

Nestlé Belgium's transformation - Wins and struggles

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SPEAKERS

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Today I'm going to talk about how Nestle Belgium is transforming their culture. I'm having an interview with Paul Van Raw, the talent manager of Nestle, Belgium.

A he will share with us what went well what were the challenges of this transformation and how he approached it with the key leader course.

My name is Murielle Machiels and I help leaders build meaningful life and organization. Stay tuned for this episode.

Hi, Paul. We've been working together for a while now. We know each other I think for two years now, and I thought it would be a great idea to share your experience and also the work we do together with our listeners, but before starting, maybe Can you describe a little bit who you are?

So, I'm Paul Van Roy. I work as a talent manager for Nestle, the multinational for the part of Belgium and Luxembourg. Meaning that my team is responsible for all aspects that our people say so going from the talent acquisition part to development and training, internal mobility and so on. And, yeah, I actually have a background more in business. I come from marketing. But I always had a curiosity and a genuine interest in the relation between humans as an organization. So in 2014, I made the switch to the very interesting world of what we still call human resources.

Yeah, great, great. And maybe because Nestle, it's a really large organization, you are also in the middle of transforming for this new world and new customer needs. And I was wondering, what are the challenges that Nestle Belgium is facing?

Ok. Well, it's a good one. Maybe they can just mention, of course, that I am not here to give statements in name of Nestle is just also my personal





experience that I wanted to discuss. But of course, Nestle like any other organization doesn't live on an island, meaning we are confronted with VUCA world as well. And if you look at previous decades, the business model was quite stable. But if you see now on all levels, we are of course, confronted with a lot of uncertainty about the future we have, if you think about changing consumer habits going from more meat oriented to vegetarian and vegan orientation where we have, you know, where we have our offer of guidance Gourmet, but even also, if it's about the conversation with our consumers going from mass media for decades to a much more two way conversation the omni channel, if you think about supply chain, the use of plastics, which is also very important topic where we want to commit on so it is not just one topic that changes but I would say that the whole industry is confronted with so many changes with such a speed and such an unpredictability. That are one of our many challenges is also how can we adapt our internal way of working to reflect better? all the changes in the external reality?

Yeah. Yeah, that's a that's a good one. And I see that you do a lot of things. I it really opened my eyes all the things that you're busy with from trying to eliminate plastic to your meat replacements. Yes. No, it's it's really great. And indeed it's a big change on talent management on the skills of the people. And what is becoming important than as talents for the people in an environment that changes so rapidly?

What is happening outside for us to be able to reflect it on the inside it means it's not only in our ways of working, but it's also in how we personally deal with that. And what we see that is indeed, you know, the word balance becomes so important. Also on a very personal level. So, for example, well, you cannot have the extreme of people who stick to you know one thing and who made the decision and who make predictions for two years and go with it and close them off for all the new external changes and information. But on the other hand, of course, you cannot have people also that just jump on every new news of the day. And so it's how to play with this, how to keep this flexibility of keeping yourself open enough to change. But at the same time, don't lose yourself in all those things. And what we see is that it puts a lot of strain also on people to keep on having the balance and because you need a lot of Resilience for that you need also very good personal balance. So, of course the buzzwords like agile mindset, adaptability, resilience, well they're buzzwords for a reason. Because we see that they're so important and maybe to add to that I would say ownership has becomes so important anyway think about really about the domain of talent and training. As we are leaving in a vuca world, we can no longer have the central service in a company that can for each function, predict what will be the new skills that are needed and and plan all this for them and roll it out. No, we need more and more of that people take ownership themselves and reflect for themselves is okay what what could help me





what skills You know, can I develop? So I see also more and more our role within a central talent department is to help people give the tools give the space give the eight for them to discover their own path and to take ownership of their continuous learning journey and continuous journey to you know, be more adaptable in the age.

Oh, yeah, that's really interesting, because I never really thought about that this way, because that's also what is happening on other decisions like marketing decisions that you need to make our financial decisions. We need to empower people because the centralized way of working is too slow. And often the decisions organ organs are too far from the problems to be able to really grasp them and come up with fast and great solution. And what you're telling me is that in fact, the same is happening for talent. It's not, again, a big organization that's going to decide these are the big things we're going to roll out for everyone or for that type of function. It's more like the people they have to be able to decide what they need.

And of course, there are some, I would say overarching teams, where you can still give this guidance if I think for example, on digitalization and that is something that is across all functions, and of course, you want to give the signal that this is important. And as well and we will talk of course later more about it. This, these helping people to develop those skills. To be able to take ownership of those things are also something that I strongly believe in that you should as an organization help develop and by doing so, if we talk more about Specific functional skills, then they have the competency, the ownership and also the mandate to build their own path. Because I mean, I just take example we we used to give, you know, a lot of very specific functional trainings on Excel functionalities are disordered and, and these trainings were centrally built and rolled out. But if you see now how fast the tools are updated, how fast everything changes, it's highly inefficient. And I would even almost say impossible on many levels for us to decide for them. So it's more about giving freedom in the freedom but also helping to build the competencies for each of us to decide, you know, how can I How can I best invest my time to learn for me to develop and do my job better?

Yeah. Yeah, I totally agree. Yeah, it's like, when you stop the controlling part, I mean, the control and demand and planning everything for someone else. It's not that you let it go to. Totally, it's just that you think about a framework. And I think you think a lot about that framework in which people can have this freedom. No, no, yeah, that's, that's, that's exactly true.

It's, it's, and it is, you know, it's so important. Even just by by accident. Yesterday, I read a new study of an article from McKinsey that they just published now in June, where they predicted like 94 million of workers in Europe, which is 40% of the workforce, will probably have to change completely, the jobs and you know, and for of course, for the remaining





ones, it will also change within the job. So this this lifelong learning is so important. And of course at the same time it's it's a challenge because you you also have to want to make people stronger for them and for their employability even if they would not stay within your own organization. That's something I strongly believe in. And, and this is there's also a way for example, we took the decision this this year to free up some of our learnings, even if it's it means investments to everybody to everybody in the sense that we think that for example, English is becoming for the future, so much important for people to be employable. Well, we we allowed everybody to take disadvantage. Also. The program we will discuss later, of course, as we did with you, we also set you know, who are we to decide who should get access to this because we believe these are fundamental competencies that can help everybody. So let's offer it to everybody and let people decide for themselves, what they can get out of it. so yeah, that this is a shift in mindset that has happened as well.

And when we talk about all these programs that you have, because you have a big catalogue of programs that that are developed by Nestle itself and and you're also offering orders, and still two years ago, we decided to start working together as a as a pilot on a specific leadership topic. And that was because I believe you said you were missing one thing in the other programs and what were you in fact missing?

Well, it's true You said we there's a huge catalogue. You know, there are trainings, workshops, e-learning, on change management, on leadership in different levels of Situational Leadership, coaching, feedback, older skills. However, most of them are still focused on a training moment. And even though we are more and more going towards blended learning, we are still seeing, you know that that one, two or three day training moments with some e-learning as pre work and maybe a coaching system session afterwards, it's still quite, you know, focused on a skill and on an event as training moments. Whereas, we sought to make a real fundamental change in behaviour in mindsets and on a bigger level in culture. You need to take time you need to be to allow people to make that shift. And it's not a shift you make in a one day training. So, what I really liked about the program we did together is that we said, okay, like you mentioned as well it takes 66 days to change habits. Let's take three months, and in which we really embrace a learning journey together with our people. And in these three months, we have moments of learning of trainings or videos, but also moments for self-reflection, moments to test and try in reality, and moments to come together and share learnings and discuss where the, you know, the result is that if you go through this three months, journey together, that you can really make a more fundamental shift something that will stick to it. And of course, that there, there is also different aspects. The fact that you take, you know, the whole or majority of the organization through this experience together. And maybe the last thing I want to say for this, I've seen a lot of





change management trainings and courses. And I've experienced them, but a lot of them are focused on explaining rationally, what is changed management and to tell people you know, these are the signals that you're in resistance. Yeah, okay, fine, but what do I do with it, and then you maybe get one or two rational tips. But that's not how it works. If, if you talk about change management on an individual level, it takes time it takes times of frustration, but you need this constant guidance which this program delivered. And if you did talk about change management on a team level organizational level, then it's also linked you know, With just finding a way to have people talk again to each other, throughout exchange have moments to bring people together. I mean, people already have so many strengths within them that they can use. So if you take a few months Where, where, where you let them explore this on them by themselves and have moments to bring people together to share this journey that is really, really powerful. And this is why for me, what we did together is was for me, I mean, maybe there are other things that exists but for me quite, quite refreshing and unique in its approach.

Yeah. Maybe I'm just going to share the start. So the start was I, I launched this training leading authentically in digital times based on my experience because I had a lot of pressure to as a leader in my previous career. And the rational way of working was not enough anymore. So I created this course to really transform leaders and also to find balance and to better handle with change to build resilience. And one of the first well the first training I launched, we had Katrin from, from Nestle, who started the training. And she started this training, because she was working really, really hard and, and she wanted to deliver and she was really motivated, but she felt like it's not possible this way anymore. I cannot keep this space anymore. And so she enrolled in this training, where we talk not only about rational things, of course, but it's really you learn to change from within and she started to change from within and by changing from one By feeling better, she started to change from from outside as well and her impact increased. And what I find great is she was so convinced that she wanted more people of Nestle or she thought First, I want everyone in Nestle to take this training. And she came to you, she came to your CEO and to the HR director, and you had already a full program, in fact, huh. And, but still, you decided, Okay, if this really has an impact, I think we should do something without it. And that's how we started a pilot that wasn't in fact, budgeted. That was not planned. And still you started it's,

I really think it was a it was a nice story in the sense that I mean, a lot of companies say we're a people company, I don't like to say because it's a little bit At least every everybody, no matter who can come up to, like you said, as well as the CEO of our company with a good idea. And she did. It was so convincing that we said, okay, let's test this. And and we'll also make sense is of course, it's like what I said in the beginning of this balance wrong





reaction would have been never going to just roll it out in the whole company like this because one person had a good, a good experience. So we need let's say, we said, okay, let's do two pilots. And we did two pilots, one with a mixed group of people from different functions, different divisions, really to see how does this work, and then one with a specific group, which was the leader, ship team of our supply chain, we learned a lot of things from that. And on the one hand, we learned that this had a lot of potential and that it gave good results. And at the same time, we also learned that if we would roll it out on a larger scale We should adapt it. And so based on those two pilots, we, we did a workshop with our management committee and you were there as well. And we decided in 2020, when it could, of course, also be budgeted to roll it out in the entire organization. Also based on the core belief, when we talk about leadership and change in habits, it only makes sense if you do it on us on a larger scale. Unless of course, you know, even individual has really one personal development point it makes, of course sense to go into coaching. But it's really about creating a common language. I mean, there's, there's a very nice, you know, it's one of my favourite parts in the program on how to manage your interpretations. If you have colleagues around you Who went through the same experience? And you can use this language to help each other? And, share observations on, you know, interpretations that might have been made in certain meetings, then it becomes so powerful. And then, you know, if people would, would leave and he would have some new people in a team, that's okay. Because there's this, this culture that that you have created. So this is also why we believe that based on what Catherine experienced based on the pilots with it, that if we would go further, it's it's better to roll it out as broadly as possible.

Yeah. Yeah. And I always say if you want change, culture is crucial. It's about changing your culture. Because people often say culture eats strategy for breakfast. Exactly. But as culture is the sum of the habits of the people in an organization I like To say that habits eats strategy for breakfast. And so having a great strategy, but not the habits and the culture to support that strategy is really difficult because you don't manage to implement your strategy or at least don't implement it fast enough for the speed of change that we are going through.

Exactly. And you know, I was also involved a few years ago with changing ways of working and if you look at most of organization that tries to change their ways of working and you know, Maury thinking about a trial and lean methodology and come on and you know, implementing these springs and everything. It has been proven that that's, if you put a lot of resources behind it, you know, consultants and everything to put this in place, okay. It goes quite well. But then of course, at a certain moment, you have to stop over investing in it. Yes. you hoped that it sticks that I think 80% of companies go slowly back to their old ways of working. And when they research it, it The





problem was not with all the tools and the ways of working the process they adapted, but it was because the habits were not there, this this shared conviction of, you know why it is important to work differently. So I am 100% convinced that it's all starts with mindsets and habits like you said,

yeah. mindset habits, and also energy and a great work life balance because in a lot of organizations today, people are exhausted because they are working really hard with their old habits in a world that is changing so fast. Where they try to control everything and the structures are maybe not, or the techniques use are also from the slower times. And then they exhaust themselves. And when you exhaust yourself, it's really hard to change your habits. And so managing your energy, I believe is crucial, and having people who are feeling goods will help you change the culture and and reach your results.

No, no, I fully agree. And it links back with with the idea of giving people also the tools to help deal with it. It's difficult because it's a shared problem. It's really a shared responsibility. On the one hand, you need to create a culture where it is allowed to change your habits and where it's even encouraged to change those habits and at the same time, It's also the responsibility of the individual to change in the sense that, like we discussed with the vuca world with the changing expectations, you can always find rational arguments why you cannot do your job, why it's too much. We cannot turn off the external world and the external expectations.

Yeah. And then yeah, the reason I built this program online is also because people are very busy. People are very busy with busy schedules. And I thought, okay, if we do this online, you can then take this course, which is self-coaching and leadership whenever you want. So you can take it whenever you won't, and everyone do it their own way. So that's That's a great part, of course. But then comes the difficult part. Because you say it's, it's the responsibility for people to develop themselves. And it becomes really important to constantly develop yourself and grow and learn. But the problem that I see is that developing yourself comes always, after all the rest. And that's also what we saw when when we did the first pilots. And, and still today, the most difficult parts of online programs is to take the program to take the time to develop yourself.

Exactly. No, it's a good one. And then, if we if we speak about learnings, I think this is something we've learned by doing and, but let's not forget as well, of course, everybody wants to improve, it's not a problem. But we also have the tendency to hope for the magic stick, right? Yes. And of course, if we talk about changing habits over three months, it also means meeting your own devils. And that you might, you know, encounter some things that are more difficult to overcome so what we also discovered is that it's it's really good to give indeed the Liberty and to have a self-paced learning





curve and don't, you know, push everybody's agenda. At the same time, what was also an improvement we did along the way is to, you know, give people also a sort of push and structure drop down the way meaning we we, we said, okay, you can do it self-paced, but let's try to have one module per month, which is which is quite very nice, very feasible and, and at the end of the month we come together, in learning groups where we share with each other. And what we see is that this is a huge part of keeping the motivation and discipline. I know that you know, other people will sit together with me at the end of the month we will share so I have this drive to make sure that I'm at a certain point. Yeah. And so first of all, it helps on the motivation knowing that there is something to work towards and that other people are watching. But at the same time, also, when when you come together, you realize or a lot of times we heard people saying, "Wow, I wasn't aware that older people have the same struggles as me". And by just having this acknowledgement that this recognition of sharing the same struggles, it again motivates to go on because it's a journey with a lot of nice discoveries and celebrations, but at the same time with difficult moments and bumps in the roads, yeah. And so we experienced that. To help going over those bumps in the roads, you need a bit more than only a fully self beasts journey.

Yeah, I completely agree and, and it's the same with everything we are again, in a world with a lot of choice, a lot of possibilities. And a lot of people who will inspire you to do something, and it's inspiration and motivation is is great to start. But on the long run, you don't stick to it. And what I really liked about how you handle this is that you put intention behind it. And that's what we miss often behind a transformation, or behind something new. You'd like to implement this You have to put intention behind it. And the means to make it possible and not just some people, they just check the box. Okay, we do this check, we have done this check. And then nothing happens because there was no real intention behind it. Yeah, because I also did a lot of research. And if you really want to change your culture, you need 25% of the people to change. When the when you get 25% of the people to change, then the other people will start following and that's when you have the the shift in your culture. But what I also noticed in the course, is, it's not just about the course, it's really strange. It's about also a movement or an authorization to be another kind of person. So what I noticed is, I have sometimes People who have only gone through the first two modules, which by the way, are the ones that deliver the biggest transformation. And then they don't find time to go to the rest are not immediately some of them start again one year later or, but I have people where I felt Okay, they're going to be disappointed because I didn't do the whole course. And in fact, they were really, really happy. And they were constantly saying, Okay, how I how would I handle this differently? Or how would Murielle handle this or it's okay to pause. It's like you're giving permission to people to be someone else. That's what I noticed. So it's, it's really, and once you give yourself





permission to be another kind of person, it's much easier to then build the habits of that person. It starts with the effect. If you believe you are a good mother, you will do everything to be a good mother. Or if you believe you are a sports person, you will put the habits in place because you are a sports person. If you believe you are a fat person, but you want to go on a diet, it will not work because you see yourself as a fat person. And that's also what I see is that it changes the way you see yourself. And because also the certificate or the fact that it's part of the MBA of Solvay Brussels School. It's also gifts to people permission to bring the domain to bring the domain of emotions and body at the workplace. Yeah.

If you say this, it makes me think I'm a huge believer also in the power of vulnerability, yeah, which I link a bit with that as well. You talk about bringing emotions and body to the workplace important parting in your training is also the centering, which is also you know, really an exercise with your body and your breathing. Well, you know, by the last learning group we did on on mindset, we started each learning group with a centering exercise. And like you said, as well it, it helps bringing these kind of habits more into the company in the organizational worlds. Whereas maybe before it would have been a bit ridiculous or you know, it's not professional, or awkward or you Yeah, I have to be rational. This is a bit too Whoo, yeah.

But at the same time, people really see then the benefits, you know, it's like, okay, now I can try and, and what was really nice. I mean, in the last learning group, when we asked for feedback, we had two people from two completely different divisions that don't work together who because of the learning group, we're in the same session, who said at the end, yeah, we made an agreement between the two of us. And now once per week, we will set up a call because, you know, we're still in Corona times covid times, and we will centre together, we will centre together, and then we'll just take a short moment to you know, talk with each other and coach each other and, and move on. So that was really nice to hear. And I think that links with what you were just saying, we feel we have a mandate to talk differently.

To be different. Yeah, and that's and that said, because we have In the past, we've had this image of what is a good leader, a good leader is someone strong, assertive, who manage his time very well who can deliver who's in control of things. That was the image we had of a good leader. But that good leader today, with those habits will draw them in all the to dues will exhaust themselves will, will lose control because it's not possible anymore. And it's about changing this image of what is a good leader and it's also bringing these soft skills leading with your heart, listening, managing your mindset, of course, managing your energy, being aware of your fears, changing from the inside, noticing what's happening inside of you, so that you can change your conditioned behaviours. It's about giving permission to be this new





leader. When you do that, collectively, it's much easier and that's why leading by example is so important. And that is also something you took into account because sometimes I see organizations "Yeah, it's okay do that". But there is such a miss alignment between these new skills and, and a lot of leaders know these new skills, they know how they should be. But in fact, when they are under pressure, they're not that kind of leader. They can be dominant, impatient, work very long hours, and then they will tell to their people, it's okay to make mistakes go home, and they are not giving an example. And that's something you paid attention to as well.

Yeah, and in reality, it doesn't go so smooth and perfectly. I mean, I don't mind being open up on that. If You see, what is nice is you have people who are more easily open for this and quick more quickly in adopting and you have people who have some more resistance. My observation is that it is independent from level of function. Meaning that yes, in senior management we have both and amongst our employees as well, and instead of trying to think, you know, let's try to create a wave just top down or create a wave, just bottom up. Let's create the wave on all levels with the people who want to create a wave.

Yeah. Great. Great. Thank you for that. And maybe one last question, what did you get out of the program? What did you change since program?

One of the many, maybe one of the most important things that I personally get out of it is to be even more aware of the choices we have all the time, meaning whatever is not right, however overwhelmed to feel or however limited you feel to change things that that is, in reality, an underestimation of your own abilities to change things

and your own power. Exactly. Yeah, I completely agree. I meet so many people who think but I don't have a choice. I cannot change this. But once you realize you have so much more power to change things then that's when change happens. And too many people are so used to just do what is expected from them and you cannot touch this. This is okay. That they have been used to thinking I don't have a choice. Hmm. And you always have a choice and you have much more power Then you believe and if you believe it's possible, it will happen.

Yes, it was, was and is a very nice experience. I am looking forward to the future. Yeah.

Me too, because I truly believe that we need a new paradigm shift. We need a new way to do business, we need a new way to manage people and to manage ourselves and a better way better for ourselves better for our families better for our planets. And once you are truly connected to what





you care about, and once you you know how to change things and how to change yourself, that's when change happens on a big scale.

Yeah, and maybe if I can just add one last thing now that I've thought about it, what I personally also really liked about this experience is The fact that you build in on a long term, regular time for yourself to self reflect to take a look of what you're doing an hour how happy you feel with this, how purposeful you feel with it. For me, it's almost like sports, in the sense that we generally accept that having regular moments throughout the week or the month to pay attention to sports is is healthy and necessary for us. And I would say at the same time, it's true for our mental wellbeing. Yeah, and, and, you know, even if you feel now, okay, it's good to force yourself even, to have regular moments to think about, you know, how's life ? how do you find your purpose? Where do you find your energy? And even if it's just to confirm that it's okay. It's really important and having this resource that helps you in taking these moments for yourself is maybe also the structure and sometimes the excuse that we all as humans can use and need to give ourselves a bit more attention.

Yeah. More focus on ourself and what we need and not what everyone else needs. Yeah. Okay, thank you. So maybe to summarise things what i what i heard is that talent management is changing from a controlled way of defining what everyone needs in an organization to more building a framework, and learning everyone to learn to become adaptable. That's that's a basic that everyone needs and wants to person sort of wants to people are adaptive. to just let them be accountable for their own change, that change will not happen just with one course or one thing of two weeks, but it's something that's more long term. And that's why an online course can fit in that because it can be on a longer term. But the difficulty is to then keep the focus on that. And so intention is important, but also the learning moments and the learning groups to have not only this accountability to keep focusing on your change, but also these moments where you can exchange and realize that you're not alone with those struggles. And that's where you find the motivation to continue and to keep trying until it becomes easier.

It sounds like a very good summary.

Okay. Okay. Well, thank you, Paul. Thank you for this interview. And yeah, we'll see each other soon again. And I'm wishing you a great weekend.

Well, thank you and with a lot of pleasure, and also very nice weekends.

Thank you. Bye. So, so I hope you enjoyed this interview and that you got some ideas out of it for your transformation. In the next episode, I'm going to talk about what you can do if you want to have less meetings, and how



you should transform your organigram to really become more agile. So subscribe to this podcast if you want to receive the next episode automatically, but also subscribe if you want to build a meaningful life or organization.

