THE DA VIDSON CODE 4

A COLLABORATIVE WORK

CONTENTS

Introduction

"Management refers to all activities required to organise and manage a company and its staff. According to the ideas that Henri Fayol began exploring in 1916, management is based on a cross-disciplinary function he termed the 'administrative function', which covers the five major specific and top-down functions (technical, commercial, financial, health and safety, accounting).

Fayol also stated that management relies on the assumption that those he calls 'administrators' are capable of deploying all the essential skills, namely planning, organising, giving orders, coordinating and monitoring."

STOP RIGHT THERE !!!

Is it just us, or do you find yourself slumping into boredom on reading yet another management 'recipe' that sounds a tad formulaic? **As if management were no more than a collection of tips and techniques** to be dissected, defined, learned and mastered – and possibly even monetised in 'how to' books that boost the writer's ego along with their bank balance. Writers do tend to savour their own words, after all...

Why *this book?*

Let's start by putting you straight on a question that might crop up as you read this collaborative effort: we didn't write it just for the sake of seeing our names in print.

We don't labour under the illusion that...
- our ideas deserve a global audience;
- we're leaving our mark on the history of humanity;
- we have a hotline to the one and only truth.

This is a collective work that was written by sixty Davidsonians who chose to work together on this project. It was born out of needs that are much simpler and more practical than that.

Service and consulting companies are often criticised for relying on a value base which sounds rather... hollow. This is unfortunately not entirely untrue. The model for developing a segment can often be summarised as follows: a manager (motivated by money) will recruit a team of sales people (with the same motives) to develop a portfolio of customers that they will bill for services (as expensive as possible) provided by consultants (as inexpensive as possible).

Since money is the staff's core concern, the only strategy is generally summed up in two words:

"make money". In short, management most often boils down to accounting seasoned with decisions that have a positive financial impact (lay-offs, ending trial periods, and giving employees as little as possible in terms of compensation, training, profit-sharing, miscellaneous benefits, etc.). Does that frighten you? Don't worry, you're not alone: since the beginning of the 2000s, it has been worrying all stakeholders in this ecosystem: consultants (first and foremost), customers (out of compassion for the former and out of frustration at the inability of consulting firms to keep their teams intact, and therefore their skills...), but also executives and managers.

We still had to learn from this state of affairs, think about what to keep, change or throw away in an attempt to build a sound business model that does not undermine the inherently noble business of helping customers deliver complex projects... Recognising the fact that Davidson will not change the world, we are nevertheless proud that our teams are moving forward with projects that are truly complex from an organisational or technological standpoint... Making a contribution to finding new energy, transportation or telecommunications solutions is actually pretty darn good.

Hence the #1 purpose of this book is:
To write in order to think about how we want to do our job as consultants and what identity (more globally speaking) we want to convey through the Davidson project.

As you will see below, our development model is based on managerial behaviours that we have been trying to follow since we founded the company.

However, the more time passes, the greater the temptation may be to believe that a dehumanised large-scale group model will replace our initial people-centred organisational structure. Nothing could be further from the truth. But in order to firmly establish this certainty, more and more of us need to take ownership of this model and its consequences.

Hence the #2 purpose of this book is:
To describe our managerial approaches, to etch them in stone, to explain them in order to pass them on.

Moreover, there is no point in stating values if they are not applied on a daily basis. There is an infinite variety of management and communication situations, or behaviours and actions in the work world, and more generally in any interaction between individuals. How can we expect them to act in accordance with the company's practices when they have not waited for them to develop? So at this point, you have to start getting scared: "Wow, what's Davidson? A cult? Do they tell people how to behave? Does everyone have to fit into the mould?". Relax! It's

more a matter of demonstrating, through multiple examples from the world of consulting, that the shortest or easiest path is not always the best one. For example, there are such subtle nuances between manipulating and influencing, directing and managing, thinking about doing things right and... doing them right. Identifying the line between these nuances and making it clear can only contribute to improving the quality of life at work, since some mistakes will not be repeated.

Hence the #3 purpose of this book is:
Providing guidelines for new Davidsonians not to fill their heads, but to inspire them to improve our shared working environment.

Finally, as I said in the introduction, Davidson is not smarter than the rest. But if there is one thing we have done pretty well, it is having been able to draw inspiration from our mistakes (often), our successes (sometimes), the strengths and weaknesses of our competitors, but also from certain insights of observers from the business world, who have particularly challenged us.

Hence the #4 purpose of this book is:
To share a bibliography and articles that (we hope) you will enjoy as much as we did.

I almost forgot the 5th item. No explanation of the text is necessary for this one.

Hence the #5 purpose of this book is:
To pass on to you a little bit of our passion for our profession and this very special business project called Davidson.

Introduction
to Davidson

Our company's not so bad, so let's jump right into it. We won't drown you in sales figures, number of employees, or EBIT... Instead, we'll tell you that **Davidson originated from the following observations:**

1. Over the last twenty years, companies have generally focused on customer and shareholder satisfaction to the detriment of the well-being of their in-house employees. The paternalistic bosses of the 1950s were succeeded by highly-paid employees whose objectives and remune-ration were closely linked to the company's performance and economic results. This primacy of economic targets has often been synonymous with painful trade-offs for the employees (forced mobility, relocation, etc.). It should therefore come as no surprise if today we are witnessing a clean break between the company and its employees. The company has "cut itself off" from its employees.

2. Consulting firms, whose main capital, more than any other companies, is their human capi-tal, have not deviated from this trend which over the years has led to a deterioration of their brand image, far beyond the quality of the professional environment for their employees, under the com-bined effects:

- Of the main focus being on the profitability of projects to the detriment of the consultants' career choices.
- Of recruitment that is not very selective due to

a high turnover rate (headlong rush, etc.).
- Of a loss of the sense of belonging to their organisation.

Faced with this deterioration, their managers have all too often surrounded themselves with a cynical exterior that has exacerbated the general trend, returning to the paradox of a progressive "dehumanisation" of companies... with 100% human capital.

In light of this situation, we decided to take a gamble by going against the tide: repositio-ning the individual at the centre of the com-pany's structure, in a work environment that is healthy, dynamic and not devoid of meaning!

Davidson's business plan is therefore an attempt to:

- Demonstrate that it is possible to manage a company using an almost exclusively qua-litative approach... rather than quantitative indicators.
- And validate the following theory: qualitative results can be achieved not necessarily to the detriment of quantitative results, but can on the contrary produce them (good thing since we are a private company that needs working capital, so it's better if we earn a little money...).

If you want to see that all this is not just a theory but can be put into practice, then keep reading...

Greeted with
a smile

Smile, noun: a smile is literally a contraction of muscles that creates a facial expression, often generated by an emotion.

In many languages, the word smile is a diminutive of 'laugh'. It's a slight movement of the mouth and the eyes, altering the expression on your face.

When I ask our visitors what kind of a welcome they got at Davidson, they often say they were greeted with a big smile in Reception, and friendly Hellos from all the team members whose paths crossed theirs while they were in our offices. That makes me feel really proud.

Because like they say, you only get one chance to make a first impression – so I'm delighted their first impressions were good ones.

When we greet visitors with a smile, it's not a fake smile but a reflection of our values. And of our congeniality! So, yes, every time you step into Davidson you'll be greeted with a smile (and with a Nespresso, because we all think George Clooney's pretty hot), and we're hoping it'll be contagious so you quickly feel at home amongst us. Because unlike some companies where they

think 'The big thing right now is to be "fun", so let's be "fun" then!' we decided right from the outset that working hard didn't mean we had to walk around looking serious.

So if you join the Dav team, you'll have to get used to working with a smile! And we guarantee you'll have plenty to smile about. We and all our works councils, in France and around the world, are bursting with ideas for getting together to have a good time – drinks, outings to the theatre, skiing and diving weekends, annual gala evenings, paragliding, curling, and heaps more.

Oh, whoops, I forgot to introduce myself: I'm Anaïs, and I started out working in Reception at Davidson before moving into a sales admin role. Now I've got a new position, that the company created especially for me: I'm in charge of events and communication, both in-house and externally. You could call me the Comms Manager. Everyone round here calls me their good vibes facilitator!

Anaïs

Feeling inspired?

Consultants

Smile, you're not on camera!
Most situations can be viewed from a number of perspectives – especially work situations. It's only a job, so try and see the glass as half full!

Managers

Don't keep your visitors waiting in Reception. If you're going to be unavoidably late, take the time to explain and apologise.

A different customer *relationship*

'Pushing the same old claptrap', 'in-your-face', 'smooth talkers', 'had no idea what we wanted', 'don't manage their staff'. Most clients of service and consultancy firms are not exactly complimentary about the managers they deal with. And it's no surprise they refer to them as 'salespeople' given their obvious priorities.

We were keen to dust off this image, to put it mildly. Of course, the *Da Vidson code* provides an armoury of management practices that should shield us from such name-calling. But right from our earliest days we decided to follow a set of principles that would set our client approach apart. According to our business model, you can't afford to pamper your staff unless you're already pampering your clients.

We came up with 5 golden rules:
1. If you don't know the answer, keep quiet as my grandfather used to say. So did my schoolteachers in fact, but we won't go there... If we don't know how to do something, we say NO. Most of our clients are still surprised by this, which just goes to show how this alone sets us apart in a world where salespeople so often live up to their own stereotypes with their 'Absolutely, no problem, we can do that. We can do ANYTHING...'

2. Don't be tempted by the best bidder approach...
I recently came by a proposal a client had received from a competitor (let's call them Alpha Consulting) for a big contract. There in black and white it stated: 'in the unlikely event of default on the part of one of our associates, a team of 3 experts, trained in all of (the client)'s technologies and methodologies, stands ready to intervene at any time to take over from this associate, within a maximum of 3 working days, and at no additional cost to (the client).' What a joke! Under these conditions, clients will see aliens before they see that team.

This is where we stand:

- emphasise our strengths: yes!
- make them up: no!
We won't cross that fine line between influence and manipulation.

3. 'When you don't know where you're going, look at where you've been' (African proverb)
Our clients are under no obligation to respond politely every time a consultancy firm approaches them, particularly when the client company doesn't know why it's being called. If we call a

client it's because our network, or our knowledge of their sector, has led us to believe we genuinely have something to offer them. There's no systematic prospecting, just a targeted, justified approach!

4. Sometimes it seems simpler and more effective to lie. Some would even say that 'bigger is always better' when it comes to lies. Perhaps we're a bit slow, but we believe that bigger is definitely not better. You may get what you want in the short term by lying, but a lie is not easy to live with. Lies tend to have an unpleasant side effect too: they can come back to bite you. How would

you react if you realised after the event that you'd been lied to? More angrily or less than if you'd been told an unpalatable truth? This is why we're committed to building relationships of trust, even when the truth isn't pretty.

5. 50% creativity, 50% effort.
When you've spent months or years working on crafting and tweaking an all-encompassing proposal, you might be tempted to wheel it out again in response to every client request. Change the logo, add a couple of references, tweak the schedule, and Bob's your uncle. You tell the client this is absolutely the way to go. In other words, you take what's been done before, and you massage it to fit the specifications.

Big mistake: you MUST start from a clean sheet every time.

Why ?
- you can customise a proposal by changing a document's layout.
  → It takes genuine analytical and creative skills to produce a truly worthwhile proposal.

- you can customise a proposal by cutting and pasting the client's requirements into some kind of proposal template: and everyone can see exactly what you've done.
  → When you put genuine thought and effort into crafting a response that has the client's issues right at its heart, that shines through too!
François

Feeling inspired?

Consultants

To our clients you're the face of Davidson, our ambassadors. So treat them like gods! Tell them about all the tools and support you have behind you, that guarantee the quality of our projects. When they ask who you work for, say Davidson.

No lies allowed in qualification meetings. This isn't what you might call 'misplaced modesty'. Emphasising your strengths and skills isn't 'overselling'.

Managers

Prepare for your calls and meetings. Every client deserves a carefully constructed, personalised presentation.

If you're in any doubt as to our ability to provide an appropriate response to a client's needs – perhaps they're looking for some rare skill that may not be available to us at the right time – be prepared to say 'I don't know how to do that'. Saying 'we can't' makes 'we can' all the more credible and meaningful.

Everyone

Make a habit of analysing client feedback from end-of-mission audits. Assign an action (manager, consultant, or Davidson) for every progress point.

A crazy
idea

September 2017. The title of Bertrand's email caught my eye. "What about a crazy idea after winning 'Great Place To Work'?". "After years of focusing on the well-being of its employees, what if Davidson decided to become the number one B Corp consulting firm in France? In other words, a company determined not to be "the best in the world" but "the best for the world". Maximising its societal impact and minimising its environmental footprint".

The idea appealed to me and I was confident because we had been increasing the number of initiatives at our subsidiaries over the years along these lines. I therefore recommended starting to work on processing the B Impact Assessment questionnaire from B Lab, the auditing organisation that validates (or not) companies applying for the label. I logged on to the online evaluation and there... I felt less confident.

There are two main reasons for this:
1. First of all, there are 200 very focused questions to be answered in a VERY well-supported way (no evidence? no points...)
2. Along the way, I discovered that our feeling of being an "exemplary and virtuous company" didn't fare well when confronted with the questions

asked. Just one example: we thought we were doing more each year in terms of sponsorship of associations (Restos du Coeur, Action contre la faim, etc.). But the reality of the figures gathered for the audit caught up with me and amazed me: Certainly in absolute terms (number of initiatives, partners, euros paid out) we have been growing every year. But as a percentage of our revenues, our commitment has been declining!

The day and then the evening wore on (my eyelids were closing) and I felt more and more convinced. B Corp is not a "reward" to be obtained: it is potentially a major vehicle for transforming our model. This is not an end in itself, it is the beginning of a new page in the history of the Dav collective. The various topics covered by the audit (gender equality, diversity, governance, environment, responsible purchasing, etc.) are all avenues to be explored. Each of them inspired me with ideas for actions for Davidson which are extensions of my own convictions and personal initiatives.

One day, then two, then three hundred and sixty-five, before the questionnaire was completed and analysed by the B Lab, additional audits were conducted, transformation projects were initiated and then completed, and the verdict was

reached a few days before the annual party and sports tournament that brings all our employees together: We got our certification. We were the leading techno consulting company and the largest French company B Corp (we may no longer be, by the time you are reading these pages, because the movement is growing and that's great!). The announcement also coincided with the results of an in-house "pro/perso" competition (a competition that showcases the employee with the best pro idea to improve Davidson's operations by enabling him/her to pursue a personal project that is close to his/her heart). The reward is ... the idea of setting up a multi-regional environment committee. A wonderful coincidence that a few months later led to:

- The widespread collection and sorting of waste by a company specifically tailored for all our locations.
- Eliminating all plastic cups and non-reusable items.
- Improving our purchasing strategy to redirect it towards shorter supply chains.
- Choosing truly green energy suppliers.
- Increasing our donations to more than the 1 per 1000 of the group's revenue.
- Our partnership with Planète Urgence which enables any employee to go on an international solidarity mission who wishes to do so, upon request.
- A partnership with Article 1. Around thirty employees sponsor students from underprivileged backgrounds for 3 to 5 years as they embark on a higher education program.
- For us, being B Corp is the beginning of a journey, not the destination. In fact, at COP25, we made a commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030. The next few years will therefore be devoted to implementing solutions to reduce

our environmental impact and improve our societal impact.

For us, being B Corp is the beginning of a journey, not the destination. In fact, at COP25, we made a commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030. The next few years will therefore be devoted to implementing solutions to reduce our environmental impact and improve our societal impact.

How about we meet again in 10 years?

Véronique

Feeling inspired?

Everyone

Take a look at the Butterfly Act describing our environmental principles. The annual CODIR is now open to all group employees. Feel free to register to attend at the end of the year.

Admin

Goodies and supplies ordered must be eco-responsible! Don't forget to read the sustainable purchasing charter (included in the Butterfly Act).

So what do we do? It would be difficult to suggest that you immediately recycle your smartphone and pull out your rotary dial phone. First of all (let's not be hypocritical), because innovation in telecommunications is one of our passions. Next, because we believe that the development of the internet has led to a number of undeniable advances (particularly when it comes to access for everyone, all the time, everywhere, to shared, interactive, evolving sources of knowledge, etc., or simply to your loved ones during the lockdown...). So the whole issue is to use IT in a sensible manner.

Therefore, we have modestly selected about twenty good practices used at Dav which we recommend to you in order to reduce your footprint. For those who are highly motivated and invested, the exhaustive, updated version of these good practices is listed on our eco-designed website: **www.davidson.fr**

Davidson x Green IT

While, before the lockdown, abandoned waste, plastic floating in the sea and air pollution were prominent, suspending human activities during the lockdown made Everest visible from afar and Venice's canals once again clear. Other forms of pollution are invisible: pollution from our electronic media, and yes, digital pollution is real. To manufacture and subsequently use digital equipment, networks, and datacentres, we use energy, water, and precious metals and produce large quantities of greenhouse gases (GHGs).

Some brief figures on digital technology's carbon footprint
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Digital technology accounts for

10% of the world's electricity use

48 hours of data — this is the production of data at the dawn of humanity in 2003

4% of CO2 emissions in 2019, i.e. more than the airline industry!

Internet :

45 million servers worldwide

Tablets, smartphones and pc's

Nothing revolutionary, all it would take is to do it... really!

33%
manufacturing

What should you do?

1. If possible, buy refurbished instead of new
2. Extend the life of your devices as long as possible, for you and for others:
   - optimise their performance
   - protect them (anti-virus, covers or protective cases)
   - repair them or have them recycled
   - give them away or resell them if you decide to part with them
3. Choose an eco-responsible brand

The TCO Certified label is a Swedish certification program. It mainly focuses on the quality and energy efficiency of IT equipment.

The Energy Star Label is a European program concerning the energy efficiency of various equipment used at home or in the workplace.

Dav Tips :
French SMEs, refurbishing & buying back your old laptops (all brands):
- **https://smaaart.fr/ :** involved with WWF France
- **https://www.yes-yes.com/ :** detailed eco-responsible approach on the ZEI platform

14%
use

What should you do?
- Turn the brightness down of your screens.
- Remember to unplug devices from the outlet.
- Disable GPS, WIFI and Bluetooth features when not in use.
- For GPS, use the new iOS and Android features that allow you to give a one-time permission to the application that requires it: this ensures that the GPS will not run in the background "for no reason". It's also better for your privacy.

Dav Tips :
Remember to uninstall rarely/unused apps or at least prevent background updating.

The internet

22% videos

What should you do?

1. Download rather than stream
2. Avoid listening to music on YouTube, instead use Deezer or Spotify
3. Consider downloading your music for offline listening
4. Adapt the resolution to the size of your screen: 4K is useless on a smartphone
5. Choose: Ethernet, then Wifi and then mobile networks to limit power consumption.

Dav Tips :

- The "New Pipe" app that allows you to only load the audio from YouTube clips and play them with the screen turned off (android)
- Don't use Spotify's "Canvas" feature which plays the video clip along with the music

6% others (email, internet, storage, etc.)

What should you do?

1. Limit upstream emails (because deleting them afterwards uses energy), archive regularly offline, limit the number of people receiving them
2. Limit the size of attachments
3. Unsubscribe from unnecessary newsletters, close unused websites
4. Create bookmarks for your favourite websites to avoid searching Google
5. Choose a green search engine (Lilo, Ecosia, Duck Duck go, but no consensus on a ranking)
6. Check the green score of your website or application and recode! **(https://www.websitecarbon.com/)**

Dav Tips :

- Use dark mode or black mode which is easier on your eyes and uses less power on OLED displays
- Use the phone, texts, or instant messaging instead of email (for example: Discord which allows you to delete old messages)

Datacentres

25% Datacentres

What should you do?

1. Choose carefully there are alternatives to air conditioning units backed up by diesel generators
2. Don't forget to delete obsolete documents from the Cloud

Dav Tips :

- IBO's Ecocentre in Clermont Ferrand which uses an innovative cooling system based on natural ventilation (air combined with rainwater recovery). No more need for air conditioning! **(https://ecocenter.fr/)**
- Switch from "traditional" hard disks to SSDs, energy use is cut by a third and robustness and performance are improved.
- Check the specifications of the "default" power supplies provided with the equipment you order (e.g. your servers) They are not always the most efficient

The end
of values

People often ask us what our "values" are. This is undoubtedly because many companies focus their HR/managerial transformation on a project that begins with questioning their values. Once established, they will then be systematically promoted internally (especially during this notorious transformation project) and will become part of the language supporting external communications.

The logic is clear: if the value base is not in place,

how can we hope to build the relevant organisations/processes/managerial approaches? Then there is the mantra: naming these values will make them tangible and the prophecy will become self-fulfilling. It's a dangerous gamble... Because stating them may very well sound suspicious. I have often seen employees snicker at the words spoken at their companies: "Us transparent? Fair? Caring? Please! It's all talk and no action...". Leading a change in management practices on such grounds would certainly be

tantamount to embarking on a journey with a serious handicap!

And then don't you find that terms depicting values such as integrity, creativity, excellence, innovation, collaboration, etc., which seem profound on the surface, become hollow and generic once they are written down on paper? They deserve something more than just window dressing.

That's why at Davidson we hate talking about values: you won't find them on the walls or on the website, let alone in The Da Vidson Code. It's not that we don't have any, it's just that this is all a matter of "putting the cart before the horse" to us!

Our daily goal is to do well or as well as we can by abiding by what we could call our "principles": empathy, adhocracy, fairness (reciprocity/symmetry of attention), etc.

If our efforts, choices, and stances result in the establishment of certain "virtues", then people may well call them values if they feel like it, but they will again be taking a risk.

Because ultimately, what percentage of employees who are satisfied with the company's transparency or fairness of treatment is enough to officially declare the company to be a transparent or fair company? 20% of the votes may be enough to be president of France, but can a company be said to be ethical if, for example, 40% of the employees say that it is not? Where is the threshold that must be surpassed in order

to proclaim oneself virtuous in an area? 50%? a two-thirds majority? 99%? Why not 100%? We can sense that we are oscillating between potentially being a sham or... striving for a pipe dream.
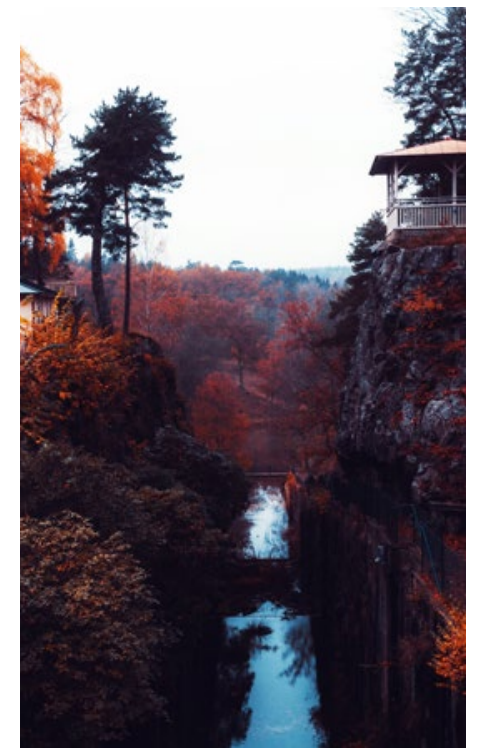
Anyway, we prefer virtues that require effort rather than assessed values.

Bertrand

Feeling inspired?
Everyone
Actions often speak louder than words.

As free as
can be

Ah, Paris! With your monuments, your theatres and museums... It's a great city to visit, but actually living in the French capital is a different story.

Allow me to introduce myself. I'm Eric, a Dav consultant, and definitely not a fan of Paris.

But as soon as I got my engineering degree I moved there anyway, because that's where most of the jobs are in my field of telecommunications. I joined Davidson in early 2010 and started work on a long-term contract for a telecomms operator in the inner suburbs, overseeing radio site roll-out all around greater Paris.

There was only one little problem: six months in, I realised I just couldn't handle the Parisian pace of life. Plus, my wife-to-be had just finished her studies and wanted to work outside the capital (in Lyon, ideally) – so you can see why I was questioning my future with Davidson. I'd only been there five minutes, so I didn't want to rock the boat. I was convinced that, with my trial period only just over, they'd reject my request for relocation out of hand. So when I picked up the phone to talk things through with my manager, I didn't

hold out much hope. Incredibly, five minutes later it was all sorted. 'Don't worry éric,' I was told. 'Moving around is part of being a consultant and our people are constantly transferring between Paris and the rest of the country. **We set up subsidiaries outside the capital to make relocating easier, not to force it on people...'**

I decided to go for broke and asked 'Any chance of a job for my wife in Lyon?' Believe it or not.
- Two weeks later my wife signed a contract with Davidson Rhônes Alpes. She was fast-tracked through the application process and Davidson's HR team naturally gave her priority.
- In another three months – as soon as an interesting opportunity for me opened up – I joined her there. Ah, Lyon! We could relax again. We very quickly got our bearings, and our family grew. What more could you ask for?

There's one last thing I should mention, because it's important. We 'lost' the job I was working on in Paris, because our client decided to sign a contract with one of our competitors instead. When I heard the news, I called my manager. 'I'm so sorry,' I said. 'It sucks that Davidson Paris lost the contract, I feel really bad for you,

especially after you helped me relocate.' Their reply? 'That's life, Éric. The main thing is that you're in Lyon now. We lost the contract, but at least we get to keep you.'

Eric

Feeling inspired?

Consultants

Weigh up the pros and cons – regions vary in terms of what project and contract opportunities they offer. Be persuasive, sell yourself to the subsidiary, make them want to get you on board! (Although rest assured we won't ask you to jump through the hoops all over again).

Managers

Process all relocation requests as efficiently as possible. With Davidson's geographical spread, it doesn't have to be a hassle!
As an example, if a Paris-based Davidsonian asks to move to Rennes, set up a meeting with the Director of Davidson West. If the relocation gets the green light, backup will be down to you. Best case scenario, you'll have made that subsidiary and your consultant very happy, and you'll find backup for your own project. Your consultant won't forget it, and sooner or later they'll return the favour. Worst case scenario, at least you tried. No one will reproach you for not succeeding if you did everything in your power to try and make it happen. And chin up, one day it'll be your turn to move to where you want to be.

Let's take things further...

It's essential that relocations should be well managed, but choosing the right projects, and contract flexibility, are just as important. For Davidsonians, these key decisions are directly linked to career progression.

Managers

Don't sell an 'average' project to a consultant in the hope that they won't notice. If the job doesn't fit, find them a different one. Offer each project to a consultant who might have a vested interest in doing that particular work.

If your consultant asks for career development opportunities, don't say 'There's nothing else' without having looked at every possibility first (within Davidson's entire wider network). Don't forget to let your client know about your team's career aspirations. You never know what may come of it!

One Minute Management: If your consultant tells you that they 'don't feel very good' working on their current project, don't put off discussing it. Set a meeting quick, come up with an action or exit plan, and keep an eye on the situation day-to-day.

Flat
management

My associates and I had all come up through the consultancy world before we founded Davidson. In this sector, unfortunately, organisational models are often based on 'traditional' companies. Why 'unfortunately', you might ask?

The Footsie 100 companies are all doing OK! They're expanding on every continent, yielding comfortable dividends – sometimes even in times of crisis – and some of them are even quite pleasant to work for. Why wouldn't we model ourselves on them? Why shouldn't a consultancy be made up of teams, departments, service functions, and divisions... How could it grow, without these multiple layers of low/middle and top management, where everyone is responsible for working towards strategic objectives and reporting operational performance indicators? Well, simply because that doesn't work – or at least not for long, in our field.

A consultancy doesn't manufacture cars or manage inventory levels, industrial procurement or non-compliant product issues. Or that's not its main thrust, at any rate. A management consultancy's chief asset is the people it employs (an even more important asset than its client base).
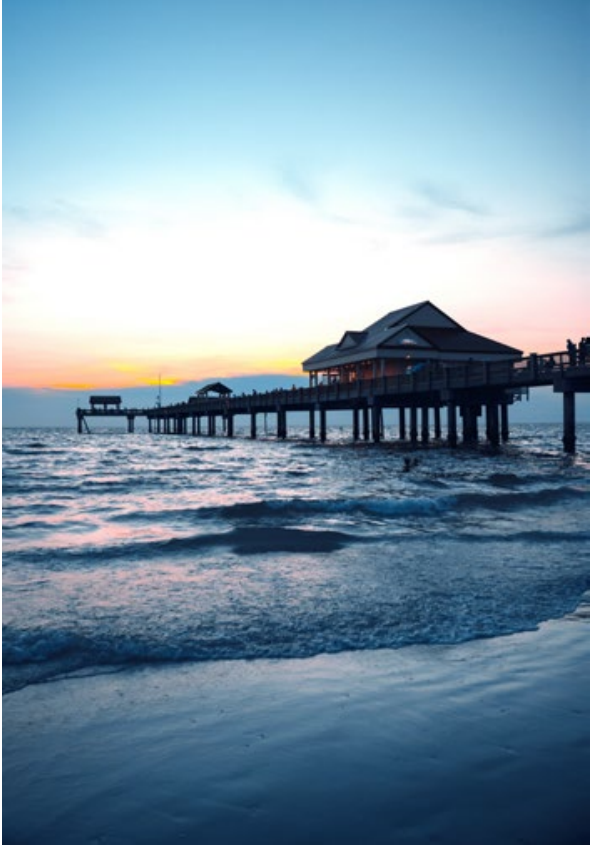
We opted for a flat management structure

because of its many advantages:
- it means we can work cooperatively across disciplines if necessary. And if not, it means we don't have to. No 'getting everyone up to speed' meetings, no cumbersome decision-making process – working in small cells makes us agile. No endless meetings. The longest meeting in Davidson history lasted an hour and a half. Mostly, they last about half an hour. We hold about two a week. Other than that, communication is point-to-point ;
- by flattening the well-known 'vertical pyramid', it brings all the staff closer. The most junior consultant at Davidson has direct access to directors and associates ;
- we've all known long and arduous decision-making processes, that often have revealing names such as:
  'cascade', which makes dealing with your line management sound like you're trying to climb a vertiginous mountain, or
  'sign-off loop' – a tortuous circuit of straight lines and twisting curves that leads you back to square one.

In our model, they're pared down to their very simplest:
- the entities are kept at a size that can reasonably be managed. Each director or associate

> 66
> **Davidson is a unique brand, its principles set a common base, we make important decisions together.**
> 99

oversees between 30 and 100 people with only one intermediate grade. That way, the degree of abstraction remains minimal, especially since each director is Davidson's main recruiter, manager and salesperson in their subsidiary. So in principle, that makes them accessible and open to listening ;
- it helps us to position ourselves clearly. The entities are broken down into geographical zones and sectors of expertise, but they're all called Davidson X, Y or Z. Davidson is the single umbrella brand, based on shared values, and important decisions are made communally – everyone's individual contribution is welcome and each of us can make our mark on the organisation.

If I'm being honest, I have to tell you about the main disadvantage of working this way: it needs lots of communication channels to be put in place, ad hoc to suit the circumstances, since there's no pre-existing template of communication channels within the company. You often have to pick up the phone and have discussions with several people at once.

But isn't that a small price to pay for bringing some humanity back into working relationships that have been gradually eroded by social media and email?

Bertrand

Feeling inspired?

Consultants

You have access to the directors, so make the most of it!

Everyone

Don't think in terms of 'cascading' communication. Most decisions can be made and communicated without getting anyone else in the hierarchy involved.

If you can avoid it, don't send an email to a colleague who's sitting a few feet from you, or even one floor up!

The shortest meetings are the best: if you're flagging up a problem, offer several strategies or a solution. Meetings are not for detailing problems, but for deciding on actions.

If there's no reason for you to be at a meeting, don't go (especially if you're just going to sit and read your text messages).

Take an interest in your colleagues previous experiences and successes in the other entities: has anyone else had to deal with this problem before? How did they solve it? If you've improved a process or a tool, make sure everyone knows about it!

Something
you should know

SYSK or **Something You Should Know**, apart from being an ace video by *Michael Learns To Rock*, is also the name of a little tool with big powers that we invented at Davidson.

Being a manager at Davidson comes with its share of paradoxes. It can be very individual at times – in some situations, you're alone – but also, of necessity, you're part of a collective. Individuals don't have everything it takes to be successful. Here at Davidson, we're convinced that working collaboratively helps bring out the best in individuals. We cultivate instinctive sharing and exchanging of good ideas and useful information, so there are no 'closed circles' here and our management maintains the same attitude.

But occasionally the road to working collaboratively can be paved with bad intentions or actions, on the part of some of our colleagues. And it only takes a little grain of sand to scratch the most beautiful machine (OK I'll lay off the metaphors now).

So we decided we have to be able to regularly undertake what might politely be called a 'collective synchronisation'. Pretty quickly, we came up against the question of 'How'?

Some firms use '360° evaluations' or expend their imagination coming up with feedback that follows rules like 'seven positive comments for one

negative'. Sorry, but we're not going to take half a day off to tell someone every time we have an issue.

We handed over the task to one of our Trio. The members quickly agreed on the following principles:
- the tool has to be engaging and make you want to take part;
- it mustn't turn into a boss-bashing session;
- and it has to cover as many situations as possible;

That's how SYSK came about. How it works is simple:
- to post a negative comment about someone, I must have already posted a positive comment about them;
- every comment I post wins me one token
- for positive comments, you can write what you want in the comments field;
- for negative comments, you can choose from a list of statements that cover a maximum of management behaviours (15 at the moment) in a quite direct, but non-aggressive, tone. Examples include:

'One of your candidates has been off the radar for so long we want to send out a search party'
'I didn't realize Mussolini wrote a book of management techniques?'
'It's better to over-deliver than to over-sell'
'Hello: noun, a polite greeting', etc.

- all comments are anonymous. Neither the recipient nor their line managers can ever know who left the comments (data isn't stored in the system). They will only see what messages have been sent;
- when my inbox indicates that it contains messages, I can choose between paying 1 token to read one of them at random, or 3 to read all of

them.

Results and learning 8 months after the tool was set up:
- the mechanics of the game (token system) leads to a lot of messages being sent. Managers have received on average 20 messages each;
- SYSK is chiefly a means of giving positive strokes! 95% of comments are positive (even though we might have thought people would only use it to give negative feedback – in which case comments would have been 50/50 positive/negative because of the rule that you have to 'say something nice first'). So SYSK is a great way of letting each other know about the positive things that we often forget to mention in our overloaded days at the office…
- 'Bad things always come in threes.' Negative feedback rarely comes in isolation – which means that with this system, no one can say 'I don't care what that person says, they're just saying that because they don't like me!';
- any abscesses are punctured VERY quickly! The messages force people to really take in the feedback and be mindful of it.

And oh, I almost forgot – the biggest impact this tool has had is that I answer my emails MUCH faster than before 😊

Pierre

Feeling inspired?
Managers
Positive or negative, it's never a waste of time reading your 'SYSKs'. The list of annoyances is not static – feel free to suggest new additions…
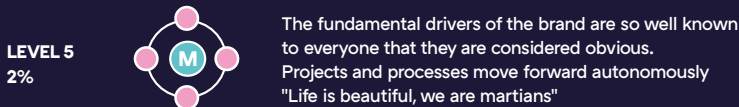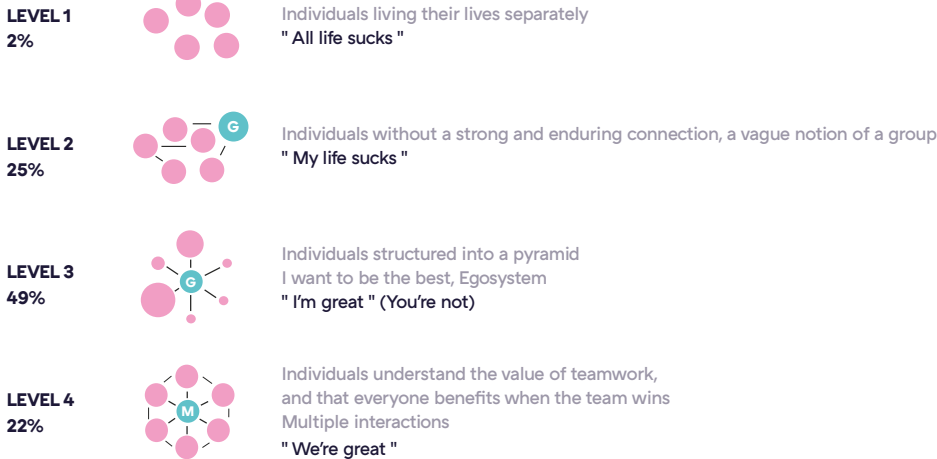
Tribal management

Flashback to a managers' meeting, 21 January 2015 at 11.02 am

Our working day had begun over two hours ago and we'd been reviewing the successes and failures of 2014. Now we're going to look ahead at the year to come.

Slide 54: a list of issues put forward by all the managers, and grouped under themes – what needs improving, what should be launched, what we should stop doing

Slide 55: suddenly, you could hear a pin drop...

LEVEL 1 **2%**		Individuals living their lives separately " All life sucks "
LEVEL 2 **25%**		Individuals without a strong and enduring connection, a vague notion of a group " My life sucks "
LEVEL 3 **49%**		Individuals structured into a pyramid I want to be the best, Egosystem " I'm great " (You're not)
LEVEL 4 **22%**		Individuals understand the value of teamwork, and that everyone benefits when the team wins Multiple interactions " We're great "
LEVEL 5 **2%**		The fundamental drivers of the brand are so well known to everyone that they are considered obvious. Projects and processes move forward autonomously "Life is beautiful, we are martians"

55

We discovered the concept of tribal management, taken from the book Manage Your Tribe by Dave Logan, John King and Halee Fischer-Wright.

Tribal means tribe: the tribe is the basic element of any important human enterprise, especially when it comes to making a living. Some tribes require everyone to excel and they are constantly evolving. Other tribes are satisfied with the bare minimum. Where does the difference in performance come from? From the tribal leaders. The tribal leader focuses his/her efforts on the edification of the tribe or, more precisely, on developing the tribal culture. When he/she succeeds, success is guaranteed. **At level 5 of the "tribal evolution", the meaning given to action and strategy is sufficiently clear and known to everyone so that projects are self-organised around triads.**

On January 21 2015 at 11:05 a.m., slide no. 55, we realized that the way we run key projects at Davidson would radically change. Our CEO told us that the 15 priority projects would not be led by management but would be entrusted to autonomous triads, which would be free to pursue the projects as they saw fit, subject to two conditions:

1. No reporting;
2. Submitting the fruit of their reflections on these subjects to the community in order to reach a consensus before making irreversible decisions (or decisions with high reversibility costs).
Whether it is a question of redesigning part of our ERP, creating a cross-feedback tool (the famous SYSK that we describe in another chapter of this book), or renewing our communication tools, from that point forward we would work in groups of volunteers who could let their creativity run wild...

5 years later, what are the lessons learned?

- Between 10 and 15 major triads are deployed each year to lead projects in a collaborative fashion, without managerial pressure and at a pace and with results that far exceed what would have been achieved with a "classic" approach. Beyond the capacity of producing a "deliverable", we also noticed that the "V0" are often close to the "Viable Product".

• Tribal management was put to the test in April 2020, when the COVID crisis "sent us all home" with dozens of new issues and opportunities to deal with (staying motivated remotely, maximising the usefulness of the time available by organising training courses, making the right operational decisions at the right time, testing the robustness of our digitalisation of processes, launching Fast Track optimisation projects... to name just a few). Our habits and attitudes that were firmly established before this particular period facilitated creating a "crisis" organisation capable of quickly executing the iterations of a process that could be "summarised" as:

1. Analysing an event.
2. Identifying the alternatives available to Davidson within 24 hours.
3. Using collective brainpower to make the best decision.
**4.** Communicating information and decision-making.
5. Organising operational implementation within 72 hrs. 6. Measuring effectiveness and going back to Step 1 if necessary.

Jonathan & Thibault

Feeling inspired?

Everyone
There can be no trios without new ideas to fuel them. Use every channel of expression available (forum, progress reviews, surveys, first impressions reports, competitions of professional/personal interest, iTab, Pic Push, etc) to give the tribes food for thought!
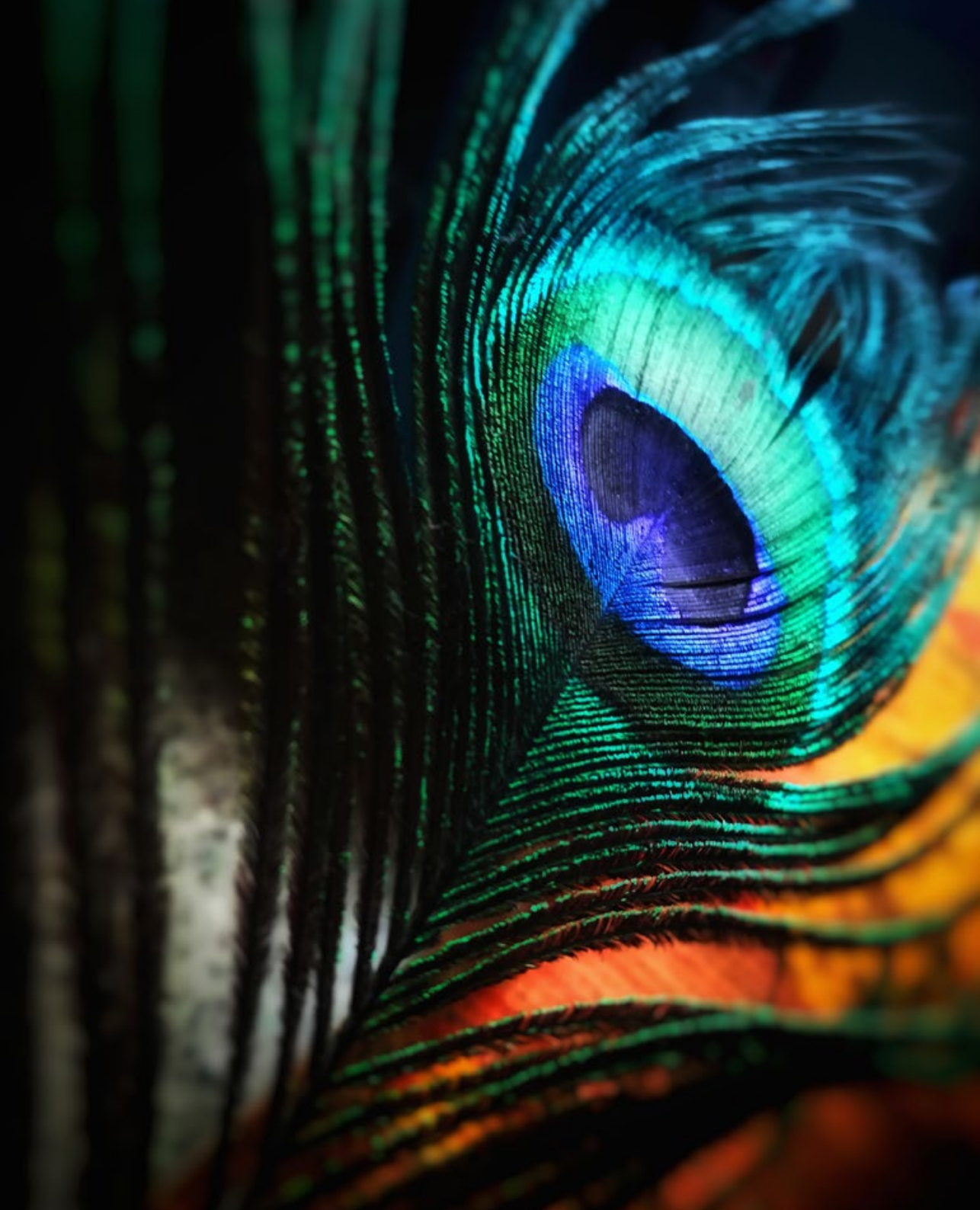
Management
Games

It was a warm summer night at Davidson.

In front of us were some pretty unusual teaching materials: packs of cards.

An external facilitator had been called in to talk us through Jurgen Appelo's 'management 3.0' philosophy that evening. And we learned that we were about to spend the next two hours playing cards – and finding out how Delegation Poker and Moving Motivators can help us work better, boosting our capacity for work independently and taking responsibility.

Afterwards, a group of us reflected on what we got out of the training.

There were two conclusions:
1. We were sceptical about some of the concepts and assumptions. One example was the idea that money isn't a motivating factor (okay, it's not all about the money, but still...), or that everything can be delegated to self-organising teams (there's a risk here that the entire decision-making

process and responsibility get lost). In short, we wouldn't use Appelo's tools without tweaking them.

2. Having said that, the format was excellent. We'd spent so long racking our brains, trying to figure out how we could redefine management roles and behaviours, and here we had an approach that gets the message across without the force-feeding factor. Using a game to tackle a fairly serious topic is exactly what Davidson's about! Replacing endless PowerPoint presentations with something more fun to build awareness and learn - this clearly got the thumbs up from us.

And so after a thought-provoking evening and a good night's sleep, we embarked on a creative voyage and set sail for new horizons, where the faintest glow of an idea for creating our own games kit shimmered in the distance.

Okay, we'll cut the purple prose. Let us journey on to the facts, comrades! (Sorry...) Once we'd made the decision to make our games kit, it was time to get serious. We needed to:
- Start by pinpointing themes: Dav culture, know-how and community spirit;
- Continue by identifying the right kind of materials for us: quizzes, card games, RPGs, etc.;
- Finish by bringing the concept to life with a series of fun games all wrapped up in an awesome-looking kit.
In September, we gave the games out to the coaches. Six months later, it's safe to say that our Management Games are a success. Coaches and coachees alike report that these games have helped boost interaction, feedback and open, spontaneous discussion!

Virginia

Feeling inspired?

Managers
Use Management Games in your weekly meetings and get stuck in.

If you think of any games that might be useful for training managers, get talking! The Management Games are built to be adaptable over time.

Everyone
If you notice that some skill-sets/processes/approaches could be improved, let us know. We'll find a way of incorporating your ideas into future versions of the Management Games.
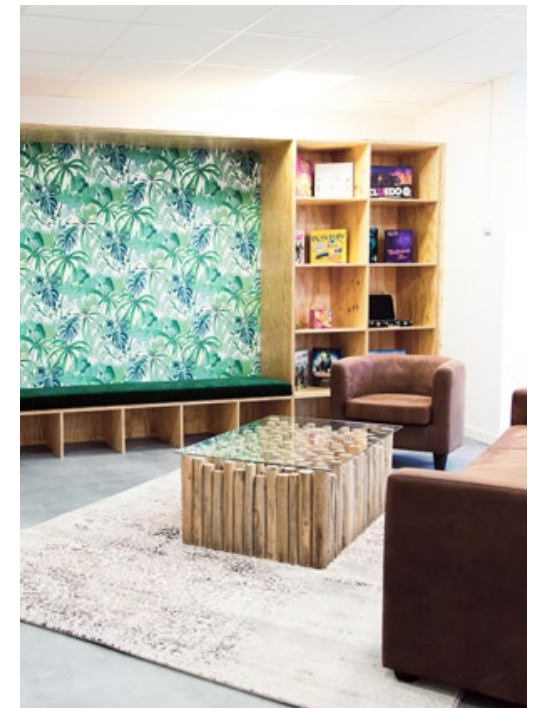
State of (financial) *independence*

A few months after Davidson was first born, when we were still in our teething stage, we found ourselves sketching out our mid- to long-term plans for the future, which was something we'd struggled to do back when we were employees in big groups.

It was probably because back in those hazy days, we were constantly being asked to report on our weekly figures and stats, our managers seemed to be obsessed with results and short-term action plans. Isn't it ironic (dontcha think?) that an SME could be more focussed on its five-year plan than a major group? But the reason is actually pretty straightforward: the stock market luuurves it some short-term data, served up fresh by its listed companies. And because we weren't listed, we were able to relax. We don't have any external investors either, which is another way we're financially independent. External investors focus on the bottom-line figure to gauge profitability, and they can add to worry caused by the financial crisis through pressure to hold on to dividends whatever the cost: the result being that companies are pushed into short-term decision-making.

And that's not really what we're about, although we are a private company and we do need to make a bit of cash from time to time (independence is a luxury that comes with a price tag). Our goal is to become a long-term, high-end member of the technology consulting elite where employees feel good and at home in a great place to work.

We're debt-free, too, so we don't answer to banks that would quickly morph into cost killers. In early 2009, at a time when the credit crisis storm was raging hard, we were unlucky enough to be dropped by a lender overnight, just a few days before pay day. We picked ourselves up, dusted ourselves off, and vowed to never be reliant on banks again. 'Debt-free' means we say 'no' to rushed investments and random purchases but 'hell yes' to 100% self-funded internal growth. Another interesting factoid you might like to know: **we don't weigh up spending in terms of how it impacts profits. Instead we take a qualitative view of things: will it have a positive effect on staff well-being?** Hence you'll find that training, profit sharing, paid-for events and charity sponsorship aren't just abstract concepts at Davidson.

Edouard

Feeling inspired?

Consultants
Keep an eye on time-tracking! If you don't know how much time you spent on what, invoicing is impossible!

Managers
Make sure you get your purchase orders in before launching a contract!

Admin
You play a key role in cash flow and outstanding payment management! You're key to our independence!

Curling...
And other stories

A weekend ski break, a spot of mountain-biking, a rooftop party, a night at the opera or theatre: whatever the activity, they all started with a small spark that erupted into a group event.

Real-life story:
One night during a Davidson weekend ski trip, we were huddled around our beers at one of the resort's bars. We were psyching ourselves up for what lay ahead: one of the social committee members had organised an afternoon sled race down one of the resort's most hardcore slopes. Picture the scene: 60 Davidsonians bombing their way down Avoriaz. Anyway, we were hanging out and coming up with ideas for the next big event. One of us was like, 'I want to do something really out there'.

We sat there thinking about it, with one eye on the curling match that was showing on the bar's TV. We didn't get it. 'What's the deal here? Pushing a puck around the ice with a broomstick? Seriously, who came up with this sport?'

And there it was. Our next Davidson event would be a night of curling. YOLO, man!

Everyone loved it. Or at least, it made everyone laugh. Fabrice called up The Club (in caps, because there's only one in Paris), set it up, let the committee know, got it approved. And a few weeks later, there we were, knees trembling on the ice, gearing up to train alongside the Ile de France region's only curling team. Remembering my colleagues' shaking, sprawling limbs still brings a tear of mirth to my eye.

That's what the Dav spirit is all about: suggest an idea, check everyone's on board, get it organised, and have fun! In my four years at Davidson, I've never heard of a single event idea, no matter how eccentric, that didn't get the green light. Obviously we're no different from any other company, in that we do the classics, too: annual big night out, a cooking session, go-karting, etc. But we always try to organise something a little different so that those of us who wouldn't have the guts to go it alone can try out new activities: other than the curling, there was also the scuba-diving, the hang-gliding, the skydiving, the mountain-biking and the glider plane rides, to name just a few. It means we enjoy this fantastic team spirit, and we get to meet as many Davidsonians as we can handle, people we very rarely see otherwise, or colleagues we only talk to via the company's online platform.

Me personally, after barely a year at Davidson, I'd already taken part in a dozen different events and been awarded my Level 1 diving certificate after a weekend in Bormes-les-Mimosas with eight other Davidsonians.

Johann

Respect is a two-way *street*

All too often in business, success is judged by how much wealth can be generated – and sadly, it's not the kind of wealth that's measured in the milk of human kindness. No. More like: What's the operating profit? How high are dividends? How much capital gain is accruing?

So is lining your own pockets, and/or those of your shareholders, the only goal of business entrepreneurs – a goal that's entirely at odds with promoting staff well-being?

Not necessarily, if you listen to the hardboiled cynics who point out that the 100 companies ranked the best places to work in the US outperform competitors by 25%. The goal is still maximum profit – but they know they need happy, motivated and productive staff to get there.

I'm lucky to have built up Davidson with associates (or employees who came up the ranks) who share my very different vision. **We believe a company is a common working tool whose value lies not in its capacity to deliver increasing yield, but in its power to create value for clients AND staff** (groups that overlap, when you consider a company's staff as its first clients, who therefore deserve a significant proportion of our attention). This view translates into an operational intent, based on a virtuous circle:

- each individual's personal commitment fuels organisational performance
- leading to better results, both in terms of quality and profit
- allowing us to refocus funds and efforts on staff well-being by offering benefits, a great working environment, and some cool perks.

In this way, the cycle continues and you get out what you put in – staff recognise that their investment in the company is valued and rewarded, and in return their commitment to the firm will deepen.

I think it would be reductive to summarise this concept of the two-way street as simply sharing out the profits fairly. To get the full picture, you need to look at how the virtuous circle works in the other direction, which may seem less obvious:

- management build close working relations with their teams – open-door policy, approachable attitude, multiple communication channels, informal atmosphere with plenty of opportunities for paths to cross, and a management response to all ideas in the intranet suggestion box within a fortnight
- managers are quick to help staff with private concerns, particularly by working on their empathy (real caring, based on sincere active listening). They'll be willing to use the

company's clout and put pressure on partners or suppliers to resolve certain situations, for instance doing business with only one bank and asking it to 'find a creative solution' when someone has a problem debt.

- decisions are guided by what effect they will have internally, not simply by how they impact ROI. We want to send a clear message that the company values 'me' – 'connected' to our core values – above outsiders – shareholders who are only 'connected' to the annual balance sheets.
- given our rationale of promoting a strong sense of belonging, we share decision-making – which calls for staff to think creatively, since most decisions stem from their ideas. 'I feel good because my firm gives me a lot, and in return, I do my bit by contributing strong ideas.'

Once this two-way street is well established, we had to make sure it was sustained, especially in a phase of rapid growth when new team members were coming on-board and the Davidson corporate culture wasn't self-evident. We generally assume that the bigger a business grows, the more 'dehumanised' it gets – and yet we all know people who are miserable in tiny companies, and we also come across execs who are happy in much larger firms. We decided not to allow

ourselves to go down that route. To make sure we don't, we give ourselves a little shake-up every year by applying to be ranked in the Great Place To Work listings.

Although we've done well in the rankings, the reason we do it is that it fuels another virtuous circle – it drives us to constantly question the way we do things, and seek out new ideas to keep our company moving along the right path. Essentially, this company is our baby and we do everything we can to nurture the atmosphere in the workplace, and uphold our values.

Bertrand

Ça vous inspire ?

Managers
Adoptez la réciproque attitude !

Pas de posture hiérarchique (j'ordonne, tu exécutes), restez accessibles, et légitimez-vous par votre capacité à écouter et à accompagner vos équipes dans leurs évolutions. Soyez un G.O. et amenez vos équipes à se comporter de même !

Fairness

We are not going to get into a debate about what is better: equality or fairness. The latter has gotten bad press because it implies unequal distribution. However, we believe that this is the condition to right certain injustices linked to the fact that not everyone starts off under the same conditions: equality means running the 100 metres against Usain Bolt in his normal physical shape. Fairness means correcting the inequality of opportunity by putting a pair of ski boots on his feet. At least then it would be a "race"...

Now we are exposed. We prefer fairness and the amount of inequality that goes along with it, without which we would not be able to envision proportionality between what is given (in terms of work, time, expertise, commitment, etc.) and what is offered in return (recognition, advancement, salary, etc.).

In short: fairness refers to proportionality which refers to... merit. Everything should therefore go well in the best of all worlds, since Davidson's case has shown us that the vast majority of Davidsonians prefer a meritocratic system over a strictly egalitarian one. And yet, if you are a manager, perhaps you have already heard these words during a review with one of your employees?
- "Why don't you raise my salary up above 50 euros? I've given my all this year in my job..."
- "I think I deserve a raise above the pay scale!

The others don't need to know..."
- "OK I missed my target, but only 2 days late because a customer cancelled a project, you're still going to approve my bonus, aren't you?"
- "I'd like a bigger budget for my company car, could you authorise that? The contracts I signed are very profitable..."

Personally, I looooove these kinds of complaints:

1. They will inevitably make me look like "the bad guy who says no"... A devious reversal of the guilt by the "out-of-bounds" employee, since he tried to circumvent the commonly established rules, sometimes without acknowledging it ("the others don't need to know" ... As if the fact of not being caught in the act negated ... the crime).

I'll get over it: "managing is accepting that you'll be unpopular", I've been told that enough at Davidson...

2. They represent throwing a lifeline to unfairness, a hot, burning rope that I don't want to grab onto. However, in a "short-term" logic, I would have every interest in doing so. Inequity in this case is the shortest path to tranquillity.

Why not give an extra €50 per month to someone who asks me for them even though the rating system does not foresee it? Because he will go home happy of course! Davidson will get over it and I will have avoided a tough negotiation and kept my aura of sympathy!

It would be a serious mistake, however, because what is at stake goes beyond immediate contentment (or relief)! For while Davidson will survive financially if I give in, we will nevertheless lose our fundamental principle of fairness. And I say "we" because the person making the request will pay the price for his/her unfair request: he/she joined Davidson because he/she thought that we were different, that he/she would never pass someone in the halls who, with equal experience and performance, would receive more recognition and pay than he/she did, and now he/she is creating the conditions, the temptation to say yes and corrupt the whole system. The exception obviously disproves the rule, except in grammar.

Romain

Feeling inspired?

Everyone

Before responding to certain requests, ask yourself this question: is it fair to "others"?

Inside
Man

When I was asked to participate in the new version of The Da Vidson Code, it immediately appeared to me that a theme (a question) emerged: Can Davidson's tribal management be applied to other companies?

Having worked with Davidson since 2013 (hours and hours of conversations with the founders and managers), rubbing shoulders with them (My company Ethikonsulting shares their offices), makes it easier to answer this question. And the answer is no.

Of course, Davidson's story is a source of inspiration for the many companies that conduct Learning expeditions at the headquarters in Boulogne, but applying tribal management to other organisations... I don't think so.

Why?

Reason #1: the bosses. At first glance, nothing sets them apart from other leaders except one thing. They work faster and self-criticise more often than their peers.

Here are two specific examples to help you better understand. In all classic companies, we are told about a charter of values. Not at Dav. The book you hold in your hands lists the right behaviours for everyday life. They illustrate the corporate culture. What good is a list of good intentions if it is not put into practice from January 1 to December 31? Values stem from good attitudes. Not the other way around.

A friend of mine who is the director of a large company has made the Cardinal de Retz formula his management style: "One can only get out of a state of ambiguity at one's own expense". In Davidson's case, it's quite the opposite. Words equal things. No implicitness. Explicitness is a must. At times it's brutal and awkward but so much more effective and unifying than beating around the bush. Everyone knows how it works. It is laid out in the Davidson Code. There is a tremendous amount of freedom, but people who don't respect the boundaries of the playing field beware!

Reason #2: the group.

Alone we go faster, together we go further.

The degree of teamwork is greater than anywhere else. The "best players" are attracted by a
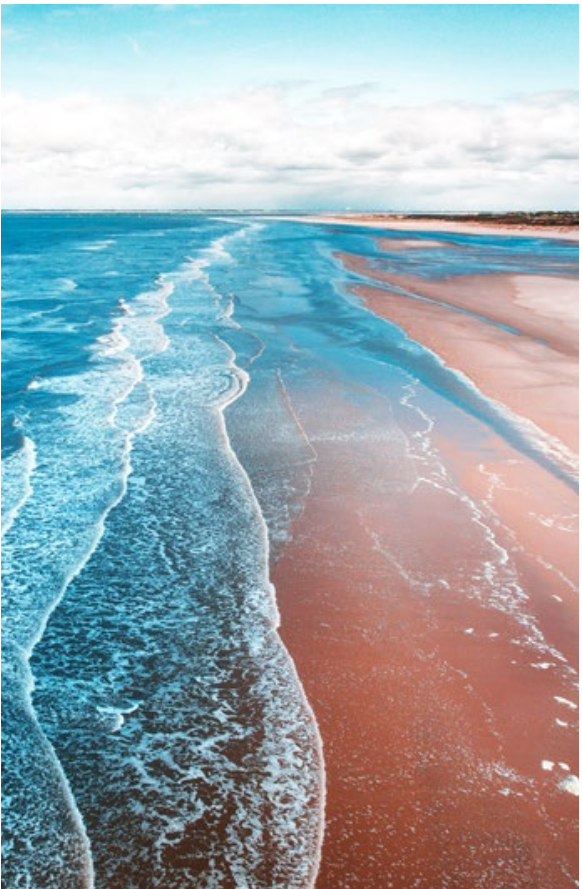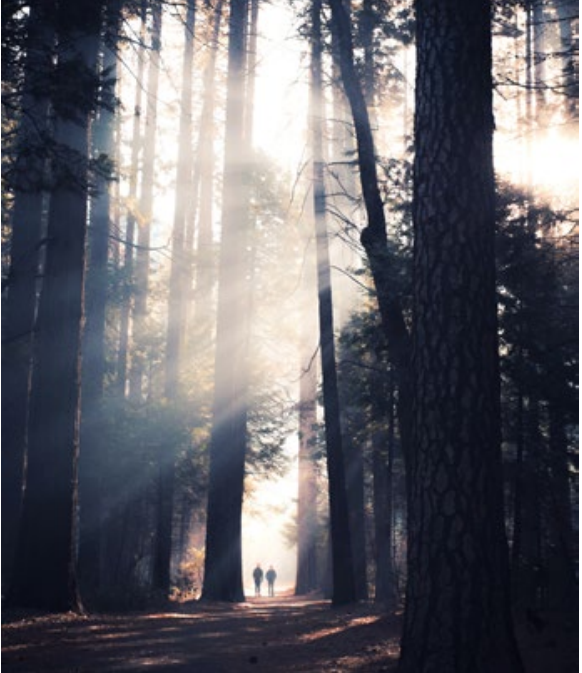
corporate culture that has won four consecutive Great Place Work awards in Europe. Since September 2018, the company has been B Corp. certified; a certification that recognises companies that want to be "better for the world" instead of "best in the world".

Hiring mistakes are rare. The culture is extremely strong but quickly eliminates the few casting errors. Mistakes are encouraged even if you don't want to make too many of them. Patience is not the main virtue of Davidsonian culture...

Another thing struck me: Davidsonians are looking for people who can rise above them. At most organisations, it is advantageous to have an army of people working "for" you, who will never take "your" place. I have found that the Davs want to bring in people who are capable of working "with" them that can rise above them.

All this makes for a high level of play where the players are autonomous and regularly step out of their comfort zone. The flat organisational structure encourages dialogue and therefore trust (I feel listened to and therefore useful) and reinforces pride of belonging.

Reason #3: the game plan

Davidson is a great place to live. The atmosphere is nice. The premises are incredible. The high degree of independence and few daily annoyances, there is only one thing left to do: Deliver and perform.

Davidson has a clear strategy and has equipped itself with the necessary tools (e.g. a fully digitised IT system, including an unparalleled intranet, which facilitates responsiveness and resilience in

all circumstances). But a strategy without action is just a delusion. Davidson is a "machine for making the plan come true". The results speak for themselves. Revenues are steadily growing (with the possible exception of a year of global pandemic) and we have been profitable since day one. At Davidson you have no excuse for not performing. We don't live in la-la land. It is better to be in line with this quote from Aristotle: "Excellence is not an act but a habit".
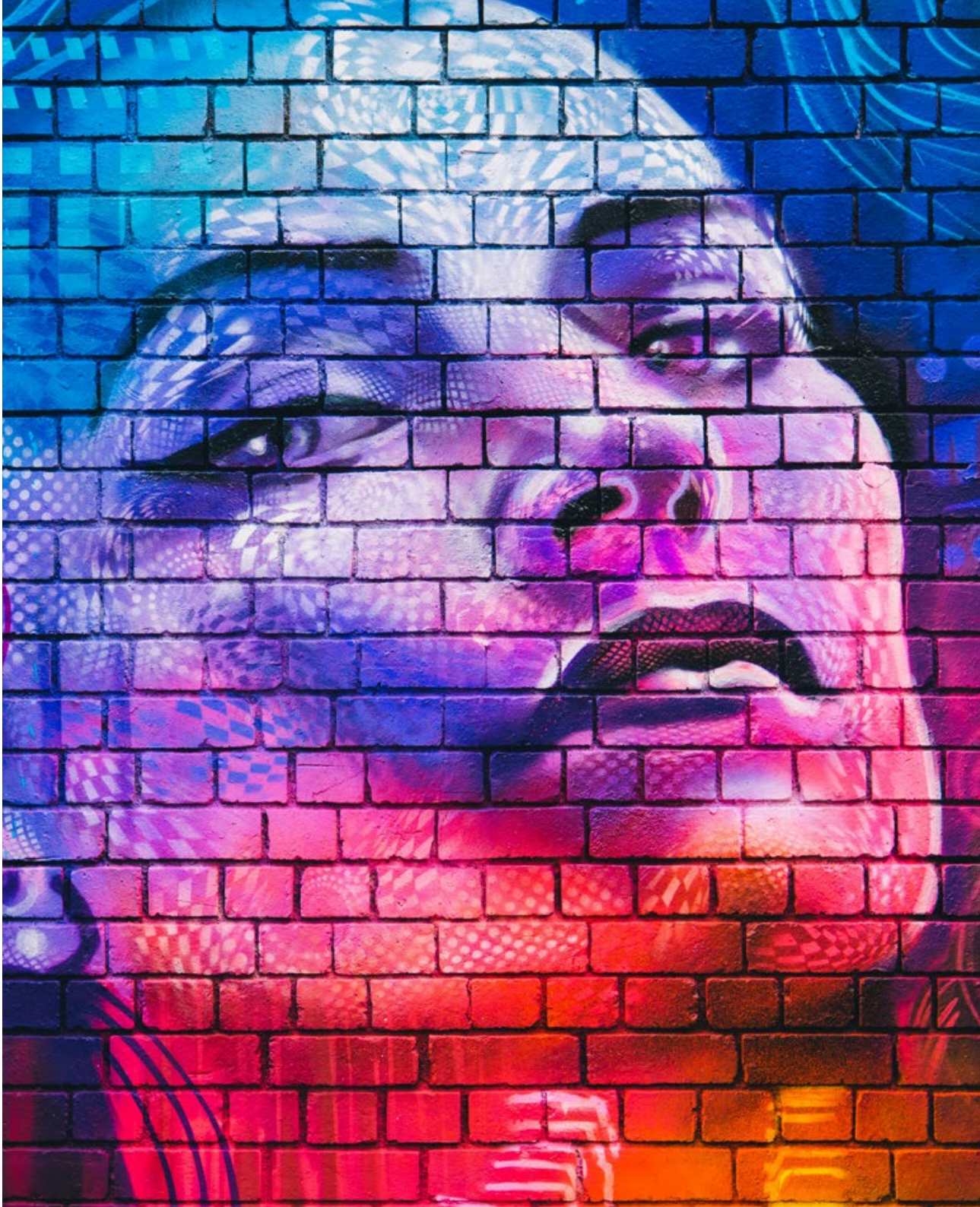
Frédéric

Feeling inspired?

Managers

Practice One Minute Management! This consists of dealing with positive events in real time (through congratulations, recognition of a job well done) or negative events (by explaining dissatisfaction and giving specific objectives).

Everyone

Recruiting people who are better than us

The Dav' campus

Back in the day, we all agreed on a single, indisputable fact: finding good, affordable housing is something of a minefield for young people working in Paris.

THE situation is so dire that many of them are actually turned off by the idea of working in the capital, and myself included…
As a young, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed recent graduate living thirty-odd kilometres east of Paris, I decided to move to the outskirts of the city, where I knew I'd find much richer pickings for jobs in my field (digital TV). Having applied to Davidson, I thought I'd need to sort my housing situation out before starting my first contract. I couldn't imagine getting to grips with my new job

while slogging away at a four-hour commute.

But as the months rolled by, my hunt for the perfect studio was looking grim. The first time I went to discuss a potential job with my manager, I let slip that I was having trouble finding somewhere to live. That was when I first heard about the campus.
'We've got a campus a ten-minute walk away from your first job, actually,' he said.
'Like company accommodation?'
'It's a bit more than that…'

Two months on, I'm pretty much living the dream: Davidson designed the campus with an amazing, lifestyle experience in mind.

The seven studios are totally independent from one another and are designed to be super comfy. And when I say 'studio', I don't mean cramped, mildewy bedsits. The campus studios are actual spaces you can actually live in. They've got it all going on: double bed, wardrobe, chest of drawers, bookcase, desk, bedside table, bathroom with everything you need, internet connection, and a massive TV. Luxury, basically!

But not only… Davidson believes we can all do with a little helping hand when transitioning from university to the world of work (and it's true that after engineering school socials, it can feel a bit lonely to end up all by your lonesome in a studio).

So the company created communal living spaces across the ground floor: think garden with loads of trees, a patio deck, comfy chairs and a barbecue (roll on summer!), a kitchen-slash-dining room (perfect for grabbing a drink after work with my room-mate/colleague hybrids, cooking dinner together, having a laugh, you get the idea), and finally the living room with sofa, coffee tables and a big TV. It's crazy to think that this room used to be a garage.

But what's the benefit for the company? **You could see it as a return to a paternalistic management style. But you'd be wrong.** The campus is an extension of all the other initiatives put in place since the company first started out, prioritising employee well-being and giving them the right environment in which to grow. The result is an incredible sense of team spirit, a real hunger for throwing ourselves into our projects, and enthusiasm for the entire Davidson philosophy. It's about inspiring people to want to make their own contribution to the Davidson project. It's basically a win-win situation.

Giving employees really affordable accommodation in fully-equipped apartments complete with awesome living areas. Welcome to fantasy land!
Etienne

Feeling inspired?

Managers
Keep an eye on the monthly dashboard to stay up-to-date on studio availability.

Consultants
Studios are available on one-year leases so that everyone gets a turn. Let us know ASAP if you plan on moving so we can get organised ahead of time!

You see it :
you do it!

Once upon a time, in a land far, far away, lived four guys called **EVERYONE**, **SOMEONE**, **EACH** and **NOBODY**.

Important work needed doing, and **EVERYONE** was asked to get their hands dirty.

EVERYONE was convinced that **SOMEONE** would do it.

EACH could get involved, but **NOBODY** did.

SOMEONE got angry, because this was **EVERYONE**'s job, after all.

EVERYONE thought that **EACH** had a role to play, but **NOBODY** realised that **EVERYONE** would shy away from it.

EVERYONE ultimately gave **EACH** a hard time because **NOBODY** did what **SOMEBODY** could have.

Did that little story ring any bells? No surprise there. Some people find it easier to come up with excuses to do sweet FA: 'I didn't want to bother you/I didn't think it would work/That's got to be too expensive/They won't listen to me', and the list goes on. Somehow, that seems easier than just taking responsibility. These are what we call the 'shoulda-coulda-wouldas', and yes, we have a special name for them, because we've got a very different approach to life.

Our approach is that when you notice something isn't working, or when you think you've got a good idea that the community will like, you take responsibility for trying to make fantasy reality.

So you can expect to hear this little saying crop up quite often between Davidsonians: 'You See It: smash it!', or to put it less catchily, responsibility is something you take, not something you're given.

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES TIME!

EX.1: Sophie (a manager) in conversation with her boss:

Sophie: 'I'd like to develop a new sector for Davidson.'

'Why not? Great idea!'

'But I don't have enough credibility in the sector!'

'So how do you propose we fix that?'

'Well, ideally I'd get training that would help me understand the new environment.'

'I agree. Can you take care of it?'

'Sure, and I think it could be good to get other interested managers involved.'

'Excellent idea. So how about you find the training and trainer you think would be best, and get back to me with three quotes.'

RESULT: Managers from four different regions received training two months later.

EX. 2: Nazim (a consultant) thinks Davidson should be developing its expertise in LTE (new generation mobile phone networks) and discusses it with his manager:
Nazim: 'I think we should be focussing on LTE.'
'How?'
'Firstly, we need to gather information: get to grips with the standard, get trained up by manufacturers, run our own in-house training sessions.'
'Good idea. Why don't you put together a group of consultants to take part in the study, go on a training course in Germany and then design some training modules we can use internally.'

RESULT: Six months later, an overview based on the standards is uploaded to the community platform and three training sessions are scheduled. Obviously, for this approach to work, you need to be able to rely on accessible, open and responsive managers (top tip: they like to know where the cheque they're signing is headed). And that's a happy coincidence, because our bosses have 'Please Do Disturb' signs on their doors (disclaimer: not literally). It comes with us being a great place to work. They're open to learning (we don't believe in top-down management) and quick to respond (one-minute management).

Another fun factoid: When we're not giving them ideas, our dear bosses are holding post-it meetings! This is where we all get together around a table and jot down questions, ideas or comments on post-its that are then read aloud and discussed in real-time in meetings that never run over an hour. It goes without saying: these post-its are anonymous. And the same rule as earlier applies: if you throw a good idea out there, there's a very good chance you'll be asked to make it happen!

RESULT: The company crèche/the in-house management school/online Who's Who of Davidsonians...

Sophie

Feeling inspired?
Everyone
Try and avoid 'shoulda-coulda-woulda'-itis. Try saying 'I'll take care of this'. It's life-changing. Or work-changing, at the very least.

Dutler,
Davidson's butler

Ahhh corporate intranets! We often go back and forth between:

- Vast catch-alls where you can stuff everything (and anything) inside and then you can't find anything any more. These end up discouraging visitors. You know, they even discourage Jean-Luc, the admin, who then asked to be transferred to accounting ("because it's neat and tidy in accounting"), which doesn't help the problem. Too much content kills the content.
- Ghost platforms whose last update dates back to 2 January 2014. Then Corinne, full of good New Year's resolutions, published a greeting card with cats wishing us a "purr-fect" New Year.

Faced with this observation, refusing to give in to fatalism (because yes, we thought that a well-made intranet was vital in the 21st century, we'll come back to this in point 4 when I've finished digressing) and convinced that we were better than Google, Facebook, Microsoft and Slack (and that we didn't want to give our data to the Americans, depend on their developments and that "in any case, generic platforms will never allow us to perfectly digitise our processes"), we set out to solve the problem once and for all! We went into tribal mode, as usual (see chapter 8).

What did we decide?

1. A single network to govern them all: we are putting all our business applications that digitise all our processes on our future intranet. We will also put a lot of (more or less) new and useful tools for Davidsonians: so they will go there for serious things (attending an E-learning session, sharing information, submitting an expense claim, making a travel request, identifying a leading practice on the Davidsonian world map, requesting online mentoring, etc.) but also for less serious things (organising a party, celebrating birthdays, sharing a passion, etc.). Because without connections, Dutler's power is worthless!

2. So you're going to say to me: OK, you aren't really Corinne's case but you are closer to Jean-Luc's... Certainly not! Because we came to the conclusion that the "freshness" of the information (you know the boxes "recent posts", "recently published documents", etc.) was not the right criteria to base our strategy of highlighting content for users on. Therefore, we chose to relegate it to the background while keeping it because news like "Jean-Luc's Birthday" has to disappear the day after his birthday (his birthday already depresses him enough, just think if we wish him a belated birthday...). On Dutler the forest hides
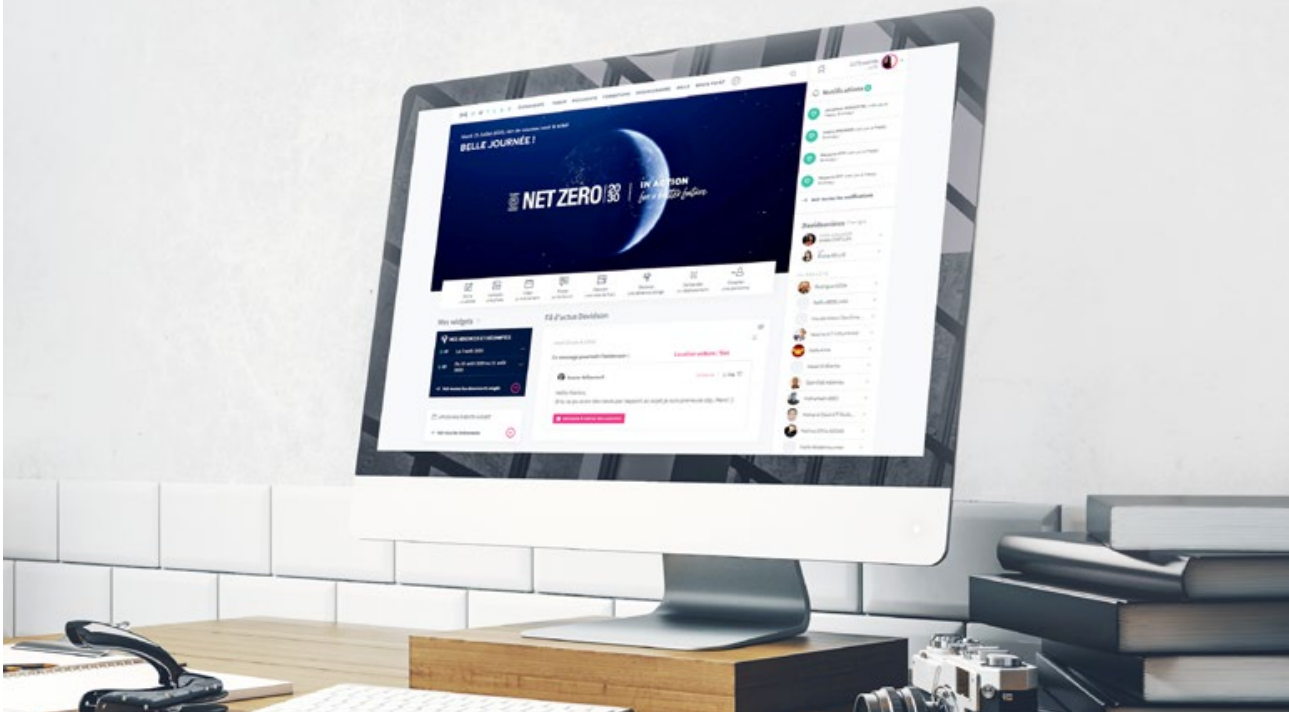
the tree (we never really understood how a tree could hide a forest...) so 15 other criteria are used before freshness... Some are endogenous (if I declared that "literature" is my hobby I won't see Corinne's posts first) and some are exogenous (if I like Corinne's posts I will see them more and more frequently and my eyes will bleed...). 15 criteria, thousands of content items to analyse: it was obviously too algorithmic for our little brains, so we got ourselves some neurons. Neural networks and artificial intelligence to be more precise.

Dutler is based on precogs that:
a. Process, clean, and understand texts in several languages (NLP).
b. Profiling (understanding expectations, dynamic weighting of criteria)
Thus the internal social network cannot "collapse under its own weight" or more precisely under

the weight of highly propagated contributions that are not very interesting because they are not statistically targeted for individual users (like Linkedin which is now overrun with heterogeneous quality posts... We are even starting to see cat videos there).

3. Total transparency. Everyone sees everything and everyone. All training courses, all job descriptions, all messages are shared! Advantage: you will no longer pass other Davs in your customer's hallways without knowing that they are part of the family! You'll find tennis partners who are geographically closest to you (based on their mission locations, hey, we don't have GPS chips implanted under our skin!).

4. Make >> Buy. We prefer making everything ourselves. So it's certainly more expensive than

if we had subscribed to Office365 and Teams. But that's the price of absolute freedom: coding a widget or a module that tackles a new business problem or deals with a specific customer request in a few hours or days! This is what Jeremy Rifkin calls "stretching the processes"!

5. Enhanced gaming: users earn points for each completed action, can get around 50 badges and track their global or local "ranking". The points earned for each action were the subject of lengthy debates within the Dutler Triad in an effort to balance the system: How much should a "like" on a post vs. putting a training course online score? Etc.

6. Video call & Forum >> Chat. If your discussion thread appeals to more than 2 people, it would be sad to deprive the forum of it. If it only concerns you and another Davidsonian, you are encouraged to do a video call which isn't as cold and is more efficient (a bit of non-verbal language doesn't hurt).

Overview of the courses: 3 years of design, 2 designers, 20 developers, 450 screens, 2,144 user stories, hundreds of bugs, unsuspected complexities but 2 patents registered for the most tentacular holacratic/tribal project led by Davidson .... and it works!

Curious to have a look? We'd be happy to show it to you !

Johann

Feeling inspired?

Managers

Prioritise using the forum as a means of communication. In telecommunications, they call it Broadcasting: information is instantly broadcast to everyone.

Direct your consultants to the forum and its FAQ section! Rather than answering the same question 100 times, use this time to make the question and answer available to everyone.

Consultants

Think about suggesting events, training courses, articles, etc. Update your skills and hobbies on your profile page so that the recommendation engine offers you the most relevant content.

We're not asking you to add an hour to your work day to contribute to Dutler! But let's just say one coffee/tea break per week would be perfect!

Mens sana
in corpore sano

'I work such long hours, I don't have time to do any sport...' 'My job keeps me stuck in my chair all day long...'

You're sure to have heard these phrases trotted out in your workplace. Until 2015, we also heard them at Davidson – and then something changed: we fitted out one office with treadmill desks!

I suppose you're wondering 'What's that, some new sort of Davidson gizmo?' It's very simple, treadmill desks were invented in the US where lots of companies have them. It's a combination of an office desk and the kind of treadmill you'd find in the gym. You put your laptop on the desk shelf, set it to the right height, and set the treadmill in motion.

Every time we show them to our visitors, they ask the same thing: 'Do you really manage to get your work done while walking?' The answer is 'yes' and the very fact that you're reading this chapter is proof of the pudding, since obviously I wrote it while walking – at 1.5 km an hour! At that speed, it's no problem at all to read, write or make phone calls!

On top of the positive health benefits (the WHO recommends you take 10,000 steps a day, and on this thing you reach that quota in just over an hour), people who use them at Davidson are unanimous that the desks help lower their stress levels – even at low speeds, walking helps you let off steam – but also, perhaps more surprisingly, they improve concentration. 'Well of course!' says Dr. Tissimo, 'Physical exercise increases the amount of neurons in the hippocampus.'

And people who don't find them beneficial can stick with a standard desk. The treadmill desks are available for anyone to use, but they won't be taking the place of normal sit-down desks.

André

Feeling inspired?

Everybody
Always remember that he who walks in the footsteps of another leaves no trace behind.

Because
I'm worth it!

I was having dinner at my friends' house a while ago. Someone was talking about their annual appraisal, and you got the feeling they felt they'd been had:

- they'd laboriously filled in their appraisal form, but unfortunately it was never read by their line manager ('Did you remember to fill it in?');
- their boss acted in bad faith when reviewing the past year, in an ill-disguised attempt to downplay any successes... and justify a minimal raise in salary;
- their targets were impossible to reach.

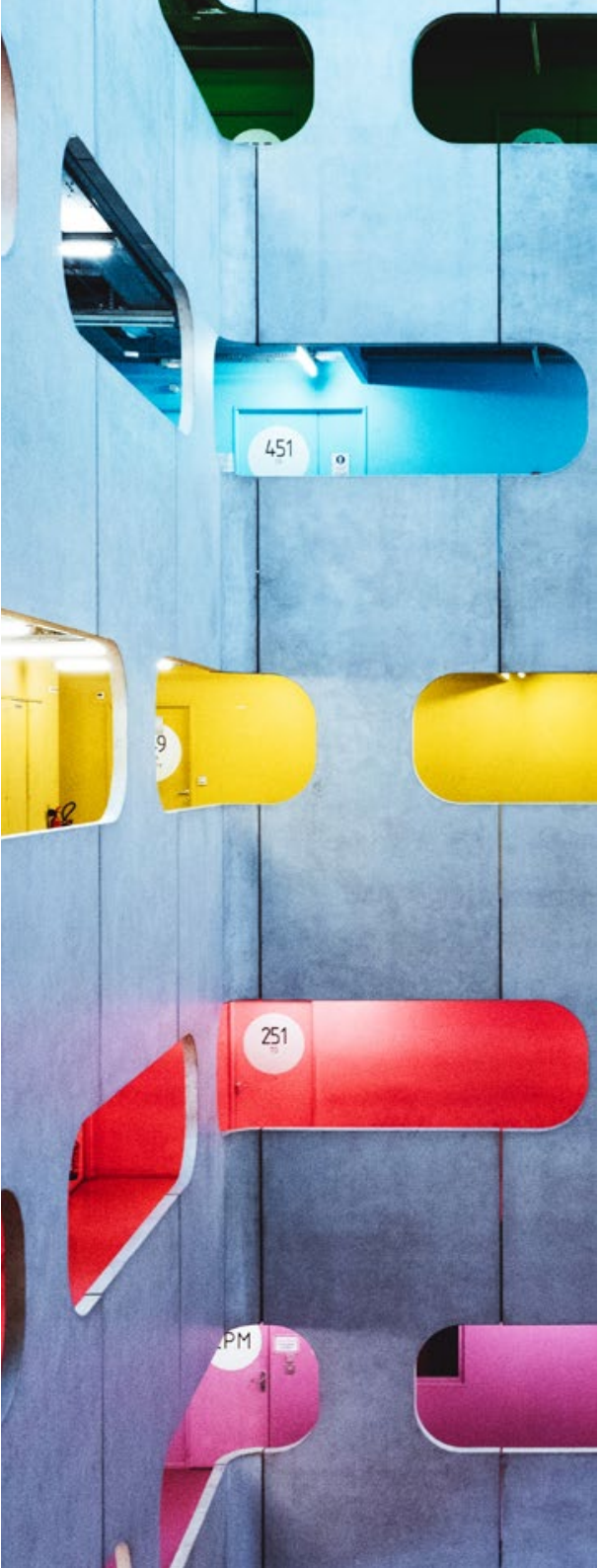Basically, the exercise was totally biased and the one thing you could be sure of was that the reviews to come would all be in the same vein.

Luckily, I haven't experienced that at Dav.

Here we consider appraisals to be an opportunity for real dialogue, and the whole process must be honest, transparent, and enable consultants to get a real sense of where they are and where they're going.

Firstly, to relax the atmosphere on these occasions that have the potential to be quite nerve-wracking, the reviews don't usually happen in the manager's office. Mostly, they take place in the café next door – so there's no sitting in the visitor's seat opposite your boss, comfortably ensconced in their fancy chair across the big desk.

We know in advance what criteria we'll be assessed on so there are no surprises: the lion's share relate to how well operations were carried out, which counts for two thirds of the overall score. The remaining third is equally split between two other criteria: how much you participated in the company's development, but also in workplace life (or better yet, to organising Davidson events like a training course, a party, a sporting weekend, etc). All appraisals kick off with a self-assessment (3 marks out of 20, 7 and 3 points) which is then discussed. Those scores are can be objectively evaluated, since examples are given for each of three criteria. So much for the past (short and sweet), next we move on to discussing the future. This is when objectives are defined together – improvement points, but also, most importantly, any desire for career development. This may sometimes involve moving onto a different project.

Last but not least, the Dav manager is under obligation to ask four questions that many companies avoid like the plague.

1. What are your training needs?
2. Can you suggest a new idea for improving how we operate at Davidson?
3. Is there anything we can do to improve your work/life balance?
4. How many marks out of 20 do you give me as a manager?

This entails that not all the action points fall to the appraisee! The manager also has to meet the consultant's expectations.

Lastly, of course, we come on to the subject of cold hard cash. There's nothing tricksy, everyone knows the pay scale – the directors publish it in the forum at the beginning of the year, based on how much the company made the year before. It's expressed as a percentage for our three categories of beginner, experienced, and senior consultants. Obviously this works to the advantage of beginners, and the raise is backdated to the anniversary of the date they joined the company!

Nassima & Sylvain

Feeling inspired?

Managers

Take the time during a new recruit's first annual appraisal to explain the point of this system. Also, make sure your teams know the assessment criteria right from the day they start working here.

Consultants

When it come to participating in the company's development and workplace life, Davidson doesn't expect you to take over from the managers or to sacrifice your private life by putting in a second day's work after you've been out at a client's all day – 'just' get into certain good habits:

- Got an idea? Share it! (report, forum, etc);
- Keep an eye out for talented interns at your clients' and talk to them about Davidson;
- Same thing if another consultant complains about their company;
- Know of a potential client, or a division that's booming? Let your manager know!

Satisfaction
V3

For many people, this brings to mind the Rolling Stones track that is apparently ranked as the Number 2 best song of all time. For others, it might be a fine piece of sirloin steak, served rare, and enjoyed with friends over a couple of excellent bottles of Burgundy.

Or it might be a general feeling you have about your work (which, considering how much time you devote to it in your otherwise busy life, has a big impact on how satisfied – or not – you are with your life overall). We decided to measure it at Davidson, putting in place some indicators to gauge morale and find out how satisfied our consultants are with the company and their assignments.

We felt it was important to regularly get a sense of the general state of mind among staff, but without getting heavy about it. There was no way we wanted to make it a systematic point on the management agenda. Why cram another half-hour meeting into everyone's weekly schedule if everything's going fine? Much better to go and play some squash or catch a movie – that'll make things go even better!

So initially we decided to put up a little 'Happy

or not?' form on our extranet where each consultant could rate their mood on four smileys at the same time as they sent in their monthly time tracking stats (which is a requirement in our field). That way, a manager is alerted if there aren't many of those digital smileys coming back, and has a perfect excuse for asking 'How's it going?' (see following chapter)

As time went on, we thought we'd toss a few more questions into the mix. Now staff give targeted answers to:

1. What's annoying you the most right now?
2. How would you assess your work/life balance? (It's fine, It's bearable, or It's out of kilter)
3. Do you think your manager should be more available to you?

There's a notification system so managers are alerted if anyone reports a bad mood or a work/life imbalance. They can deal with issues as soon as they come up, and agree an appropriate plan of action with the staff member.

This system also allows us to pass on a monthly compilation of results to the heads of each subsidiary, so they can:
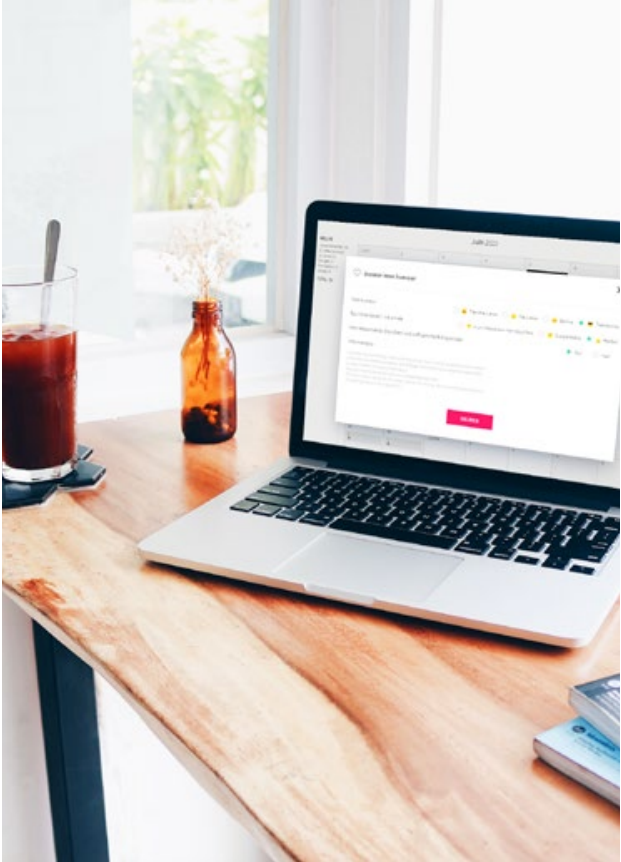
- ongoingly monitor the percentage of people who are satisfied or very satisfied, and observe when collective progress is made
- be proactive in talking to certain managers, if morale is consistently low in their teams despite their measures. The aim is not to reproach them with 'You're a bad manager because you can't resolve the issues in your teams', but to work with them to find more effective ways of tackling the problem. If an unsatisfactory situation has lasted more than three months, it's impossible not to be aware of it!

To sum up:
- if I'm grouchy OR the air con in my office doesn't work OR my daughter says 'Who's that man?' when she sees me OR my manager gives me about as much time as Donald Trump would: monthly notification triggers action by my manager
- I wave a red flag for three months running: the head of my business unit will check with my manager that measures are being taken.

This data is also fed into the teams' individual dashboards, so they can have an overall view of how things progress on an annual basis. This is the kind of scale that makes sense, because obviously Satisfaction – with a capital S – can only be measured over the longer term!

Which suits us down to the ground – we like to take the long view.

Gabriel

Feeling inspired?

Managers

One-minute Management: instant action on low morale.

And rest assured:
- the smileys aren't there to make you feel guilty, they just prompt you to not stick your head in the sand;
- we'll never ask you to monitor dozens of indicators, but these ones are surely worthwhile?

Consultants

Don't be afraid to use the smileys! None of that stiff upper lip or 'I don't want to make a fuss…'!

Did you know?

The classic smiley that we all know and love – that happy, round yellow face – was invented by Harvey Ball in 1963 for an American insurance company that was putting together an in-house communications campaign to boost staff morale.

Good ideas never go out of style…

SATISFACTION & BALANCE

Satisfaction

| Très Bon |
| Bon |
| Mauvais |
| Très Mauvais |

Balance

It's all good
I'm gritting my teeth
It's getting me down

05/2019 06/2019 07/2019 08/2019 09/2019 10/2019 11/2019 12/2019 01/2020 02/2020 03/2020 04/2020

■ Satisfaction ■ Balance

98%
Average rate of satisfaction at Davidson in 2019 (Satisfaction ratings and annual GPTW survey).

24
Number of Davidson staff members 'dissatisfied' for over three months in October 2019 (Satisfaction ratings).

How's it *going?*

'I bet you hear that question 100 times a day, but sadly for most of us it's just rhetorical. We tag it on to 'Hiya' or 'Alright?'

because we're being polite and that's what you say to colleagues. Or worse, we actually make a point of not being interested in people because it's a workplace mantra that we should keep our private and professional lives separate.

At Davidson we decided that when we ask that question (and we do ask it, often!) we would pay attention to the answer.

So when I ask it, it's because I really want to know: 'How's your family? Is your baby walking yet? I gather you survived your weekend with the in-laws?' You might think it's unnecessary, or even insincere, but not for me. I really want to know how people are when I see them every day at work. Not out of prurient curiosity but just because I'm really interested. So when someone answers 'Fine, thanks,' are they really fine?

When I tell you that I'm a Davidson manager, based at headquarters, and that my consultants are off on assignments all over the country (and far beyond), you can understand that since I only

see them very occasionally, I really need (and want) to use those meetings to get to know my teams better, to build a relationship of trust and lay the foundations for quality career management. We spend so little time together that it's vital we use that time to really connect.

Apart from anything else, it's hypocritical to think that people can keep their personal problems totally separate from their professional lives. We're all human and of course our private difficulties impact on the workplace. Knowing what's going on means we can adapt working conditions to make things easier for people. We don't want to add any more pressure when someone's already struggling to cope. Quite the contrary, I think it's a manager's role to help people keep a sense of perspective about work when they're going through tough times. 'Take it easy. It's ONLY a job...'

Of course, this only applies if the relationship you have with your colleagues is open and honest. But if that is the case, then your question isn't just a formality and there's a good chance that you'll get a genuine answer.
Mostly we ask this question because we actually want to get a better understanding of the person

we're talking to.

Jean Decety, a renowned neuroscientist, describes one of our capacities as 'to step into someone else's shoes and understand their feelings – that distinctive trait that makes us so profoundly human and forms the basis for social reasoning and moral behaviour.' That capacity is empathy.

What if we worked on strengthening it?

'How's it going?'
'I'm feeling better already...'

Yann

Feeling inspired?

Everybody
When you ask the question, take the time to really hear the answer...

Being in the bench
isn't a waste of time!

'We met Davidson in August 2007 and instantly got on. Mickaël and I (who'd studied together at the ISEN) both signed up for our very first consultancy jobs. We thought the hard part was over.

In September 2007 we had initial scoping meetings with Davidson clients about potential assignments. The meetings went well, but nothing concrete ever came of it because the client couldn't secure the budget in the end. Our confidence started to falter, and we worried we were on borrowed time. Then our manager called us. We expected him to say he was having second thoughts about hiring us, but that wasn't it. He was reassuring, asking if we'd like to work with him on finding a stimulating assignment within his client portfolio. Basically we needed to track down potential key procurement advisors in our fields. We thought that was a good plan, and we'd be helping out our manager. As the weeks went by, assignments still failed to materialise. Mickaël and I started calling each other more often. "I don't see how this can go on much longer, do you?" All the other new recruits had been allocated assignments to work on. Our friends weren't very encouraging: "Get real! They're hardly likely to keep you much longer, you're

costing them money!" We couldn't argue with their reasoning, and we feared the worst.

But although time was ticking by, our manager was as enthusiastic as ever. He kept us in the loop, supported us, reassured us and – most importantly – believed in us. "You'll see, it'll work out eventually!" At this stage, we were starting to think, "Either the people in this company are crazy, or they're masochists." This was clearly a very different kind of company, and that's what kept us plugging away. After a few more weeks and technical meetings (boy, were we prepared!), we finally got a lucky break – our inaugural assignment, and what's more, it was work we really enjoyed. Result!'

This story illustrates how we see the between-contract period at Davidson – we know that being on the bench isn't a waste of time! It's time that can, and should, be put to good use. For a start, being between contracts is no big deal. As our boss once said, a consulting firm without downtime isn't doing its job properly. Initially, we thought he was crazy (cutting inter-contract ratios is an obsession for our competitors), but then he explained:

'If you don't have between-contract periods, there may be several reasons:

1. You're not recruiting enough and you're under-staffed, which probably means you can't handle all the calls for tender that interest you. Clients may be less than impressed with your lack of responsiveness.

2. You might be staffing your teams too quickly without having enough time to find high-quality opportunities for them. Between-contract periods can buy you more time to scope the market and pinpoint projects that match the profile of your teams. Anyone can pump up their contractor numbers by accepting anything and everything that comes their way…'

Being on the bench gives you breathing space and time to catch up on all the stuff you don't have time to do when you're racing around on assignments. Things like updating the Davidson project database, reading those specs and articles you've put aside, sharing information with other consultants on the platform, developing training materials, upgrading your skills, working on one of Davidson's many 'internal tool' initiatives, organising an event with the works committee, you name it. And by the way, Davidson actually has a very low between-contract rate (3% on average since we first started, with low standard deviation). When we do find ourselves without an assignment, we're always kept busy with those in-house jobs and especially with looking into potential client projects!

Nicolas & Mickaël

83

Feeling inspired?

Consultants

Think ahead: Remember to update your skills portfolio as soon as you know your current assignment is coming to an end. Meet with managers and go through it – make them want to be superstar agents to the superstar player you are!

You know the market: suggest ideas to your manager – they don't know everything!

Follow up after managers get the ball rolling for you – don't wait for them to call you.

Capitalise and share: use your experience to develop some training or overviews that will be of use to everyone.

Work on your presentation skills: successful client pitches are essential. Winning them raises your profile so you can move your career forward faster than if you're stuck behind a desk.

If it's dragging on... Maybe there just aren't any assignments going, due to an economic slump or because you're ultra-specialised. Keep an open mind. How could you broaden your horizons a bit? A temporary relocation? Focusing on a new area of expertise or a sector that's booming?

Stay active. Netflix is cool, but eventually your brain turns to mush and you'll lose your edge in meetings. Use your time to work on constructive in-house initiatives. Don't force Davidson to make you clock in.

Managers

Think ahead: Talk to your consultants as soon as their current assignment ends, check in with their goals, and share their profile with all other managers unless your portfolio makes you 99% certain you'll have something to give them that's perfectly aligned with what they want to do.

Prepare for meetings: Don't believe a consultant who says 'I don't need to prepare', unless you've seen it for yourself in a successful mock interview.

Don't force them to come into the office unnecessarily or stick to rigid hours – find them interesting things to do, and follow up. When a consultant is between contracts, it's the management's responsibility, not theirs – so don't put pressure on them.

Don't break off a trial period because the consultant's on the bench!

Don't embellish consultants' profiles – there's no excuse for lying. The same goes for client meetings. Don't pluck skills out of thin air...

Draw up a list of ideas from accounts in your own portfolio or other people's. Keep your consultant updated on what action's being taken. Read the papers: you should know what companies might be looking for the skills that Davidson's teams can provide.

A butterfly
wing flapping

Or how to "become the cause of the effect one wishes to produce" (Julia de Funes)

Since 2007, without waiting to become B Corp, Davidson decided to invest in public interest projects. Why this approach of getting involved in projects with a social or environmental focus?

1. To make our contribution, however modest it may be, by making our skills and "grey matter" available to organisations and associations on a totally voluntary basis. We also donate 1 per 1000 of our revenue

2. To give Davidson consultants, who are motivated by these socially-oriented projects, an ethical sense to their daily professional life

3. To make in some cases (simpler without it) the link with the Davidson Consulting's Healthcare practice, which focuses on related activities

4. Because life is made up of beautiful encounters and in these beautiful interactions there are entrepreneurs, athletes, and members of associations who have shared their commitment with us and have given us the desire to support them.

2008: Partnership with the National Gerontology Foundation

We designed an informative multimedia app related to Memory. The objective was to explain and illustrate cognitive functions and how to stimulate them in order to delay the onset of cerebro-degenerative disorders through digital games.

2009: Partnership with Altanova

Davidson developed a prototype app embedded in a smartphone that accurately detects colours and ambient light using the camera. This is to help visually impaired people who can use speech recognition to query the app and get answers about their environment.

2010: wHing project in partnership with the French Muscular Dystrophy Association (AFM)

In collaboration with another industrial partner, we contributed to developing a new-generation electric wheelchair. The project focused on studying, designing, and introducing an innovative feature to this chair: raising users of the chair from a "seated" to a "standing" position. The prototype was successfully completed on time, making it possible for the AFM to begin a "Tour de France" with the wheelchair to give families and patients a glimpse of it.

> "
> We are very grateful to your team for the work done and we are well aware of the level of collective and individual commitment that this mission required (...) On behalf of all the patients and the AFM, I thank you and I convey to you our great pride and admiration for having collaborated with your teams on this file.
> "

Sylvain Van Wassenhove,
Head of AFM's technical aids service and innovation unit

2011-2016: Robik project in partnership with the AFM

Davidson consulting was involved in a large-scale project to make the principle of a brain computer interface or BCI (Brain Computer Interface) more robust and ergonomic. The goal of this interface is to control a device by extracting and interpreting voluntary characteristics of electroencephalographic (EEG) signals captured on the surface of the scalp or invasively. Davidson was involved in writing the specifications for, designing and developing a system to develop a brain-computer interface that can be used by caregivers or family members for patients with significant neuro-muscular disorders such as myopathies and more generally at various stages of Locked-in Syndrome (LIS).

rely on and determining how to best reuse them in the corporate world. We were lucky enough to have basketball players, volleyball players and judokas working with us so that they could learn about the various facets of our business, our horizontal organisational structure, and the spirit that reigns among the teams based at Singular. And we also learned a lot.... Because hard work, self-sacrifice, as well as resilience are essential ingredients for succeeding in elite sports. These qualities are epitomised by the champions we met during their time at Dav.

opportunity of sharing and transmitting its skills and knowledge to strengthen the self-sufficiency of local populations and/or protecting their environment. There are many areas of intervention and they revolve around three main themes: socio-educational activities, biodiversity preservation, and adult skills training.

Davidson also decided to sponsor the freediving vice-champion Alice Modolo in becoming an ambassador for Planète Urgence.

Jonathan

2018: Sponsorship of the Women's Foundation
We developed the website for the Collectif Féministe Contre le Viol (Feminist Group Against Rape) and also financially supported the Women's Foundation with several collections of donations.

2019: Partenariat avec Planète Urgence
Getting involved all over the world in charitable initiatives is not something that cannot be improvised. That is why we chose to partner with Planète Urgence, an International Humanitarian Association recognised as being of public interest in 2009. We were fascinated with their concept of commitment: Leave for Change. Davidson allows employees who want to get involved in one of the 350 projects (in 23 different countries) proposed by the NGO by financing their missions (transportation, food and accommodation costs accompanied by a donation to the local association that benefits from the mission). Each project aims to make a real impact because it meets a need expressed by a local partner. It offers the

2013-2014: Telemedicine Project with H2AD
Davidson and H2AD conducted a research project to detect behavioural changes in individuals who are home alone. The H2Box project was based on the observation that a person's state of health translates into daily life through a variation of habits and behaviours. From the data collected by a series of sensors, we developed one of the mathematical models and a neural network to detect these variations.

2017: Project with Sancare
Davidson consulting invested in the first round of financing for Sancare, a start-up whose objective is to automate and upgrade

the coding of hospital stays through Machine Learning. Davidson supported Sancare in accelerating the release of the Minimum Viable Product to hospitals thanks to a team of consultants who provided expertise on ongoing integration, as well as on the performance of Machine Learning models.

2018: Partnership with Sports Compétences
Davidson chose to be a partner in this new program that prepares top athletes for their professional careers through corporate immersions. In this context, athletes are assisted in: promoting the skills they have developed in their sports, understanding the skills and know-how they can

How to spot
a true friend!

has an anecdote to share, and some of them are real howlers:

'When I went in to sign the contract, I saw another consultant's name had been crossed out and replaced with mine in ballpoint.'

'My company's HR director contacted me on Viadeo to offer me a job. I've been there six years now, and she didn't even realise I'm on her payroll.'

'My manager doesn't take my calls now he knows I want some training.'

We had a grand old time listening to horror story after horror story, until one of the gang who'd been a bit quiet suddenly piped up with:

'I can't really relate to all this. In my company, they don't just treat us like numbers, they see us as real people. We've got a forum where we get to know each other and share documents, organise company events, post ads for flats to rent and stuff. Training courses are open to anyone, you don't have to go crawling to your manager for permission. We feel pretty happy to be working together and belong to the company.'

You could have heard a baby pin drop.
'Shall I put in a good word for you?'
'If you wouldn't mind...'

It was a midweek evening, like any other. I was having a drink with some workmates. And we were shooting the breeze, talking about what we'd been up to, the football results, holiday plans, the usual.

We discussed work, as you do. And when consultants from different companies talk shop, it's not long before someone brings up the atmosphere at work, and their working relationships. Everyone

And that was it! Cue a fast-track interview process minus the usual three-week wait to hear back. I'd never experienced that before, they ring you up the same week to tell you if you've made it to round two or not. And that's how I found myself part of this big family...

A few weeks later, I was back in the bar with my former workmates. They were all convinced it was too good to be true, but they were wrong. No empty promises, no between-contract periods when they force you to come in to the office so they can watch you twiddling your thumbs. I experienced the full Made in Davidson welcome and events calendar, which was just brilliant. Plus, my first assignment was everything I'd hoped for!

A few months later,
four others left my old company to join me at Dav!
Stéphane

Ça vous inspire ?

Consultants

Feel free to make referrals: they contribute massively to the Dav family spirit!

- follow the process through from start to finish
- only put forward the very best people you can find!
- use the Dutler cooptation's module to drop and follow the applications.

Managers

Co-optations have to be followed closely:

- we make sure that the co-opting person appears on the interview sheet;

- don't forget to give the co-optation bonus!

Referrals are 'sacred':
- give interview priority to referrals;
- keep referrers updated: let them know whether their candidate is in or out (and why, so they see how high the bar is set).

You should worry if your teams stop putting people forward… Referrals are a way of gauging how happy our staff is. Think about it: would you recommend Davidson to your best friend if you didn't like it here?

Take good care of other candidates, too. It's not their fault if they don't know anyone at Davidson, so keep them updated on how their application is going.

Let's take things further…

Since we're on the subject of recruitment, let's not just focus on referrals. Bringing in new recruits is a pivotal part of our company experience, and needs to be handled with the greatest of care.

Managers
Don't interview candidates in an office piled high with documents – especially not CVs.

Don't pressure candidates into signing a contract on the spot (unless a job absolutely demands it, and don't make ridiculous threats like 'you have until midnight, or the deal's off…'). It's legitimate for a candidate to want to sleep on an offer. They're not always ready to make a snap decision there and then. Although it's true that the longer they take to decide, the less keen they probably are…

Take the time to carefully consider the CVs you receive or look up. A handful of keywords are rarely enough to match a jobseeker to the kind of jobs you have going: check what gets them fired up (cover letter, CV strapline) or guess (the general thrust of their career so far). Only call in targeted candidates for interview.
Starting salaries: Make sure your offers match our budget. Don't use the old 'as-low-as-possible-but-high-enough-that-she'll-say-yes' chestnut.

Only meet with candidates if their experience and motivation are right for the job you have in mind. We don't collect CVs, so don't bother if it's not the right fit.

Wondering if you should hire people for their potential or wait until a client gives the green light? Both! Don't hire someone with huge potential unless you're 99% sure you'll be able to offer them their dream assignment (during or after the recruitment process). Conversely, you absolutely should not hire somebody just because a client said 'Yes'. Everyone has to meet Davidson's standards, no exceptions.

Knowing how
to say thank you

A few months ago I took part in a round-table panel of major companies and SMEs to discuss how to give feedback to employees – letting them know if you're happy or unhappy with their work, and suggesting improvement points. One of the rules I heard repeated again and again (mostly by HR directors of renowned companies classed as leading employers), was:

'Never thank your employees. They'll immediately think you owe them something.' Like what? All kinds of stuff, apparently:
- pay rises;
- promotions;
- your time when they need it (my personal favourite!)

This got me thinking.

Observation No. 1: Don't ever fall into the trap of thinking the HR manager is your friend. Some of them manage to take the 'human' right out of HR…

Observation No. 2: Managers sometimes tend to caricature their staff as whingers who never miss a chance to complain. In response to what they see as such a grasping attitude (which would imperil the company if they gave in to it) managers have no choice but to take an aloof and manipulative

stance, and above all not weaken – 'Never give an inch, or they'll take a mile!'

Two questions came to mind:
Firstly, how do they mark out a great employee from one who does the bare minimum, if both are treated with the same indifference?

Secondly, how are managers supposed to build open, honest relationships with their teams if systematic mistrust prevails, even when everything's going really well?
I don't think spending too much time on these questions will lead anywhere, but it's fair to say this angle is only one of many possible takes on things. Here's another:
- a company's employees aren't necessarily greedy;
- they are motivated by more than just a shiny gold star to stick on their good behaviour chart;
- their relationship with their company is a two-way street. They're not always out to get as much as they can for as little as possible.

They're more than capable of telling the difference between **a company that's doing well and can share its profits with staff in different ways, and a struggling firm where everyone has to pull together** (including any shareholders and fat cat directors who should be setting an

example rather than lining their own pockets). Ironically, it's in the second scenario that saying THANK YOU is more meaningful than ever: when salaries and career development don't progress proportionally to the efforts you put in, a little recognition goes a long way.

Manners never hurt anyone, and saying thank you doesn't mean you have to clam up when something difficult needs saying.

So you can see why not being hypocritical has become a golden rule of interpersonal communications in our company. We pride ourselves as much on our soft skills as our technical expertise.
Bertrand

Feeling inspired?

Consultants
You're allowed to say thank you, too.

Managers
Never be afraid to say thanks! Don't put it off. 'Thank you' is a phrase best served piping hot.

Show you care! Another way of showing you appreciate an employee is to remember the good times (weddings, birthdays, births, etc.) but more importantly the bad times (problems in private lives, workplace fatigue after a hardcore contract or period), too.
You've got an unlimited flower/chocolate/goodies budget – use it!

Out of sight but still close to mind. Don't forget employees who are off sick. Make sure you check in with them, too.

Tonight,
it's an open bar!

Before I joined Davidson, I'd spent over ten years with a telecomms consultancy group. Unlike most of my former colleagues, I had no cause to complain about either my tasks or my pay. But there was one thing that wound me up and left me so frustrated that I felt the need to go and see if the grass was greener elsewhere. That thing was training. Or, more to the point, the lack of it...

Phase 1: in search of the Holy Grail

Quite simply, training is the Holy Grail. We think it exists ('Well you can always put in a request'), apparently some people have even seen it ('There's a schedule going round somewhere'). But no-one has ever actually touched it ('No, I've never had any'), and it's best not to talk about it as it can bring bad luck: your manager will never risk asking you if you need it, in case you say yes. Training is pretty much a dirty word. But I got by without it, because the advantage of being a consultant is working in and learning from a whole range of different environments.

Phase 2: my life was ticking away

But there came a point when I really did need some training, for PMI certification. In my field, project management, you're increasingly expected to have both experience and a qualification in the PMI method. Fool that I was, I assumed getting it would be a formality.

After all, in seven years I'd asked for nothing, no intercontract work, just certification that would make me and my employer stand out in a competitive market. What could be more straightforward?

At least that's what I thought:

1. my manager ignored my phone messages;

2. so I pinned him down at head office:
'Did you get my messages?'
'Erm, yes, but it's hardly urgent is it?'
'Well it's getting that way.'
'Oh, right, well let's pencil it in for next year...';

3. and the next year: sorry, it completely slipped my mind. You should have reminded me. It'll take a while you know: I'll need to get quotes from a few places to get the best one, you know how they pump up their prices... (Actually no, not in the past year - Ed.);

4. right, I've got two options for you. The best one is e-learning: it's cracking, for 50 euros you get unlimited access to multiple-choice questions and online classes, so you can do it at weekends at your own pace. Or there's a course of 15 evening classes from 7 to 9 pm, starting next January - they're booked up till then. The funny thing is that I found loads of daytime ones

on Google, with good availability. Maybe it's a budget issue?

Anyway, step **5** was me applying for new jobs, and I've been with Davidson ever since. Largely because during the recruitment process I got coherent answers when I asked about the training policy. 'It's an open bar here. We say yes to all requests as long as they're not completely potty, and provided we get some sort of return on our investment.' Less than a year after I joined, I asked my manager if I could do this same qualification.

And here's what happened:

1. he thought it was a great idea, and a win-win outcome too as it would help Davidson big me up to their clients;

2. he gave his approval there and then;

3. a few minutes later he emailed me the details of the training manager who was going to send me the schedule of PMI training;

4. as soon the schedule came through I chose my slot, and confirmation of my registration arrived a few days later.

I'll be qualified in two months. This is the Davidson approach to everything. We trust in everyone's sense of responsibility – obviously the company wouldn't cope with a constant flow of nonsensical, poorly judged requests – and Davidson invests in individuals, who know they are valued. In the last few weeks I've been putting together internal training modules, a suggestion I came up

with as part of the Davidson Management School project.

For me, this is what true return on investment looks like.

Véronique

Feeling inspired?

Managers
Say yes to all training requests (unless they're completely nuts)!

Everyone
Don't try to bankrupt us. Pick training that's useful to you but has some benefit for Davidson too.

Share your knowledge: any Davidsonian can put articles, training and reports on the extranet for all to see. Get used to hitting 'upload' in the document database, or in forums you feel you can contribute to. When you get a spare minute, why not take the time to add or improve training or information materials.

Keep putting your training requests in the relevant section on the Davidson extranet! This helps us focus our efforts on key topics.

Did you say *added value?*

During my first interview with Davidson, one of the questions took me aback:

'Do you know the difference between a service provider and a consultant?'

This is what I was thought: 'One is an overpaid temp working for a big or small software company, the other for Bain or McKinsey...'

This is what I said:
'No'
'But there is one: added value.'

I somehow managed not to laugh at this puffed-up phrase that recruiters always trot out to promote their fine establishments... He didn't let my smirk put him off:

'Despite what people think, it's not the type of assignment that defines the consultant (even though some assignments have a tendency to do this): it's the attitude. When you're given an assignment, will you simply carry out the usual tasks or will you do your utmost to go beyond your client's expectations? In other words: will you be creative and take the initiative? Will you have a natural desire to boost productivity in the team you're supporting? Will you automatically draw on all the good practices from your previous experiences, however short? Will you speak out when something surprises you?

In other words, will you go the extra mile? If so, you may not have 20 years' experience but you have the makings of a great consultant.'

To be honest, what he said had me hooked.

Especially as these few ideas echoed some of the professional qualities I'd tried to cultivate in my first job, in a start-up.

Two years later this recruiter was my manager. A manager determined to help me develop all the core attributes of a great consultant. I see him once a month for a progress update with our client. My presentations always include a slide entitled 'further suggestions', and in the past 12 months we've deployed more than 10 of these suggestions, with the client's approval. They've all opened up the scope of the original project in a good way, and broadened my own horizons.

Every month, the client breaks into a smile when this slide appears, to see how we've gone above and beyond. He calls me 'Mr More' now.

Anisse

Feeling inspired?

Admin
If you have a bit of spare 'band-width' in your day, use it to think about ways of optimising or broadening your project.

You could start by taking a really close look at the factors and motives involved in 'time wasting'. Try describing them, together with ideas for corrective actions.

Then think about whether you operate proactively or reactively, i.e., do you anticipate. If you don't, have a good look at your time management, priorities, tasks, etc. You probably need to rethink how you operate.

Managers
Make sure your teams have all the tools to make their projects run smoothly (first impressions report, progress documents, steering committee presentation template, etc.) and make certain that the client at least gives consideration to any comments passed on from staff.

Work hard, but don't take *yourself too seriously*

Maybe you're thinking, 'I've heard it all before'? It's true that lots of companies use that tired old phrase 'we work hard, but we play hard too' – 'Our workplace is really fun, we even have table football!' (Note from Adrien: not that I have anything against table football, I want us to get a table here!) It's a shame, because beyond the cool-fascism, there's a lot to say on the subject.

First off, let's be clear:
- not taking yourself too seriously doesn't mean you have to turn into Ronald McDonald! Being relaxed at work doesn't mean clowning around.

Having said that,
- it's our philosophy that NOTHING we do in our work – which isn't fundamentally dangerous and where colleagues are sufficiently educated to manage polite communication – justifies people getting wound up, sulking, being cynical or pitting themselves against their colleagues. Unhealthy rivalry between colleagues does nothing to help the next meeting run smoothly.
Here, our mantra is 'take is easy'. Don't give in to panic, stress or frustration.

Because everything we do here is ONLY work.

Let's not confuse (and let's remind our colleagues that they mustn't, either).
1. 'Real' life with its genuine perils (like serious illness, for instance)
2. The world of work, with its magnifying effect that often make problems appear bigger than they are. Let's face it, who hasn't ever overreacted to a poorly worded email? Who's never felt overwhelmed by their workload sometimes, when they haven't had enough sleep?

Looking at it from a work/life balance point of view, **when a personal issue interferes with your work, a 'hard' problem meets a 'soft' problem.** So the company has to adapt and factor in your difficult individual circumstances, for as long as it takes. To give an example, we decided to establish the Dav Campus, whereby Davidson rents furnished flats and makes them available to its young employees. This saves them all the grief of having to flat-hunt around Paris, at a point in their lives where they're unlikely to have a guarantor and they're still in their trial period. (see the Dav Campus chapter).

Of course, we do all know we're not living in the castle of a Walt Disney princess. Without over-dramatising, it's important to be aware that the business environment our company operates in today is aggressively competitive and we can't take anything for granted. So to survive in this jungle, we need to stay happy, and stay focussed! And that's a lesson that everyone at Davidson has definitely grasped: after four and six years with the company respectively,

we're still as impressed with how people take every chance they get to blow off steam, and yet they're right there, scarily efficient and ass-kicking when it's a question of persuading a client or getting a project completed. Proof that you can do serious 'work without taking yourself too seriously...

Adrien

Feeling inspired?

Managers
Don't turn a simple situation into a drama. Does a member of your staff need to go home to look after their sick child? NO problem. Bank on their professionalism rather than complaining about their absence. If your favourite consultant announces she's about to become a mum, give her flowers so she knows she won't have to worry about you reproaching her for it.
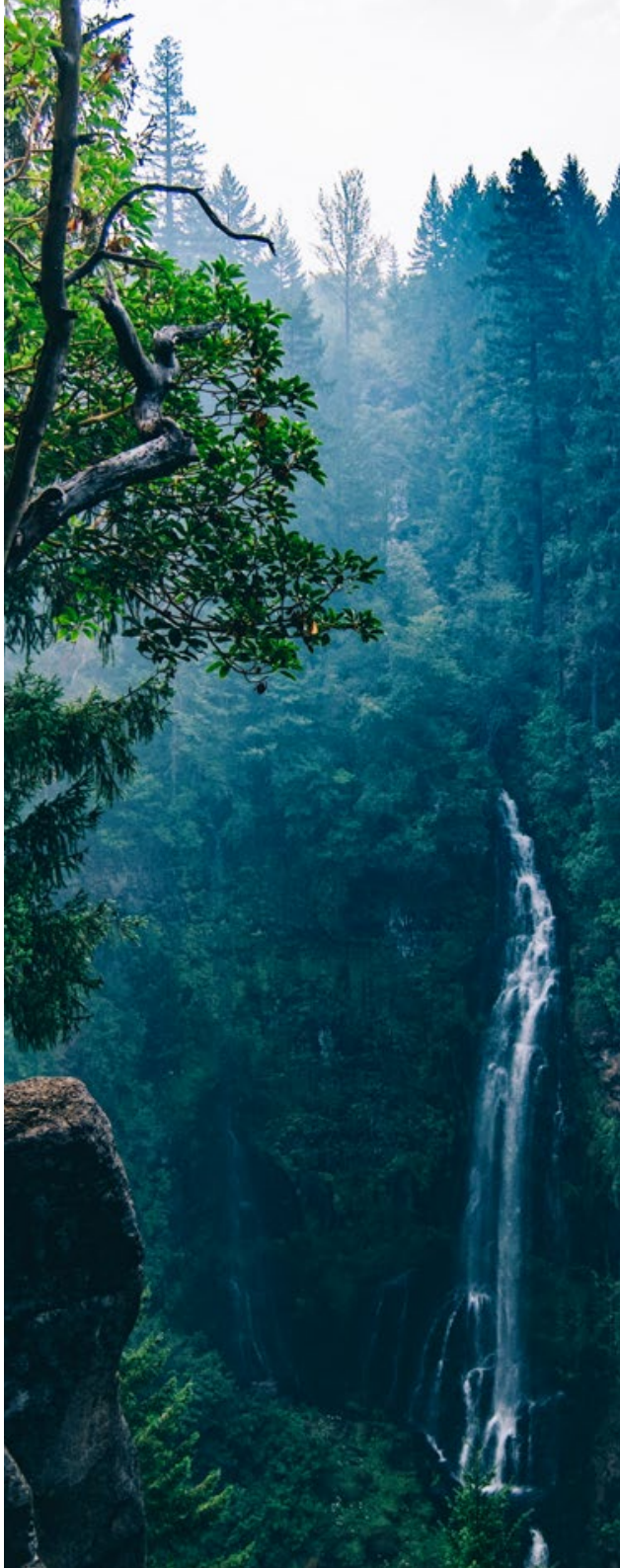
On the importance
of being a techie

you'll love it').

When I started at Davidson, I found the corporate culture quite different – here the managers are mostly ex-engineers and consultants. Or if not, then as good as. To give an example, after I'd been here a week I came across two managers talking about the ins and outs of UMTS and LTE.

'Which engineering schools did you go to?' Cue uproarious laughter: 'We went to business schools!'

At Davidson we're big into tech because we think the stuff we're working on – the cloud, new-generation radio networks, new energies – is changing the world around us...

At Davidson, the managers have to understand the technical and operational issues faced by our clients and consultants (without muscling in, though). Obviously they need an in-depth grasp so they can take a close interest, and fulfil all aspects of their remit:

• vetting new applicants for the right personal qualities and technical skills to make good Davidson consultants. We need them to

When I hear consultants from other companies talking about their line management, they mostly call their bosses 'sales managers'...

which figures, because profit is often the motivating force for those guys. Profit comes first, no matter what. Even if it means staffing projects in a rush (and stringing the client along), dragging them out as long as you can ('Sorry but we don't have anything else for you'), cost-cutting (putting a cap on salary increases and training expenditure, if necessary), or limiting costs of intercontract periods ('Trust me, it's your dream project,

challenge candidates and make sure they have the right expertise. They also have to assess how open-minded applicants are, how adaptable, how proactive... these are just some of the qualities that are essential in a good consultant;

• getting projects up and running that are win-win for the client and for the Davidson teams (client's needs addressed/consultants' motivation taken into account)

• overseeing smooth delivery of projects (a lot of situations can be anticipated or at least understood by someone who's dealt with similar issues before)

• providing relevant input between projects, which is crucial for the consultant because those are key periods when their career development can come to the fore.

In a way, your manager is like a high-altitude mountain guide: you still have to walk the path, but they can show you the way – knowing the route and its dangers, they can lead you by the most interesting paths to reach the summit.

People do sometimes ask 'Doesn't all this touchy-feely stuff harm your profits?' It's true that our managers aren't trained to be pushy salespeople, but in our eyes that's a blessing. Our marketplace has been teeming with that kind of behaviour for years. And now most consultants, and clients, say they're heartily sick of it. They're fed up of salespeople who'll do anything to get a signature on a contract. We really think that nowadays, people value the quality of our responses and technical solutions over a purely sales-oriented approach.

Khaoula

Feeling inspired?

Consultants

Don't hesitate to call on your manager throughout your project.

We put a lot of emphasis internally on helping consultants grow into a manager role, so feel free to ask your manager all about their job – both its upsides and downsides – and what kind of personal qualities it takes.

Managers

Make sure your teams have all the tools to make their projects run smoothly (first impressions report, progress documents, steering committee presentation template, etc.) and check that the client at least gives consideration to any comments passed on from staff.

Know your stuff! Take the time necessary (with the teams, by reading, or with in-house training) to unpick and look in-depth at an area relating to your business prospecting.

Stay on top of all the projects and close to your teams. You should know the skills portfolios and assignment factsheets by heart!

Talent-spot and encourage any potential managers within your teams. Take the time to assess all requests from people who want to move into project management roles, and let them know quickly if you have to refuse – giving good reasons.

Chaos theory

In 1963 Edward Norton Lorenz discovered that you can obtain chaotic behaviour with only three variables, i.e. a non-linear system with three degrees of freedom. By demonstrating that a very complex dynamic can appear in a system that is formally very simple, he turned our understanding of how the simple relates to the complex on its head. People now realise how complexity can be intrinsic to a system, whereas until then it had been considered to have an extrinsic, accidental character linked to a multitude of causes.

In 1972 Lorenz presented the butterfly effect before the American Association for the Advancement of Science with his famous question: 'Does the flap of a butterfly's wings set off a tornado in Texas?'

Edward Norton Lorenz
May 23, 1917 - April 16, 2008 / USA

Singular
by Davidson

If you've gotten to this page: Congrats! It's because you've had the courage to read all of my colleagues' articles related to horizontal companies, tribal management, "satisfaction", etc. First theory, then practice. Personally, I wanted to write a chapter with less text and more images to introduce the Project (with a capital "P") which alone embodies our way of working and our principles: our new "Singular" headquarters.

4

It is the number of floors, but it is above all the number of surveys sent at the project's launch to all the future residents of the headquarters. 4 surveys for 4 decision phases.

Introduction: putting the triad together (if you don't know what I'm talking about, read this book from the beginning)

Phase 1 : request contributions. We interviewed the headquarters' 140 future permanent residents! 137 answered a survey containing dozens of questions that will help us design our new workplace, such as: Private offices or Open Space? Parking space or bicycle space? Catering service or restaurant tickets? As well as many open-ended questions so that the Davs

can express their creativity (a crazy idea? Etc.).

Phase 2 : sending a second questionnaire for a vote that includes the best proposals received during the first phase and identifies the main trends. Objective: to validate the body of ideas that will have to be made concrete during the study and implementation phases. This is not so simple when we know that the answers to the question about the offices were: 50% in favour of private offices, 50% in favour of open space... How did we decide? To find out, you'll have to come have a coffee with us...

Phase 3 : presentation of the summary of the ideas that were chosen (more than 100) and those that weren't (3). The objective was obviously to incorporate as many proposals as possible into the project and to explain why some were left out:

- The sports facility: because it's not our job and well... it doesn't smell good.
- The butterfly greenhouse: poor creatures...
- The vegetable garden: poor vegetables...

Phase 4 : call for contributors to participate in different working groups to complete "the work". The devil is in the details, so we chose to take care

of them. Here are just four examples:

- A triad created the Dav perfume which is diffused at our offices (this is not a joke).
- A second looked at the food service (organisation, type of dishes, etc.).
- Another chose all the furniture and decorative elements. It even went so far as to draw the patterns of the tapestries that decorate our meeting rooms!
- A fourth one thought about naming the building ("Singular", you can guess why...).

The result: after 2 weeks of surveys, 2 months of studies, 1 month of cleaning and 4 months of work: 4,500 m2 of space that reflects our image! Welcome to... our your home!

Yann

What the hell did he decide
to row for their team?

I'm a former banker and I work at Davidson… Having read this book, you might be thinking that the company it describes sounds like a pie-in-the-sky bubble of goodwill disconnected from the reality of this cruel, financially unstable world.

So then one of two things happens:
- either you didn't believe such a place could exist, and now you know there's a banker working here, you feel vindicated; of course it was too good to be true!
- or, as a positive and trusting soul, you believed everything you read and now you're left wondering: 'But then what the hell's HE doing there?'

My ex-boss, a director of a banking group, plumped for the second option. It has to be said that the bank he heads up views Davidson as a bit of a curiosity – a company that delivers solid financial performance and houses some of its staff at preferential rates in specially acquired accommodation is bound to provoke surprise and a certain admiration, sometimes slightly tinged with well-meaning condescension.

That's probably what he meant by the words he uttered when I told him I was leaving his venerable institution. In essence, he said: **'It seems to me they're rather romantic at Davidson.'** The word 'romantic' is very fitting. Then he added: **'As their finance director, it might be hard for you to keep having to rain on their parade…'**

I'll admit that knocked me back a bit at first. I'm no cynic but I know how it works, especially in this industry, so what he said really hit home and my rose-tinted spectacles took a big dent. For one thing, I've never really hoped to be happy in my job (not being too stressed was about as high as I'd aimed). And for another, it didn't seem such a good idea to be the finance guy in a company where no one talks much about money.

So why did I sign up? Because I understood in my discussions with the directors that if I stepped up to take charge of their finances, it wouldn't doom me to be a permanent killjoy.

There's a difference between staying on top of things and keeping too-tight control. Davidson have grasped something that I consider essential: **a company run by bureaucrats who govern it too strictly is unlikely to succeed.**

It will know why it's losing money (since it will have painstakingly evaluated the cost of all those flabby layers of mid-management) – but it won't necessarily be able to figure out the right way to get the profits flowing in. Prove me wrong by showing me a company with 1,400 staff, that hasn't undergone any external growth in ten years of existence, and is run by bureaucrats?

Everyone has their area of expertise. My team (the finance department) knows the price of a ream of paper, and how many we buy each year. We can handle optimising this outlay on our own (or oversee other, more complex processes, given the limited appeal of the 'paper buying' function). Davidson's managers and consultants don't know much about the price of paper. Which is just at it should be. You'll have realised as you read through these pages that they're focussing on 'How?' and 'For whom?'

Because that's their job – to create value(s).

Franck

Feeling inspired?

Everyone

If you have to choose between the long and short term, always go long.

What the hell were they
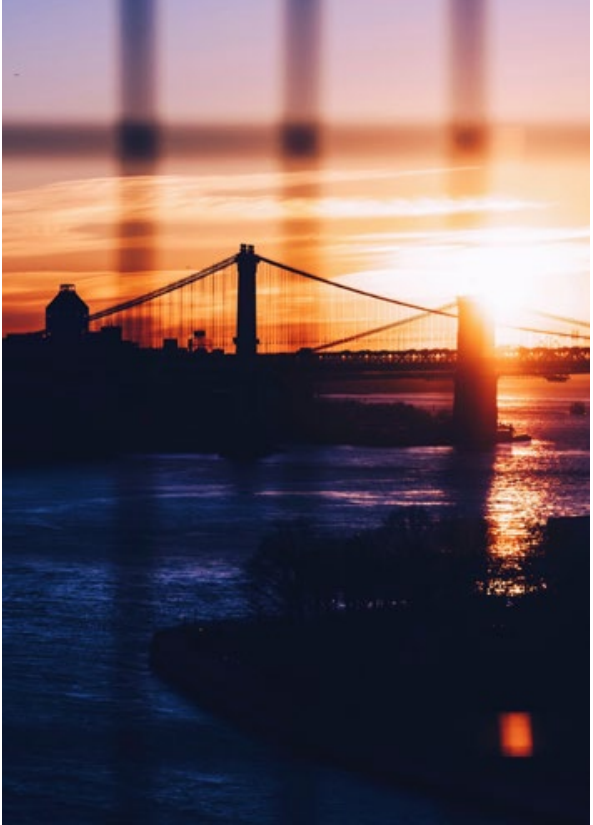## *going to do in this mess?*

At the end of 2019, even though we were in a comfortable situation, we decided to leave our positions as business manager (which we held at the same company) to take part in the Davidson adventure. It may not seem like a rational choice (everything is humming) but it was vital for us, because we felt it was time to join an environment, a brand whose convictions and managerial practices were in line with our own.

On 17 March 17, we had been at Davidson for just a few weeks (for Anne) or just a few days (for François)... That's why, when the general Covid-19 lockdown was announced while we were still in our trial period, we were rather uncertain about

the appropriateness of our move...

The ensuing weeks were crazy. Bad economic and health news came one right after the other all over the world: companies and individuals were most often reduced to navigating blindly. The first surprise: faced with this situation, nobody lied to us. Management was honest enough to recognise that the best thing we could do collectively was deal with things as they happened and not make plans about the future or get lost in speculation, but rather:

- take advantage of this time to rack our brains, which we don't always have time to do when we're in the thick of things!
- launch fifteen triads to explore as many avenues of creativity and change as possible (focusing on topics such as the Da Vidson Code 4 that you are holding in your hands, redesigning our website, our skills repository, building the disaster recovery plan, etc.);
- self-training, get trained, train others (more than two hundred video training sessions were organised in less than fifteen days for staff and consultants);
- communicate, communicate, communicate: emails sent every ten days to all employees,

> **"**
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> **"**

daily information on our messaging groups, creation of exchange groups, information sharing, useful links on the Dav cloud, etc.

In short, create the conditions for the COVID pandemic to turn into an opportunity and for the Davidson brand to emerge stronger than ever!

We came to Davidson because we thought it was an exceptional company in our consulting/ services world. We have become fully integrated because we got to know friendly, approachable co-workers who enabled us, via the triads, to work together on issues that shape the company, regardless of how recently we joined the team. It had been so long since we had been asked for

our opinion... The company we joined understood that it is not enough to "give" to employees to give them a sense of fulfilment in their jobs, but that it must also be able to receive and process all the suggestions which, if they become reality, will become the bricks that the employees will be proud to have contributed to building the Dav wall. A wall that could become a bulwark in times of crisis.

All this seemed natural to the Davidsonians.

For us it was... supernatural.

Anne & François

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But above all:
to all Davidsonians who bring this crazy idea of Davidson to life every day.

Share and send us your opinions at the following address:
davidson@davidson.fr! This work will only be more collective ...

It's still the beginning
This book was printed on PEFC certified paper.

THE DA VIDSON CODE 4

A COLLABORATIVE WORK