



VAN EDE AND PARTNERS

**APPLICATION FOR
2005 INTERNATIONAL SPIRIT AT WORK AWARD**

Basic Data

Van Ede and Partners was founded unofficially in 1979; officially in 1981. We have one hundred and thirty employees: eighty consultants, twenty psychologists supported by thirty secretaries and administrative staff. Most of the staff work on a part time basis for Van Ede.

Nature and scope of business:

Our core business is outplacement. Other activities such as career coaching for individuals, teams and organizations have evolved over the years as a spin off from our core business.

We are experts at managing the complicated and painful process of coaching an employee made redundant in one company into finding a new and suitable position in a different environment. This is often a process of personal transformation made possible by reflection on past life experiences, of making sense and meaning of important personal experiences in order to develop new scenarios for the future and then to act on realizing them through active networking in relevant environments. Our slogan is "In business with talent".

Total revenues in 2003 were Euro 9.000.000

In that year 946 clients made use of our services.

1235 clients made use of our services in 2004.

The final balance of 2004 will be made available in April 2005 by our accountants.

Locations:

Our offices are strategically located in the major cities and provinces in the Netherlands: Amsterdam, Arnhem, Beetsterzwaag, Breda, Eindhoven, Enschede, Groningen, Maastricht, Rotterdam, The Hague, Zeist, Zwolle.

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A Brief Description of our Organization: Vision, Mission and Core Values.

Our vision is that every person has been given a specific set of talents which he should put to use for the improvement of society. We are convinced that there is always a specific fit between a person's dreams and desires, his talents and a problem or need in society. If one individual fails to put his talents to use, somewhere in society a need is not being fulfilled.

The development of an individual -both his personal and social growth- is strongly influenced by his natural disposition at birth, by the opportunities for development in his youth and by the environment in which growth took and takes place. We believe that man is master of his own destiny.

Van Ede and Partners stimulate people, wherever possible, to take charge of their life and future. Our coaching and counseling is aimed at bringing clients to a better understanding of their "Self". We focus on their aims in life and help to identify and make use of innate talents, in other words, to do what comes naturally. We engage the whole personality in relation to the surrounding world. In the past our working slogans have been:

"Our task must be to free ourselves of this prison by widening our circle of compassion" and "yielding to the design of the universe".

It is our mission to achieve the fit between a persons "God given" talents and the place in society where these talents are put to their best possible use.

The ultimate purpose of all our work is furthering justice in society by the development of the talents of leaders and citizens and their application in the right place. We regard our task as finished only when the client feels he or she is on the way to fulfilling his/her destiny.

This process is neatly symbolized by our logo depicting "Niels Holgerson on the back of the goose" (front page). Niels is the protagonist in a Swedish geography book written by Nobel Prize laureate Selma Lagerlöf. The book relates in a fairy tale fashion the amazing journey of Niels on the back of the gander Martin. The word gander comes from the Sanskrit word "hamsa" symbol of the "Self". Niels' journey is a metaphor for the human being striving to free himself from ingrained habits and thoughts by which he makes himself small and trivial. In rising up above the world he is able to see things from a different perspective and in choosing different places to land he discovers his true strength in contact with the world. Our core values are service and unselfishness.

Our definition of "Spirit" or "Spirituality".

The spiritual view of van Ede is based on a fundamental belief in human dignity and in the potential of each human being to grow in consciousness and to progress towards liberty and responsibility. The notion of outplacement was introduced to the Dutch business environment some 25 years ago by Paul van Ede and our recently retired, but still very involved chairman of the Foundation, Hans Leewens. All employees at Van Ede are aware of the beauty and duty implied in the mission and vision of our work. We frequently speak of the holy awe and amazement as we ourselves and our clients become aware of inherent and taken for granted talents, a personal calling (vertical dimension) and strive to be of service to the community (horizontal dimension). We are often witnesses to immense personal transformations,

which many a time bring tears to our eyes, give us goose bumps and make our hair stand on end.

A much quoted saying is: "Welcome every client as if he were God himself." Our offices are situated in lovely, clearly sattvic villas, some with well kept gardens. They are strategically located around Holland providing easy access for our clients and consultants. Fresh flowers and a quiet but alert atmosphere, and friendly, welcoming secretaries make our clients and consultants generally comment: "I felt at home immediately".

Human development requires a "sattvic" environment where the mind is clear and decisions are made easily and correctly, where the body functions without stress and head, heart and senses are alert and aligned. In a world where generally money and power are sought after in a rat race this environment feels like a balm for the soul.

Diversity

This question puzzled us for a while. Ultimately we don't handle concerns about diversity of religions and we do not set boundaries around employees trying to convert each other. I think this is due to the fact that we see each individual as unique and that we welcome diversity and respect, even cherish and seek out unusual individuals. Besides Dutch employees we have within our workforce individuals with Czech, German, Chinese and Jewish backgrounds. We actively strive to make our workforce a mirror of the diversity in our society.

Given the increased difficulties migrants are having in finding jobs and integrating into Dutch society we chose the theme "the stranger" to reflect on during our Christmas celebration two years ago. A video tape was made where a number of consultants shared their own sense of being a stranger. This impressive video was shown at the Christmas celebration. This reflection led us to offer a number of free trajectories to academics from different cultural and religious backgrounds.

On the one hand we hope to facilitate their integration into the working environment and on the other hand it gives us the opportunity to gain insight into the mechanisms at play in this complicated social phenomenon.

Core Application

Shared Values

The binding essence of our organization which explicitly facilitates and encourages spirituality at work are our Shared Values. These Shared Values are drawn from ancient and universal sources of spiritual wisdom among others from the Veda's, Plato's Politeia, Shri Shankaracarya's books on Good Company and The man who wished to meet God, and Marsilio Ficino's Friend to Mankind, the teachings of Gurdjieff, Oespensky and many others who have over centuries provided mankind with glimpses of true wisdom and divinity.

Policies, programs, practices, the structure of the organization and the strategies within van Ede are always designed and actively related to these Shared Values. They are implemented and watched over by the Foundation and a group of mentors. Besides these there are no written rules and we consciously stand in an oral tradition. We act according to the need of the situation and with common sense.

The Shared Values are so important in our organization that every new employee is explicitly asked if he is willing to abide by these values.

Let me elaborate on them here.

1. In Business with Talent or enterprising with talents. (Neither of these translations cover the Dutch meaning exactly but together they are a nice approximation).

An important human asset is personal talent. By being in business with these talents and aligned to a personal calling a person comes into his own and finds a (social) destination. "In business with talent" thus means linking personal talents and calling to the needs of society. According to Bernard Shaw:..."the true joy in life, is being used for a purpose, recognized by yourself as a mighty one; being a force of nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy" (from Man and Superman).

We see man as a force of nature called by his birth to fulfill a destiny.

2. Man, Master of his own destiny

One reaches destiny out of a desire of becoming one's true self and becoming master of oneself. The "master" accepts life as a gift and given; he knows his strength and destination. He has freed himself from the slavery of judgments, fear and premonitions of disaster, he is independent. True freedom requires yukto (coming into contact with the deepest layers of the self) and yukti (playing the game of the world well). To become a master is to obey talent. According to Ralph Waldo Emerson: "each man has his own vocation. The talent is the call. There is one direction in which all space is open to him". (From Essay IV Spiritual Laws).

3. Tradition of Unity: the other is yourself

Conscious man knows that life is one and indivisible; the Self, of which every person partakes. Personal development is the de-envelopment of the Self, leading to a natural being and doing in the world.

Our world is divided; people are divided and can make life miserable for each other. The Vedic Tradition teaches that before the caste system came into existence there was just one caste called Hamsa. Niels Holgersons goose is a symbol for this Self: white, flying high, landing untouched on water, a symbol of integrity. A person who comes unto himself knows of this Unity. With a

mild eye he can observe the division of self and world. The image we frequently use is that of the two birds in the Mundaka Upanishad:

"Two birds linked in friendship are sitting in the same tree. One of them eats of the ripe fruit, while the other is quietly looking on" We call them the Self and the System (or ego). When the eating bird gets frustrated in the picking, he finds support from the bird that is quietly looking on. In truth it is the One Consciousness. Only our systems (the eating bird) get frustrated.

4. Perform in Measure Time and Place

Life is equal to the playing of roles. Shakespeare says "All the world's a stage and men are only players". "Perform in Measure Time and Place" are the words he puts into the mouth of Malcolm, the noble heir to the powerless Macbeth. These are the words of true authority the sound of the Self. He who speaks from his Self has an authoritative voice and no need for status or power. Huizinga, a famous Dutch writer explains in his Homo Ludens (Playing Man) how the only way to be in harmony with creation is by as the Shankaracharya of the North once expressed it "playing ones role nicely" A person invested with spirituality knows the truth to be consciousness itself; all the rest is just a play. The road back to the full authority of the Self is by obeying the fine laws of creation, in measure time and place. This is what makes one useful to society.

5. Code of Conduct

Human action serves the community if it is built on truthfulness, attention for the whole being, justice and unselfishness. This means: walk your talk; respect the other, act no matter who is in front of you and in an unselfish way. In Van Ede we have chosen unselfishness as a code of conduct. That does not mean giving up one's self interest. It means as Espinoza has said – that you seek your self interest where it coincides with the general interest. That is "Yielding to the design of the universe" as Joseph Campbell expressed so beautifully.

We respect the state of development of each individual client, also religious and philosophic convictions. The unity that lies behind all spiritual effort is recognized.

6. The Third Point

Connection is the prerequisite of Communication. Asking questions is considered to be an essential skill. In some cultures, as for example the American, asking questions is seen as a sign of weakness. For Socrates and contemporary coaches as Byron Katie it was and is an ideal way of focusing on a common point in shared attention. The wonder of true dialogue is that we suddenly become aware of truth or the only possible solution to a dilemma. The recipient is the source of the information flow. Connection is established when we direct our attention to one point at a time and focus our shared attention on it: the third point. Hence our emphasis on forms of communication such as reflection, dialogue and advise and consent.

Habitual thinking divides the world in two: father/son, me/the other, spiritual/materialistic etc. The dualistic view on the world is the source of much tension fear and grief. And it is not correct. There is always a third point: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; me, the other and common humanity; spiritual, materialistic and the design of the Universe.

In Van Ede we are constantly looking for the third point, the vertical dimension that unites what appears separate.

7. Client and Profession

The client is our focal point. The allocation of consultants and psychologist is done in the client's best interest. We strive to be helpful to the client's personal process and to be good company: independent and self sufficient, capable of generating power and development in our client and in ourselves. We participate in intervension sessions with our colleagues to develop our professional skills and to promote and safeguard the quality of our work.

At Van Ede we realize that all our work depends on the state we are in, as well as the state we encourage in our clients.

8. Mentorship

We know and acknowledge the concept of mentorship. Each novice to the organization is assigned a mentor within his office and a mentor at a different location. These mentors guide and introduce new colleagues into the intricacies of the working procedures, the organization and the Shared Values through regular meetings for dialogue. Mentors are also responsible for the transmission and watching over the implementation of the Shared Values, they provide help for colleagues and last but not least they are a "chapter" for the overruling of all managerial decisions, should they not be in line with the Shared Values.

We all accept that, although independent and only submitted to scrutiny by colleagues we may in the heat of events digress from principle. The mentors' task then is to rectify the situation. In an organization guided by spiritual principles and wanting to play a successful role in a society that frequently is less principled, mentorship is a most helpful tool.

Mentors come together every six weeks for a session of reflection and dialogue and openly discuss the goings on in all offices. The concept of mentorship evolved out of the desire to create a pool of spiritual authority watching over worldly power. In our thinking on Good Governance we see supervisory boards (as in our case the Van Ede Foundation implemented by the mentors) concentrating most of their attention on testing all happenings against the Shared Values and Principles instead of as is now very often the case on financial and competence issues. It is here that Van Ede could coach organizations in developing mentoring as an organizational discipline to implement and sustain spirituality in business.

9. Organization

Van Ede describes itself as an unusual or unorthodox "tegendraads" (in Dutch) organization. We strive to be of the world not in the world.

Our organization has the form of an inverted pyramid where the client and consultant come first, supported by the secretaries. The partnerships of the local offices support the whole. A few years ago the form of independent subsidiaries was chosen as the best fit to the needs and interests of independent entrepreneurs. This made many employees shareholders in the company. This decision was made in order to prevent the company from being sold to big globalising outplacement companies which would have demanded conformity to a very different set of rules. It also furthers independent, entrepreneurial, context related functioning of the subsidiaries.

Unity within the whole is insured by:

1. Each subsidiary is bound by a strict license contract spelling out the consequences of the allegiance to the Shared Values offered by the Foundation to the local offices.
2. A Council of Unity representing the partnerships, strives for unified procedures within the subsidiaries and represents the organization, in public relations and marketing, stimulates professional development and manages large country wide accounts.
3. An Operational Committee of all local managers meets on a regular base to discuss common issues.
4. A chapter of mentors is responsible for adherence to the shared values in all aspects of business.
5. The Foundation. Important tasks lie with the Foundation: Administration, Sponsoring, and the Van Ede Academy on which I shall elaborate below.
6. The board of the Foundation is the final spiritual authority, which registers and watches over the subtle spiritual greater plan of the Shared Values. The Board of the Foundation prefers to work in silence and out of sight.

Administration

The most important organs for administration are:

The Van Ede Group, a financial holding for all Van Ede Companies, including 70% of a subsidiary for Top Executive Coaching.

Van Ede Services who are responsible for company wide marketing, finances, personnel, information technology and the organization of large meetings. All annual budgets and reports are ultimately validated by the Foundation, owner of the organization.

Sponsoring

Sponsoring has a long tradition in Van Ede. Roughly one percent of our annual revenues are made available for sponsoring and the Van Ede Academy.

Our first sponsoring activity was the Jan Hoebe Fund to finance education for the children of clients, which had died.

Then came concerts for the Holland Music sessions and nowadays we regularly sponsor young musical talent nationally and locally as in the Peter de Grote Festival in Groningen and Schiermonnikoog where young talented musicians from all over the world meet on an annual basis for Master classes given by seasoned professionals.

In 1999 we sponsored the Ficino conference in London; the Sheila Rosenberg Foundation for prizes and scholarships in the St. James Independent School for Girls, and the Van Ede prize for young writers, an initiative in Zwolle. Our largest sponsoring activity was and still is the funding of YMWS schools in Calcutta. Under the dedicated guidance of Peter Aalders thousands of children there have had schooling enabling them to discover and develop their talents. In other countries such as Indonesia (Gerard Mann's Batu project) and Africa van Ede has subsidized projects designed to create environments to encourage individuals to be in business with their talent.

The Van Ede Academy

We anticipate a Renaissance period in the 21st century visible in a Zeitgeist longing for cosmic consciousness, as traditional culturally based codes of conduct erode in our globalising society. We frequently ask the question "Does the individual know that he is the makeweight that tips the scales?" The development of cosmic consciousness and destiny, the role to play and the Natural Laws that guide the cosmos and our lives are learned by practicing the Liberal Arts.

Van Ede has taken on Liberal Arts, (following the teachings of Dr. James Armstrong) as the basis for ethics and inspiration and is actively developing a coaching and learning programme in the Van Ede Academy.

Currently four streams towards a new dimension in coaching are being developed: The coaching of leaders, young professionals, teachers and immigrants. Presumably a fifth stream, coaching for age related development for individuals above the age of fifty will be developed in the future.

The setting used by the Academy are "Convivia", feasts celebrating life, a ritual sharing of good food in good company, a meal enhanced by reflection and dialogue.

Besides our Shared Values the other practices that systematically enhance spirituality and connection in the vertical and horizontal dimension in our company are inspiration, reflection and rituals. We have a long tradition with these.

Inspiration

Inspiration related to breath and breathing is of fundamental importance in singing which is why we always sing at the beginning of conferences with all colleagues. In the span of half an hour it is possible under the spirited guidance of our colleague Victor Mueller to achieve near perfection at three to five voiced pieces of music. It helps us to literally tune into the situation and each other and sets the right tone for the conference.

Inspiration is the waking of spirit, the breath of life that connects each individual with the whole, which frees the psyche of preconceived ideas, and formulas and opens it to universal concepts. Inspiration leads the mind from knowledge about something to knowledge as a form of being, from feelings to deep emotion. It opens and cleanses the heart so that everything may be reflected without judgment and readies it for a loving and dedicated relationship with the world. Augustine says "Ama et fac cum vis" (Love and do as you wish).

Our most important source of inspiration is our daily work with clients, who so generously share with us their experiences in organizations and their most heart felt concerns. These dialogues provide us with rich information on the state of affairs in the world and provide a constant impulse for creativity, reflection, connection and networking.

Other sources of inspiration have been mentioned in previous passages. We consciously draw from eclectic universal sources the Upanishads, Bhagavad-Gita, the Bible, Koran and other Holy Scriptures as well as more current sources like Wilbur, Chopra, Senge, and many more. Ancient myths and stories from different cultures about gods, heroes and astrology, when shared with clients in Inspirational Meetings in Zeist recreate the childlike or

archaic pleasure of bedtime stories and star lit evenings by a campfire and help us to realize that some issues with which we grapple are universal.

Reflection

A practice at the beginning of every meeting in all our offices is that we start them with reflective behavior. In these meditations we take time to land in the present moment, feel our feet on the floor, pay attention to our breathing and reflect in a shared tranquil moment on our current personal state of affairs. After the reflection we share thoughts and feelings that occurred to us with our colleagues. Alternatively a colleague may read aloud a poem or a story based on our Shared Values and we share thoughts coming out of the reflection on these words. It is a way of aligning ourselves to the higher order of things and brings concentration, efficiency and true dialogue to our meetings.

Another reflective practice is the fact that each consultant who aspires to join our company is invited to write a personal autobiography as an exercise in reflection on past life and career experiences in order to make sense and meaning of the personal path. This is the exact procedure our clients follow in their outplacement trajectories. This self analysis is discussed with a psychologist in a personal dialogue where relevant themes and recurring patterns, explicit talents and personal pitfalls are identified. Spirituality, as an ongoing journey is assumed to inform the way in which an individual perceives and interprets his or her life, and enacts it in various life roles including that of work.

Rituals

Our annually shared rituals are the following:

- (1)A one day spring conference carefully designed around personal development and current issues.
- (2)A three day summer conference for all consultants and psychologists is an opportunity to promote personal growth. We practice with and on each other the guiding principles we use with our clients. We reflect on our personal ambitions and plans and are engaged in reflective dialogue with colleagues on our stagnation, desires, and dreams.
- (3)A secretaries meeting is organized annually by a different local office.
- (4)Our Christmas celebration for all employees with their partners is a festive and joyful annual ritual.

Great importance is placed on the principle of good food shared in good company (in following of Ficino of Florence) and these annual affairs are special occasions where we reconnect with colleagues who we do not see on a daily basis.

The effect of our policies

The effect of these policies and practices has been a thoroughly motivated workforce, an efficient network organization of dedicated professionals working creatively within a sense of "flow" with a high degree of independence and responsibility.

Our business success is due to a large extent to the practices described above which clearly distinguish us from other companies in the business and provides us with a cutting edge. For years now we have achieved annual growth. Many of our employees work on far beyond the age of retirement because they find the work satisfying and fulfilling with high flexibility and freedom. For twenty five years now the company has provided redundant individuals with support and coaching leading to a new working environment. Over the years we have achieved a country wide network of ex clients who are always happy to provide current clients with advice and guidance. This network of old clients is our main marketing tool, many of our current clients come to us through word of mouth from old clients. We also make use of an "outer circle" consisting of leaders in key positions in industrial companies and governmental and non profit agencies. These programs have already withstood the test of time and most probably will continue to do so well into the future. The main reason for this confidence is that our philosophy is based on ancient wisdom coming from the Vedas and other schools of philosophy which have taken and passed the test of time.

Where traditionally clients came from the ages of mid life and upwards we have found during recent years that clients become younger as they start the search for spiritual meaning at a lower age, and as a result, our employees have become younger too. We find that our clients choose our company above others when they actively seek to engage in soul searching activities in a quiet holding environment.

Van Ede a model for inspiration

Members of the board of the Foundation like Hans Leewens are inspired speakers and regularly accept invitations to speak publicly at conferences and meetings of governmental agencies, companies and multinationals. Peter Tielenius Kruythoff has for years now been the chairman of the association of Career Firms International and involved with the International Institute of Career Certification and the development of an internet based coaching program for career consultants. Peter Aalders has for many years held key positions in national and international career consultancy boards. Our company is renowned in Holland and is regarded as an authoritative voice in the field. Regularly articles are published in newspapers, and magazines and radio interviews are held with our employees. For recent publications and broadcasts please feel free to visit our website.

Our organisation is constantly evolving and changing, even while writing this application I realized that new impulses are constantly given by talking, reflecting, and sharing ideas and views with colleagues. Always the challenge for the organisation is to maintain old values and evolve with the times.

This challenge is felt strongly at the present time as the founding members yield their influence to younger colleagues in the process of retiring. Issues at stake are organizational culture, how to honor our heroes, maintain continuity, and how to come to a sense of closure after investing a life time of

energy. We often compare the company to a bag of fleas. As the subsidiaries gain independence and energy is channeled into diversification, the quest is to remain whole.

Only time will provide the answers.

Below I have included a number of stakeholder references, testimonials by a secretary, a number of consultants, a subsidiary manager, a client and two customers whom we have served.

To conclude you will find a humorous case study illustrating our work.

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Stakeholder References

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Secretary in Amsterdam (the oldest subsidiary) for sixteen years

Van Ede then –Van Ede now – but still van Ede.

I discovered that life was not always a piece of cake at a very young age. After a sickbed of three years, my husband died at the age of thirty one. I realized that he had only studied and worked and not spent nearly enough time enjoying life. I decided to do things differently, I swore to enjoy life. I had worked for nine years with a bank and decided to quit my job. This was of course rather impulsive and naïve as I was far from fun and laughter because my sadness and anguish over losing my husband had to settle. So I painted and redecorated my house, walked and cycled with my dog and visited my mother. I kept this up for ten years and finally realized, I wanted to work. My problem was that I could not work with a computer and friends had told me that if you press a wrong button you lose everything. In 1989 I paid a visit to a job search agency who assured me that they could teach me computer skills and that very afternoon called me and offered me an interview with van Ede and Partners, an ouplacement agency. I was interviewed by Gerard Asperslag and Leo Jansen and spent some time alone with the other secretaries with whom I had a lot of fun. After a few days I was accepted on condition that I wear a skirt. I was thrilled and entered a whole new world. The atmosphere in the office was special, somewhat pompous and stylish. Especially the first time Hans Leewens introduced himself to me by shaking my hand and immediately getting down to business. That was “common sense” I was to learn later, because van Ede was one long learning experience for me. Norms and values were used in day to day practices. I had learned about order and discipline at school but in the special company of these colleagues I could put things into

practice. The office became my second home. Every week fresh flowers were personally arranged by Els Leewens, later it became one of my tasks. On arriving early in the morning the house smelled of fresh coffee, prepared by Hans, who started work at seven thirty to avoid traffic jams.

Early mornings were ideal for spiritual conversations, and the more I thought about things, the more questions I had. Poor Hans, as my personal “guru”, had to answer all those questions. With every answer I thought...”yes that is it”, and felt it to be true.

By believing in reincarnation I had found a place for my dead, and overcome my own fear of death. All the pieces of the puzzle were mixed up and Hans helped me to solve the puzzle. It cannot be chance that we met in this life, let it be clear that spirituality had an enormous effect on me. I thoroughly enjoyed it and told my friends all about my new experiences. They sometimes wondered if I was “losing it”. To them it seemed as if I had become a member of a sect. Van Ede was way ahead of it’s time. The clients were highly educated as were the consultants, all “gentlemen of leisure”, with impressive careers and networks. Imagine... there were thirty two consultants, mostly men. In those days there were very few female clients, there were no computers for clients and the secretaries typed out cv’s and letters. There were two secretaries and two accountants sharing a small room, clients wandered in and out, and we were all very involved and had tremendous respect for Hans Leewens. After a while colleagues became family...we laughed a lot together, and cried too. A sense of humor was always important. Telephone calls could always be put through to Mr. Leewens, who felt that they were often relevant to his client. His handwriting was terrible, and two of us would spend hours trying to decipher it. He always said: “you can read it, but you don’t want to”, and ultimately we learned..

I was always impressed that we sometimes helped clients for free the so called “sherry clients”. We only asked them to bring a bottle of Sherry. Where would you find that in the business world?

Omnis (our current computer registration system) did not exist. Contracts and bills had to be added up before they were sent out. In Amsterdam we registered all the clients for all offices; they called us for a new client number. In that way we had contact with colleagues in other offices. We had introduction groups, eight day groups, (three day groups did not yet exist then), and the workshop “In Business with Talent.”

New consultants, accepted by a selection committee, were allocated a mentor, and later Maquette was started, an introductory workshop for new colleagues. For a few years we sang in the mornings from 8.30-9.30 with Victor Mueller, which was very special. After that we had breakfast together, a wonderful start to each day.

Our Christmas celebrations were always special affairs. Hans would always set the Christmas mood with his Christmas speech. A highlight was in “Huis ter Duin”, which started at ten in the morning and went on until eleven at night. Every office had to prepare and produce a play, we had workshops and singing and danced Menuett’s. Everyone dressed for dinner, and the preparations were great fun; as was the problem solving when Piet Colijn discovered that he had

forgotten his cuff links. I had met the sommelier, when we had tested the dinner a few nights earlier, and of course he was prepared to lend me his cufflinks for the evening.

Special attention was paid to the table seating. No one was to sit at a table with the same people as the year before, and husbands and wives were also separated. After the main course tables were reshuffled, it was quite a puzzle!! It was our job too to prepare bags with presents for everyone. Another highlight was when Hans celebrated his 65th birthday and when he received a medal from the queen. We organized a brunch with a Dixieland band in the Vondelpark, with Tielenius Kruythoff.

I always enjoyed our secretary's day when the partners treated us as queens. There were five partners in those days. Meetings were held at Leewens home and Els, his wife prepared lunch. My favorite partner was Mr. Van Weelden, he could tell lovely stories about how he met his wife, who wanted to have nothing to do with him, but eventually succumbed. After a long and happy marriage they died within forty eight hours of each other, and we buried them the same day.

The company grew and grew, more consultants arrived, and new offices were opened. We used to sing "Long live Chaos", but more structure was needed. Leo retired and Leewens spent his summers in the Morvan, but worked during the winter months. The concept of subsidiaries was introduced. I was used to having a leader in the office someone in charge of management and finances, with a plan for the future which was quickly implemented.

With the subsidiaries we suddenly had a management team and a board. At the beginning there were lots of meetings, where people had to find a common denominator. Things became better as time progressed. Carina our new manager is lively, full of ideas, some of which are implemented which are great. Last year we renovated the furniture and carpets, this year new curtains. We now have four hundred clients in the house, have bought a coffee machine, with real cups and saucers and a dishwasher. Clients have their own computers, and bills are made up in Omnis, and are printed out at the press of a button.

The atmosphere in the house is different which is logical as times change. Our clients and consultants are different (younger and more women). But still we share something special which our clients notice too.

I have often heard that they appreciate the way we are together, and wish they had a similar working environment. Last year we spent two days on Texel (an island in the North of Holland), which was good for the family feeling, as was our 25th anniversary celebration at WP Krusemans' home last summer, where we sang and painted, did Chi Gong, and made art out of junk.

We organize breakfast sessions for our clients' companies and for our neighbors. We have new workshops like "Top Women" and "Man and Power".

We should make more use of Hans Leewens, who I know is always available. His heart lies with van Ede.

Much has changed through the years, but I still enjoy working for my Van Ede!

Martha Kaesehagen
2 March 2005

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It can be different!

I was forty eight years old. In 1992 after having worked in the business world for more than twenty five years I had arrived at a point where if I were to say that I was happy, I would have to conclude that it was more out of habit than personal experience.

Of course I had had an interesting career with plenty of opportunities for development, an excellent salary. A lovely family, hobbies and yet, something was bothering me. More and more my environment was the compass that directed my footsteps, what had happened to me?

A meeting by coincidence (??) with van Ede and Partners was an immediate eye opener. The personal attention for my self as a human being and my intrinsic motives, the quiet and serene atmosphere in the conversation, the time that was made for me, even the stately old building felt wonderful. I, who was accustomed to action, speed, results, fast decisions in buildings made of cement and glass.

I started working there and much can be said about spirituality in van Ede. I shall name just a few ordinary things in our work, that inspire me tremendously and give me a lot of positive energy.

Singing

We start many occasions like intervision sessions, workshops and seminars with singing. The first times were accompanied by a lot of transpiration as I was so unaccustomed to doing this, but now I find it tremendously inspiring. To literally tune in together in this way before starting work provides a sense of connection to my colleagues and connects me to something greater than the sum of the people present. Apart from that singing is a lot of fun.

Reflection

Before every office and work meetings we reflect on a relevant theme. This short meditation at the beginning of a meeting and the subsequent sharing of each others thoughts, visions and feelings provides us with an atmosphere of openness, a sense of safety where I may and can say anything. Even difficult and personal things.

Thoughts and feelings

What I noticed, when I first started working with van Ede, because I was so totally unaccustomed to it, was that my colleagues not only asked me what I thought about certain issues, but also what I felt about them.

This extra dimension, beside all professional argumentation, makes our communication clearer and more effective.

The questions about my feelings I experience as highly personal attention which helps me to develop my own thinking because I am invited to go more deeply. Very inspiring!

The Shared Values

In van Ede we live by the Shared Values. It is the guideline we use when questions arise and problems need to be solved. Because these shared values are based on the wisdom of world traditions they regularly prove themselves to be an excellent guideline. They help us to distance ourselves from menial, tediousness and bring us to wise decisions. The Shared Values provide the direction to the way we fulfill our mission and our work.

The things stated here and many more special aspects make van Ede a place where I feel very much at home. Where I find and can give inspiration in my work.

I have discovered that my place in the world is that of *accompanying* people rather than *managing* them. I still enjoy achieving results, but I have discovered that when I give attention, time and love to my clients and to the way I do my work I am happier than when reaching a goal.

More and more it is my inner compass which defines the direction I want to walk: to become a truly free person.

Ben Scholts
18 March 2005

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What does Van Ede mean to me?

Van Ede & Partners has made a personal transformation possible from a somewhat timid, average businessman to more of a spiritual manager. My learning question this year is: I want to learn how to become a spiritual manager.

I have developed a subsidiary of our company in Rotterdam to full bloom and with the help of my colleagues we have started a subsidiary in Breda, which has now developed to an independent subsidiary too. I try to observe all things happening around me with love and use them as impulses for my soul.

I have many business and personal relationships that are all about the vertical dimension which naturally has its repercussion in the world at large. I learned to listen to the spirit of managing from Hans Leewens at our summer conferences, now more than eight years ago. He challenged me, even seduced me to follow a spiritual path. To listen to the spirit of managing happens in silence rather than judgment and analysis of causes and effect. In the silence I pray for assistance and can make contact with the all pervading life in space. It then becomes clear what the situation is all about and what is needed (to perform in measure, time and place). I can then respond to a person or people in the group.

Together we are strong (the vertical component), together we become creative and arrive at insights that are supported by all. I can then make a suggestion or a choice out of the alternatives that have been generated and can commence implementation (the horizontal component).

Such a leader is sensitive and sensible and not a mechanistic leader who leads from the perspective of his own ego. In this way I am able to get the best out of myself and others, which increases my self confidence and even achieves better results.

As our company is also just a normal company and not only a movement of freedom fighters, we experience the good and the bad together, but it is still a wonderful company and helps me to work at our ideals in life.

Kees Pannevis
11 March 2005

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Spirituality and Van Ede.

What is the spiritual meaning of Van Ede for me? In a lecture which I held a few years ago I concluded that my spirituality is related to the question "to what do I want to make or maintain a connection"? Instead of connection I could also speak of relinquishing control. But connecting is more active and in spirituality I make active choices. With what in Van Ede can I connect, what makes me enthusiastic, and gives me pleasure in my Van Ede work? I cannot separate this from two other "worlds" in which I have worked: the political-governmental where I spent 18 years and the academic world where I worked for 31 years.

In the political and governmental world I connected with the **ideal to make this world a better place**. That touched me deeply. The key concept in that world was power in the sense of Weber: "die Möglichkeit/Vermögen Wirklichkeit in Bewegung zu setzen". (the possibility/ability to move or activate reality).

The shadow side to this is that all power has the tendency to corrupt. I had had enough when the tension between ideal and reality became so big that the ideal tended towards cynicism.

Within the university I felt a spiritual connection to the wonder and admiration over creation. I wanted to understand and comprehend it and that connected me to a world in which that is the highest goal. In a spiritual sense it was all about "**wonder and curiosity**". For some time now the shadow sides of that spiritual ground are many, because in competition with its original calling, universities strive for money and competitive power. I had had enough of this world because of the intense loneliness in which all those seeking people ultimately exist. After these experiences Van Ede feels like paradise. What fascinated me from the beginning is the authentic dedication of all managers in the organization to honor and serve the goals of the organization. **To be of service** is that to which I make a connection here. But what gives me immense daily pleasure is that I feel more whole in this organization.

Wholeness means that I can be the way I am. Qualities of mine which were not used in other working environments are allowed to be: playfulness, being of service, curiosity, dexterity, longing, friendship...etc. Where in other offices I always had to wear a mask of functionality to show my dedication to the meaning of the organization, here I feel seen and accepted, bigger than in other offices, closer to my destiny, happier and more grounded.

If I describe the spiritual meaning of Van Ede in this way, one could ask if the meaning of this organisation lies in what employees think of it. And that skepticism would be correct. Of course the essence of Van Ede lies in the meaning of her work for the clients. But I start with myself, since of the many service oriented organizations I am familiar with, the Van Ede organization knows, better than any of these other organizations that only happy people can be of assistance to their fellow human beings. It is only

within the spiritual bond I feel with the shared values of Van Ede that I am able to give the clients the quality they deserve.

A key phrase within my spiritual connection with Van Ede is her slogan "The client is yourself". It is a sentence which can be misunderstood and even misused in many ways, but I understand it as "Love thy neighbor as thyself". Dominant in this parallel of the client and the consultant is that theirs is not a functional relationship but only one of complete persons. And so a lot of attention in our work is focused on the client's quest for his or her destiny. It is a search for the deep values which motivate a client's behavior? Be not too careful, because who shall judge what is good and what is bad?

And if you don't understand this admonition, the story is told about a client who within days had a conflict with every group he worked with. With the help of Van Ede he landed a job as manager of a school where two groups of teachers were constantly battling with each other. All interim managers had failed to solve the conflict and left. Our battleaxe was accepted on the condition that he receives a fair chance for half a year. And as was to be expected within days he was at loggerheads with both groups. I won't go into the details of what he did, but after a few weeks the teachers of the school were unanimous in their judgment, that this new manager did not discriminate between the two parties. Not one manager before him had achieved this.

In the work of Van Ede and Partners everything is done to help the client to reconnect with their deepest sense of meaning and ambition. And perhaps "help" is not the correct word, we "invite" or even "seduce", because everything is directed towards emphasizing the unique value of this person with all his talents. People blossom in an environment which breathes this striving in so many ways. That is why the "yourself" in the quoted slogan has to be emphasized. Within Van Ede it therefore is accepted as completely legitimate for a consultant to say: "this client is so different from me, I cannot do anything for him" And when during interview sessions it becomes apparent that a consultant is struggling with a clients behavior, the question is always asked "can you still love him/her a bit?"

People come into their power with Van Ede, they reclaim their wholeness, they start shining again and recover the possibility of a "way to live".

As said, I find the wholesomeness of this view of humanity in my contacts with clients and colleagues alike, with whom I feel more connection than in any other paid work setting I have had. But I do not do full justice to the question about the spiritual meaning of Van Ede and Partners if I do not shed light on the shadow of these shared values and view on humanity. Because the more positive the portrayal of man the more the question of sadness, pain and guilt can arise within the other.

Do you do justice by a person who goes bent under the difficulties of life if you only inquire after his/her achievements? With many clients I have the tendency, within the safety of our confidential conversation, to share some time reflecting on the shadow side of life. Is it of value in this organisation that when clients are allotted to a consultant we take into account who is aided by this quest, and who has the courage for the undertaking? I don't know. For me and many of my clients, it is a privilege to be allowed and able to deal with each other in the sense that all life experiences are valued as real and that we don't get stuck in a sort of New Age fuzziness. What I am uncertain about is the absolute individualism in the organizations portrayal of

man. A human being spends his life in a world that existed before he was born, and that will continue to exist after he passes away. A human being can only find his destiny in a relationship with that world. When people in the bible are invited to have compassion with "the least of my brothers", then the need for such a relationship is confirmed. People in search of work in this world cannot neglect these issues. "To find your destiny" especially in paid work, asks of each of us to realize what "doing our bit", means in that larger world. It is the essence of the campaigning phase, when the client goes out to explore the world at large. I have a dire need in intervision, summer conferences and continuing education to share our thoughts on the state of the world. It is this world in which our clients are going to work. And it is only in relation to this world in which we as colleagues live, that I feel prepared for the quest for wholeness which is so strong in my spiritual connection with Van Ede and Partners.

Philip Idenburg

6 March 2005

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Van Ede cliënt 2004.

During my first conversation with van Ede and Partners, my having been made redundant was still fresh in my memory. I felt fragile and was more preoccupied with the past than with the future. I realized that this period was the ideal moment to stand still and reflect what it was I wanted to achieve with my career but felt far from inspired to make work of this. Quite soon the first group sessions started: meeting other people that had often had similar experiences, doing different group exercises with them, reacting to each others stories, we even sang together. And perhaps what surprised me most: everyone opened up so quickly.

I have read quite a few self help books. I knew all about positive thinking, that you should act out of your own strength, that NLP tricks work etc. etc. At first the stories the group leaders told seemed to be only optimistic words, a dream which perhaps I hoped to realize someday, but which was not really for me. I wanted to believe them but did not know how to go about it.

Yes if I could find my own way, if I finally started using my unique qualities, then suddenly my letter of application would be taken out of the enormous pile and the resulting job interview would lead to success. Yes wonderful, but how to find the way? How do I know what makes me unique? How do I know my métier? And above all: when do I dare to follow that path and choose to ignore all the sideways? When do I dare to believe in myself?

Somewhere in all those months of conversations in groups and with my coach, I began to realize that something was happening. I usually felt happy and strong after a session, and knew that I could make a difference in the group and my immediate environment, and perhaps in the rest of the world. And that feeling stayed with me for ever longer periods of time. The stories of the phoenix rising out of its ashes, the descriptions of the growing process of a rose, the drawings I made and analyzed , to hear from a group member that I started to shine when I talked about a certain topic, to discover together with others what my deeper motives were, all these seeds started slowly to sprout. I suddenly discovered that all the stories about "standing in your strength" and "flow" were not as vague as I thought. I experienced that if I dared to make a choice and followed the path that seemed made for me things just started happening. My CV was read, I was called, I received my first commission. Surprise, surprise it works! This is it! This is what they mean! I think that everyone could benefit enormously from this process. It taught me to believe in myself, I took steps I would never have dared to take, or could not take before.

Friends tell me that I have become a happier and more joyful person. Although I would never have chosen to be made redundant I can now say, knowing all that this process has brought me: my redundancy was a 'blessing in disguise'.

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International Tank Terminal Operator Vopak has for years now been working with the career coaching and outplacement agency Van Ede and Partners. The strength of Van Ede is that they, with their enormous diversity of career coaches, are able to place people from different organizational levels successfully with their warm client centered approach where they act out of a sincere love for the depth of every human being.

The way in which Van Ede works is very free where meaning making and vitality are core concepts. In individual conversations, group sessions and theme meetings issues are addressed that are relevant to the meaning of life, inspiration, visions of life and humanity. Air and space. Van Ede then accompanies people to land on earth after a soaring flight where their desires and talents flow together in their next career move. What Van Ede delivers is made to measure.

Strange experiences with other agencies have made it clear to us that their limited approach, taking only the clients current work experiences into consideration, does not bring the success that is achieved by the expertise that lies within van Ede of tapping into the source of inner desires and dreams.

People that have been coached by van Ede have also learned to recognize and accept their shadow sides, they show a realistic understanding where earlier they would have felt victimized.

In spite of the fact that clients experience the approach as beneficial to their well-being, they are most certainly put to work, and have learned to independently look into the future, are open to feedback and can act with a sense of consciousness for their environment. They stand more freely and stronger in life.

The readiness of the colleagues that have been coached by van Ede to choose for a quality of life has shaken awake and made other colleagues think. Without this positive resonance it would not have been possible for Vopak to reduce our work force in Rotterdam on such a large scale with a sense of win/win. Reconciliation in partnership.

Judith Beers
20 March 2005

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Rabbi Susja said shortly before his death: "in heaven they will not ask me why I wasn't Moses, they will ask me why I wasn't Susja" (Martin Buber). Van Ede & Partners (E&P) is an organisation that is driven by the goal to develop people and work with the motto: people don't have to change, on the contrary. This motto is in line with the quote of Rabbi Susja. In the practice of their work I see this: one points at what is and not at what should be or have to be. The challenge is the search to develop a person: to bring this person into contact with his source, his personal qualities, and to give this form with soul and passion.

Development and personal growth hurts sometimes. To develop is to unfold and to see the resistance within you. It is similar to the process of a snake shedding its old skin when he needs a new one: it is hard work and when you are working you are vulnerable. In the essence the working on yourself is to reconnect heaven and earth: to be open for the creative impulse and to give it a form. In the case of E&P it means to find a job.

Occasionally people are not open enough to receive an impulse: all fears, desires, emotions and expectations are barriers. One is not in the line of heaven and earth and it is impossible to create. The way of man is connecting the creative force of heaven with the receiving, shaping power of earth. We stand exactly between heaven and earth, literally and figuratively, and it is our spiritual road in life to connect these.

E&P reaches a helping hand on that road, like a spiritual teacher. Student and teacher are equal and learn both ways. Like a midwife: you help the other with his birth. Spiritual leaders of today (Tony Parsons, Eckart Tolle, Jan Kersschot, Nathan Gill and others) bring us back to the essence: BEING. No big stories, but back to basic: "all there is, is this, nothing to become...."

To be, here and now, fully aware, live through your ego and to be an instrument. E&P is an organisation with spirituality as guide to help the other to develop, to be, to work in an organisation as an instrument of a force that is far more powerful than yourself.

Chen Yi in "the tao of organisation" describes association with others: when heaven and earth do not commune, that is obstruction; when above and below associate with one another that is association with others. When there is obstruction, it is necessary to cooperate. It's like the Taoist I Ching describes: sameness with people, meaning that other people and oneself are as one.

In I Ching terms: heaven is above and fire is below. E&P is in the position of the fire. They employ strength with enlightenment, and make enlightenment effective by strength. Being truthful within, and adept without, developing ones self and others as well.

E&P guides you to "cross the great river" and like Paulo Coelho says: the greatest virtue of someone that wants to go the spiritual way is courage. E&P helps one to gather this courage in order to do all our things the right way, with awareness and creative energy.

Jan Brinkman

To conclude a humorous case study, illustrating our work. This case takes the clients barely acknowledged dreams and aspirations into consideration. It was awarded an award from the International Career Foundation last fall in Prague.

Silk lingerie and Business Class.

'Production worker, 35, married, lower technical school not completed'. The man that came in didn't meet my expectations. Nice looking, slightly foppish. Impeccably dressed, brown eyes, full lips. And a voice: deep and warm.

Never been happy as a production worker. Laughing stock because of his dress and manners. But how to escape, with his semi-tropical background?

His ideal world: a soft rosy world with many warm women, plenty of cash and a 6 cylinder BMW. I asked what moved him much: silken ladies underwear. I had a moment of hesitation, afraid of asking too many intimate details. But, if this was important for him, was there a way to make it work? I asked him whether he had ever thought of work in the lingerie sector? Of course, but how could he as a man....? I got an inspiration: if he would involve his wife....? I invited them both to the next interview.

She fitted him perfectly, blond, well turned out, sunburned and lots of gold. I mentioned I had read about Lingerie-parties, direct selling. 'That's heaven', they exclaimed. Next week she invited all the ladies of her fitness class. He had brought bags of Italian lingerie, exclusive, expensive. Party followed party. He wallowed in silken lingerie. The ladies obviously loved it.

Two months after the end of this Group-outplacement project I had asked him to report back. He put his car in the parking lot, the light blue BMW- 7 series, 6 cylinders, 8 year old, with a couple to match! They told how things had turned out differently. They had not started the proposed business in lingerie parties. One of the fitness ladies had asked him to apply as host to Business Class travellers at the National Airport. Because he felt highly confident, with the success of the parties behind him, he had upped his 'last salary' level to lingerie earnings standard. No problem. So he was earning much more now than ever before.

And the lingerie party idea? Still, but now as a hobby, two to three evenings a week. Good for savings and never a dull moment. Hand-in hand they walked, two glamorous and happy people, back to their six cylinders, and to a well discovered destiny.

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