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The power of purpose

06 Letter from the dean
Prof. Steef van de Velde reflects on the school’s deep sense of community and the inspiring alumni who lead the way in showing how businesses with a real sense of purpose can benefit society.

08 News from RSM
A round-up of news and activities from around the world of RSM.

14 Movers and shakers
Keep up to date with the career moves of fellow alumni.

16 Alumni awards
In line with RSM’s mission, the annual Distinguished Alumni Awards were presented to individuals from the school’s community for actions that clearly show there are many routes to being a force for positive change.

20 Defining the essentials of purpose
A review of the 10th annual RSM Leadership Summit, which explored the fundamental power of purpose for people and organisations in the context of leadership, business and management.

24 Marlies Dekkers: making a difference for women
Award-winning designer Marlies Dekkers burst onto the fashion scene with the launch of her first lingerie collection in 1993. Driven by a powerful sense of inner purpose, she is unrelenting in encouraging and inspiring women to follow their dreams.

28 Shaun Tomson: power through purpose
Acknowledged as one of the greatest surfers of all time, Shaun Tomson talks about how we can all harness our inner power by understanding the deep sense of purpose that drives us, and by developing a personal code with which we can live our lives.

32 MBA alumni reunited
Across a sunshine-filled and event-packed two days in October, alumni and staff got together to share memories, talk about how their lives have progressed, and to renew their bonds of friendship.
Business research and education for hands-on experience in data analytics. RSM has a new specialist research centre to support organisations in turning data into business value through five areas of expertise:

- Digital business
- Marketing analytics
- Audit, accounting and control analytics
- Financial innovation and technologies (FinTech)
- Smart cities and communities.

The centre offers:
- Methodologies to analyse and visualise data
- Training and skills development for executives, and at bachelor and master level
- Expert knowledge on data governance for businesses to benefit from the digital transformation
- Access to students, the academic community and hands-on analytical skills
- A data lab and test hub hosted with founding partners to identify business opportunities.

Find out how we can enhance your data knowledge: www.rsm.nl/data

Big data is not about big data, it's about competence.

Enhancing your data knowledge

Rotterdam School of Management
Erasmus University

RSM - a force for positive change
Big data is not about big data, it’s about competence.

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It was, I must say, a truly memorable event. And just a week later the first cohort of the Rotterdam-Cologne EMBA graduated, which also makes us very proud indeed.

I’m sure you will join me in welcoming these 1,500 new MSc and EMBA graduates into the RSM community, which now comprises more than 38,000 alumni. And to show just how global our community is, 41 per cent of you are international (non-Dutch), and 32 per cent of you live outside of the Netherlands. RSM really does have an impressive international reach!

In October, I took immense pride in leading the MSc graduation ceremony through the streets of Rotterdam. People stopped and cheered, graduates and their families celebrated and, thanks to the power of social media, they shared this never-to-be-forgotten day with friends all over the world.

One of the great inevitabilities of graduations is that there will be reunions. On p32, you can read about the recent MBA reunion that took place in Rotterdam. It spanned 30 years of graduations and beautifully reflects the deep sense of community we have, not just as a school, but also across generations.

What you do as alumni inspires us tremendously. Acknowledging that, the RSM Distinguished Alumni Awards took place in October. The Awards recognise the outstanding achievements made by entrepreneurially spirited members of the RSM community.
who, in keeping with our mission to be a force for positive change, lead the way in showing how businesses with a real sense of purpose can benefit society. I extend my congratulations to the worthy winners. Read all about them on p.16.

Also in line with our mission, Rob van Tulder, professor of international business-society management at RSM, has just published a ground-breaking book explaining how leaders can successfully align their organisation with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The book, *Business & The Sustainable Development Goals: A Framework for Effective Corporate Involvement*, is available to download free of charge from the RSM website (see News pages for details).

Highlighting the fact that a desire for positive change has always been central to what we do, on p.40 we pay homage to our Department of Business-Society Management, which celebrates 20 years of leading the way in “mainstreaming sustainable business”. It’s worth noting that when the department was established in 1998, it was completely unique among European business schools.

Earlier this year, all 21 of RSM’s degree programmes went through a full accreditation process by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) and the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). The joint NVAO-AACSB panel stated it was particularly impressed, not just by the school’s mission, but also by the ways in which it is being lived in everyday life, through our education programmes, collaborative spirit, and through the quality and impact of our academic research.

To be a force for positive change is much more than just a mission – it is our purpose. Reflecting this, the power of purpose was the theme of this year’s RSM Leadership Summit (see p.20). As former world champion surfer, successful entrepreneur, best-selling author and inspiring motivational speaker Shaun Tomson made so clear during his emotionally moving talk at the Summit, purpose is power. It is the power to inspire, motivate and influence others in a positive way (read our interview with Shaun Tomson on p.28).

To conclude, RSM is very firmly headed in the right direction. It takes time, of course, but we are already witnessing the positive effects. And as we approach the end of one year and look forward to the start of another, I am absolutely certain that RSM – and you, the alumni who are the very heart of our community – will be in full, unstoppable stride as we expand our influence and ability to make a lasting difference together.

Best wishes to you for a peaceful and prosperous 2019.

*Steef van de Velde*
Dean and Professor
Rotterdam School of Management
Erasmus University
NEWS FROM RSM

MSC GRADUATES’ FIRST JOBS
Young RSM master alumni are increasingly employed by multinationals and the digital sector, according to RSM’s latest MSc Employment Report. The details about the first jobs of RSM graduates are based on a survey conducted in April 2018. See more statistics for young alumni who graduated between 2016 and 2017 at www.rsm.nl/msc-employment-report

SILICON VALLEY NETWORKING
Several alumni in the San Francisco area met up with about 40 RSM honours students aspiring to become managers and entrepreneurs. The international bachelor students were on a study trip to Silicon Valley to tackle business challenges and visit companies such as Tesla, Google, NASA and YouTube. Alumni said they were inspired by the students, and can benefit from this direct access to RSM’s talent pool. www.rsm.nl/engage

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP SCALE-UP
Alumnus Evan van der Holst (MScBA Master in Management 2017) won the Rotterdam Thesis Award, an initiative by the City of Rotterdam and Erasmus University. The jury said Evan’s master thesis offers rich insights into how social entrepreneurs go about their business and what they require from their surrounding ecosystem to achieve scale-up.

CEMS ALUMNI OF THE YEAR
Alumnus Hassan Yassine (MSc International Management/CEMS 2009) is one of the three CEMS Alumni of the Year 2018 candidates in the Senior Leader category. The co-founder and chief revenue officer at GAIA Design in Mexico was recognised for his achievements by the CEMS Alumni Association out of 13,000+ CEMS alumni worldwide. RSM exchange student Maximilian Tayenthal (CEMS 2005, WU Vienna) is also nominated in the same category. Winners will receive their award at the CEMS Annual Events in Malta in December 2018. www.cemsalumni.org

ALUMNA WINS PRIZE IN PARIS
Cécile Duriez (OneMBA 2014) received the Prix du Meilleur Pitch 2018 (Best Pitch Award 2018) at the Paris Chamber of Commerce after presenting her platform for baby-sitting exchange to fellow entrepreneurs and investors. She has been developing her start-up business Kidwi at the Chamber’s incubator hub Incuba’School in France since May 2018, and the Kidwi website went live in June. The pitch competition took place at Incuba’School’s “Demo Day” last summer. www.kidwi.com
FORMER PRIME MINISTER ON SHARED VALUE

Former Dutch prime minister, Prof. Jan Peter Balkenende, met around 175 alumni from RSM’s Parttime Master Bedrijfskunde on campus on 12 September. They explored ways in which commercial companies are creating economic and social value. He said the government’s role should be to finance innovation and adapt regulations nationally and locally for companies of all sizes. He argued governments should also promote sustainable procurement and encourage partnerships that create networks of organisations in supply, manufacturing and distribution chains.  

WEB www.rsm.nl/pmb-alumni

WELCOME, NEW ALUMNI!

Welcome to the alumni network to all 1,497 of you who have just celebrated the completion of your master studies! More than 800 graduates joined the procession in Rotterdam’s city centre and the ceremony at De Doelen on 6 October. Keynote speakers included Allard Castelein, CEO of Port of Rotterdam, who told graduates they are ‘in a unique position to make your voices heard, and in that way to influence and change society.’ A warm welcome too, to the 610 new BSc alumni who graduated in mid-November. Good luck, and stay in touch!  

WEB www.rsm.nl/alumni

FIRST COLOGNE-ROTTERDAM EMBA GRADUATION

The first cohort of the Cologne-Rotterdam EMBA celebrated its graduation in October. Keynote speaker Dr Carsten Pillath, director-general in the Secretary-General for Economic Affairs and Competitiveness of the Council of the European Union, admitted having great respect for the graduates, but was also a little jealous of their wide experience of industry sectors and cultures which may have shaped their views on management and leadership. Of the international group, 16 out of 20 attended the ceremony for the graduation, which was officiated by the Deans of RSM and UoC.  

WEB www.rsm.nl/EMBAcologne

GLOBAL ONEMBA GRADUATION

The value of standing for positive and inclusive change was proven by guest speakers and the Class of 2018 at the graduation of RSM’s Global Executive OneMBA in summer 2018. The 32 new alumni represent 13 nationalities. Keynote speaker Lucile de Godoy (RSM OneMBA 2004) shared her story of personal realisation and reinvention, and class representatives Elisabeth Stevens (Booking.com) and Jasper Petit (Bouwinvest Real Estate Investment Management) shared their academic and social highlights.  

WEB www.rsm.nl/onemba
GOAL-SETTING TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE CAREERS

Learning new cooking skills was only one of the highlights for alumni from various RSM programmes who gathered in Munich to reconnect, meet new people, and develop their critical thinking around thought-leadership in business. This year’s annual leadership weekend in Germany in June was themed around building a successful and sustainable career, and how to stay competitive and grow skill sets. [WEB](www.rsm.nl/alumni/events)

SOCIAL INNOVATION AWARD

Sam van Tol (BSc Bedrijfskunde 2015 and MSc Strategic Entrepreneurship 2016) won the Duurzame Dinsdag social innovation award from the Dutch government. He impressed the jury with his organisation Correctbook and its business model of doing good by fighting illiteracy through reusable notebooks. The award was given by the company Asito and Dutch Secretary of State Stientje van Veldhoven in The Hague in September. [WEB](www.correctbook.nl)
SCHOLARSHIPS CONTINUE
Six of the donors to the Entrepreneurial Spirit Scholarship came together in October to connect with the current scholarship recipients and to sign agreements to continue the scholarship for 2019-2020. The scholarship is offered to BSc International Business Administration (IBA) students for the three years of their studies. It was established by alumni Alexandre Moneton (IBA 2011 and MSc International Management/CEMS 2014) and Jasper J.J. Buntix (IBA 2012 and MSc Finance & Investments 2014). Read more about them on p16. Would you like to help talented young people study at RSM? If so, visit WEB www.rsm.nl/donate

VOLUNTEERS WANTED
Can you volunteer to help make our local community in the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg even stronger? There are so many of you in the area, so we want more opportunities for you to stay connected with us and each other. But we need help! Will you take an active role in connecting RSM’s Benelux community? At the same time, expand your own network or just have fun with other RSM graduates. Let us know via EMAIL mmikec@rsm.nl

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS
MINDFULNESS BOOSTS CREATIVITY
It only takes one 10-minute session of mindfulness meditation to result in workers producing a wider range of solutions for a problem — and employees who generate fresh ideas can boost a company’s innovation. But hectic work environments and stress can easily undermine anyone’s focus and creativity, according to Emma Schootstra (MSc Management of Innovation 2016) and researchers Evgenia Dolgova and Dr Dirk Deichmann. Watch their short animation on WEB www.rsm.nl/discovery

POWER STRUGGLES IN TEAMS
Power struggles in teams can hurt organisations. Research by RSM’s Dr Lisanne van Bunderen shows power struggles erupt when teams are threatened or face uncertainty, and it’s individualistic in nature. One way to avoid them is to create teams without hierarchy. See how Lisanne’s research can benefit your team at WEB www.rsm.nl/discovery

POWER AND NARCISSISM AT WORK
In Greek mythology, the hunter Narcissus fell in love with his reflection. But self-obsessed narcissists are no myth in the modern workplace. They reveal themselves by taking credit for others’ work, name-dropping, and enjoying positions of power and privilege. People assumed narcissists tended to find powerful positions for themselves, but research by RSM’s Dr Nicole Mead and Dr Anika Stuppy suggests that power itself may create narcissists. Watch their video at WEB www.rsm.nl/discovery
TELL US YOUR NEWS!

We love to hear about your achievements, such as prizes, projects and parties involving RSM alumni! Whether it’s a business award, nomination for something awesome, or if you’re busy in the RSM network, let us know and we’ll try to squeeze your news into RSM Outlook! Send details and photos to EMAIL alumni@rsm.nl

SÃO PAULO ALUMNI GET-TOGETHER

RSM alumni in Brazil met up in September in São Paulo for social networking at the 3 Brasseurs Bar. Many local alumni organise regular get-togethers in São Paulo, so they created an RSM Brazil group on WhatsApp to make it easier to connect to each other. Now there are more than 50 of you in this group! Contact the alumni team to join in via EMAIL alumni@rsm.nl

SEPTEMBER REUNION

Thirty alumni from the 2009-2010 MSc Entrepreneurship & New Business Venturing programme came together in September. Their day included time on campus, lunch at the Fenix Food Factory and a visit to CityHub Rotterdam, one of the successful start-ups that originated from RSM’s MSc Entrepreneurship & New Business Venturing.

AN MBA MATCH

First stop after city hall on their wedding day for alumni couple Clarissa Accioly and Maarten Laheij was RSM. The MBA team welcomed them back in September for a wedding photo session. Said Maarten: ‘I thought it would be nice to take a trip down memory lane and to have some meaningful pictures.’

The couple met at RSM when Maarten’s cohort (MBA 2013) welcomed Clarissa’s cohort (MBA 2014). ‘For me it was love at first sight,’ said Clarissa, but it wasn’t until after a group evening out that they started talking. Maarten admits he was slow off the mark, but proved himself when he persevered with house-training the couple’s dog, Sunshine. ‘Maarten took care of her. At the end of that week I realised he was a keeper,’ said Clarissa.

Their studies have been valuable in their developing relationship, particularly for the differences in their cultural backgrounds: they remember what they learned about metamessages. ‘Whenever we can’t understand each other, we say: OK, what’s your metamessage?’ said Clarissa, adding that: ‘I believe that our RSM MBAs make it easier for both of us to support each other’s career choices.’

Maarten agrees: ‘Yes, we are still perfecting listening skills! The RSM focus on soft skills like culture, communication, equality and acceptance really gave us a solid base.’ Congratulations and best wishes to the happy MBA couple! Got an RSM romance story too? Then get in touch via EMAIL alumni@rsm.nl

RSM - a force for positive change
BOOK OF WINNING STRATEGIES
Increasing technological disruption means more strategic challenges for business leaders. So how can you create and execute an effective business strategy? RSM’s Dr Marc Baaij and Prof. Patrick Reinmoeller’s new book Mapping a Winning Strategy – Developing and Executing a Successful Strategy in Turbulent Markets presents a new approach to strategic decision-making to motivate and mobilise stakeholders to achieve overarching business goals.

FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIES
A framework for effective corporate involvement in the UN Sustainable Development Goals has recently been published as part of RSM’s Series on Positive Change. Written by RSM’s Prof. Rob van Tulder, Business & The Sustainable Development Goals: A Framework for Effective Corporate Involvement gives chapter-by-chapter guidance with an integrated vision of complex societal problems. Download it free of charge at www.rsm.nl/positivechange.

Part-time PhD Programme in Management

New knowledge from research is always needed in business. Sometimes, the best person to carry out that research is you.

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Are you interested in further developing your academic skills while working? Submit your application before before 15 March to start in September 2019.

More information on: www.rsm.nl/part-time-phd
Keep up to date with the professional advancements of fellow alumni as they develop their careers and move not only to new positions and companies, but also to different countries. Making a career move? If so, contact us at alumni@rsm.nl

Wouter Alders  
MScBA Strategic Management 2011  
Moves from role as country manager Indonesia, Air France-KLM to become commercial director Spain and Portugal, Air France-KLM.  
Effective: July 2018

Ozgur Butun  
Executive MBA 2017  
Leaves position as platformization and modularity programme manager, Philips, to take on new responsibilities as global head of business transformation, Asics.  
Effective: July 2018

Saurabh Ghelani  
Executive MBA 2016  
Was managing consultant, PA Consulting Group, UK. Is now EMEA strategic trust leader, Google (Switzerland).  
Effective: September 2018

Paula Gonzalez  
Executive MBA 2016  
Is promoted from team leader of the industry specialist team (strategy and marketing), Paques, to role as head of global services Europe, China, India, North America, Brazil and Asia Pacific, with the same organisation.  
Effective: March 2018

Ngozi Amobi  
MBA 2017  
Formerly marketing manager, Damco. Is now regional head of marketing, Europe, with the same organisation (the Netherlands).  
Effective: April 2018

Carlo Durando  
MBA 2004  
The former partner at Equita Group takes on new challenges as managing director – head of global investment banking, Credit Agricole CIB (Italy).  
Effective: March 2018

Juliana Gomez  
MBA 2017  
The senior consultant business finance, Deloitte, is now wholesale control manager Middle East, Africa & Netherlands, PVH Corp.  
Effective: September 2018

Djon Kleine  
MSc Business Information Management 2013  
Moves from Boston Consulting Group in Amsterdam to take on role as project leader with the same organisation (San Francisco, USA).  
Effective: January 2018

Hans Lagerweij  
MSc Business Administration 1996  
Previously portfolio managing director TUI Travel/Travelopia. Is now president and CEO, Victory Cruise Lines (Miami, USA).  
Effective: February 2018

Nikos Kyvranoglou  
MBA 2014  
The key account sales manager Northern Europe, Novacom Trailermatics, the Netherlands, is now chairman and CEO, Eagle Stone Group SA (Greece).  
Effective: June 2018
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- Post your job or internship vacancy on our online job board
- Reach thousands of international and Dutch students and alumni from RSM’s bachelor, master and MBA programmes – and browse the online CV database.

Contact us to find out how your organisation can prepare for the future with our students’ new and valuable ideas.

More information at jobboard.rsm.nl | careerservices@rsm.nl | +31 10 4082010
COMMITTED TO POSITIVE CHANGE

When RSM opened up the public nomination process for this year’s Distinguished Alumni Awards, it asked for alumni who demonstrated RSM’s mission. The Awards were presented during a dynamic and purposeful RSM Leadership Summit at the Van Nelle Fabriek in Rotterdam, and this year’s four awards were presented for actions that clearly show there are many routes to being a force for positive change.

Story by Justine Whittern  Photos Geert de Jong/cheeseworks.nl & Joe Farthing

Recipients for the Awards were chosen from more than 38,000 alumni worldwide by the RSM community for their achievements or for their voluntary work. They were short-listed by a jury of six: RSM’s Prof. Dirk van Dierendonck; Martin Kersbergen, Distinguished Alumnus 2013 and chief brand officer at Coöperatie DELA; Elizabeth Rogers, Distinguished Alumna 2017 and founder of Kuunda 3D; Alba Tiley, Distinguished Alumna 2014 and global sustainable antibiotics director at DSM Sinochem Pharmaceuticals; Sue Martin, director of corporate and alumni relations at RSM, and Willem Koolhaas, RSM’s director of corporate marketing and communications.

Diederick van der Wijk

It takes a particular kind of determination to inspire refugees to successfully use their entrepreneurial talents in their new home country. The benefits extend to the Dutch community as a whole and there is potential for the business community to learn from their perspectives, says Diederick van der Wijk (MSc International Management/CEMS 2018), who founded non-profit organisation Refugees Forward, based in Amsterdam, in 2017. He was presented with a Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award 2018.

Refugees Forward runs training and coaching programmes that unleash the advantages of diversity in society through a four-month incubator programme for refugee entrepreneurs. Under Diederick’s management it has so far raised €100,000 in funding, and now works with major companies to provide quality training and mentorship for participants.

When accepting the Award, Diederick credited RSM for its part in helping him to recruit colleagues Marta Fiolhais, another CEMS master graduate from the Nova School of Business and Economics in Portugal, and Laura Di Santolo (RSM BSc IBA 2016 and MSc International Management/CEMS 2018), who nominated him for the award.

‘Diederick is the heart and soul of the organisation. He works every day and there’s no out-of-the-office time for him,’ said Laura. ‘He consults with every one of our entrepreneurs and manages our major stakeholders and investors with such energy and passion. When you meet him, you believe in his vision: to empower every entrepreneur to become economically self-sufficient and to rebuild lives through entrepreneurship.’

It’s a role that gives Diederick a great deal of enjoyment. ‘I enjoy thinking about entrepreneurship for our organisation and for everyone in our programme. And I especially like the fact that we are active in social entrepreneurship. Participants know the implications for sustainability and social impact. They are capable of starting something that could be a social enterprise, and just need a little push. We give them motivation, support and a network.’

Refugees taking part in the four-month programmes are aged from early 20s to mid-50s. ‘Their common
They are capable of starting something that could be a social enterprise, and just need a little push.”

Diederick van der Wijk, MSc International Management/CEMS 2018

denominator is experience in entrepreneurship. Maybe they were factory managers or had their own businesses in construction or software. They want to use their skills here in the Netherlands but they face hurdles such as diplomas or certificates that aren’t recognised here,’ explained Diederick.

So far, 21 people have been helped. Of those, 10 have started a business, and participants of Refugees Forward have raised €250,000 in capital, well above expectations. Diederick is extending activities from Amsterdam to Rotterdam in February 2019 so that Refugees Forward will cover the Randstad and the south of the Netherlands with two programmes in parallel for 60 entrepreneurs. The plan is to offer it to 200 entrepreneurs in Western Europe by 2020.

Inspiration to take the entrepreneurial leap came from a professor in Diederick’s behavioural economics class during a study exchange at the Graduate School of Management, St. Petersburg University, who told the students if they really want to start a business they would have started it yesterday. ‘I knew then it was time to get started. I saw people active in social enterprises in Russia, and started thinking about doing the same in the Netherlands.’

The drive to grow the enterprise comes from Diederick’s enjoyment of what he does. ‘I plan to keep on doing what I am doing for now. And later, simply to do things that I like that are related to society. I really enjoy it, so it’s more or less effortless. RSM is still very relevant to me because we recruit through RSM directly or through its network. The school really helped me to start on the right foot – with the right people.’

WEB refugeesforward.org

Niels van Deuren

Recognising there was an accommodation problem when he was preparing for his international study exchange in Singapore resulted in Niels van Deuren (BSc IBA 2009 and MSc International Management/CEMS 2012) founding HousingAnywhere, a global online marketplace for student rooms. The company now employs 90 people and operates in more than 400 cities. Niels received a Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award 2018.

Accepting his award on stage, Niels said he would like to see RSM encourage students to be more entrepreneurial to create ‘a huge database of entrepreneurs’, and to put the RSM Leadership Summit spotlight on entrepreneurs as well as CEOs of big organisations.

Niels is now looking ahead for ways to further apply his entrepreneurial skills, and to learn new ones. ‘My company and I are slowly separating: I have put a great management team in place at HousingAnywhere so I can focus on new ideas for things I still want to do with my life,’ he said.

Soon he will travel for a few months ‘to do nothing but get inspired. Then, I want to freelance for a couple of years advising start-ups. And after that, I will start another company of my own.’

Travelling and work bring him into contact with interesting people who inspire him. ‘Inspiration gives me new ideas, which brings me a new energy for life.’ These outward-looking habits are the attributes mentioned by fellow alumnus Maarten de Smit (MSc Marketing Management 2012), who nominated Niels for the Award.

Putting his own self-starting entrepreneurship skills aside, Niels recognises that
sometimes everyone needs support in the right way at the right time. ‘I like that my company helps students on this first basic step in their new life,’ he said. ‘Moving to another country is a process that’s “super old”. As long as there are universities, there are students renting rooms, but it’s complicated for international students. HousingAnywhere helps them find a place online, book it safely, and gives them one thing less to worry about.’

Niels is an ideas man, but credits RSM for giving him the theoretical knowledge for marketing, for human resource management and for finance that helped him to put his business ideas into operation. And he says that through RSM he met a lot of business-minded people who helped him grow his company in the early days. He gives guest lectures to inspire students and meets the new generation of students. ‘Every new generation is full of energy and new ideas. This also gives me new ideas and energy,’ he says.

Jasper Buntinx and Alexandre Monéton

Jasper and Alexandre were jointly presented with a Distinguished Alumni Volunteering Award 2018 for setting up the RSM Entrepreneurial Spirit Scholarship – now supported by a small community of alumni – for first-year students starting the three-year BScIBA at RSM.

Both men mentioned the valuable experience of their own bachelor studies at RSM. ‘We’re happy we can let others experience the same,’ said Alexandre, who graduated from the BSc International Business Administration in 2012, followed by the MSc International Management/CEMS in 2014. He’s an investor in emerging and frontier markets through his three-year-old company, Danish Capital, in Toronto, and he says he intends to continue supporting innovation through the allocation of capital as a force for good.

Jasper graduated from RSM’s BSc International Business Administration in 2012, and the MSc Finance & Investments in 2014. He is an infrastructure associate at Macquarie Group in London. His personal ambition for success is based on a desire to continue contributing to society, and to develop the scholarship so that it becomes a self-perpetuating part of the BScIBA programme. After just three years, the scholarship is currently supporting three students. Its third student, Matilde Sévilla, expects to graduate in 2020. Previous scholarship recipients Emilian Todinov and Nicholas Savvakis nominated their benefactors for the Award.

“Ultimately, our goal is to support a large number of students every year.”

Alexandre Monéton

‘We both spent nearly five incredible years at RSM. The school gave us so much – we simply want to give something back,’ said Jasper. The scholarship, for students with an entrepreneurial spirit who are more financially constrained than others, comes with dedicated mentoring; recipients are encouraged to participate fully in university life and to think ahead. ‘We believe education is a pillar of personal growth and development, and want to do our part in opening it up to as many people as we can.’

The scholarship was established with the adage of “what goes around, comes around” in mind. Fostering alumni community involvement encourages students to give back to others when they can. ‘The positive feedback loop spreads,’ says Alex. ‘The next step will be to open it up to more potential donors and mentors, and thus more students. Ultimately, our goal is to support a large number of students every year,’ he said – but only once they are satisfied with the structure and process, which is still in development.

There’s another point that the pair make clear: the success of the scholarship shows the value of mentorship, which creates and promotes a more inclusive business environment. ‘We think businesses should be more actively involved in the nurturing of students at a time when they need it the most,’ they say.

There are plans to increase the size of the scholarship fund to support 25 students over the next 10 years. ‘We think we can create a small and dedicated network of sponsors and RSM students to make the scholarship attractive to supporters as well as students.’

They credit RSM with teaching them the power of building relationships. ‘IBA helped us to develop into global individuals with a strong academic and practical foundation from which we benefit every day; it fostered a community of individuals. That’s what we are doing through this scholarship too.’

Tom Marshall

Seeing student colleagues who weren’t utilising their talents or creating impact as they wanted to when they transitioned from student life to professional life inspired Tom Marshall (MSc Management of Innovation 2016) to speak about the importance of utilising freedom and opportunity to do energising and meaningful work during the master graduation ceremony at RSM in autumn 2016. Tom realised this also applied to him, and Extraordinary Life was born as a result.
It’s an organisation that empowers people to live with purpose, and a movement that aims to evolve the purpose of work, empowering professionals and students with the mindset and tools to achieve success and impact in their lives. Tom is also an innovation consultant at Deloitte.

He was presented with a distinguished Alumni Volunteering Award 2018. In the days following the presentation, he gave his two-hour “Inner Beast” workshops and coaching sessions at the Erasmus Centre for Entrepreneurship, and to students at Copenhagen Business School. The sessions focus on discovering inner talents, finding out what energises participants and the impact they want to make, and making a timed plan to unleash it.

‘There was an important outcome to that Copenhagen presentation,’ Tom told us. ‘Five people there want to work with me to scale up Extraordinary Life internationally by setting up a community in Copenhagen. I want to empower them to give sessions without me; that’s fundamental to being able to scale a movement organically.’

Extraordinary Life is changing from being a coaching provider to building its own social movement. ‘We are connecting with people who believe the same as we do and empowering them to share our ideas about how work should evolve.

‘We’re just getting started,’ says Tom, who started out alone in 2016 but now works with four students, plus others who contribute. He credits his master studies for teaching him an understanding of testing and validating ideas, scaling up a proven idea, and for fostering creativity among colleagues. All of this is understood and appreciated by Vildana Gačić, career development manager at RSM who nominated Tom for the Achievement Award.

‘RSM really supports me and Extraordinary Life,’ said Tom, who believes in giving back to those that helped along the journey and has given more than 60 sessions on campus to RSM staff and students. ■

Read more about Tom Marshall in our article on p38.
The 10th annual RSM Leadership Summit, held at the historic Van Nelle Fabriek in Rotterdam, explored the fundamental power of purpose for people and organisations in the context of leadership, business and management. 

Story by Lesa Sawahata Photos Geert de Jong/cheeseworks.nl

What does it mean to live, lead, and conduct business with a sense of purpose? How can purpose be defined – is it different from a mission, a passion, or a sense of responsibility? Why is purpose so important for organisations and people? Is it generational? And above all, how can one know one’s own purpose?

These were the topics that were presented at the RSM Leadership Summit on Friday 12 October 2018.

Moderator Dorothy Grandia, communication faculty of the Erasmus Centre for Women and Organisations, seamlessly wove together many layers of ideas, ideals and actions as presented by the speakers and audience during the day. After RSM Dean Steef van de Velde welcomed the capacity audience, the keynotes began.

Michiel Muller
The first keynote was presented by Erasmus University alumnus and serial entrepreneur Michiel Muller, who has launched such industry-changing, consumer-empowering businesses as Tango, the network of unmanned filling stations, and Route Mobiel roadside assistance, and now, online grocery store Picnic. How disruptive can groceries be? ‘We started Picnic with a clear purpose: the food system needs to be changed. There is a lot broken in the world of supermarkets because it was invented 50 years ago,’ he said. ‘Food waste, food miles, unfair trade, wasted
time and air pollution from vehicles is creating big human problems, and big business can’t solve them.’

With Picnic’s app-only shop, a fleet of electric trucks, overnight order fulfilment, and free delivery at a pre-determined time, the firm is doing more than satisfying customers’ needs: it is boosting sustainability and busting the outmoded business model of the grocery industry. Further, it offers an unexpected factor of nostalgia. ‘Remember when the milkman used to come to your street? It was quite convenient, the milkman was familiar, and they had what you wanted every time. We thought – let’s replicate that model for Picnic,’ he said. As Picnic continues to grow throughout the Netherlands and Germany, Muller’s purpose for the app-based shop is clear: ‘We want to be the best milkmen on Earth.’

Prof. Daan Stam

With his academic keynote entitled A science of purpose: a leadership perspective, Prof. Daan Stam, associate professor of innovation management at RSM, provided insights gleaned from recent research into leadership, goal-setting, and communication. ‘Here’s a spoiler: I’m going to say a purpose is a goal, but not every goal is a purpose,’ he said. Discerning between high-level, long-term, abstract, self-defining goals, for example, I want to transform my industry, and low-level, tactical, concrete, short-term, get-the-job-done goals like I need to finish this tonight, Prof. Stam said: ‘I don’t think the low goals or the high goals are purpose. I actually think that purpose is in the lines that run between these high and low goals, and that everything done in the organisation needs to be linked to the high goals in order to be purposeful.’

For leaders who want to influence their teams, Prof. Stam told the audience: ‘There is an “I” in team: because effectiveness depends on individuals. And individuals need to be hooked by your purpose.’ Research shows that there are two things leaders can do to get their teams talking about organisational purpose and making it their own. First, the frequency of talking about the purpose or vision: ‘Don’t just mention it once and go away; communicate the purpose or mission statement over and over,’ he advised. And second, make purpose about the people you are talking to. ‘If you are a leader, you make a purpose, release it into the organisation, and let it go. If the individuals are connected to that purpose, then they become its owners. They create a shared vision together.’

There is an ‘I’ in team: because effectiveness depends on individuals.”

Prof. Daan Stam, associate professor of innovation management, RSM
Marlies Dekkers, creator of the eponymous brand that has been shaping the world of lingerie since 1993, added a crucial element to the discussion of finding personal and organisational purpose: the cultural and societal context in which one lives. Dekkers, the originator of the Feminine/Feminist movement, discussed the difficulty that women have had in finding individual purpose because, until recently, their purpose was almost wholly dictated by society. She described herself as a prime example: sent to housekeeping school by her parents as a teenager, she rebelled. ‘I knew that wasn’t my journey, but I still didn’t know what else was out there,’ she said, adding that she was driven by an ‘inner fire’ that eventually led her to art school and then found an award-winning lingerie brand designed with the intention of giving women confidence and a sense of power.

Dekkers told the audience that it is essential for them to follow their inner fire along what is not always a clearly marked road. ‘It’s not easy, but people who follow that road, who follow their purpose, shine from within. If you dare to dream, to grow, to be, you will have a life that burns with this inner power,’ she said. [Read our interview with Marlies Dekkers on p24.]

Vincent van den Boogert
‘Banking is not popular. Type “Why are bankers...” into Google and look at the results. If there’s one industry that needs a purpose, it is banking,’ said Vincent van den Boogert, CEO of ING Netherlands, during his keynote presentation. What is the purpose of a bank, he asked. If you’re as big and diverse as ING, you have to find a shared purpose. ‘ING’s purpose is empowering people to stay a step ahead in life and in business,’ he said. ‘If people are in control of their finances, their quality of life improves. Money matters.’
However, implementing purpose is hard work, he said, akin to restoring trust after a bumpy ride and requiring ‘a thousand little steps.’ Adding in some theory, he asked: ‘how can I translate my experiences into a theoretical framework? How can I turn purpose into practice?’ He proposed five key factors:

1. A purpose should also include a vision for society;
2. It should support the business model – not a trade-off, but reinforcement;
3. Fits the future, but is rooted in history;
4. Appealing to customers and employees;
5. The company must organise itself to deliver this purpose.

Shaun Tomson

‘We find our purpose or our purpose finds us,’ said Shaun Tomson, world champion surfer and entrepreneur who found his purpose – helping others to know, own and activate their own purpose – through personal loss: the tragic, unnecessary death of his son in 2006. Tomson has written several books, including *The Surfer’s Code* and *The Code: The Power of “I Will”*, the latter offering a simple tool for connecting with one’s purpose. He showed it to the audience of the RSM Leadership Summit: a personal code of commitment comprising 12 key statements beginning with the words “I will”. ’This is a tool which helps distil and frame one’s purpose into an actionable 12-line mantra for positive change,’ he told the audience. [Read our interview with Shaun Tomson on p28.]

We find our purpose or our purpose finds us.”

Shaun Tomson, entrepreneur, author and world champion surfer

After a final wrap-up by Dorothy Grandia and closing words from Dean Van de Velde, the audience of alumni, staff, corporate relations and students took the opportunity to enjoy cocktails, tapas – and great networking – under the industrial ceilings of the Van Nelle Fabriek.

The next RSM Leadership Summit will be held on Friday 4 October 2019.
EXECUTIVE INTERVIEW / MARLIES DEKKERS

BURNING WITH THE INNER FIRE OF PURPOSE
Award-winning designer Marlies Dekkers burst onto the fashion scene with the launch of her first lingerie collection in 1993. Driven by a powerful sense of inner purpose, she is unrelenting in encouraging and inspiring women to follow their dreams and to develop the empowering self-confidence with which they can make a real difference. Story by Lesa Sawahata

Lesa Sawahata: How would you define “purpose” in your life?

Marlies Dekkers: Oh, that’s a big question. And a beautiful one – I get a little emotional about it. It is so important to do something that you really feel your heart is in. Where you feel, I can do this every day with a smile, and have the energy to see it through because I think it’s my purpose. And where you also think, I can make a difference here – what I’m doing is important; it matters. This is the opposite of that terrible feeling of emptiness or loss. Your sense of purpose pushes you, and guides you, through life.

Where does your sense of purpose come from? Were you influenced by a role model, or...

I come from a working class background; it was an environment that didn’t encourage women to follow their dreams.

I’ve been asked this question many times and the fact is that my purpose just comes from within myself. I didn’t even know it was possible to have a dream, which is why it’s now so important for me to tell women ‘dare to dream’ – because nobody told me. ›
When did you first understand “purpose”?

There was a kind of fire inside that helped me during difficult times. When I was 15 or 16, my parents enrolled me in a huishoudschool [vocational training for housekeeping], but I wanted my studies to be more academic, even though I didn’t even know what the possibilities were. So at that age there was really no example for me, but there was this fire burning inside and I thought ‘there is more to life, and I have to do something.’

At that time I often fantasized that I was an 18-year-old girl with breasts and curves, which I didn’t have. I knew that when I turned 18, I could make my own decisions, and then my life would really start. So that was the moment curves and lingerie became kind of symbols for my own dreams, for spreading my wings. And I think that’s why it has ended up being my work, and the form of my purpose.

So is this where your motto ‘Dare to dream, dare to grow, dare to be’ comes from?

When I went to art school [St. Joost Academie in Breda, from which she graduated cum laude in 1991], I saw the young women around me often didn’t find themselves beautiful or desirable, and didn’t believe in themselves. I thought, how can I show them how strong and beautiful they are? If only they would have a sense of self-confidence. I believe all women are as beautiful, desirable and sensual as they find themselves to be. That’s how I came to my purpose: to challenge women to follow their dreams. It sounds so simple, but it’s not.

Why is it not simple for women to follow their dreams?

Women, particularly in the corporate world, are in a very early stage of daring to dream. In fact, we have to challenge women to not stop dreaming, and encourage them to dream big – bigger than they ever have. There I was: born in 1965 in the Netherlands, and it was still natural for my parents to want me to be a housewife. This is an important point: you have to understand the times in which you are living, the zeitgeist.

In every time period there has been a certain way of thinking about women in society. You can reject it or embrace it, but it’s very important to understand it – because that is how you can understand your own position.

I didn’t even know it was possible to have a dream, which is why it’s now so important for me to tell women ‘dare to dream’ – because nobody told me.”

You mentioned the various ‘waves of feminism’ during your keynote presentation at the RSM Leadership Summit. What are those waves?

The first wave of feminism was around 1900, when women fought for the right to vote, and for access to higher education. And in the 1960s there was a second wave, in which women fought for financial equality and sexual liberation.

The third wave came when I was in my twenties. This was the point of embracing individualism. Madonna was becoming famous, and she was so important to me – she was individualistic, powerful, and showed her strong and muscular body. It was during this time that I created my own design language, which I continue to work with all these years later.

We’re in the fourth wave of feminism now, which is about true gender equality. I’m so proud that by helping to shape the third wave, I helped prepare the way for the new generation of feminists who are stepping forward.

How does your personal sense of purpose connect to your purpose as a leader? How do you express it?

When I started my company in 1993, I thought ‘I want to do this with women.’ At that time – and it’s often still like this – people thought that only men were able to run a business. For the whole 25 years, between 85-90 per cent of the company’s employees have been women. I strongly believe that in business women are equal to men. In my company, of course, there is an even better fit: women understand deep down what I am speaking about. And yes, there are men working for the company, and I’m very happy with them. So I think as a leader I can inspire people – especially women, and anyone who works in my company. I think I can give them that inner fire I have had since I was young. That’s how my personal and leadership purpose connects. My mission is to give women self-confidence.

How important is a sense of purpose in accepting and dealing with change, personally and as a leader?

The position of women in society has changed over the past decades, and as an entrepreneur you have to adapt to that. For example, #MeToo is a very important social movement. It’s also something I’ve been talking about for 25 years – about how women are not...
just objects of lust. Since the recent scandals related to #MeToo, men also understand. They say, ‘Oh is that what you meant?’ Yes, it’s what I’ve meant for 25 years.

Some years ago the Marlies Dekkers brand came under attack: a knock-off company copied our unique style and wanted to turn women into sex objects with marketing that was about “dressing less to impress”. We won that lawsuit. As a company and as women, we have been fighting so long not to be reduced to objects of lust. But, there is something beautiful in having to deal with and adapt to these big challenges and changes, because the result is that things move.

What do you mean by “moving”?

We are creating movement in the bigger world; doing something that matters and that is strongly connected to society. Society has its own opinion about this subject, of course – but you can be the visionary, you can be the oracle, you can see things years before anyone else does.

As a designer, sometimes you make a statement but it’s too early for people: nobody listens to your message; they can’t understand what you’re talking about. And when they do, what follows is a period when everything is blooming and you’re on top of the world. If you are driven by purpose, you know that you’re not doing something average: you’re working on something that matters, not just for yourself, but also for the generations after you. That’s purpose.

As a leader, where do you get your “juice”, your inspiration to keep inspiring others?

That’s why I was so emotional with the first question. It’s so beautiful to start with a view of doing something that matters over time, and then to re-align your purpose during difficult periods. For example, when my company went bankrupt, I really had to dig deep. I felt like I was dying. For 20 years I had been CEO and creative director of my company. And I thought, what if I really was dying? What would I want on my headstone? Not ‘Here lies a very good CEO’! That’s not my purpose. The purpose of my life is to make a difference for women. It’s what I was born to do. In that moment I changed. I got the company back on its feet. And I said ‘I don’t want to be CEO anymore. I want to be creative director, and I really want to spend more time getting women to hear my voice, to understand my message, and to become inspired.’

Q: How do you keep your sense of purpose strong?

I think it’s the opposite: it’s the purpose that keeps me strong. 

WEB
www.marliesdekkers.com

“The purpose of my life is to make a difference for women.”
FINDING YOUR POWER THROUGH PURPOSE

Former world surfing champion Shaun Tomson, who comes from South Africa, is acknowledged as one of the greatest surfers of all time. A successful entrepreneur and author of two best-selling motivational books, he inspired attendees at the recent RSM Leadership Summit with his heartfelt insights into the power of purpose. Here Shaun elucidates on that subject with Russell Gilbert, RSM Outlook’s managing editor.
Russell Gilbert: Your books, The Surfer’s Code – 12 simple lessons for riding through life, and The Code: The Power of “I Will” were not only bestsellers, but they also became something of a cultural phenomenon. How did they come about, and what motivated you to write and share a “code” in the first place?

Shaun Tomson: It all started 20 years ago at Rincon in Santa Barbara, my adopted beach in southern California, which was facing a severe environmental challenge. It’s a beach I’ve surfed often and still do. Sewage was leaking into a river and into the ocean there. An old friend, Glenn Hening, phoned me and said we should work together to tackle the problem. He told me he was bringing a group of young people down to the beach along with the media and representatives from local government so that the public could be alerted to what was going on.

He asked if I could offer something that might inspire the kids to become more purpose-focused and environmentally connected – create a wave of awareness – so that they could see the problem in context.

Wondering what I could offer them, I sat down at my desk and decided to write down everything surfing has taught me about life, and expressed it as a form of commitment. I wrote 12 lines in 30 minutes and called it the Surfer’s Code.

I had 100 laminated cards printed with the code on each. The cards were given out to the young people who came down to the beach and everybody loved it – the kids, their parents, and the media. That, for want of a better word, turned into groundswell: it activated a sense of inspiration and consciousness among the young people. We solved the environmental problem not long after, but the cards kept going. I kept getting requests from people who wanted them. So from a hundred we printed 1,000, and then 10,000.

This statement of purpose – of my purpose – started to permeate through the culture. Then I started to get calls from people inviting me to give talks at leadership conferences, schools and universities. I think people became fascinated with the concept of a code. There’s something fundamental about a set of principles by which you try to live your life. And although I wrote the code and it’s personal to me, when people take possession of it, it becomes theirs – because their perspectives and interpretations of the code will be different to mine. The 12 lines are about honesty, integrity, courage, persistence, empathy, honour and more. They’re the building blocks of our humanity, life, business, and everything we do.

Having created this wave, it seemed a logical step to take it further and write a book?

I have to say it wasn’t really my idea. A guy I met at a conference, coincidentally organised by Glenn Hening who had alerted me to the environmental issue at Rincon, suggested the code would make for a great book and he [co-author Patrick Moser] and I eventually collaborated together. There are 12 lines in the code, so 12 chapters, each with stories based on my own experiences that illustrate the point and bring home the message of every line.

The book was due to be published when my son, my beautiful boy Mathew, died in a tragic and pointless accident.
It was a very, very hard time for my wife and me. We couldn’t understand the senselessness of his death. He was just 15. Our lives were destroyed.

The day he died, in fact two hours before he died, he read me a beautiful essay he’d prepared for school that day. In it he had written the words ‘The light shines ahead.’ In re-reading his essay at a later time, those words struck me really hard. My son had given me these very powerful words: a message of encouragement, of hope, and of wisdom, and I knew this was my call to purpose.

So having postponed it, I decided the book should be published, and I started giving talks about the code. The book, *The Surfer’s Code – 12 simple lessons for riding through life*, was a very powerful talisman; it cemented what I spoke about, which was purpose, commitment, and the power we all have to influence others in a positive way. It’s something that clearly resonates with people.

Then one day, sitting in the surf waiting for a wave at Rincon, a man – a headmaster at a local school – paddled up to me and asked if I would speak to a group of about 80 pupils. It was while speaking to them that I had an epiphany. I said to them: the Surfer’s Code is my code – I wrote it. What’s your code; what’s your purpose, what’s your path, and where are you going to find your power?

As an exercise I asked them to think about their own code, and to write their own 12 lines in 30 minutes, just as it had taken me 30 minutes to write mine. The very first line, written by a young girl, said: ‘I will be myself.’ When I read those words, I was deeply touched and I wanted to cry, and when I think of them now, I still do. It’s an anthem – I will be myself! With our young people facing so many challenges every day, that 13-year-old girl had, with those few words, put a flag in the sand. It’s such a profound statement.

Everything else the class wrote was just pure poetry, without them intending it to be: they were just writing about their purpose, their path, their passion and their power.

*It’s such an incredibly honest statement to make, and especially for one so young.*

Exactly. It’s a fundamental inner truth, and it’s authentic. Your purpose has to be moral, and you have to be authentic. You can’t tell a fake story about yourself.

So the kids have written their codes and I love what they sent me. I’m so inspired I decide to write the second book: *The Code: The Power of ‘I Will’*. Just like the first book, there are 12 chapters, one for each line of the code. Except instead of using my code, each chapter uses one of the kids’ statements. The first chapter, inspired by that young girl, is ‘I will be myself’.

So my mission now, my goal, is to create this positive wave of purpose, inspired by other people’s codes. As well as talking to kids in schools, I work with some of the biggest organisations in the world. I say to everyone that this is a simple tool to help you define your purpose – with just 12 lines, each beginning with ‘I will...’

In an organisational context, my process is super simple. I talk for an hour and tell some stories. I get a sense of what the organisation needs and use stories to reflect that. So my stories might be about courage, resilience, and share their code, it creates this engagement that’s mind-blowing.

You’ve been invited to share your experiences and perspectives by an impressive number of top-flight corporations and organisations all over the world. What is it about the lessons and insights into your life and your philosophy towards it that makes what you have to say so appealing?

About 70 per cent of my work is with big established organisations where one might assume they have a certain way of thinking. Yet they’re very receptive to what I do. Why? Because purpose impacts their bottom line. Just recently, the front cover of *Harvard Business Review* read ‘...how to turn purpose into engagement or whatever I feel those participating will appreciate most.

By the end of the hour, everyone knows me. By that I mean they know where I stand; they know my spirit. Afterwards they get together for 30 minutes and write their own codes. They then take it in turns to stand up and tell everyone theirs – and they always read their codes like champions. I might be talking to the CEO of a multinational company and C-suite executives, or a group of kids with no money, who don’t know where their next meal is coming from, but when they write
Without purpose you will not have performance, and without performance you won't have profit.

When people are so disengaged from the organisations they work for, how do you go about changing that?

It's a two-part process. Step one is the emotional engagement. That's really important. I never do this work without putting the emotional engagement first. Just giving people a different perspective on life, hearing my perspective, for example, gives them the chance to reframe where they are. What's also important is that the stories I tell them are true. They're not someone else's and there's no BS. They know what I'm telling them is authentic, and that I'm an authentic guy. By sharing interesting stories about courage, honour, integrity, optimism or self-esteem, you can engage your audience and create emotional resonance. Once engaged, they become more open and receptive to looking at themselves differently.

Incidentally, when someone reads out their own code to a group for the first time, there's usually spontaneous applause. I don't tell them to applaud – it just happens. Some stand up and cry when they read their code. The CEO of a company with 60,000 employees cried in front of his team.

When they've written their own code, each person picks the “I will...” that resonates with them the most and that is then written on a board. So if you have a group of 50 people, you have 50 lines. The lines come together like a mosaic of power, passion and poetry. It really is incredible. It represents the collective consciousness and purpose of the group.

Some companies put that mosaic of purpose on the wall where everyone can see it, because that's their culture come to life and not a homogenized mission statement or something equally as bland. Instead, the collective purpose is real: it's authentic, truthful, and it's come from the people who don't just make up the organisation, but who are the organisation.

It's so simple. It's not rocket science and it's elegant, inexpensive, and a great way to bind people and create implied accountability. When you put out there what it is you say you will do, for example, 'I will be a better leader', your colleagues will hold you to it.

Why do we sometimes lose our sense of purpose, and why does it take someone like you to come along and help us re-discover it again?

That's a good question. In the end, I look back to my own experience, and to what happened to me when my son died, when I lost my life and everything collapsed. Then I found those words of his – ‘The light shines ahead’. They were so resonant and inspiring. His words gave me the power to continue, and to live up to one of the lines of my own code, which is ‘I will always paddle back out’. In other words, I will never give up. Perhaps my words can help others find their own along with the power to move from darkness into light.

Sometimes, at certain stages of our lives, perhaps when we've experienced terrible losses, we need reminding of who we are and what our purpose is. I say to kids, purpose is power. “I will...” equals power! Psychologists call it agency, but essentially you're simply going out there and using very basic tools to get people thinking about and moving towards certain paths that are of fundamental importance to who they are. And nothing is more important than a positive attitude, especially about yourself.

As for my role, I like to think I'm just like a pebble. Drop a pebble in the water and it creates a ripple. The ripple creates a wave and people ride it. I'm such a tiny part of the process, but helping people find their purpose and their power is my mission.

What next on that mission? Will you continue to talk to kids in schools with your Positive Waves Tour?

Yes, indeed. My goal is to continue with the tours, perhaps once or twice a year. And I like to merge profitability with purpose and get corporates involved in this mission. When I go to a school, the school doesn't get charged, the business does. The corporate gets the association, which makes them look good, and employees feel they are part of a movement.

As well as schools, I'll continue my work within organisations. They have unbelievable power to positively influence the trajectory of the world today. And I love sharing. One of the lines of my Surfer's Code is: ‘I will pass on my stoke.’ Stoke is surfer slang for the exuberance and passion someone has for life. Ultimately that's the source of everything; it all comes from there. No matter who you are, it's all about sharing and creating a wave of positive change – and every one of us has the power to do that.
Over an event-packed two days (12-13 October), staff and former students shared memories, industry knowledge, and sometimes-heated opinions. “These MBAs,” smiled storytelling expert Simon Hodges, leading the *RSM & You* seminar on current alumni programmes and future strategies, ‘they know what they’re talking about and they’re not shy.’

The strongly positive feedback from the seminar audience included the assertion that MBA graduates have a deep entrepreneurial streak and “just think differently”. There were also provocative questions on rankings and overall awareness of ways in which alumni can continue to engage with industry, with RSM, and with each other. Sue Martin, director of corporate and alumni relations, embraced challenging questions from the audience asking why current alumni programmes aren’t more widely known, and how the School can stay relevant to those who graduated decades earlier.

We talk a lot about what alumni can do for us. I’d like to focus on what we can do for you. It’s our job to make sure you know how to become a mentor or
mentee; it’s our job to encourage you to hire from the RSM graduate pool; it’s our job to basically sell you the ideas we’re working on.’

In a play on the I WILL goal-setting theme implemented by RSM and its community, Martin suggested one of her own: ‘I WILL commit to being more data-driven. We haven’t identified where our alumni are, we haven’t talked to you as much as we would like, and we haven’t yet identified your varying needs. Our plans in the pipeline aim to change all that.’

Brandon Kirby, director MBA marketing and admissions, kept his I WILL statement simpler, ending the session on a high note: ‘I WILL take anybody out for a drink. And you can quote me on that.’

Simon Hodges’ storytelling workshop prompted a more reflective atmosphere in the final campus-based session of the reunion. Alumni were asked to share the values they most admire in their own cohort and other cohorts, as well as an RSM memory they wish all other students could have.

Persistence and dedication are hallmarks of earlier years. Claudia Toth (Full-time MBA 1993) spoke for her group: ‘Our generation learned to focus on work to the exclusion of everything else. This has its drawbacks but we don’t stop until the job is done.’ Winnie Linker (Full-time MBA 1988) expressed similar sentiments: ‘Time and being influenced by the 80s has given my age group confidence. We’re risk takers, we take no prisoners, we’re badass. Generally we are a group that delivers and finishes what we set out to do. Half-assed is not cool.’

Community and belonging
While younger graduates admired the dedication of earlier years, an appreciation for a less selfish attitude was a strong theme. ‘I like the millennial shift from an “ownership” mentality to a more open “sharing” mentality,’ said Stu Preston (Full-time MBA 1993), echoing Linker’s appreciation for younger cohorts’ emphasis on social good: ‘I like the millennial focus on community. It’s always been there but millennials are pushing it to the forefront again. Things like community, communication, front porches, care for neighbours... From happiness research we know that the key to happiness, once basic needs are met, is a sense of belonging and community.’

Preston fondly recalls riding a ten-year-old Harley Davidson motorbike around Europe with his pregnant wife in 1992, completing his eclectic thesis A Structural Study of the Used Harley Davidson Market in Europe. ‘Our first son travelled more than 5,000 miles with us before he was born. We travelled to 14 countries, including four in the Eastern Bloc, meeting wonderful people, making some business contacts, and living in the moment with them. The preceding two semesters, with our very cosmopolitan RSM classmates, really opened us up to appreciating the full value of the experience. I believe our class was made up of something like 124 students representing 41 countries.’

Linker reminisced about a time when sleep was an optional luxury: ‘The 80s was a time when the words can’t and excess did not exist. We worked hard and partied even harder – every day and every weekend! What I loved about RSM was the availability of the faculty members who taught us. They often joined our parties and we debated points till the sun came up. And we never missed classes – we could not let our classmates down! RSM sure is a lot more genteel now.’

The reunion programme ended with a farewell dinner at the riverside restaurant Zalmhuis in Rotterdam where old friendships were cemented and plans made for the next reunion. Said Tanja Goudarzi Pour (Full-time MBA 1998): ‘How I look forward to getting another burst of wonderfully positive energy and purpose at the next reunion.’

Tanja Goudarzi Pour, Full-time MBA 1998

To keep up to date with alumni events, visit www.rsm.nl/events
Make sure you consider the less tangible aspects of your work and personal life and choose what you enjoy in both. This was the answer given by Simone Marschall, a graduate of the Full-time MBA 2012, when asked what advice she might offer to anyone considering committing to undertaking an MBA.

*Story by* Brian Bollen
OCUSING ON SOMETHING YOU ENJOY IS NOT A LAZY OPTION, AS SOME MIGHT SEE IT. RATHER, IT CAN BE A KEY TO MAXIMISING ONE’S POTENTIAL, AND CAN DELIVER UNFORESEEN CONSEQUENCES. SIMONE POINTS TO THE CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF STEVE JOBS, WHO FAMOUSLY POPPED INTO CALLIGRAPHY CLASSES AT REED COLLEGE IN PORTLAND, OREGON, AFTER DROPPING OUT OF FORMAL STUDIES. WHO WOULD HAVE GUESSED THAT HE WOULD EVENTUALLY MONETISE THIS WHEN HE BEGAN TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS WITH APPLE COMPUTERS? SHE SAYS.

SIMONE, WHO BEGAN HER MBA STUDIES IN 2011 AND IS CURRENTLY PURSUING WHAT SHE DESCRIBES AS AN ENTREPRENEURIAL-CUM-TRAVEL SABBATICAL, IS DRAWING FROM A DEEP WELL OF EXPERIENCE AT WHAT IS RELATIVELY STILL A YOUNG AGE. BORN IN THE NETHERLANDS IN 1977, SHE HAS HAD AN INTERNATIONAL UPBRINGING HAVING LIVED IN CHILE AND IN CANADA, AND, AMONG OTHER THINGS, STUDIED ECONOMICS IN EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND.

IT WAS DURING THIS PERIOD THAT SHE REALISED THAT THE ECONOMICS MANIFESTO SHE DREAMT OF WRITING WOULD COME UP AGAINST A DIFFICULTY: THE TENDENCY OF PEOPLE NOT TO BEHAVE IN PRACTICE TO FIT SOMEONE ELSE’S THEORY. THIS LED HER TO ADD SOCIAL AND ORGANISATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY TO HER FORMIDABLE ROSTER OF STUDIES.

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

SIMONE HAS SEEN CERTAIN DECISIONS SHE MADE IN ORDER TO ENHANCE HER PERSONAL LIFE LATER FEED INTO OTHER AREAS, INCLUDING WORK. ‘GOING TO CANADA TO STUDY BANKING, BUT MAINLY TO GO SKIING, EVENTUALLY CREATED THE OPPORTUNITY TO RETURN THERE TO DO CONSULTANCY WORK WITH MERCER IN TORONTO.’

AT GLOBAL CONSULTANCY MERCER, SHE ANALYSED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND STATISTICAL DATA TO BENCHMARK, VALUE AND ESTABLISH EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION PACKAGES ACROSS A RANGE OF INDUSTRIES. THIS TOOK HER INTO THE FASHION AND RETAIL INDUSTRY IN THE HAGUE AS BUSINESS CONTROLLER OF ARTESANOS CAMISEROS, A CUSTOM-MADE SHIRT RETAILER. ‘THAT IN TURN HELPED TO BRING ME TO WHERE I AM TODAY,’ SHE EXPLAINS.

SIMONE MARSCHALL IS CLEARLY VERY MUCH DRIVEN BY HER SENSE OF PURPOSE. SHE ALSO HAS FOND MEMORIES OF HER TIME STUDYING AT RSM, FOR A COMPELLING COMBINATION OF REASONS. ‘IT HAS GIVEN ME AN INTENSE SOUNDING BOARD WHICH HELPS ME IN MY DECISION-MAKING,’ SHE SAYS. ‘THE WAY THAT EACH PROFESSION LOOKS AT OPPORTUNITIES IS RADICALLY DIFFERENT. YOU BECOME VERY MUCH ENGAGED WITH THE PEOPLE YOU ARE WORKING WITH SO CLOSELY FOR A YEAR, AND LEARN FROM THE DIFFERENT SKILLS AND PERSPECTIVES THEY WILL HAVE. WORKING WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE SKILLS IN, FOR EXAMPLE, COMPUTER PROGRAMMING, IN MARKETING, IN ENGINEERING OR IN PUBLIC RELATIONS, ALLOWS YOU TO GAIN VALUABLE INSIGHTS INTO DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES. THIS ENABLES YOU TO UNDERSTAND THE BROADER IMPLICATIONS OF DECISIONS, INVOLVING THE RIGHT STAKEHOLDERS.’

SPORTING ACTIVITY PROVIDES FOND MEMORIES. ‘AT ONE INTERCOLLEGIATE EVENT WE ALMOST WON THE VOLLEYBALL,’ SHE SAYS, CLEARLY STILL STRUCK BY WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN A HIGHLY UNLIKELY ACHIEVEMENT. EVEN IN LOSING THAT FINAL SHE FINDS A POSITIVE. ‘ONE THING THAT STICKS WITH ME IS THAT THE TEAM CAPTAIN MADE SURE EVERYONE HAD A CHANCE TO PLAY,’ SHE SAYS. IN THIS CONTEXT, PURSUING A TEAM ETHIC TOOK PRIORITY OVER WINNING.

THE MESSAGE IS THAT WHILE TAKING AN MBA CAN BE A BIG RISK, THE REWARDS CAN BE EVEN BIGGER, AND THOSE REWARDS ARE PRACTICAL AS WELL AS EDUCATIONAL. ‘MY NEW NETWORK HELPED IN MY FOUR YEARS AT PVH [A LEADING FASHION HOLDING COMPANY, FORMERLY KNOWN AS PHILLIPS-VAN HEUSEN, WITH TOMMY HILFIGER AND CALVIN KLEIN IN ITS BRAND PORTFOLIO],’ SHE GOES ON. ‘IF I NEEDED TO SPEAK TO A SPECIALIST ADVISER ON A SPECIFIC TOPIC IN A DIFFERENT COUNTRY, I COULD FIND OUT VERY QUICKLY JUST WHO I SHOULD SPEAK TO.’

SIMONE IDENTIFIES THIS INTANGIBLE BENEFIT AS A LARGE COMPONENT OF THE VALUE OF DOING AN MBA, DURING AND AFTER THE COURSE ITSELF. SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ALSO PROVED IMMENSELY IMPORTANT, IF LARGELY UNEXPECTED. ON THE SOCIAL SIDE, SIMONE BEGAN HER YEAR OF MBA STUDY DETERMINED NOT TO DEVELOP A LATE-NIGHT LIFESTYLE. ‘WITHIN WEEKS, THOUGH, WE ALL THOUGHT NOTHING OF VISITING ONE ANOTHER AT TWO OR THREE IN THE MORNING FOR A COFFEE AND A CHAT,’ SHE RECALLS. ‘YOU ALWAYS HAD SOMEONE TO TALK TO AND ENGAGE WITH AT ANY TIME.’

THIS EMOTIONAL SUPPORT CAME INTO ITS OWN VERY EARLY IN SIMONE’S MBA YEAR, WHEN HER MOTHER ALIDA (LYDIA) WESSELINGH DIED. ALIDA HAD BEEN THE FIRST FEMALE GEOPHYSICIST TO GRADUATE IN THE NETHERLANDS. ‘IT HELPED ENORMOUSLY THAT I HAD SUCH OUTSTANDING PEOPLE AROUND ME,’ SHE SAYS.

RETURNING TO THE PRESENT, WHAT ARE HER PLANS? ‘I WANT TO FULLY INVEST IN MYSELF, IN AN ONLINE FASHION AND RETAIL BUSINESS APP THAT I AM CURRENTLY DEVELOPING…”

“I WANT TO FULLY INVEST IN MYSELF, IN AN ONLINE FASHION AND RETAIL BUSINESS APP THAT I AM CURRENTLY DEVELOPING…”
By his late thirties, Rolf Dauskardt (Executive MBA 2003) was successful but not satisfied. He had built a solid career in infrastructure finance but somehow felt held back – that was until he found the opportunity to apply his entrepreneurial skills to pursuing a purpose.

*Story by* Bennett Voyles
For a long time, Rolf says, ‘I was enormously frustrated because while I was by nature entrepreneurial – I had set up two businesses for other people – I was just not prepared to take that final step myself. I stayed in a traditional job and what felt like security and status at the time.’ More importantly, he felt that working for a traditional firm constrained his ability to use his skills to arrange innovative financing for projects that foster positive social change.

Taking an Executive MBA at RSM helped him develop more of the business skills he knew would be necessary, but he still could not bring himself to take the entrepreneurial plunge.

Joining the rebels

Then he discovered the RebelGroup, a newly established entrepreneurial, non-hierarchical firm headquartered in Rotterdam that focuses on leveraging private sector investment to create public value.

Rolf found Rebel liberating in two important ways. First, it provided the environment for setting up an independently run venture concentrating on raising money for infrastructure projects outside of the Benelux market. Second, he found like-minded and purpose-driven entrepreneurs. ‘The main motivation for all of us is that we believe passionately that rebels can have a positive impact in the world – as advisors, developers and investors. Somebody who is simply pursuing wealth would not find themselves happy in Rebel,’ Dauskardt explained.

This kind of rhetoric might sound as if these rebels spend their time advising tiny anarchist dairy communes and macrorbiotic cafes – and Dauskardt acknowledges that ‘if you scratch a rebel you’ll find a little bit of a hippy underneath’ – but their work is making a difference on a large scale, through such projects as improving Manila’s metro network, reinforcing the Netherlands’ Afsluitdijk causeway with one of the largest infrastructure financings in the country, and raising €200 million to build a new state-of-the-art hospital for children with cancer, the Princess Máxima Center for Pediatric Oncology in Utrecht.

Collective purpose

The RebelGroup’s combination of a strong sense of collective purpose and commitment to giving the individual independence to pursue their own vision of how to achieve that purpose has almost served as a special sort of competitive advantage for the company, which Dauskardt describes as a ‘growing group of small firms.’

He and his colleagues can see their advantage most clearly when they contrast their culture of independent, purpose-focused teams with people from more traditional firms organised in command-and-control hierarchies.

‘Often when we are on mandates with other firms, partners or our clients, we notice that many professionals are frustrated, constrained and controlled by their companies and the company culture. They are limited in their ability to innovate or take initiative by management limitations, their internal procedures, company silos and worst of all, internal political behaviour,’ Dauskardt said.

Even in the executive suite of many of these traditional firms, things are no better, according to Dauskardt. ‘The firm can become constrained by the limits both of managerial vision, and their ability to bring the corporation with them,’ he said.

As Rebel has grown by focusing on its shared purpose rather than command and control, it has given Dauskardt a new idea of business leadership. Instead of trying to get the most from people, he said, he now sees the executive’s role as ‘enabling people to get the most from themselves.’

Being a purpose-driven venture is paying off in their recruitment efforts too, as the rebels seem to be in sync with the way many millennials are now thinking. ‘Achieving this sense of purpose in their careers seems to be more important for many of this generation than just their job titles, salaries, climbing the corporate ladder, etc. Sure, many can and do go off and work for hedge funds and the like, and often make a lot more money, but as with most of us here, sometimes they don’t ultimately feel it’s a meaningful end in its own right.’

Making purpose pay

As for Dauskardt, he seems to have no regrets about leaving traditional finance behind. Pursuing his purpose turns out to have been a good move: his own venture has done well, and he now focuses on the overall group, which has been one of the few financial firms that stayed steadily profitable through past financial crises.

A more entrepreneurial and purposeful life also seems to agree with him personally. ‘I get a lot of energy because what I am busy with every day – and usually nights and weekends – is having a positive impact on the world and making things better,’ Dauskardt said. ‘And that is pretty cool.’

The main motivation for all of us is that we believe passionately that rebels can have a positive impact in the world...”
Unleashing your inner purpose

Alumnus Tom Marshall is founder of Extraordinary Life, a personal development organisation that wants to radically alter our views of education and work while changing people’s lives by helping them to find and nurture their sense of purpose.

Story by Tim Skelton
Photo Geert de Jong/cheeseworks.nl
Aged just 18, Tom left his UK home to study economics at Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR). ‘I was questioning the traditional path people follow,’ he explains. ‘I wanted a more enriching international experience, and realised I could only get that from moving abroad.’

He describes his undergraduate years as a rite of passage. ‘Traditionally, a university gives people the skills to get a job, and to become independent. But education is more than that,’ he says. ‘A university should help people to find their authentic selves. EUR ignited my personal growth. I met people from all over the world, and they broadened my horizons.’

After graduation, Tom followed the MSc Management of Innovation at RSM, and says the school’s vision to make a positive change fitted perfectly with his own goals. ‘One lecturer – Dr Murat Tarakci – was more a facilitator of self-development than just a teacher. He only spoke for 30 per cent of the class, and spent the rest of the time sparking discussion. He thought the best way to learn was by debating and challenging each other’s opinions.’

It also helped that Tom’s classmates were as passionate as he was about changing the world. ‘As a result, rather than studying individually in the library, we sat together and helped each other, discussing concepts we had.’

**Societal advances**

Tom believes everyone has a unique combination of talents, and says seeing that potential go unfulfilled is what motivates him to help people. ‘There are people at all levels from all backgrounds who are very successful by every conventional measure, but they aren’t happy. That frustrates me,’ he says. ‘If everyone used their talents to do something they cared about, it would give them fulfilment and bring about societal advances. Moreover, the world would be a better place.

‘People suffer burnouts,’ he continues, ‘because they spend too long doing things they don’t care about. That wouldn’t happen if people were more engaged. Students often don’t know what they want from life. Unleashing their sense of purpose could have an incredible impact.’

Tom’s master was about driving change within organisations, and he applies the same theory to personal development. ‘After all, an organisation is just a collection of people,’ he points out. ‘To drive change you have to change people and give them purpose. It’s cultural. It’s also what I’d like to teach my future children: to help them believe they can adapt and learn anything they set their minds to.’

In Tom’s definition, purpose is the energy and sense of belonging that comes from doing something you like, and fulfilment is the end result of this. ‘It’s that sense of satisfaction in reaching a balance in your life between career, family and friendships, and the sense that your desires are in line with your reality.’

And to find purpose and fulfilment, Tom says you first need belief. ‘You have to believe you are worthy of living a fulfilled life, and that work can be something that excites you. You also have to set your own definitions of success, and be aware of your talents and what you enjoy.’

**Exposing ideas**

You also have to reflect on what energises you and what impact you want to make. ‘We get people to visualise themselves living their passion. Subconsciously, they will then see opportunities for making that a reality. I once drew a picture of me speaking in front of a crowd, talking about a subject I was passionate about. Three years later I hosted an event at the Rotterdam Ahoy convention centre in front of 5,000 people.’

Nevertheless, to realise personal goals you also need the right tools, and Tom believes one vital skill is public speaking. ‘A lot of young people have great ideas, but if they can’t express them to convince an audience, their ideas might as well not exist,’ he says.

‘Tom has big ambitions for Extraordinary Life. ‘We set out to give people the tools and mindset to achieve success. But my real vision is to evolve the very purpose of work, to make it something that energises people and is something they believe in.’ He thinks the best way to achieve this is not to give sessions and talks, but to collaborate with others to create an international movement.

With that in mind, he would love to hear from anyone who wants to start a dialogue about how to shape the movement together. ‘I feel fulfilled and excited by the impact we’re having and the path I’m on, but I’m always focused on making an impact on more people.’

‘How many people exactly? ‘I think one billion is the new one million. I’d love to achieve that,’ he says. ‘It won’t be easy, but it’s not unreasonable in today’s world. If “Gangnam Style” can reach one billion views on YouTube, why can’t we achieve something similar?’

WEB www.extraordinarylife.eu
In the 1990s, when cutting-edge business scholars began to focus on the relationship between business and society, most of them organised seminars on business in society or business and society. But this didn’t quite make sense to RSM professors Muel Kaptein, Lucas Meijs and Rob van Tulder because the combinations treated business as something separate from the rest of life. They sought to change that.

**Story by Bennett Voyles**

The alternative they proposed when they launched their department on the subject 20 years ago was Business-Society Management (B-SM). ‘The idea was that the focus of a management school’s scholarly attention should be on the interaction between business and society (which is why the hyphen is used). Business not only accommodates society and operates within a given context but actively influences society as well,’ the three recall in their recently published book about the history of the department, *Mainstreaming Sustainable Business: 20 years Business-Society Management, 20-year impact?*

Two decades later, the department, the first of its kind in a European business school, is still focused squarely on that hyphen, but has grown beyond the three professors and now encompasses 35 staff members and 109 master degree students. B-SM’s holistic approach to major societal challenges has taken root in many classrooms and boardrooms around the world – thanks in part to the efforts of the B-SM’s 1,200 alumni.

**Rigorous approach**

B-SM turned out to be in the vanguard of a revolution in management education that saw business not as a sphere that was separate from society but as one more force in society – and a potentially powerful instrument for achieving larger social goals.

Scholars like Dr Corinna Frey-Heger took note. RSM’s B-SM department ‘had been on my radar for a long time already, because it combined an interest in real-world challenges and global social issues with a very rigorous approach to research,’ says Frey-Heger, the most recent addition to the faculty, who earned her PhD at Cambridge for a thesis on innovation and knowledge management in response to the refugee crises. ‘Sometimes in the academic world it’s hard to find a department that’s good at combining both,’ she says.
B-SM trains students to focus on complex real-world challenges that go far beyond traditional business concerns about profit and loss. For example, students in Frey-Heger’s next Sustainable Grand Challenges class will be assigned a “wicked problem” posed by Common-land, a non-profit founded by B-SM executive fellow Willem Ferwerda that is dedicated to restoring vast swathes of ecologically devastated country all over the world through a combination of business, philanthropic and governmental resources.

‘We try to nurture our faculty in the department and our students in the master programme to be critical, independent thinkers,’ says Prof. Joep Cornelissen, who heads the B-SM department.

And they seem to have succeeded: a number of faculty and alumni have regularly featured in Dutch newspaper Trouw’s annual list of the Netherlands’ top 100 “greenest thinkers and doers”, including Ferwerda and Li An Phoa. Phoa is founder of the Drinkable Rivers initiative and of Spring College, a nomadic school focused on fostering ecological thought.

Facing the challenge

According to Prof. Meijs, over time the department has evolved from a focus on businesses’ relationships with their stakeholders toward more direct involvement with resolving difficult issues, particularly those having to do with broadly defined sustainability.

Today’s students tend to take their studies much more personally, integrating its lessons more deeply into their lives than B-SM students once did, said Prof. Meijs. ‘Ten years ago, this was just an interesting option and it didn’t relate to their private lives. Now you can see them living how they talk.’

When she arrived in September, Frey-Heger also noticed an unusual degree of focus among the B-SM students. ‘Some of them had a very specific idea of what they wanted to do. For example: “I’m interested in finding better ways of keeping the ocean plastic-free,”‘ she said.

Although the MSc in Global Business & Sustainability that B-SM graduate students earn is popular with recruiters, the current students don’t seem to be as focused on whether they work for commercial or not-for-profit organisations as might be expected, says Prof. Cornelissen. For this generation, such distinctions almost seem beside the point.

‘My sense generally is that our students really want to work for companies that do good. Whether that’s a social enterprise, a non-profit, or a larger corporation, they don’t care as long as it has a moral compass,’ he explained.

It might also reflect a perspective they are picking up as students in B-SM, and which 2003 graduate David Frans, now a partner in the energy practice of consultancy firm Roland Berger, recalls in the book: ‘You can add value anywhere. It’s just a matter of looking at it from the right angle.’

For copies of the book Mainstreaming Sustainable Business: 20 years Business-Society Management, 20-year impact?, contact Ronny Reshef at rreshef@rsm.nl

For more information about RSM’s Department of Business-Society Management, visit www.rsm.nl/bsm
What works in business today will likely be obsolete by tomorrow. And while it is the mandate of management education to prepare managers for this environment, very few effectively do so. Key to succeeding in business is original and creative thinking. RSM’s new executive education courses aim to do exactly this.

According to Professor Frank Hartmann, RSM’s dean of executive education, ‘Much executive training is still focused on teaching old school theoretical groundwork and traditional business models, which have been around for years. While this knowledge is important, we believe that other skills are proving more effective for success in the long run.’ Namely – the ability to think differently.

‘The business world is in a state of constant disruptive change,’ says Prof. Hartmann. ‘Successful managers will be those who are able to critically evaluate challenges and find new perspectives on a problem.’

Three new courses developed for RSM’s executive education portfolio – Neuromarketing, Business Philosophy, and Sustainable Finance – aim to develop these skills in participants. The programmes differ significantly from traditional courses geared towards teaching participants “how to be a better manager”. Teaching is interactive, dynamic and reflective. Participants are encouraged to challenge orthodox concepts of business and its opportunities, and to think about management in new ways.

‘Our mission as an academically rooted educator is not to show participants how to imitate others, or master a set of tricks, but to train them fundamentally in how to think for themselves,’ says Prof. Hartmann. ‘Learning is rooted in practical challenges but the idea is to instil the skills of critical and creative thinking in participants.’

The approach is in line with traditional academic learning – which makes a university-based business school like RSM the ideal institutions to teach it. ‘Hands-on solutions remain highly relevant,’ says Prof. Hartmann. ‘But developing participants into mature business thinkers is the ultimate objective of executive education and the unique added value of our university.’
Challenging assumptions

An important goal of these new programmes is to teach participants to challenge assumptions. ‘Becoming aware of the assumptions we hold and how many are false makes us more open to new ideas,’ Prof. Hartmann says.

‘Managers who make a habit of regularly asking themselves important questions will greatly improve their performance,’ says Wiep van Bunge, professor of history of philosophy, and head of the Business philosophy programme. The course uses in-class debate and interaction to encourage participants to ‘take a step back, broaden their perspective, question the evidence,’ says Prof. Van Bunge. ‘Just because you have always been doing something a certain way doesn’t mean you should continue to,’ he says. ‘Managers should constantly ask themselves: is there a better way of doing this? We also encourage participants to ask themselves what a fulfilled life looks like. Knowing what you want to achieve in life has a huge impact on our motivation.’

Alternative views

‘Neuroscience methods have deepened our understanding of consumer behaviour,’ says Ale Smidts, professor of marketing, and head of the Neuromarketing course. ‘These methods allow us to look inside the consumer mind and observe the mechanisms behind our behaviour, including how the brain evaluates choices and responds to marketing actions.’ The Neuromarketing programme demonstrates how new technology has brought entirely new perspectives to the world of marketing – and business research.

New perspectives on business are a key part of how participants learn to think differently. Sustainable Finance, for example, shows participants how to connect the dots between new models of finance and environmental and sustainability concerns. ‘This is about bringing a universal picture to participants that they haven’t seen before,’ says Dirk Schoenmaker, professor of banking and finance, and head of the Sustainable Finance programme. ‘It’s giving them an actionable repertoire that is broader than when they came in.’

New business practices

Many new business practices are not yet entirely understood by the business community – and these courses strive to fill the gaps. Neuromarketing companies, for example, have made consumer data from neuroscience methods commercially available, but few managers are in a position to make informed decisions about the validity of their claims.

‘The neuromarketing course aims to change that,’ says Prof. Smidts. ‘Participants will become informed consumers of these external services so that they know what value to expect from this data. They will see how the methods work in practice and the results they can yield.’

Sustainable business practice is another broad concept that is often not deeply understood on a practical level. ‘There is a lot of trial and error going on in this area,’ says Prof. Schoenmaker. ‘Many managers in financial institutions want to do sustainable lending or investing, but need a more systematic way of doing it in practice.’

Sustainable Finance gives participants a broad overview of what sustainability means before ‘drilling down to what these practices really entail,’ he says. ‘We give participants the systematic tools that will bring them a much greater impact from their sustainability focus.’

The enormous academic foundation of a university brings huge added value to RSM’s executive programmes, says Prof. Hartmann. ‘These courses go a level deeper than traditional approaches. These kinds of intellectual challenges are great confidence builders – and this is the unique value that a university can offer.’

For more information about these executive education programmes, visit WEB www.rsm.nl/perspective
RSM’s alumni team and Prof. Steef van de Velde, RSM’s dean, transferred to Dubai for a couple of days in September for an alumni career event organised jointly with the Local Chapter. Director of alumni and corporate relations Sue Martin and alumni relations manager Meta Haag-Mikec kept journals so that we could report on their adventures.

Story by Justine Whittern
Photos Dubai Event Photography & Meta Haag-Mikec

Sue Martin: Dubai is the largest and most populous city in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) where around 80 per cent of inhabitants are internationals. The appeal of a tax-free salary and the potential for growing a career draws people to Dubai, which is a global city and business hub for the Middle East, and has one of the world’s fastest-growing economies. Four RSM alumni run the Local Chapter for alumni working in the region. We helped them to organise an event to advise alumni who are about to navigate a career in the Middle East.

Jeroen Reyes (FT MBA 2000), who co-founded the RSM Club of Spain, took the idea of an alumni event with business content and networking opportunities to Dubai. Erwin van Helden (Executive MBA 2009) used his network to find speakers for the event, supported by Hari Pandiyat (FT MBA 2009). Eric de Clercq (Executive MBA 2006) took part in the panel Q&A session.

Job vacancies attract large numbers of applicants compared to other highly international locations so employers can be very selective, and networking is hugely important. We really liked Jeroen’s idea to use the event to strengthen the network there. Jeroen told us he has been contacted by some who have already accepted a job in the region and those still thinking of relocating – even an old classmate who came over for a couple of weeks for interviews and stayed at his family home.

Wednesday 26 September
Sue Martin: We meet the dean, Steef van de Velde, when we fly from Schiphol Airport, and arrive in the UAE just before midnight. It’s really hot, and a real change from the chilly autumn weather in Rotterdam!

Thursday 27 September
Meta Haag-Mikec: Steef has his own schedule of meetings at Dubai Business School at the University of Dubai and the Dubai Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Sue and I get to work on final preparations at the Address Montgomerie, a luxurious golf resort. We welcome our co-organisers from the Dubai Alumni Chapter: Jeroen, Erwin, Eric and Hari.
They are committed, international professionals whose careers brought them to UAE. As alumni relations manager, I correspond with so many alumni, and rarely get to meet them in person. This is an opportunity to find out what it’s like in their world so we can deliver the services our alumni need wherever they are.

*Sue Martin:* We’re joined at the event by almost 40 guests – mostly RSM alumni, but also a few of their friends and colleagues, as well as honoured guests from the Dutch Consulate General, and a number of alumni of Erasmus University. It shows me how committed the RSM network is, even 5,000 km from Rotterdam.

Jeroen, as chapter leader, opens the event and welcomes Hans Sandee, Consul-General for the Netherlands in UAE. Specialist recruiter Claire Swann, MD at Trigon Associates Middle East, presents case studies of career moves. Hisham Darwish, regional HR leader, Middle East and Pakistan at IBM Middle East describes how immigrant workers affect regional development.

We hear that due to economic uncertainty a larger than usual number of professionals are considering employment opportunities in other regions or back home, and also that working with international diversity was an essential professional and social skill in Dubai that can be used elsewhere.

In general, UAE is good for alumni careers, but several alumni say long stays make it difficult for families to readjust on repatriation. Questions to the panel are about long-term career options, and how to prioritise your family. The alumni event closes with a small reception, and a lot more networking.

*Friday 28 September*

*Meta Haag-Mikec:* In the UAE, the working week is Sunday to Thursday, and expats have developed a tradition of going for Friday brunch. We invite alumni to join us as a thank you for their contribution. We discuss ideas for future alumni activities around the world. It’s interesting to hear how they juggle their international careers and families. It’s during brunch that I hear first-hand how much they appreciate the value of the alumni network! Afterwards, a few of us go for drinks nearby. We relax and enjoy the Dubai vibe.

*Saturday 29 September*

*Sue Martin:* We have a few hours on Saturday for sightseeing. Dubai is fascinating and huge, and we seek out places to avoid the 38°C heat. Later we have dinner on a terrace overlooking the famous Dubai fountains.

*Sunday 30 September*

*Sue Martin:* We arrive back in the Netherlands early on Sunday morning, tired but excited and enthused by the passion and dedication of the alumni we met, in particular Jeroen, Hari, Erwin and Eric, whose tireless efforts made the events a real success. I wonder where we’ll be headed next!

“It’s during brunch that I hear first-hand how much they appreciate the value of the alumni network!”

_Meta Haag-Mikec, RSM alumni relations manager_
As a member of the RSM community, you’re a part of our mission to be a force for positive change in the world. More than 10,000 alumni, students, faculty members and staff have expressed how they plan to achieve their goals through I WILL statements. What’s yours?

Find and share your I WILL. And discover 10,000+ inspiring goals at WWW.RSM.NL/IWILLEVERYONE
FORTHCOMING EVENTS

VARIOUS DATES
New perspectives
Do you want a different way of looking at your organisational issues? Join one of our new executive education programmes for fresh perspectives: Business Philosophy, Sustainable Finance and Neuromarketing. Discover how you can contribute to substantial changes in ways you won’t expect.
WEB www.rsm.nl/perspective

ALL YEAR ROUND
MBA mentors needed
Remember when you were an MBA student? You studied to change something about yourself and found mentors who helped you become who you are now. Our new MBA hopefuls joining RSM this winter are also in need of guidance. Sign up to help them with your knowledge and experience. They are looking to you!
WEB www.rsm.nl/mentorme

DEADLINE IN JANUARY
PhD vacancies
Know anyone who might be interested in a fully funded and salaried PhD position at Erasmus Research Institute of Management (ERIM)? Accepted PhD candidates become employees (promovendi) of Erasmus University Rotterdam. There are several new and internationally oriented PhD research projects focusing on innovative management and business research. Apply for the 2019 autumn intake before 15 January via
WEB www.erim.eur.nl/phdvacancies

21-24 JANUARY
Winter communications
Do you work in reputation management, corporate communication or a related discipline? Join our four-day winter course to explore the latest insights, developments, and best practices in organisational identity, branding, strategic reputation management and corporate communication. Find out more via
WEB www.rsm.nl/wccc or contact EMAIL ccc@rsm.nl

24 JANUARY
New Year’s drinks
Toast the New Year and discuss your plans and resolutions for 2019 with fellow alumni and Dean Steef van de Velde at the RSM Alumni New Year’s reception in Amsterdam on Thursday 24 January. You’ll find the venue and exact times for this informal, fun event at
WEB www.rsm.nl/alumni/events or contact EMAIL alumni@rsm.nl

JANUARY – APRIL
Non-profit management
Learn how to manage your impact, and how to deal with leadership, marketing, fundraising, HRM and volunteers – all the challenges specific to non-profit organisations and NGOs in the new Dutch-taught course: Non-profit Management. The eight-evening module is part of the Parttime Master Bedrijfskunde programme. For more information visit
WEB www.rsm.nl/npm
FORTHCOMING EVENTS

VARIOUS DATES
Ambitious colleagues?
Would any of your Dutch colleagues benefit from a business degree? Send them along to one of our Parttime Master Bedrijfskunde information evenings. They can study to improve careers and organisations while working at the same time. There are online and live information sessions, and the two-year, part-time programme starts in September 2019. For dates and more information, visit WEB www.rsm.nl/pmb

FEBRUARY – APRIL
Bite-size communication courses
No time for the whole Executive Master in Corporate Communication? You can take the electives as stand-alone courses this winter and spring! Sign up for Media Impact on Reputation (12–14 February), Organisational Change (19–21 March), or Thought Leadership (16–18 April). Learn more at WEB www.rsm.nl/corpcomm

SPRING 2018
Frontiers in marketing masterclasses
We’re hosting four state-of-the-art marketing masterclasses in the spring to discover and explore cutting-edge research and new perspectives for topical marketing concepts. These sessions will broaden your knowledge of the latest developments in marketing. Take the opportunity to share your experiences and network. Dates and topics will be announced at WEB www.rsm.nl/fim

SPRING 2018
Frontiers in BIM
Real-life examples and experiences from expert professionals are paired with the latest insights from our academic research in the Frontiers in Business Information Management masterclass series. It’s an opportunity for you to share your experiences and network. Topics are yet to be announced but the website contains full information about last year’s knowledge-broadening series. WEB www.rsm.nl/fibim

5 MARCH – 27 JUNE
NRC Live Impact Challenge
Turn your positive change ideas into action in the NRC Live Impact Challenge from 5 March 2019. News organisation NRC and RSM join forces to offer an inspiring way to innovate your business using one or more of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. The 100-day challenge presents online RSM modules for skills and knowledge about initiating and implementing sustainable innovations. The final event and announcement of the winner of the challenge will be on 27 June. WEB www.rsm.nl/nrclive

7 APRIL
Erasmus Charity Run
Participating in the Erasmus Charity Run means challenging yourself and experiencing the biggest one-day sporting event in the Netherlands, with the stunning backdrop of Rotterdam’s city centre. You will be cheered on by an enthusiastic crowd from start to finish; an experience you will remember your whole life! We hope to see you all on Sunday 7 April 2019. For more information, contact EMAIL charityrun@eur.nl

17 APRIL
Find your interns
Did you know RSM bachelor students are smart, young professionals ready to put their skills into action and learn more about business and management? And you can meet them at our Bachelor Internship Fair on 17 April 2019. So get ready to represent your company and find the best bachelor students for an internship at your organisation. Register before 8 March. EMAIL careercente@rsm.nl

RSM - a force for positive change
10 MAY
Forum: Business for better?
Alumni, students and business partners will wrangle with the question ‘Business for better?’ while cracking 10 cases presented by front-running companies and featuring top student research. What drives business to be a force for positive change? Sustainable RSM has forged a new partnership with RSM STAR to co-create the RSM – STAR Forum for Sustainable Development (formerly the RSM Sustainability Forum) on Friday 10 May. Full details will be announced soon. Learn more from Joey Johannsen EMAIL sustainableRSM@rsm.nl

MAY
Open day for professionals
Do you know any colleagues or friends ready for the next step in their careers?

Discover more events at www.rsm.nl/events

Tell them about our open day for professionals in Rotterdam, which will take place on a Saturday in May 2019. They will learn all about RSM’s MBA and executive programmes (in English and Dutch), and meet alumni and faculty members. For more information, keep an eye on WEB www.rsm.nl/openday

OCTOBER
RSM Leadership Summit
What’s going on in the business world? Don’t miss the 2019 RSM Leadership Summit in October when high-profile corporate speakers and leading academics share the latest developments in the hottest management issues. This networking event also brings alumni and corporates together to connect and share experiences. Keep an eye on the website for updates on topics.
WEB www.rsm.nl/summit

OCTOBER
MBA Alumni Reunion 2019
Is it your turn to celebrate your graduation anniversary? If you graduated with an RSM MBA in 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009 or 2014 then add this to your diary! The MBA Alumni Reunion starts with the RSM Leadership Summit, followed by an informal meet-up with your old classmates, reflecting on old times and creating new memories. For more information and exact dates, make sure to visit WEB www.rsm.nl/mbareunion

Fancy a spring reunion in New York City? What about a ski event in Italy? Perhaps a networking lunch in Hong Kong? Around the world, alumni organise all kinds of events and get together to build their networks, keep learning and stay connected while having fun. Discover the RSM Alumni Local Chapter calendar for activities near you. Visit WEB www.rsm.nl/alumni/events or EMAIL alumni@rsm.nl

ONGOING
ALUMNI ACTIVITIES NEAR YOU
Take the next step in your career. Gain new perspectives and skills in RSM’s open and customised programmes. Our goal is to enable you with new tools, skills and knowledge that you can use immediately, for real impact. RSM and Erasmus University alumni are offered a 10 per cent discount.

WEB www.rsm.nl/open

"Lifelong learning is critical to success. It makes sure you're ahead of the game and you get the most out of yourself. I love the international atmosphere at RSM and I gained more in-depth knowledge of finance and business valuation, which I need for my current job. I was also excited to come back to campus after 25 years to do an executive course and regain the great feeling of being part of the RSM community. And my son is now in RSM’s IBA programme, so I’m a very proud father.”

Sander de Leeuw (MBA 1992) participated in Finance for Senior Managers. He works as a raw materials director at Berzelius Metall GmbH in Germany.
Zet de volgende stap in je carrière, verrijk je kennis en kunde met een master bedrijfskunde.

Parttime Master Bedrijfskunde

» Tweejarige masteropleiding in het Nederlands
» Universitaire kennis waarmee je direct aan de slag kunt
» Avondcolleges aangevuld met online componenten
» Internationaal project in Shanghai of Kaapstad

Meer informatie op: www.rsm.nl/pmb
The power of new perspectives

Neuromarketing
What is neuromarketing? And how can it benefit your business? In this two-day programme, you will learn how neuromarketing can help you find more business opportunities and increase your effectiveness and success in marketing.

Length: 2 days  
Frequency: 2x per year

Sustainable Finance
How can finance be used to increase your business’ contribution to a sustainable economy? In three days, you will learn practical tools for implementing sustainable investing and lending, and explore the change management issues that put it in motion.

Length: 3 days  
Frequency: 2x per year

Our broad portfolio of executive education programmes makes an impact on yourself, your work and your organisation. Increase your value and choose the programme that suits your career. RSM is consistently ranked among the top business schools in Europe.

rsm.nl/executive