



# HEADWAY

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM **AHEAD**  
PART OF THE EUROPEAN EXECUTIVE SEARCH NETWORK



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## ► TOMORROW'S JOBS

AHEAD's cross-sector survey showed that over 70% of respondents considered the level of resilience demonstrated by their company to be high or quite high (p.2).



Product wizard, imagineer, talent scout...? 'When I was at INSEAD many moons ago, they told us that when students start university they will not have heard of some of the jobs that will be vacancies when they graduate,' explains AHEAD partner Alexandre Paternotte de La Vaillée. 'Today the same rings true, though in an even shorter timeframe.' So, as we gradually emerge from the biggest recession since WW2, where will new jobs be and what form will they take?

According to McKinsey's Global Institute, the most performant countries do not have a more favourable mix in their economies, just individual sectors that are more competitive. And while many governments are looking to manufacturing sectors as a new source of growth, service sectors continue to be necessary for job creation especially in high-income economies. With government cut-backs on the cards across Europe, public sector and other non-profit employers are no refuge.

Meanwhile new clean tech sectors are seemingly not enough to boost economy-wide employment and growth. 'Certainly the big boom in 'green jobs' that was anticipated five years ago has not materialised here or internationally,' explains Alex.

'In the attempt to decarbonise our economy in the coming decades, the whole energy system is in flux,' comments Hans De Keulenaer of the European Copper Institute. 'Electrical engineering - a relatively stagnant profession up to the early 90s - is evolving rapidly. Now there is the move to smart grids (i.e. combining communication, internet and power technology), the electrification of everything (heat, transport...) and the drive towards energy management. Electricity is at the centre of many of these trends.' So Hans remains convinced that 'professionals who can commit their career to sustainable energy can expect a bright future.'

A snapshot of vacancies both locally and globally support pick-up across various sectors and economies. In India, GE is creating 3,000 technology jobs and Walmart is investing heavily in Africa. Meanwhile in the US, vacancies include several hundreds at a time in sectors as diverse as insurance, retail, healthcare... In the City of London, there was an unexpected surge in recruitment earlier this year particularly in compliance and risk. UK graduate recruitment is up with consumer goods and investment banking leading the way. And AHEAD's Brussels office notes encouraging new activity spanning various sectors this autumn.



**AHEAD**  
SEARCH FOR HIGH ACHIEVERS



## ► HOW RESILIENT ARE HEADWAY READERS?

The answer is pretty resilient, according to the results of our recent survey. Moreover 75% of the 234 high achievers surveyed electronically by AHEAD in September 2010 consider resilience a very important trait in today's post-recession workplace. You have to 'move forward fast, even after failure,' advised one.

Resilience is succinctly described as the 'strength to bounce back from adversity'. With its origins in physics, the word stems from the property of materials like rubber that return to their original form or position despite the impact of external forces. A sort of unrelentless elasticity, if you like. Truly resilient *people* though seem not only resistant to adversity but also derive energy from the experience, which they later draw on.

Most respondents were complimentary about their boss, with over 76% describing his or her resilience level as high or quite high. 'My boss had a clear vision of what was required to keep the ship afloat. He got his team on board and that's what gave him strength.'

That said, most assessed themselves even more highly with 93% rating their resilience level as high or quite high: 'Resilience is one of my strengths, as in my life I've experienced enough challenging situations like divorce, illness and changes at work, that have reinforced this strength.' 'Multiple stressful situations have made me pragmatic and confident.' 'You have to be able to cope with constant change in this era. Flexibility is key.'

'It is no surprise that this audience really enjoys new experiences and ideas,' notes AHEAD's Managing Partner Guy Vereecke, 'and sees themselves as particularly well organised and reliable, as well as collaborative with others. Indeed some psychologists suggest that highly resilient people tend to be more collaborative than competitive. 'However more detailed analysis of *our* results reveals that those who considered their resilience level to be highest also described themselves as highly competitive,' explains Guy. 'Interestingly those with quite low resilience levels were significantly less competitive too.'

Meanwhile, at corporate level, it's encouraging that 70% of our sample described their company's level of resilience generally as high or quite high. As one manager from the FIAT Group points out 'Look at where they were in 2002-3, and where they stand today.'

## ► OUT OF THE BOX

The images in this edition of HEADWAY are reproduced from AHEAD's eclectic mid year calendar 2010-11 'Out of the Box' by kind permission of award winning London photographer Michael O'Reilly. To see more of Michael's work, check out [www.oreillystudio.com](http://www.oreillystudio.com).

## ► MAKING IT HAPPEN

As we emerge from recession, many people have good ideas but few actually carry them out. And fewer still carry them out excellently. The business leader who executes good ideas most successfully, wins. Such is the message of two new books stressing the importance of turning good ideas into reality.

**The Other Side of Innovation: Solving the Execution Challenge**<sup>1</sup> is a serious insight into how to execute an innovation, whether a simple project or a 'grand, gutsy gamble'. The authors are quick to admit that while 'ideating' is energising and glamorous, execution can seem like humdrum, behind the scenes, dirty work. With an impressive depth of research, they draw on examples from innovators as diverse as BMW and Timberland to explain how to:

► **Build the right team:** Who will be on the team? Where will they come from? How will they be organised? How will they navigate the delicate and conflict-rich partnership between innovation and existing operations?

► **Manage a disciplined experiment:** How can team members quickly test their assumptions? Translate results into new knowledge? Measure progress? How do you give innovation leaders a tough but fair performance evaluation?

The Other Side of Innovation is a practical and provocative read, which will appeal to professionals in all sizes of companies and sectors. It takes you step-by-step through the process to ensure that your Big Idea goes somewhere rather than nowhere.

This key message is echoed albeit in a different format in **100 Great Leadership Ideas**<sup>2</sup>, by Jonathan Gifford. He describes 100 ideas from around the world and how to apply them in your company with a simple formula.

Michael Eisner, former CEO of Walt Disney explains that he would regularly get letters from people claiming that a certain show or movie was their idea, or something they were thinking about doing. But why didn't they do it? It's a big step putting an idea from head to paper, assembling a team, and putting on a show. In evidence, he reminds readers how hard it is to put on a show at high school.

Likewise for Louis Gerstner, former CEO of IBM, making it happen is possibly more important than developing a brilliant new strategy. He maintains that execution is the most unappreciated skill of an effective business leader and the critical part of a successful strategy.

1. The Other Side of Innovation: Solving the Execution Challenge by Vijay Govindarajan and Chris Trimble, published by Harvard Business School Press, August 2010

2. 100 Great Leadership Ideas by Jonathan Gifford, published by Marshall Cavendish International, June 2010





## ▶ SPOTLIGHT ON PIERRE PIRARD

### ‘LIFE IS TOO SHORT TO JUST HAVE ONE LIFE’

Pierre Pirard enjoyed an exemplary blue chip career with companies such as Procter & Gamble, Reckitt Benckiser, Stanley Works and most recently as CEO of one of AHEAD’s clients, Family Service. Then in 2009 he stepped out of the mainstream corporate world to teach underprivileged youngsters at the Institut des Ursulines in Molenbeek.

‘I always thought that a teacher would not work as hard as a businessman, and had expected more time for myself. That’s not the case. In fact, 8 hours of teaching a day is much more tiring than running a multi million euro business.

In industry, shareholders expect you to create value for them, and if the value of the company is higher in Year 2 than Year 1, then you’ve succeeded. So how do I create value today? By making sure that my students leave with a good diploma to create their own value in the world. My mission now is to create a higher quality after 10 months where the only dimension is people, people, people.’

#### **So how do you bring business to life for these youngsters?**

‘It’s a challenge. My students at Molenbeek, they are nearly all from North Africa with their own culture and are not particularly open to the world. My first challenge is to open their minds, get them to listen to the news regularly on RTBF not only Aljazeera. Yes, of course, I could have chosen an easier path but I can add more value here.

Last June I saw a rewarding difference in my class but not among everyone. 50% were showing interest, 50% did not care. I don’t try to measure any more. If just one succeeds, then my work is worthwhile. As it happens, I’ve just had a text from two students from last year who have just enrolled at college to become primary school teachers. A year ago they were destined for unemployment. But remember, I did not achieve this alone, but as part of the School.’

#### **Tell us more about the group of 12 businessmen you have gathered to help you.**

‘My idea was to give students a coach, a stepfather, whom they could call and ask questions – a mentor who would not judge them, who was outside the academic evaluation process. So I called my friends – CEOs, COOs, CFOs, who thankfully were all receptive and willing to give one or two hours per month. It’s a privileged access for my students that I hope they will appreciate.’

#### **How could HEADWAY readers assist further in your mission?**

‘This year we are fine with 12 mentors already in place, but I am certainly keen to hear from anyone interested for the future. Also I’m always looking for internship possibilities for my students – essentially for 7 weeks a year (4 x 1 week and 1 x 3 weeks).’

#### **What message do you have for business professionals considering ‘giving something back to society’ or stepping out of their mainstream business careers?**

‘Do it ! I’ve met so many of my friends who say that they want to do it, BUT... then come the excuses. Personally I think life is too short to just have one life. While some aspects may be less attractive, you learn so many new things. What

you give up is nothing compared to what you gain. Besides, you’ll be 70 before you know it and then it’ll be too late.’

#### **Resilience is a highly valued trait in today’s workplace... In your opinion, how do your young charges at Molenbeek compare with their middle class counterparts? Will they have a natural ‘edge’ as future candidates for companies?**

‘It’s true that my students have all had tough lives... often little money, poor education, no father around. But I’ve not enough experience to draw general conclusions about their resilience. Some want to be stronger in the future. However others may never be able to bounce back from earlier hardship.’

#### **How important has resilience been in your own career?**

‘Very important indeed. In Moscow in 1998/99 with Reckitt Benckiser, my brief was to ‘stop the bleed’. We were losing millions in the region so I quickly cut the headcount from 300 to 72. As a boss you need to do what is right for the future of the company.

In fact it’s not dissimilar today if one of my students won’t listen in my class. Do I eject him knowing that it will not be in his interest? Yes, if the rest of the class will not listen if he remains, and would all suffer.’

### *‘What you give up is nothing compared to what you gain.’*

#### **What have YOU learned from your students at Molenbeek?**

‘I’m learning every day: how to teach of course, but also about their culture, their religion, the way they see life, how they act, how they see the future. It’s totally mind-broadening.’

#### **In your opinion, how well does the education system serve business?**

‘Frankly not well at all. At 18 the level is dramatically low today. One of the key reasons is that we don’t ask students to work hard enough nor teach them how to learn to work at home. It’s all too relaxed. We should ask much more rather than dumb down levels to the lowest common denominator. We should be pushing our young people to the highest level and helping lower achievers to catch up.’

#### **You come across as someone who likes new challenges and to keep developing. What mountains are still to conquer?**

‘Right now I’m so much into my new job, I’m only looking 3 to 5 years ahead. My main ambition is to make sure that my students get their diploma. And, of course, to become a better teacher...’

If you would like to offer internship or mentoring please contact pierre.pirard@almolu.be.

## ► TEN TECH TRENDS

According to McKinsey<sup>1</sup>, here are ten technology trends that senior executives should be aware of:

**Distributed co-creation moves into the mainstream.** Evolving from sites like Wikipedia, free input from internet users can provide useful technical support, new design ideas, or even viral marketing from bloggers enthusing about a product. Now, the per-contact cost through customer communities can be as low as 10% of traditional call centres.

**Making the network the organization.** Through social networking sites, increasingly porous companies can break down the internal barriers between departments, and the external barriers between the company and the business world. This enables us to contact experts in any field immediately, cutting time and increasing quality of results.

### *‘The Internet of People is now also the Internet of Things.’*

**Collaboration at scale.** Using video and web-calling nowadays to facilitate large, real-time meetings between employees hundreds of miles away can save your company time and money, and employees stress.

**The growing ‘Internet of Things’** The Internet of people is now also the Internet of things. It includes embedded sensors on devices connected over networks--usually wireless--to analytical resources. It’s really incorporating the physical world with the electronic world under two broad categories: information and analysis, mostly around the sensors receiving information; the other around automation and control, where you really close the loop from sensing to actuation.

**Experimentation and big data.** The proliferation of automated data tracking means that, at the click of a button, you can see the trends throughout every sector of the company. Taking the time to set up this technology allows for tighter marketing, visualising untapped areas, and innovating strategy based on current trends.

**Wiring for a sustainable world.** With the increasing power of technology, so comes greater responsibility to use it effectively. More and more companies are aiming to reduce

environmental stress through technological means - whether this be directly via smart power supplies, which limit power at off-peak times, or indirectly through logistical software such as satellite navigation improving the efficiency of freight.

**Imagining anything as a service.** Technology has opened a wealth of new opportunities for micromanagement. The sheer quantity and precise nature of available data now means that services that were once considered a whole package can be divided into a number of sub-services. Look to the low-budget airlines; whereas once, the price of an airline flight included baggage and an in-flight meal, now one can pick and choose from the services.

**The age of the multi-sided business model.** With the internet as it is, the old uni-directional supplier-distributor-customer model has begun to unravel. Increasingly businesses are targeting multiple players simultaneously, whilst being supported by web advertising. The proliferation of the “freemium” model, rather, a model under which the standard product is free, with paying premium members is an exciting step (eg. Skype).

**Innovating from the bottom of the pyramid.** Recently radical business strategies have emerged from the developing world, as modern technology meets poor infrastructure. In parts of Africa, low incomes and lack of formal ID make it nearly impossible for banks to work on the same model as in the developed world. But Safaricom, a telecoms provider, offers banking services to eight million Africans through its mobile-phone service. The phone acts as the bank account, with members able to access a virtual balance at a network of shops and garages.

**Producing public good on the grid.** Given the advantages of technology in the competitive private sector market, it is clear that in the future, we can use this knowledge to assist the infrastructure of our cities. Eg. using cloud computing to provide a real time diagnostic of a “wired city”, where one is able to optimise power, redirect water, and detect faults at the click of a button.

1. McKinsey Quarterly August 2010 by Jacques Bughin, Michael Chui, and James Manyika, McKinsey Global Institute.

AHEAD is a leading search firm specialising in high achievers. Headquartered in Brussels, we were formerly YESS International Brussels, created in 1990 by Egon Zehnder International. Today AHEAD forms part of the extensive EESN network covering Europe and beyond.

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