000 global brands choose Talkwalker solutions** to design and monitor their social media strategy.

Talkwalker is based in Luxembourg and operates in several locations worldwide, including in the United States and Europe.

The challenge of hyper-growth

Both the firm's business and its number of employees have seen tremendous growth: the team **went from 20 employees in 2012 to 250 in 2018**, with ambitions to **double this figure by 2020**.

To achieve this ambitious goals, the founders need to **maintain employee engagement** and retain talent, despite **moving away from the start-up culture** that contributed to their success in the first place.

NURTURING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT WITHIN A HYPER GROWTH CONTEXT

Talkwalker's management practices

Talkwalker created a HR department in 2016 and **recruited a Head of HR** to ensure the growth of staff, to foster engagement within teams and to secure critical processes. Several initiatives were **launched to develop employee engagement and facilitate this cultural shift**.

Securing key assets

The company assesses a dozen essential positions within operational teams to **structure the organizational chart and defines required skills** for each position. This aims to **provide each key profile employee with an awareness of their progress** and a long term vision of their career development within the company, with the goal of retaining key talent.

Fostering a feedback culture

The management fosters a **feedback culture** whereby new managers are encouraged to **provide structured feedback** (both positive and negative) to ensure that every employee in the company gets feedback on his/her performance. It seeks to compensate for the fact that the larger the firm, the lesser an employee may observe the impact of their work.

Allowing real autonomy to focus on people development

The founders gradually **decentralize** strategic decisions from C-Level (co-founders) to Vice Presidents (board members) so that they are able to get closer to employees and **concentrate on engagement and employee development** (board members rather concentrating on P&L issues).

Transparency first

The management **communicated transparently** with their employees and with the media about the cultural shift, assuming the company is not a start-up anymore, switching to more structured ways of working, more specialized positions, and evolving expectations from the staff toward the organization.

TALKWALKER

NURTURING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT WITHIN A HYPER GROWTH CONTEXT

ANALYZING THE LEVERS OF ENGAGEMENT ACTIVATED AT TALKWALKER

ENGAGEMENT LEVERS	WHAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ACTIVATE THESE LEVERS
RELATIONSHIPS & LEADERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The team launches a lot of events to foster relationships between employees. Team events (lunches, after-work events, etc.) are organized every week to encourage teams to mix. ▪ The founders are still involved in operational activities (for instance the CTO recruits and onboards all new joiners to his teams) but have gradually decentralised decisions from the founders level to board members. This aims at increasing the proximity between managers and employees, and making managers aware of their responsibility towards employee development in a context where the number of levels in the hierarchy is increasing.
PURPOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The identification of specific competency requirements for all the key positions helps to provide employees with a long-term vision of their progress and what is expected from them. It should help them to contemplate their development within the company. It is a strong cultural shift given that beforehand, when the organization was smaller, they looked for more versatile profiles, and they are now looking for specialists. ▪ The founders communicate transparently on the transformation of the company. They do not consider themselves to be a start-up anymore and they assume this change in front of the teams.
TALENT & LEARNING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Talkwalker is among the most innovative companies in the field of AI and data science. As a consequence, it offers very interesting opportunities for employees to develop skills in these fields, which is promoted both internally and externally. ▪ The managers seek to develop a strong feedback culture to ensure that all employees receive constructive feedback on their performance and that they can foresee the impact of their activity on the company's results.
COMPENSATION & BENEFITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As the company grows, additional benefits are progressively offered to employees (such as stock options) that contribute to generating long-term engagement. ▪ Challenges are often organized with financial incentives, offering for instance an additional day off if annual revenue exceeds a certain amount.

TALKWALKER

NURTURING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT WITHIN A HYPER GROWTH CONTEXT

THE EXPERT'S POINT OF VIEW



**Charles
Merlin**



Scaling-up has always been a perilous step for companies, even more so when this change occurs suddenly. Although most engagement levers are deployed when a company is still a start-up (with high levels of autonomy, proximity, transparency and interpersonal interactions ...) they are gradually diluted as the company grows. Proactively employing practices that enhance these engaging management methods is the key to success. For instance, Talkwalker created practices that aim to integrate feedback in their way of working. Further, Talkwalker didn't fall into the trap of individual bonuses to make employees feel like a part of the common adventure.

This case is similar to the significant growth that Spotify had a few years ago. They undertook innovative practices to maintain their culture. They emphasized, among other things, the creation of an agile team organization (the famous guild). In another context, major firms like Michelin or Haier took bold decisions to offer an engaging working experience to their employees.



OUR FINAL WORDS ON THE TALKWALKER CASE

Talkwalker have taken up the challenge to maintain **employee engagement while growing** and letting go of the start-up culture, by focusing on :

- **Ensuring continuous employee development** by leveraging interest in the job through a feedback culture and providing clear expectations of requirements for each position (unlike the usual start-up culture where generalist profiles may usually be expected).
- **Developing interpersonal relationships** (everyone knows one another) ensuring the increasing number of employees and growing number of processes does not affect the relationships between people.
- **Communicating with transparency** to their employees about the on-going transformation.



HOUSE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

DEVELOPING TEAM ENGAGEMENT WITHIN THE CONSTRAINTS OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

DISCOVERING HOE AND ITS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

House of Entrepreneurship offers services to entrepreneurs established in Luxembourg. In 2016, it decided to expand its offer and recruit while renewing its management. Since then, it has been a success thanks notably to new management methods.

OUR INTERVIEWEE



Tom Baumert
CEO

A one-stop shop for entrepreneurs

House of Entrepreneurship is an initiative created by the Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce with the support of the Ministry of Economy.

It offers a full range of **services for entrepreneurs** in Luxembourg (from formalities in trading and export, to trainings or the organization of networking events) through its “one-stop shop”, a counter that brings together all of the parties involved in the business creation value chain in Luxembourg.

The challenge of engaging within constraints

In 2016, House of Entrepreneurship raised its ambition and took the decision to widen the range of services offered to entrepreneurs. From a team of 8 versatile employees, they now have **almost 30 employees** assigned to four departments (lobbying, formalities, services, one-stop shop).

The challenge for the management team was to **attract, retain and engage employees within the existing constraints**. The Chamber of Commerce is a hierarchical structure with strict processes. Managers have less room for manoeuvre to reward their teams.

The progress of remuneration is collective and not linked to individual performance. It is then a challenge to recruit locals, often more attracted by large public administrations (who offer even better conditions than the private sector).



HOUSE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

DEVELOPING TEAM ENGAGEMENT WITHIN THE CONSTRAINTS OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

HOE's management practices

To develop team engagement within the constraints of the public sector and attract new employees, the team implemented different management practices, betting on a new identity, new ways of working, and new participative ways of managing.

A new identity

The team **renewed the branding** of the structure and renamed "*Espace Entreprise*" to "House of Entrepreneurship".

The title of each position was customized from a public administration naming ("attaché", "secrétaire") to a private sector/start-up naming ("CEO"). The team moved into a new dedicated workspace to host entrepreneurs with a modern design and switched to a flex office.

New ways of working

The team fosters ownership of project managers and new ways of working to deliver projects faster. Projects are driven with a *lean start-up* method to gain in **flexibility and agility**. While previously projects needed to be well defined to be presented to the board, they are now presented at an experimental stage to allow for testing, failing, and to achieve overall progress faster.

New management practices

Participative management practices were set up, with regular meetings in which everyone comes with one idea to discuss on how to improve ways of working.



HOUSE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

DEVELOPING TEAM ENGAGEMENT WITHIN THE CONSTRAINTS OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

ANALYZING THE LEVERS OF ENGAGEMENT ACTIVATED AT HOUSE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

ENGAGEMENT LEVERS	WHAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ACTIVATE THESE LEVERS
EMPOWERMENT & INFLUENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With the increasing specialization of positions going along with the growth of the team, employees are dedicated to an area of expertise. Management fosters autonomy and controls work less. Employees are encouraged to propose and launch new projects. For instance, it was following employees' ideas that HOE successfully remodelled the entrance area and adapted processes to improve customer satisfaction. In a dedicated regular meeting, employees are encouraged to suggest ideas on improving their ways of working.
TALENT & LEARNING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New ways of working inspired by start-ups were implemented in order to develop agility in project management ("lean start-up"). Employees are encouraged to present unfinished projects to the board in order to receive feedback early. This enables employees to spend more time on essential tasks and to learn more. Additionally, the teams seek to learn and try new methods that are applied in other sectors. The training budget was significantly increased to develop the skills of the current workforce.
RELATIONSHIPS & LEADERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop relationships within the team, a social space was created inside the office where events are frequently organized. The team leader implements a participative management style that contributes to reducing the distance with management.
FEEDBACK & RECOGNITION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As the leverage on salaries is limited, other ways of rewarding employees were found, such as offering well-known trainings and certifications from leading business schools to the best performing employees. The number of feedback meetings per year increased to a minimum of two. Constant feedback should be given to all employees.
PURPOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The branding of the House of Entrepreneurship was renewed to better reflect the employees' mindset (less than 35 years old on average and international backgrounds). A three to five-year vision of the House of Entrepreneurship was crafted to provide a longer term perspective to employees.



HOUSE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

DEVELOPING TEAM ENGAGEMENT WITHIN THE CONSTRAINTS OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

THE EXPERT'S POINT OF VIEW



**François-Xavier
Duperret**

// I find the "House of Entrepreneurship" business case particularly interesting because it seems to revisit some of the myths or beliefs every manager has interest in rethinking. By "myths or beliefs" I mean the limits we rightly or wrongly set for ourselves, that prevent of us from moving mountains.

The first myth is the perception of a lack of room for manoeuvre: in the case of House of Entrepreneurship, there is no doubt that the leader must find the right mix between respect of the existing framework of its public structure and the boldness to get things moving, to challenge status quo. No major change occurs without going through a phase of dizziness. This statement raises the issue of the manager's ability to demonstrate bravery, to run the risk of confrontation, to face other's looks and engage in decisions and actions that expose beyond the authorized perimeter. Each manager has to move the cursor to the most appropriate position between conformism and creative disobedience to bring actual added value.

The second myth can be summed up by the common sentence "I don't have the resources": succeeding in attracting, retaining and growing talents within your team without having the financial resources or competitive compensation to compete with private companies raises two questions:

- What creates engagement and makes employees want to go beyond?
- How do you work with your existing resources and support their development instead of surrendering and declaring "I don't have the resources"?

In this case, the team leader must find other means of recognition and motivation (an inspiring project, a refreshed brand, a strong feeling of belonging to a new project, an innovative management method, etc.) in order to retain talent and achieve collective success.

The third myth would be to think that because contemporary management methods advocate for a more participative and consultative approach, that authority fades away for the benefit of a self-directed collective. In the case of House of Entrepreneurship, as in many other success stories, we have someone authoritative who embodies inspiring leadership. These forms of leadership evolve with a management style that frees decision-making, initiates more consultation and participation, puts into place self-directed or autonomous teams. But, the figure of authority that inspires transformation, that reassures when the boat is rocked, often continues to be embodied by emblematic figures.

OUR FINAL WORDS ON THE HOUSE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP CASE

HOE succeeded in attracting and engaging new people to help reach its growth objectives **by implementing simple and efficient practices.**

The team leader identifies all of the levers on which he has room to manoeuvre and he **adapts his management practices** to make the most of these small areas of leeway.

This management model contributes to **reducing the turnover** rate from 30% before 2016 to almost 0%, as well as developing the reputation of the organization to attract new talents.

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