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A positive force

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I WILL MAKE A POSITIVE IMPACT IN THE WORLD

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
Change is a good thing, says outgoing RSM Dean Steef van de Velde, particularly when it comes to leadership. As his deanship ends after two terms in the post, he reflects on the legacy he leaves and the positive future ahead.

When I first took on the deanship of RSM, I knew that I would only serve for two four-year terms. And now that deadline has arrived. But while, initially, I was dreading it, I am now reconciled to it. In fact, I am now looking forward to it.

That might sound a little strange. The deanship has been, without doubt, the best and most gratifying job I have ever done. But change is a good thing, particularly a leadership change. And while it’s satisfying to look back on the work, the challenges and the triumphs of the last eight years, it’s just as exciting to focus on the future.

Indeed, thinking about the future is at the heart of the two initiatives closest to my heart during my time as dean. Of course, academic impact and ensuring that our students have a great start in the job market, and progress in their careers, is vital. But our mission statement, RSM – a force for positive change, also takes in the societal impact of what we do.
The time was right to review our mission. I’ve found it particularly satisfying to see how it has been supported and embraced by everyone. I never thought beforehand that this change would have such a big impact. And we are now seeing this shift almost everywhere, as universities and business schools all over the world recalibrate the role they have to play in society. The big challenge now for us as a school is to walk it like we talk it. We have a great mission statement, yes. But a mission statement is not just a statement: it is a long-term goal.

We have a great deal of engagement with the corporate world and society at large to help us fulfil our mission. But the most powerful instrument we have to help us shape the future is our education. Every year, we graduate around 2,000 students. They are our agents of positive change. RSM has a big role to play to facilitate them, and so we need to ensure that we keep close ties with them. For example, over the last year, we have taken our mission roadshow to alumni chapters all over the world, discussing what RSM – a force for positive change means, how we want to achieve it, and what our alumni can do.

I am also proud of our One School principle: again, this will help shape the future of RSM. In practice, the school consists of two units, a public arm and a private arm. The challenge is to present these as one, ensuring consistency in what we say and do. There is more to do, but we have made good progress over the last few years.

Over the last eight years, I have seen rapid change in my specialist area, technology. When I started, all the talk was of online learning and massive open online courses (MOOCs). Now, we talk of a broader term: technology enhanced learning. Technology is already having a huge impact on business education, and education in general. Our current and future challenge will be working out how we can use it effectively.

But it is people, of course, who are charged with taking RSM forward in today’s rapidly-changing global landscape. And I have great confidence in those people. I have been blessed with a strong, competent, able and visionary senior leadership team that has worked with me to take the school forward. I hope you will welcome my successor, Professor Ansgar Richter, with as much enthusiasm, support and trust as I have been lucky enough to experience. I have been really proud to be your dean, and I wish you all the best in your professional and personal lives.

Steef van de Velde
Dean and Professor
Rotterdam School of Management
Erasmus University
RSM renews accreditation – for the fifth consecutive time

Back in 1998, RSM was among the first European business schools to receive AACSB accreditation. It has now been renewed for the fifth consecutive time, and lasts for the next five years.

Dean Professor Steef van de Velde said: “This accreditation is a reflection of our positive, collaborative spirit and the quality and impact of our education and research.”
NEW DEAN APPOINTED

Professor Ansgar Richter has been appointed the new Dean of RSM and will take up his post on 1 November 2019. Previously, he was Dean of Surrey Business School, and head of the organisation and management group at the University of Liverpool Management School. He succeeds Professor Steef van de Velde, who is stepping down after eight years in the post.

ACCOUNTING VOTED ‘MOST INNOVATIVE COURSE’ IN BACHELOR PROGRAMME

The Foundations of Finance and Accounting course has won the first ever student vote for ‘most innovative course’ in the annual Student Representation (SR) Professor Awards. Students from RSM’s BSc International Business Administration (IBA) and BSc Business Administration (Bedrijfskunde) chose the course for its use of innovative tools and smaller-scale, in-class activities in workshops.

Students also voted for the most inspiring lecturers of the academic year for each class and programme. “We may give our professors a headache at times throughout the year, but we love this opportunity to thank them for their collaboration and hard work,” said Florian Dohmen, chairman of SR.

YING ZHANG ONE OF TOP 30 THINKERS

A top RSM academic has been recognised as one of the top 30 thinkers to watch in 2019 by www.thinkers50.com. Ying Zhang is associate professor of entrepreneurship and innovation, Chinese economy and business and associate dean of China business. Her work argues for the necessity of cross-sector collaboration between business, education research and social-economic circumstance.

ROTTERDAM PORT HAS BEST MONTH EVER

Rotterdam’s status as one of the world’s leading ports was further confirmed in April 2019, when it shipped 13.6 million tonnes of container freight, beating its previous record of 13.2 million tonnes in August 2018. This makes Rotterdam the largest container port in Europe.

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€50 alumni discount
Conference discusses collaboration to help refugees in Europe

In summer 2015, several thousand asylum seekers landed on the beaches of Lesbos, Greece. Four years later, between 100 and 200 are still arriving every day – so how can organisations work together more efficiently to help them?

Experts discussed this question and more at a RSM conference organised by the Centre of Excellence in Public Safety Management (CESAM).

Keynote speaker Marios Andriotis Konstantios, international relations advisor to the mayor of Lesbos, said that the humanitarian crisis called for European involvement.

UNIQUE CAMPAIGN SIGNPOSTS THE VALUE OF POSITIVE CHANGE TO MBAs

Undertaking an MBA at RSM can bring students success beyond personal gain – that’s the message of a new global campaign. The MBA of Value campaign will use both digital and traditional media to stress the value of positive change in the world to prospective students. “Over the years, we’ve seen a shift in the profile of the prospective students with whom we interact,” said Brandon Kirby, Director of MBA Marketing and Admissions at RSM. “Conversations around entrepreneurship and making a difference in the world have become just as commonplace as salary after graduation and personal gain.”

ONEMBA RESIDENCY

East and West Europe came together when Global Executive OneMBA students from five universities across the world arrived for the Global Residency Europe at RSM.

They heard from speakers including Dean Professor Steef van de Velde and Martin Sutton, academic facilitator for the European global residency, and had an open question session with former Dutch Prime Minister Professor Jan Peter Balkenende. In Rotterdam, they visited three companies before flying to Warsaw, where they heard from speakers including Jerzy Hausner, the former Deputy Prime Minister of Poland.
The Erasmus Centre for Leadership (ECL) strives to create a knowledge hub for state-of-the-art leadership research, to help research outcomes make their way into RSM’s educational programmes, and to inspire the public to join the debate on leadership.

The ECL offers a platform by:
» Creating a common value proposition for leadership education at RSM driven by the current needs of business and underpinned by the latest scientific knowledge;
» Enabling business leaders to share their insights and experience with the Centre and to learn from each other;
» Providing business partners with expertise and support for leadership development so they can lead their organisations into the digital arena;
» Using business and scientific knowledge to provide excellent education to students so they can develop into agents of positive change;
» Develop tools, new procedures and programmes to provide life-long leadership education.

www.rsm.nl/leadership
MOO-VING IN ON FLOATING FARM

The Floating Farm at Rotterdam’s Merwehaven harbour has welcomed its first cows. The 32 red-pied cows will eat around 80 per cent waste products in line with the farm’s circular policy, and their manure will be used for fertilizer to grow their feed. The Floating Farm, designed by waterborne architects Peter and Minke van Wingerden, aims to highlight how food production can respond to the challenges of climate change.

HENK DE VRIES APPOINTED PROFESSOR OF STANDARDISATION MANAGEMENT

It’s vital to set and implement standards if products and services are going to be successful. Now, RSM has appointed leading standards expert Henk de Vries as endowed Professor of Standardisation Management. He will address standardisation from a managerial perspective. The chair is endowed by the Erasmus Trust Fund and co-funded by the Netherlands Standardization Institute (NEN).

Toronto alumni chapter launched

RSM continues to extend its global reach with the launch of the RSM Local Chapter in Toronto. Canada-based alumni enjoyed an evening at the residence of the Consul-General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Toronto to network and reconnect with their classmates. Nearly 100 alumni have joined a new network on LinkedIn.

WEB To join, visit https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12192328/

WEB The MOOC, Driving Business Towards the SDGs, is available now via the Coursera platform.

Sustainable development goals

A new massive open online course (MOOC) from RSM aims to demystify the part businesses can play in achieving the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.

The seven-week course is aimed at those who want to create a culture of sustainable business, exploring how business can contribute to a better future for people and the planet while staying in profit.

WEB The MOOC, Driving Business Towards the SDGs, is available now via the Coursera platform.
MOVERS AND SHAKERS

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 around the globe. Making a career move? If so, contact us at alumni@rsm.nl

Erik Nijveld
Executive MBA 2004
Moves from a position as technology deployment manager at Shell to become the CEO and co-founder of Deployment Matters, Delft, Netherlands
Effective: March 2018

Caroline Cawley
MBA 2012
Leaves position as global sustainability manager at Liberty Global, Amsterdam, to be a senior corporate social responsibility consultant, TDC Group, Copenhagen, Denmark.
Effective: January 2019

Midas van Dijk
MSc Strategic Management 2014
Moves from a role as business controller at Horticoop BV to business controller services & solutions at MediaMarkt-Saturn Holding Nederland BV.
Effective: December 2018

Ana Cristina Kábana
MSc Supply Chain Management 2017
After completing an operations internship at Rosefield Watches, Amsterdam, Ana becomes a consultant at McKinsey & Company, London.
Effective: February 2019

Miguel Delcour
MScBA Strategic Management 2003
Takes up a role as chief executive of KVGO – the Royal Dutch Association of Printing and Allied Industries, “of and for entrepreneurs” in communications.
Effective: February 2019

Kate Wang
MBA 2018
Formerly assistant manager customer support and operations at wingpax, Amsterdam, Kate is now brand manager, daigou markets Europe, for Holland at Home, also in Amsterdam.
Effective: January 2019
Tom Loozen  
*MBA 1999*  
After working as senior managing director at professional service company, Accenture, Tom moves to EY, Amsterdam to take up the role of global telecommunications leader.  
*Effective: January 2019*

Eelco Fiole  
*MSc Business Administration 1994*  
Already busy as managing partner of Alpha Governance Partners, Zurich & Signapore, Eelco added a second role to his portfolio as CFO of Tezos Foundation, Zurich.  
*Effective: January 2019*

Paula Gonzalez  
*Executive MBA 2016*  
Paula takes on greater responsibility following a promotion from head of services to managing director of biotechnology experts Paques Europe BV in the Netherlands.  
*Effective: March 2019*

Alexandru Cosmin Buteica  
*MScBA Global Business and Stakeholder Management 2012*  
Still working at the World Bank, Alexandru moves from a role as an operations analyst to one as a water supply and sanitation specialist.  
*Effective: March 2019*

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**RSM alumni making waves around the world**

It was great to hear from **Anne Kathrin Bischoff**  
(MScBA Global Business and Stakeholder Management 2011), the executive coordinator of the UNESCO-Chair of Entrepreneurship and Intercultural Management, University of Wuppertal, who was in touch to tell us she has become an advisor for entrepreneurship at the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs, Digitalisation & Energy, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. And **Matthieu Campion**  
(Executive MBA 2017) writes to tell us that he’s become the general manager of Mitsubishi Motors Europe’s electric vehicle business, after working as head of marketing communication for TomTom’s automotive division.

If you have an update for us and would like to share your news with the community of Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, please do email us at alumni@rsm.nl
RSM − a force for positive change
Climate change. Economic turmoil. Social disadvantage. The issues the world faces in the mid-21st century are huge – and business has a critical role to play. Which is why we are preparing the next generation to think and do with reflection, creativity and a collaborative spirit.

Story by Megan Welford
Illustration Petra Eriksson
We can’t leave global challenges to governments, individuals and NGOs. Business must play its part.”

My first act in this job was to make three major mistakes. I assumed everyone knew what I wanted to achieve. I assumed everyone thought it was a good idea. And I thought I could make it happen overnight.” So says RSM Dean Steef van de Velde, with characteristic frankness.

Of course, every leader makes mistakes. But few leaders have what it takes to identify those mistakes – and then change course. The challenge was clear: enhance the school’s reputation, impact and relevance. But could a mission statement – words on a page – really make a difference? After all, most of us would struggle to recite our company’s mission statement, let alone agree that it impacts our working lives.

“I wanted to bring in strategic philanthropy, but simply telling people you're excellent isn’t enough,” says Van de Velde. “Together with the team, we went back to first principles: what exactly is RSM here for? We kept returning to the huge global challenges we face, and our conviction at RSM that business should play a key role in addressing them – that we can’t leave it to governments, individuals and NGOs.

“There’s good business in it too, and it reflects a way of thinking we have in this part of the world that the US and Asia don’t really have. So eventually we got to this statement – ‘A force for positive change’.”

Van de Velde was sceptical that a mission statement – words on a banner or a website – would make a difference. However, as staff and students got involved in defining exactly what it was they were trying to achieve, his excitement grew. The words they would arrive at – “Be a force for positive change” – would turn out to be more than just a mission statement. In connecting the school to deeply held human values, they would give the school a driving sense of common purpose.

What would come next required a step change. “We needed to walk the talk,” says Van de Velde. That’s where Eva Rood, director of the Positive Change Initiative, came in. “My role is to make sure the mission is shaped in our curriculum, research and facilities,” she says. “My small team and I are just the accelerator unit, though. We have a small budget and that’s deliberate – we shouldn’t take over the responsibility from the rest of the school.”

Taking RSM to a new audience

Academic directors are redesigning the curriculum, and have rebranded the MBA as an “MBA of Value” that ties business into sustainability. Undergraduate teachers are drawing on the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for their courses. “One teacher is using UN poverty data instead of the dummy database he previously used for his statistics module,” says Rood. “Another is asking students to measure Fortune 500 companies against the SDGs. It’s playful and interesting. I’m setting up an escape room based on the SDGs, testing game-based learning. It’s all bringing us intriguing external collaborations too.”

Positive change is now part of the onboarding process for new students, she continues. “MBA applicants must write an essay about how they will be a force for positive change, then they discuss how RSM can help them achieve it.” She has
acquired new colleagues who approached the school because they were inspired by the mission. “I’ve been pleasantly surprised by people’s willingness to collaborate. I think the mission triggers something in people because it asks them to contribute to a greater good.”

She’s also proud of a series of “deep dives” with local businesses and frontrunners exploring dilemmas in the up-and-coming algorithm economy, which “provides opportunities outside of the usual scope of courses”. It’s just one way in which RSM is broadening access to its ideas. So far, RSM has published a series of new frameworks on positive change exploring how business can contribute to society’s grand challenges, developed using the SDGs. And Rood’s team have launched a MOOC (free online course, see right), Driving Business Towards the SDGs, that is open to anyone – and more are planned. “They are bringing RSM thinking to a different audience, of nature conservationists, farmers and investment bankers,” says Rood.

The innovative, outwardly focused nature of the Positive Change Initiative is one which Elena Avramenko (Executive MBA, 2018) says she recognises. Indeed, her time at the school opened her mind to the social impact of business, and led to her startup The Time Donors – a volunteering platform

**DO THE BEST YOU CAN**

RSM believes the strength of individuals and businesses is multiplied when we join forces, and we can use that force to make positive changes. But we encourage everyone to take action. All it takes to make a start is the power of one, just as in the hummingbird story (where a tiny bird is mocked for trying to put out a huge forest fire, but responds with: “I am doing the best I can”) by Nobel Peace prize laureate Wangari Maathai, a campaigner for sustainable development, democracy and peace.

**SDGs ONLINE COURSE**

RSM’s new MOOC, Driving Business Towards the SDGs, explores the role of business in contributing to a better future without giving up profits. The seven-week online course uses the UN’s SDGs as a framework for addressing the global problems, looking at the issues the goals relate to, how to apply business insights to each of them and what individuals can do. It also explains how all 17 of the SDGs are interconnected, and why synergy is the key to meeting the challenges.

See https://www.rsm.nl/programmes/mooc/ for more.
where people offer their time and professional skills. “I did a summer course on social entrepreneurship,” she says, “and until that point I thought social meant not-for-profit. It was an eye-opener to think that a business could be for profit and have a social impact. Like Web 2.0, it’s Business 2.0.”

She was supported by Professor Patrick Flood at RSM. “He said my idea was good because it tapped into the generous, altruistic side of people. Through him I discovered the work of American psychologist and author Adam Grant, who says that although we are ‘givers’ with our friends and family, at work we are, at best, ‘matchers’ – if we give, we expect something in return. My business allows people to give, in a professional context. The idea is we should share our knowledge, not hold it, because otherwise it’s of no use to anyone.”

For Avramenko this is not a ‘soft’ idea – it’s a necessity for future businesses if they want to attract and retain talent. “For millennials, brand name and salary aren’t enough,” she says. “They also want to make a social impact.” She cites the 2016 Cone Communications Millennial Employee Engagement Study that says by 2020 millennials will make up 34 per cent of the global workforce, and 76 per cent of them prefer to work for a “socially active” company.

Blanca Vergara (MBA, 1999) agrees that the rise of the millennials will lead to a drastically different society. “By 2030 just nine per cent of us will be full-time employees,” she says, citing PricewaterhouseCoopers research. “We will be an entrepreneurial society, not a hierarchical one.” Vergara set up her own coaching business 12 years ago, after working for the European Commission and then the European Space Agency. “Once I stopped being an employee I learned so much,” she says. “I like to call it the entrepreneurial jungle, because it’s organic, exciting and colourful.

“We have to let go of the idea that competition is the way forward. Collaboration is the only way that innovation is possible. People have misunderstood Darwin’s idea of survival of the fittest. Fittest doesn’t mean strongest, it means the most adaptable.”

**A common higher purpose**

Vergara says RSM woke her up. “I remember one particular lesson on the moral responsibility of companies – about a dirty logo at the entrance to a building – where we were pushed to think: ‘What am I doing here? Why do I get up every day?’ It was one of many lightbulb moments for me,” she says.

Hande Macit (IBA, 2014) mentions the heart when she talks about Luwia Yoghurt, the sustainable food business she has started with her brother, making fresh yoghurt. “I was so excited to move to the Netherlands from Turkey, because it’s a dairy country,” she says. “It’s famous for its cows, cheese
and windmills. However, I was shocked to find that the Dutch don’t eat fresh yoghurt. Dairy is very industrialised here, and I believe the food system needs to change.

“A recent report from the World Economic Forum says unhealthy eating now costs more lives than smoking. We are passing on our DNA to the next generation – we need to look after ourselves, to be able to look after the world. My brother and I make yoghurt on a local farm and sell it directly. It makes my heart feel good to know that we’re offering people something good.”

But she says she may never have taken the plunge into entrepreneurship without RSM. “RSM made me more daring. It gave me entrepreneurial spirit. I met people of all nationalities, and we went on trips to places like India to learn about business. I think we learned to take the best from each other, to share and combine, and that turned me into a world citizen.”

According to Rood, the world’s problems are “frightening and overwhelming. But with our mission statement, we are actively deciding to focus on what we can do. We can’t solve these problems alone. That’s why members of our accreditation body, who were initially critical, spent three days here recently and completely changed their minds. They said that although we are providing an excellent education and research, that is no longer our end goal. Instead, we are trying to make business a force for good, which is more than education and research. It’s a common higher purpose.”
RSM – a force for positive change
EYES ON THE PRIZE

Marjolijn van Gerven admits she likes a challenge – and it’s just as well. As the person leading the Dutch response to the UN’s poverty goal, she’s aiming to halve the numbers within 10 years. And she’s characteristically optimistic.

Story by Peter Taylor-Whiffen
Photos Dana Romina / Mladen Pikulic

Most people would consider being asked to solve their country’s poverty crisis as an impossible brief. But Marjolijn van Gerven (MSc Business Administration, 2001) is not most people. As the person leading the Dutch response to the United Nations’ No 1 goal – to end poverty in all its forms everywhere – the RSM alumna is not just hopeful of success, she’s positively optimistic.

“We’ve never before had a truly co-ordinated national approach to this problem, or to make it a joint effort between government and the rest of society,” she says. “Which means that, despite all the documents, research and government papers, we’ve never really given ourselves a chance to try as hard as we can.” But, she says, since the leaders of the UN’s 193 member states put eradicating poverty at the top of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to address the world’s most urgent problems, that has changed.

“There is now a universal agenda that binds different parties such as government, corporates, creatives and (social) entrepreneurs together. And that means all things are possible.”

In March 2019, Van Gerven was asked by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Hugo von Meijenfeldt to work as part of a team of co-ordinators, under the chairmanship of former politician (and former Rector Magnificus Erasmus University Rotterdam) Alexander Rinnooy Kan, to address the 17 goals. Her specific target is to cut by half the 600,000 Dutch households currently living in poverty within just 10 years. The co-ordinators are asked to build up a national alliance around their goal, and together they search for interrelated themes between their goals.

“It is my belief that this infrastructure is not only of value to reach for the 2030 UN goals,” she says, “it’s also the start of a national public-private infrastructure that can be used in many ways. We are fortunate to live in such a prosperous country that many people do not even see poverty as a problem here. But it absolutely exists, and we’re not simply talking about a lack of money. The impacts are much wider than that – social isolation, anxiety and depression, physical health issues, bad housing or even homelessness, crime and domestic violence. Poverty leads to stress, and stress leads to irrational choices and behaviour. For millions of people, these issues stem from not having enough to live on. And that is why we need to act. That is why I need to act.”
But where, with such an enormous challenge, do you start? For Van Gerven, the first practical step was finding out what had already been done. “I spent months researching documents, public consultations and government policies, to discover the country’s written ambitions around poverty. I then started sounding out organisations, potential partners and influential people in the field to hear their thoughts and see if they might want to participate and how they could contribute.”

Van Gerven quickly saw that the key was a joined-up approach, and began to bring together an alliance of 20 business, education and government partner organisations to exchange knowledge, map out existing services and identify the gaps. “I have been given free rein, which gives me the opportunity to execute this role based on my own vision. I think one of my strengths is identifying which coalitions, organisations and thought leaders are best suited to achieving this goal.”

Impossible task
When you look at her background, it seems as if Van Gerven was born to do this job. After studying at RSM for an MSc in business administration and then a postgrad in transition management (Drift), she became a business advisor and worked for several advisory companies. Then, in 2010, she set up her own business, advising the government on ways to bring innovation to social and youth care during a time of major budget cuts. “I love this kind of ‘impossible task’,” she says. “It needs proper investigation, preparation, creativity, persuasion, vigour and perseverance. Most people would turn it down or cut the task in pieces, but for me the impossibility is the challenge.”

Van Gerven’s passion for social justice was formed years earlier in her family home. “My father was an enormous influence,” she says. “He had built himself up from a machine operator at Philips to a director at ABN AMRO, before he started his own management consultancy firm. He always remained studious and worked extremely hard – and he was acutely aware of the needs of others, a sharp listener and passionate about people. He never forgot how he started out, and stood up for the common man.

“So from a young age I was also aware of the needs of others and knowing when people or groups are left out – and standing up for them. Combining that with my mother’s caring and creativity has made me the person I am. So I do have a strong feeling around injustice, inherited from my father – as he inherited it from his father who was in the Resistance, a fact he kept secret all his life and that we never discovered until after he died.”

Van Gerven’s father was so supportive that when she came to RSM to study business administration, he enrolled alongside her, studying the same programme part-time at the age of 52. “It was a wonderful experience. We spent so much time together and he taught me a lot too – double-loop learning. He was my father, friend and mentor. He is no longer alive but, if he was, I know we would be doing this SDG project together.

“RSM helped me develop my analytical and methodological skills and understand organisations and businesses, and encouraged us to work together in teams and groups. Studying Management of Change was so valuable because of the focus on social and human interaction. It was also great to take part in the exchange programme. My time at the Copenhagen Business School was a great experience and I made some valuable friends there.”

Van Gerven is using the understanding she gained at RSM to build a comprehensive agenda to tackle poverty. “We need to involve people, especially children, and especially those with first-hand experience. From there come new ideas. We make them aware it’s their human right to participate...
We need to involve people, especially children, and especially those with first-hand experience. And from there come new ideas.”

And is the 50 per cent goal achievable? “I don’t know yet,” she says, candidly. “But we have never had such a specific UN goal, and have never pooled all our knowledge, skill and capital in this way to tackle such a major social issue. The biggest obstacle is just how committed our government is to fulfilling the UN agenda. But our biggest asset is the enormous positive effect of the SDGs on society!”

But she is optimistic. “If we achieve 25 per cent poverty reduction we will have made progress – taking into account external factors that can influence the economic situation – because we’ll have established a new national infrastructure built on a new way of thinking and handling complex social problems. Then, not only will we have found answers but we’ll have built ourselves a ‘Next Society’ – one that is much more balanced, truly resilient and truly inclusive.”
KNOW YOUR PURPOSE – THEN ACT

Forget pipe dreams and unfocused ambition. Because success, as Professor Michaëla Schippers explains, comes to those who know what they really, really want.

Want to know the secret of life? Ask Professor Michaëla Schippers. She has spent the past 20 years investigating what makes people happy and effective. The answer? Knowing your purpose – and acting on it.

“Striving towards a goal can make us happy and fulfilled,” says Schippers, citing various pieces of research that say people with a purpose in life live longer, sleep better – and even have better sex.

But some find this process easier than others. At the start of her career, Schippers says she had no problem focusing on study – and Taekwondo training – rather than being tempted by the bars of Amsterdam where she studied. Gaining her PhD and performing in her favourite sport were more important. “Setting goals has always come naturally to me. But for most people, it certainly doesn’t.”

Human nature being what it is, most of us are adept at procrastinating, finding it easier to focus on short-term rewards rather than the distant goals of career success. But Schippers has devised an extraordinarily effective way of helping people achieve their long-term goals. She was inspired after reading about a proven programme that helped individuals set and commit to goals. Could this be the answer to the high drop-out rate of Dutch students in their first year at university, she wondered? RSM jumped at her suggestion of a research project that would involve students taking part in a brief, online intervention.

Astonishing results
With a series of considered prompts and questions, students were coaxed into setting specific goals, defining concrete measures to achieve them, and then – and this stage was critical – actively committing to them. Around 800 students took part in 2011, and the study was so successful the university now asks all first-year business undergraduates to undertake goal-setting in a mandatory three-stage process.

The results are striking: a 22 per cent rise in students’ academic results since the intervention, and equivalent
Schippers cites research that shows people with a purpose in life live longer, sleep better – and even have better sex.”
rise in student retention. But among male and ethnic minority students, who traditionally underperform, the outcomes were even more astonishing. After the first year, the gender gap closed by 98 per cent and the ethnicity gap by 38 per cent. Retention of ethnic minority male students increased by 54 per cent. “I’d had a few sleepless nights waiting for the results to come in,” says Schippers. “But when they did, we were elated.”

Planning the ideal future
Goal-setting is simple but can be deeply revealing, says Schippers. Students are asked to respond to a series of questions around study and life, and to imagine their ideal future.

The worst possible outcome – what would happen if they didn’t change anything. One way to fix a purpose is to imagine how you’d like to be remembered – or whom you’d like to emulate. Reflection is key.

“This stage is very much like brainstorming – ‘What do you want in life? What did you want as a kid? What would you do with more leisure time?’ It’s very rare students don’t come up with anything.” Using this approach, they define at least six future goals. Ambition varies, says Schippers, and many students focus on their careers. “There’s no such thing as a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ goal,” she says. “Some people simply want to become rich – but they might have good reason – such as ‘I want to reform the education system in Brazil and I need to finance that.’”

This is an example of what Schippers calls a self-transcendent goal – one that focuses on a higher purpose, and her research shows that publicly stating your goal leads to even better results. “And these goals make you happier as well as making the world a better place.” All students have their portrait taken and come up with an overall personal goal – the “I WILL” statement.

And now, some enterprising secondary schools are working to adapt the programme for a teenage audience. Despite that fact that Dutch teenagers consistently rank among the happiest in the world, teachers have been shocked by findings from national school inspectors. Academic standards have been falling steadily for 20 years, an official Dutch report confirmed last year, and Dutch children are among the least motivated to learn.

And the gap between schools in rich and poor areas is widening – a big deal, says Rotterdam headmaster Bram van Welie (Executive MBA, 2014), in a
country that prides itself on offering equal opportunities. Parents are more likely to steer their children towards schools offering the same opportunities they had, and social segregation is becoming more entrenched.

Van Welie heard about the programme while taking an MBA at RSM. “It seemed almost too good to be true.” When he was promoted to headmaster, he picked up the phone. Inner-city Rotterdam schools could benefit hugely, he believes, but could the programme coax reluctant teens to raise their game at school? “There are many distractions for teenagers in a city such as ours. Many are tempted to make the wrong choices,” he says. “I hope this intervention makes them more aware of the importance of the last two years of secondary school.”

Students are encouraged to fix a purpose by imagining how they’d like to be remembered, or whom they’d like to emulate.

After Van Welie received government funding to redesign the programme for a teenage audience, four Rotterdam secondary schools have signed up for trials to begin in September this year. “It’s a huge undertaking,” says Schippers. “Nobody knows how younger pupils will react.” But the process is relatively friendly, says Van Welie. “Nobody minds talking about the future – if we ask our kids, they genuinely seem to enjoy it.”

Like many students, Robert Vlug (BSc Business Administration, 2018), now a course co-ordinator at RSM, took part in the programme as an undergraduate, despite initially being sceptical. But he attributes his current career to the goals set by his 18-year-old self. “One was to figure out what I wanted in life.” Had he not taken part, he may not have taken the risk to go into teaching, he believes. “I know I love being an educator and helping people.” Many undergraduates approach the exercise with scepticism, he says – but at least they are honest. “Most adopt a wait-and-see approach.” The goal he has set himself now is to “teach the next generation how to achieve greatness”.

And parents have welcomed the change in their student children, says Schippers. “They say they’re more motivated.” Students report better time-management skills too.

Schippers believes these life skills should form a major part of the curriculum – as we live longer, we’ll need to think harder about how we spend our extra years. She’s just reviewed her own goals, “and my new one is to reach one million people with this exercise. For those whose student days are long behind them, it’s never too late to find a purpose in life.”
Gaining a new perspective
Lead... or die. Well, not quite. But when a group of Rotterdam School of Management MBA students landed in Hardangervidda National Park last year, the challenge was considerable: the equipment, the distance – and, of course, the weather. All in all, the perfect test of leadership.

Story by Becky Allen

A few days into RSM’s Nordic Leadership Expedition to Hardangervidda National Park, Dorothy Seguy (Executive MBA, 2018) had her lightbulb moment. It was her turn to lead, and having failed to set out clear goals, some of her team members were beginning to question her decisions.

“Frankly I was just there to escape the pressure of a hectic worklife balance. That day, I couldn’t care less how many kilometres we walked or whether we reached our end-point or not.” But while she was happy simply walking all day, her followers were not. “I realised that the others needed goals, and they were angry with me because, without those goals, they felt lost. It was a terrific learning experience, because being a leader isn’t something you are taught in class – it just doesn’t happen that way.”

Seguy is one of several participants who, over the past two years, have braved the RSM expedition to Hardangervidda, the largest eroded plain in Europe and an ancient, ice-worn place. A lunar landscape of rock and rivers, the treeless plateau is vast and – apart from the reindeer herds that nibble its moss and lichen – utterly empty. And, as Verena Ohms (Executive MBA, 2018) discovered, standing on a rocky spur overlooking a Norwegian fjord is a strange place to give a speech.

If you don’t count the wild reindeer, the audience is tiny: just a handful of fellow MBA peers and two or three staff from RSM with whom you’ve spent the past seven days walking and talking, coming undone and rebuilding yourself from the inside out. But the vision speech
“What happens on expedition stays there. People say very personal – and powerful – things that none of us would ever repeat.”
is the culmination of the expedition. As the wind whisks away your words, it’s a rare opportunity to articulate where you have come from and where you’re going, a promise you make to those who have shared an important part of the journey and, for some, a profoundly personal experience. “Giving mine and listening to the others was really moving,” says Ohms, who now works in RSM’s Leadership Centre. “My speech was extremely personal and I opted not to have it recorded, so what I said is something that will stay within the group and in that wilderness.”

A personal experience
RSM’s Dr Hannes Leroy leads the expedition, and says the first thing he always says to participants is: “It’s not for everyone, it’s quite a challenge.” As well as gale-force winds and the odd snowstorm, last year’s group faced an additional battle to protect their tents from a deluge. “After a long day’s hike, we set up camp and it started to rain,” he recalls. “Overnight, a river began to form so we had to get up in the middle of the night and dig trenches to divert the water away from our tents.”

While Leroy and his colleagues (including partners Bold Expeditions) are on hand to ensure participants’ safety, both physical and mental, they are otherwise alone: they set their own goals, find their own route, and learn about leadership and themselves along the way. The only fixed points are the legacy speech, being leader for a day and taking along a bundle of personal letters from colleagues, friends and family that RSM gathers in advance for each participant.

“All that’s set is point A, where they enter the national park, and point B, where they leave. Everyone makes their own expedition,” says Leroy. Some opt to set up base camp and explore one area, some set their sights on Hårteigen, a monolith that rises from the plateau like Australia’s Uluru, others bring a pack raft and take to the lakes.

“We tell them how to do it, but other than that it’s up to them. And sometimes they fail miserably,” he explains. “We could be walking in completely the wrong direction for hours, but we let them, because lots of interesting learning arises from that and it builds their self-efficacy.”

Overcoming a lousy leadership day is something Ohms remembers vividly. Her team had set Hårteigen as their objective, but after two days and 20 hours’ walking the mountain remained resolutely out of sight. “Leading that day was challenging for me because things were really uncertain. Every time we crested a ridge we thought we’d see it – but we never did,” she says. “I hadn’t found my rhythm and was doing a really poor job. I didn’t know what was expected; I was trying to be someone I wasn’t, and it didn’t feel good, so I was disappointed in myself that day.”

However, two things helped her: getting her first glimpse of the mountain that evening and reading a letter from a friend who always made her laugh. “When we finally spotted...
Härteigen, sitting there in the distance, it boosted our morale and gave us a new spirit. The next day was special. We got caught in a huge thunderstorm but were determined to reach it, and when we did, we felt euphoric. For the last kilometre we were almost running!

Exactly what makes the RSM expedition such a powerful learning environment is something Wouter den Boer (Executive MBA, 2018) has thought long and hard about. Like Ohms and Seguy, he studied alongside a full-time job in the aviation industry and believes that it’s the time and space – increasingly rare commodities in modern life – that make it special.

Nowhere to hide

Being outdoors in a small group has two massive benefits, Den Boer believes. First, it creates strong bonds between team members and a safe place to learn. “What happens on those expeditions stays there. People say some very personal – and powerful – things that none of us would ever repeat,” he says. “It was a very trustful environment to give open and honest feedback.

Second are the physical demands. Being active all day provides time and space for thinking and talking, and strips people back to more authentic versions of themselves, he says. “You’re there for a full week, 24/7, so you see everyone’s ups and downs. When you’re under physical stress and strain, leadership style comes to the surface: you find what style fits you best, where you can add value and what you might need to work on. Those moments – when you get feedback with real-life examples – were really useful for me.”

They are things that Leroy says are supported by research evidence as well as his personal experience. A study by one of his current PhD students suggests that people learn most from negative experiences, but only if they have enough room to process their emotions. “It’s exactly what we do in Norway,” Leroy explains. “We put people in uncomfortable positions but give them a wealth of time – either walking by themselves or talking to a coach – to reflect. That’s the magical combination that happens there.”

And because the expedition provides nowhere to hide, it strips people of the many roles and identities they create in normal life. “Out there, you can’t retreat to your cosy hotel room after faking it all day. You have to be yourself from day one. You all sleep in the same tents, you all smell, you all show a vulnerable, human side, so the true self emerges very quickly. We get to the core of who we are – our strengths and our weaknesses – and then get to rebuild a more authentic version of ourselves. That’s what people take away.”

It’s certainly true for Ohms, Seguy and Den Boer, for whom the experience has been revelatory. For Den Boer, the expedition has boosted his confidence at work and as a leader,
and has helped him relax and focus on what’s important to him. “Those are the big wins,” he says. “The letters I read there were particularly powerful, because they all focused on finding a better work-life balance. I’m someone who goes at things full throttle and can lose track of when is a good time to relax. When even your boss tells you this, it’s time to listen.”

Ohms says she returned from Norway more confident and more resilient. There, she says, it was easier to absorb – and process – uncomfortable truths, and it gave her valuable new perspectives. “It made me realise how small we are in this vast universe; problems that seem huge in everyday life suddenly disappeared in Norway. The most important thing when you’re hiking is what you’re going to have for dinner – what’s the dried reindeer stew going to taste like, and does anyone have some dried sausage? There, those are the important questions. And it’s good to find so much joy in such small things.”

But Seguy, perhaps, has changed most as a result of the expedition. On returning from Norway she left her job, moved to Amsterdam and is now taking a sabbatical to decide what she really wants to do with her life. Over the space of a week in Norway, spending time with herself as well as listening to others, she says she felt naked and – as a result – better able to reconnect with earlier dreams and desires that gradually got buried by the demands of successive jobs.

If there was a moment of realisation, it was when she gave her legacy speech. “At the age of 20, you want to change the world. Giving my speech made me realise that I still do,” she says. “When I was young, I wanted to teach, and now I’m making small steps towards that. I’m reconnecting with my roots, it’s like a homecoming. And I made a promise to my team that I would do it, so that’s a commitment I need to keep. Because when you make a promise to an audience after sharing that kind of experience – that really counts for something.”

RSM’s Norway expedition is now available as an open programme at RSM Executive Education. Visit www.rsm.edu/NLE for more details.
Fortune 500 companies tell us they’re serious about maintaining the health of the planet and everyone on it. But are they?

Story by Dr Frank Wijen
Once seen as the province of eco social warriors, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has gone mainstream. It’s now an established part of the corporate and commercial framework, with an estimated 80 per cent of Fortune 500 global companies issuing sustainability reports. While they are deadly serious about the generation of wealth, they make clear, they are also equally serious about maintaining the health of the planet and everyone on it. They are good corporate citizens.

Or are they not? Has this apparent dedication to CSR become a very clever exercise in misdirection? Are major corporations acting like the best illusionists, distracting public attention through overtly benign actions while indulging in covert activities to undermine rules and regulations designed to benefit society as a whole? Are the ‘robber barons’ of the past really still with us – albeit wearing a much more effective disguise than ever before?

Social vs political responsibility

It’s important to acknowledge that many elements of modern business life are undoubtedly significantly better than in the recent past, thanks to the progress made in embedding the concept of sustainability into corporate DNA.

Unilever and Philips are two prominent examples. Unilever has significantly reduced the environmental impact per product supplied, for instance, by co-creating and adopting a series of voluntary sustainability standards, including MSC (Marine Stewardship Council, governing seafood catch and sales) and RSPO (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil). And Philips has significantly reduced its environmental footprint per product, in particular around energy efficiency, packing, weight, toxic materials and recycling.

But all the focus on corporate social responsibility has meant that few have gone on to question an organisation’s performance when it comes to what we call CPR – corporate political responsibility. It is rare to find firms that are equally transparent about, and proactive in, their political activity. The most common methods used to evaluate CSR and corporate sustainability today almost completely ignore the role of business in shaping public policy. In other words, CSR needs CPR.

And there is evidence that some companies use their corporate sustainability initiatives as a cover for their political efforts, to block meaningful change through government regulations seeking to rectify negative social and environmental externalities from self-interested corporate actions. Few, if any, major companies are genuinely transparent about the tools and tricks they use to shape all-important public policy.

Take the issue of fine-particle emission limits for cars in Europe, for example. There was an enormous amount of embarrassing publicity when Volkswagen was caught cheating in their diesel emission tests. However, what went largely unreported was the fact that regulatory emission ceilings were already being set way too low in the eyes of many informed commentators. And this had almost certainly happened because the vehicle manufacturing giants had used their financial muscle to deploy armies of highly effective lobbyists in Brussels, which simply blew the lightly resourced environmental campaigners off the battlefield.

The issue of vehicle emissions is hugely important, as it potentially affects vast numbers of people. According to the 2017 Air Quality in Europe report from the European Environment Agency (EEA), the annual limit value of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) continues to be widely exceeded across Europe. The EEA further calculates that in the European Union an estimated 502,351 premature deaths in 2014 were caused by air pollution, including NO₂, much of which comes from car emissions. This has attracted little in the way of media attention. Slow and largely invisible deaths do not grab headlines in the way that, for example, a terrorist attack would.

A similar thing seems to have happened in terms of the emission of greenhouse gases by large industrial producers in
Europe. Despite well-PR’d statements by many of them about their CSR efforts here, the EU has generously distributed free emission rights to them that will actually lead to it breaking undertakings made under international agreements. Is this an unfortunate lack of attention which could afflict anyone, or perhaps those insidious lobbyists at work again at the heart of the Union?

Or look at the active lobbying by Dutch-based multinationals to abolish the Dutch dividend tax. The companies concerned included Unilever and Philips, both of which top sustainability rankings. No single political party advocated this measure, which would have cost the Dutch taxpayer about €2bn, money that could have been spent on social amenities and good causes such as healthcare, education and nature preservation. This example nicely confronts the proactive CSR positions of these firms with their actual political activities. Lobbying for this and other fiscal favours, including secret tax rulings between multinationals and fiscal authorities, embodies sheer political irresponsibility.

Time to stop virtue-signalling

It is clear, then, that the situation is far from perfect. Companies need to be encouraged to align behaviour much more closely with their virtue-signalling pronouncements on sustainability and corporate responsibility. It’s understandable that, from a purely commercial point of view, businesses will be keen to minimise the effect that regulations might have on their profitability. But if they are consequently taking actions to make this happen, then I would argue that we need, and have the right, to know about them.

How can this come about? I’d suggest three relatively simple steps. First, fully disclose corporate political activity; lobbying and other political actions, such as financing ‘environmental’ organisations opposing regulations, should be publicised. This may seem idealistic, particularly in the light of legal decisions that currently allow unlimited covert political spending. But in the longer run, we do not expect current conditions to last. Social expectations change over time, and in the information age transparency is being increasingly insisted upon.

Second, they need to align CPR with CSR. Or, in other words – be honest. Put bluntly, don’t say one thing in public and do another behind closed doors. If a firm says it is seeking to voluntarily reduce its carbon footprint, then we would expect it also to support public policies that require all firms to reduce their greenhouse-gas emissions.

And third, they should actively support public policies that will enable the private sector to better pursue sustainability efforts and commitments. Partnership is always better than conflict and doesn’t have to have any major detrimental effect on the bottom line. One might not expect, for example, an oil company to support restrictions on fracking, but it would be reasonable to ask the same company to support regulations that restrict greenhouse-gas emissions from fracking if doing so would be environmentally beneficial and only entail marginally higher operating costs.

Creating a mandatory public register detailing CPR and requiring companies to disclose dealings with politicians, regulators and bureaucrats could form another element of the solution – even though firms might still pursue their political dealings secretly. It will be hard to develop an effective sanction. But whenever outright lies are told, these will be more easily revealed, since the official statements can be more readily compared with actual behaviour. Prompting firms to report their concrete stances and actions, not their lofty, abstract ideals about a beautiful society with happy people, offers a better basis for showing non-compliance with official statements.

Academics and business people have, so far, primarily focused on CSR, thereby overseeing the pernicious effect of politically irresponsible acts by businesses. Many today agree that companies must be much more transparent about their political activities. If they claim that they are following the tenets of CSR, they must demonstrate openly that they are not lobbying in the political arena against societally beneficial regulations.

Companies must not act like illusionists, showing off their benign actions but hiding their less rosy achievements. Instead, they must behave responsibly across the board, both socially and politically.

Frank Wijen is an Associate Professor of Strategic Management at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University (RSM). A shortened version of this feature appeared in Forbes magazine in April.
If companies deliberately act to minimise the effect regulation will have on their profitability, we need to know.
WATCH THIS SPACE

Coming soon, a new magazine for RSM alumni.

After more than a decade, it’s finally time to say goodbye to RSM Outlook. From our next issue, we’re launching a new print and digital magazine.

We’re taking a little break to get everything ready, so you can expect to see the new magazine in early 2020.
As a recent graduate of the MBA course at RSM herself, Kyla Vander Hart (MBA, 2018) says she had a good idea what to expect when she agreed to take on Crystal Lai (MBA, 2019) as an intern at FrieslandCampina, a multinational dairy co-operative. “An MBA intern brings tons of experience to the role – it’s not like having someone fresh out of school,” says Vander Hart.

Because we have been through the same learning process, and I know the MBA process inside out, I also know what she is capable of, where she could improve her skills and where the stress points are. She doesn’t have to hide anything from me.”

Lai had actually targeted the company herself, and approached Vander Hart and another graduate, Juan Carlos Romero (MBA, 2017). So, when an opportunity arose a few months later, Vander Hart didn’t hesitate. “We can always use an intelligent person on the team and when we needed an intern we went straight to Crystal,” she says. “She fits our skills needs and, as we are all three alumni, we know what works and what is beneficial to both sides.”

Lai was offered a six-month internship working as an analytics translator, creating a bridge between the business and data science teams through change management. “We are both collaborative people,” says Vander Hart, “but while I tend to be a big-picture thinker, Crystal takes a more operational, detached approach. She has challenged me to create a vision for our team and it has been a really positive experience. Having her on board has been a massive help for the team and very beneficial to me personally.”

Now, nearing the end of her internship and with a full-time job offer working in digital transformation at a tech company on the table, Lai is thrilled with the experience. “I have learned so much more than I expected, and Kyla has been not only a co-worker but also a mentor,” she says. “The entire team is really young, and we think together to solve problems. Kyla follows the philosophy of ‘servant leadership’, so her main goal is to serve her team. She trusted me and gave me the resources, direction, support and protection to do my job.

“My goal when I started the internship was to join FrieslandCampina full-time, but I am very excited about my new job with another great team. And I am sure I will stay in touch with Kyla and the team – I will always keep that relationship!”
Aditya Sharma (MScBA Master in Management, 2018) put Unilever at the top of his hitlist after meeting Roberto Flores Meregote (Master’s in Management, 2017) at an RSM alumni event. “I was already applying to a number of companies for an internship but, after talking to Roberto about work Unilever are doing, I decided it was most definitely only them for me. “I got back in touch with Roberto to find out how he came to be working there – it turns out he had been an intern himself. Although he works in information analytics and I am interested in supply chain, he was able to help me with contacts and explain how the internship system worked. It was great to have someone on the inside as I went through the application process.”

“I appreciate the fact that RSM encourage their students to approach for advice, not just for a job referral.” The two remain in regular contact, despite no longer directly working together, and Flores Meregote was delighted when Sharma was offered a full-time job at Unilever, working in a similar role to the one he held as an intern, but with additional managerial responsibilities.

“I found my job through an internship as well, so I am happy to give something back,” says Flores Meregote, who currently has eight mentees from RSM on his books. “I work in a very specific job environment which can become a bit of a bubble, so it is always refreshing to meet new people and get an external perspective.”

Indeed, Sharma is grateful to Flores Meregote for his help along the way. “I was in touch with him throughout the application process,” he says. “And before my final interview, I had a long chat with him to prepare for the session.”
Budi Pratomo (MBA, 2019) is very glad he listened to the advice impressed upon him early on in his MBA. “From the beginning of my course at RSM we were taught about the importance of connecting with alumni. So, when I was looking for an internship, my first step was to look up alumni with a similar profile to me.”

His research led him to Isa Yilmaz (Erasmus School of Economics: BSc Economics & Business Economics, 2015, MSc Economics & Business, 2016, Data Science & Business Analytics, 2018) who at the time was working in data analytics at EY.

“When Budi got in touch, he was very enthusiastic and excited about what we were doing here and wanted to know more. We talked about what data analytics actually means and I encouraged Budi to take some extra courses on the side,” says Yilmaz. “I also knew we were looking for interns so I forwarded Budi’s CV to a partner and suggested he invite him in for a coffee. And I helped Budi prep for the meeting by suggesting some courses he could mention during the interview, as well as some background on the department.”

Pratomo found Yilmaz’s guidance invaluable. “I reached out to a lot of people – two of the contacts turned into internship offers, one of which was here at EY, which I immediately accepted. Finding Isa made it so much easier for me to make the contact, because it was not totally random and we shared common ground through our experiences at Erasmus.”

Yilmaz is quick to stress that Pratomo gained his position purely on merit. “Once I had talked to him, I thought he was a nice guy who knew what he was talking about, so was happy to put him forward. I was also impressed that he had had the journey from Indonesia to study for his MBA in Rotterdam. I helped him prep, and suggested some basic programming courses, but, in the end, it is always down to the individual.”

Yilmaz has moved on to work at Deloitte, where his work has a greater emphasis on strategy, though still with a flavour of analytics. Once an intern himself, he says that if he could be of help to other MBAs looking for a position, then he would be happy to do so again – “But I need that first call to see what type of person they are.”

As for Pratomo, he now has a full-time job at EY and is keen to ‘pass it forward’. “If I find myself in a capacity where I can help other MBAs find internships, then of course I will do so. After all, I benefited, so why wouldn’t I assist others in the same way? My message to other students is that there are plenty of people out there willing to help you – but first it is up to you to find them.”
GOING DUTCH IN LONDON

At RSM’s London alumni event, conversations ranged across positive change, multilingualism, data and, of course, Brexit.

Story by Lucy Jolin

There was certainly a Dutch flavour to the recent London alumni event at Proeflokaal Rembrandt: it has got the biggest selection of Dutch beers outside of Benelux, after all. But while the backdrop was resolutely lowlands, the atmosphere was truly global, with alumni hailing from all over the world gathering to talk about everything from business to Brexit to building materials.

“I care about this school because it has given me so much more than undergrad,” said business consultant Adam Lewis (MBA, 2019), who took the opportunity to connect with fellow graduates. “The MBA is so intense and the connections you make are completely different – and they are all people who are interested in the same things. Networking events like this are always great, but they can be hugely useful at specific points in your career. At the moment, I’m working on taking my business forward, so I want to meet everyone, because you don’t know who will be able to offer the right help or give you unexpected insight or inspiration.”

Insights galore

There was certainly plenty of unexpected insight on offer. In one corner, management consultant Anand Moharir (MBA, 2016) and Danilo Alves de Oliveira (MBA, 2016) discussed a subject close to every global citizen’s

“Our aim is to build a truly global alumni relations programme – and to help our graduates share their stories and experience.”

Sue Martin, director of alumni relations, introduced her team and explained the role of the international chapters.
heart: language. Both are multilingual and they reflected on how essential it is to learn the language of the city you live in. In another corner, Lorène Gaudin (MScBA Master in Management, 2018), industry analyst at BRG Enterprise Solutions, was animatedly discussing the challenges of getting the right data to inform market research. “I am working on the market for ceramic tiles in France and Germany and there is no data at all! It’s difficult to get information so you have to dig deep, reach out to companies and do many expert interviews.”

Door opener

Alvaro Hurtado (MSc Business Administration, 2008) and Mihaela Roman (CEMS, 2014) were pondering the impact of Brexit. “London is a good place to be right now, but after Brexit? I don’t know,” said Roman. Hurtado agreed that it’s a fluid situation. “It requires a lot of adaptability going forward,” he pointed out.

They agreed, too, on the benefits of the RSM Master’s. “For me, it was a door opener,” said Hurtado. “It gave me opportunities that otherwise I wouldn’t have had access to. It gives you a pedigree.”

Of course, key RSM people were also on hand to share insight and future plans, too. Sue Martin, director of alumni relations, explained the role of her team and the international chapters. Her aim, she explained, is to build a truly global programme – and to help alumni tell their stories.

And Eva Rood, director of positive change, introduced alumni to the real changes that her team has helped to bring about, from the news that RSM is developing an escape room to the fact that ‘plant librarian’ is a genuine RSM job title. She urged her audience to consider the power of one – that we all need to do the best we can, no matter how insignificant that effort might seem.

Find out how to get involved with RSM Alumni Chapters at
WEB www.rsm.nl/network or contact our team at EMAIL alumni@rsm.nl
Follow us on Instagram
FORTHCOMING EVENTS

AUGUST
Alumni dinners
Join your fellow alumni for a catch-up over food and drink. Groups of our full-time MBA, Executive MBA and Cologne-Rotterdam EMBA students, accompanied by staff and faculty members, are travelling to various locations this summer.

In August, they’ll be in Hamburg, Lisbon, Shanghai and Reykjavik, and you can also meet them and fellow graduates in Washington DC.
EMAIL: alumni@rsm.nl for more information about the dinners and to attend one near you.

AUGUST
Singapore/Jakarta
Do you want to join alumni for dinner in Singapore or Jakarta? That’s where we’ll be at the end of August, so get in touch now if you’re in the area.
EMAIL: If you want to join us, email alumni@rsm.nl and we’ll let you know the details.

VARIOUS DATES
MBA on the road
Ready to take another step in your career? If you’ve been thinking about doing an MBA, but you still have some unanswered questions, we would be delighted to meet with you.

This summer, our MBA team is touring various cities, including New York, Seoul, Toronto, Manila, Singapore, Ho Chi Minh, Beijing, Tokyo and Taipei. They can look over your CV or LinkedIn profile and provide you with specific feedback and insight into which MBA is right for you, and how the degree can benefit you.
WEB: Learn more at www.rsm.nl/mba/information-events

4-5 OCTOBER
MBA alumni reunion 2019
We are delighted to invite MBA classes of 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014 back to Rotterdam to celebrate their MBA Alumni Reunion on Friday 4 and Saturday 5 October. We are looking forward to reuniting old MBA friends and new ones from other MBA classes in Rotterdam and on campus.

The reunion weekend includes the RSM Leadership Summit on Friday, and continues with a day of activities on Saturday to give you time to catch up with your old classmates and create new memories together.
We will also offer workshops and masterclasses to continue your professional development, and there will be fun and social activities too.

To conclude, we will host a reception and dinner in the Art Nouveau-style Zalmhuis restaurant, close to campus and at the foot of the Van Brienenoord bridge, with great views over the Nieuwe Maas river.
Why not add to your reunion weekend? Take a tour of the city on Sunday – we can give you tips for the latest must-see places – or arrive on campus early on Saturday to explore our new-look site.
There have been big changes in the past five years – Woudenstein now resembles a small town. And if you remember the only lunch option as broodjes kaas from Maria’s then come and see for yourself; now we have a food court, a supermarket and on-campus housing.
WEB: Find out more and secure your place at www.rsm.nl/mbareunion

ONGOING
Local Chapters
Nothing happening in your country? Around the world, alumni organise events through our network of Local Chapters, and we’re on hand to offer advice on running your own event.
WEB: Visit www.rsm.nl/alumni/international-network for more.
FORTHCOMING EVENTS

5 SEPTEMBER

**Benelux first**

Our Benelux Chapter welcomes all RSM alumni based in the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg to celebrate its first Dutch event.

Just like our chapters all over the world, the Benelux Chapter is here to help connect, entertain and inspire the 26,000 alumni living in our home region.

WEB: To find out more, and to register for the event, visit www.rsm.nl/alumni/events/benelux-chapter-event/

ALL YEAR ROUND

**Mentors needed**

Last issue, we asked for MBA alumni to offer some time to help mentor the new generation of students. Now, we are looking for alumni who graduated from all programmes to help mentor the next generation of students and also recent graduates who are just starting in their career.

WEB: To find out more, please visit www.rsm.nl/mentorme

4 OCTOBER

**Leadership Summit 2019**

Every year, RSM invites the business community to an event that engages everyone in a debate about issues and challenges in business and leadership, and presents inspiration and answers from international business leaders and thinkers.

The RSM Leadership Summit suggests that if change is the only constant, positive change is possible, featuring inspirational messages from business leaders and world-class academics, and offering unique networking opportunities.

It is a lively platform for all kinds of business practitioners to engage in a day of high-level networking and the sharing of knowledge and experiences.

The audience – which includes the business community, alumni, RSM’s top academics, students and staff – is invited to contribute to the global exchange in facilitated networking sessions.

Confirmed speakers include Felicity Aston (explorer, scientist and author); Hanneke Faber, (Unilever’s President of Foods and Refreshment), Arwen Smit (blockchain expert and founder of MintBit), and professors Wolf Ketter and Stefano Puntoni, leading experts in energy and marketing respectively.

The 2019 RSM Leadership Summit is on Friday 4 October at the Van Nelle Fabriek in Rotterdam. Alumni are entitled to a €50 discount, and early-bird prices are available until the end of August.

WEB: To find out more, please visit www.rsm.nl/summit
Fancy a spring reunion in New York City, or 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.

WEB Find out details of the RSM Alumni Local Chapter calendar at www.rsm.nl/alumni/events or EMAIL alumni@rsm.nl

AUTUMN
Frontiers in Leadership
As the world changes, so do the leadership styles we need to adopt and demonstrate.

In a new series of leading-edge masterclasses, a global range of academic and sector experts provide insights into the latest trends and developments in leadership and management from around the world. And as an extra bonus, all masterclasses include dinner.

WEB Find out more at www.rsm.nl/frontiers-in-leadership

30 OCTOBER – 3 NOVEMBER
Wildlife Film Festival
This year’s Wildlife Film Festival Rotterdam returns with five days of outstanding wildlife films and documentaries. An initiative organised by volunteers, and born from a passion for animals, nature and film, we are currently looking at how RSM can support this organisation.

WEB Learn more at www.rsm.nl/wildlife-film-festival

21 NOVEMBER
Distinguished Alumni Awards
A new highlight in the RSM Alumni calendar, the Distinguished Alumni Awards are no longer part of the Leadership Summit but will be given out in November.

The awards are presented annually to outstanding alumni of the school, in recognition of excellent contributions to society, business and/or the RSM community. The nominees for the awards are chosen from our network of almost 40,000 alumni.

WEB There’s still time left to vote for your favourites: visit www.rsm.nl/daa

FROM AUTUMN
SDG Events Series
As part of the School’s positive change initiative, we present a series of events to understand how we can tackle some of the world’s greatest challenges, all within the framework of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

WEB For more, please visit www.rsm.nl/positive-change

JANUARY
New Year’s Drinks 2020
Celebrate the start of 2020 with your fellow alumni at the Alumni New Year’s reception in the Netherlands, with full details to be confirmed shortly.

WEB Register your interest for this informal, fun event at www.rsm.nl/alumni/new-year-2020

ONGOING
Alumni activities near you
Fancy a spring reunion in New York City, or 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.
EXECUTIVE EDUCATION
OPEN PROGRAMMES 2019

Take the next step in your career. Gain new perspectives and skills in RSM’s open and customised programmes. Our goal is to furnish 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

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<tr>
<th>SEPTEMBER</th>
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<td>(also 7 October)</td>
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<td>4 September Project Management in Practice</td>
<td>8 October Neuromarketing</td>
<td>11 November Business Valuation Workshops</td>
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<td>9 September Customer-centric Strategy for B2B Markets</td>
<td>10 October Women in Leadership</td>
<td>11 November Sustainable Finance</td>
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<td>11 September Digital Analytics</td>
<td>24 September Effective Negotiating Skills</td>
<td>30 November Change Management</td>
<td>27 November Essentials of Leadership</td>
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<td>3 days plus</td>
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<td>12 September Leadership Challenges with Big Data and Analytics</td>
<td>16 September The Power of Storytelling</td>
<td>28 October Persuasive Leadership</td>
<td>24 September Operations Management</td>
<td>20 January 2020 Winter Course in Corporate Communication</td>
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<td>17 September The Challenge of Leadership</td>
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RSM – a force for positive change
Dream big, **start small**

Announcing the RSM **Hummingbird Fund**

A new fund to support experiential learning with a local impact.

Empower students to understand the transformative change that starts with *I WILL do the best I can*.

Support the journey of turning responsibility into action.

Learn more at [www.rsm.nl/hummingbird-fund](http://www.rsm.nl/hummingbird-fund)
Making cities more sustainable

At Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, we believe in the new generation of students. A generation that is keen to solve the most complex challenges in the world.

That’s why we’ve taken a different approach to business education. We encourage our students to challenge conventions and be the change they want to see, whether it’s making cities more sustainable or helping to grow local economies. We strive to give their MBA value. Interested? Visit mbaofvalue.com