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SPEAKING UP

It was the strangest of years. Who among us could have imagined one year ago what we – and the world – would experience in the 12 months to follow? A global pandemic has left no one untouched and the student environment has not been spared.

But, amidst the tumult and uncertainty, students have stepped up to the challenge. It has been a time for reinvention, of adjusting to learning remotely and finding new ways to interact with EDHEC faculty or staff and each other. As economic consequences cause prospects to dim in one sector, career plans are being rethought as new opportunities emerge elsewhere.

As we enter the year 2021, it seems only right then to turn the floor over to students. This issue of Vox is dedicated to them. It was produced – from A to Z – for and by EDHEC students. In its pages, we think you’ll hear a student voice, perhaps grown wiser from our collective life experience, but still filled with determination. And hope.
Excellent rankings mean 2020 ended with a bang for EDHEC. Indeed, our Global MBA gains 12 places in Financial Times MBA 2021 ranking and confirms its position in the top 100 worldwide. The business school was classed in the top four by two leading publications in France and continues to move up influential international ratings. A result that confirms EDHEC’s place as a world-renowned business school.

Flying high in France
Le Figaro, a daily newspaper has ranked EDHEC fourth among French ‘Grandes Ecoles’ for 2021. The rating pays particular attention to the prestige of partner universities, research activities, faculty and recruitment selectivity. EDHEC’s progression can be credited to an impressive Alumni network and unique student organizations. Meanwhile, the specialist publication L’Étudiant also classed EDHEC as the fourth best ‘Grande École’ in France, coming in third place for academic excellence and second place for student satisfaction. This rating is decided according to where future business students have chosen to study and demonstrates the broad appeal of the school.

Student satisfaction
EDHEC has shot up the prestigious Financial Times EMBA ratings, to 45th place globally in 2020. The business school has now joined the world’s top 50 for its Executive MBA, demonstrating the high quality and selectivity of its leadership programme. With an overall customer satisfaction score of 9.55, EDHEC is the number one Business School in France, and is in the world’s top ten. The FT also placed EDHEC’s Masters in Management 16th worldwide, rising three places from 2019. Finally, as a mark of its continued excellence, the FT ranked EDHEC among the 15 best-performing and most desirable Business Schools in Europe for the fifth year running.

A worthwhile investment
Lastly, British think tank Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) acknowledged the excellence of two of EDHEC’s programmes, the Global MBA and MSc in Marketing Management. In both instances, QS emphasized the school’s exceptional employment rate and an impressive return on investment. EDHEC’s Dean of programmes, Benoit Arnaud, explains that the ratings “attest to the excellence of the courses and their alignment with corporate needs.”
ON TRACK FOR 20 YEARS of GLOBAL QUALITY

Without accountability, a commitment to quality is nothing but words. EDHEC is therefore proud to announce that it has once again renewed its accreditation with EQUIS, the European Quality Improvement System.

EDHEC has long subscribed to the principle of constant quality improvement. This latest renewal will take us beyond twenty years under EQUIS scrutiny, confirming our focus worldwide with recognition that is respected across the Business School sector.

As EDHEC forges ahead with its international development strategy, notching up a staggering 250 agreements in force on five continents, EQUIS continues to give its seal of approval. Indeed, accreditation is one of EDHEC’s distinguishing features, setting us apart as one of the 1% of Business Schools boasting triple accreditation by the AACSB, EQUIS and AMBA.

Approved by students

One key difference in the EDHEC approach, strongly supported by EQUIS, is our determination to offer future graduates an immersive experience at renowned international universities. Of course, implementing such grandiose initiatives must center on our students. Quality improvements feed into optimizing the education experience for EDHEC students today, and for many years to come. It’s part of a virtuous circle that includes students producing their own assessment report of the school which is communicated to EQUIS, and several sessions that enable student feedback to be heard and processed.

We asked an EDHEC Global MBA student, Sarmad Fateh, for his opinion: “For me, EQUIS Accreditation was a ’must-have’ when I was searching for MBA schools. It testifies to the quality and credibility of the institution, its faculty, and the student body. The multicultural aspect is obvious the moment you enter the MBA class. Your MBA course team, the professors, and the classmates you interact with are all from different nationalities and cultures. Every class discussion is enriched with their unique viewpoints based on their experiences. Our assumptions about how the world works and how people think is questioned and reshaped. Now I’m better equipped to thrive among people of different cultures and I also have access to a global network of high-performing individuals who will be there to help me professionally.” In a nutshell, EQUIS confirms the EDHEC promise.

EDHEC’s 4-year International Bachelor of Business Administration program has been granted Bachelor's degree status. This milestone, with effect from September 2021, acknowledges the program’s excellence in teaching and leadership, and confirms a research strategy aimed at strongly impacting society. The decision was made after assessment by the CEFDG (France’s National Commission for the Evaluation of Training and Qualifications in Management).
Imagine stepping into the shoes of an employee who must handle criminal risks facing the company: that is the challenge being tackled by students following the criminal risk management courses taught by Bertrand Monnet, an EDHEC professor, and Criminal Risk Management Chair Director at EDHEC, enables students to understand the risks to better prevent them.

A criminal risk how-to

“The criminal economy can be broken down into four major dynamics: the development of criminal activities, financial parasitism, predation of the legal economy, and competition,” Monnet explains. Criminal organizations use any of eleven techniques to attack companies: money laundering, terrorist funding, assault, theft, extortion, kidnapping, sea piracy, fraud, counterfeiting, smuggling, and market control. In today’s world, each of these crimes have both physical and digital aspects. And a company can be affected in four of its dimensions: in terms of its business, personnel, assets, and image.

Creating value in an exposed environment

In 2019, nine out of ten companies worldwide suffered a cyberattack. A full one-third of these did not recover. Those numbers show the crucial importance of anticipating corporate risks. “The aim is to explain to students how to create value in a very risky environment,” states Bertrand Monnet. Even more so in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, which is greatly intensifying the growth of criminal risk. “As in any financial crisis, many companies find themselves short of cash flow. That is an opportunity for criminal organizations to more easily inject funds into the legal economy to launder revenues from their activities,” he comments. “In coming years, we will probably also see an exponential increase in variations on the cybercriminal forms of these techniques.”

A method based on case studies

To identify threats, students are provided with a method that enables them to determine the presence of these risks in their business, step by step. “The idea is to equip them with a kind of radar empowering them to detect the presence of such risks to better avoid them as they navigate this uncertain new territory, like a GPS,” asserts Bertrand Monnet. In concrete terms, the courses include a very academic approach to help them understand the challenges, completed by case study illustrations clarified by risk specialists as well as testimonials from members of criminal organizations themselves.
An educational documentary series for the general public

For ten years, Bertrand Monnet has been writing reports and directing documentaries for the print media and television. His purpose has been to seek out information and decode it to better explain it to his students and the general public.

“This journalistic collaboration gives me the opportunity to interview participants in the criminal economy that otherwise I would not have the chance to meet,” remarks Bertrand Monnet. He has notably penned a series on the criminal economy to be broadcast in France in the springtime on the RMC TV networks and on Netflix. A theme-by-theme variation of the programme will be published as a series of reports in Le Monde from December. The first episode examines the economy of narcotics by probing into the world’s foremost multinational drug organization, Mexico’s Sinaloa Cartel. Bertrand Monnet traveled there to observe the cartel’s activities in the field, filming the production and interviewing ringleaders.

“This series is an unprecedented mixture of documentary and university lecture: a sort of vast case study that goes beyond the lecture theater to explain what the criminal economy is by studying the cartel from a microeconomic point of view: how its logistics and supply chain are organized, what its profit margin is, and so on.”

For the first time, students participated in the adventure by playing bit parts in the documentary. And it’s possible that students and viewers will have the opportunity to interact directly through digital tools.

Interview with JEANNE CORMERAIS

At EDHEC, we are taught to become top managers. Our objective is to take a global view of every dimension of the corporate world in today’s risky context. Our role is to understand and determine each risk factor, and to take proactive steps before it’s too late. Bertrand Monnet’s classes provide us with very concrete field expertise which enables us to take a step back, an essential step in analyzing and measuring the impact of these risks. Taking an objective view is important because a company can be the generator, instrument and/or target of this type of risk, and Bertrand Monnet’s approach is extremely instructive for our analytical skills. I was also struck by the relevance of the course – its very concrete nature – when we participated in the Netflix documentary. It shows the reality of what Bertrand Monnet shares with us in his classes. Shooting the documentary was both enriching and an outstanding experience!

JEANNE CORMERAIS
Trade Student, Msc in Global and Sustainable Business
As EDHEC pursues its ambitious Strategic Plan, new tools are at hand to help brand our uniqueness and trumpet our values. In the latest of Business School firsts, EDHEC has become the first in France to create its own unique sound identity. The composition conveys energy, positivity, exchange, and an echo with the future. In short, features that set EDHEC apart.

Conjured up by Michaël Boumendil, an EDHEC Alumnus 1994, the sound identity is his generous gift to our Business School as part of the EDHEC Giving scheme. It is partly a homage to how EDHEC influenced Michaël and helped lead to his success in founding his agency Sixième Son, which invented the sound identity sector. His talent is recognized worldwide notably through signature work for brands like AXA, Krug, Renault, SNCF, and Michelin.

Michaël hastens to explain that an effective sound identity is not a decorative flourish but a vector of meaning. “Music is a language with a vocabulary and grammar. The challenge for a sound identity is to tell the brand’s story. If it’s a true story, it’s clear. The right sound signature is true to the brand, and has the capacity to stand out, attract attention, and trigger engagement.”

The story EDHEC wants to convey with this sound identity is a story of values. At a time when our school is embarking on a new strategic plan, we want to express ambition, independence, agility, and innovation. People will discover the sound identity when they view EDHEC films and messages online. It is set to quickly become a defining and distinguishing feature of EDHEC communications.

Impacting future generations
EDHEC’s decision to embrace a meaningful sound identity is incredibly timely. The global health crisis has encouraged everyone to focus on what really matters. For brands, including our institution, it’s a time to focus on purpose. Why are we here? Why do people choose to study here and not elsewhere? What do we want to change?

The new sound identity has been designed to embody this determined, caring, future-facing drive which is the engine within the EDHEC universe. EDHEC is a place where people have the opportunity to flourish and make a positive impact on their world. In a quote which could apply to every EDHEC student – past, present, and future – Michaël concludes: “It’s wonderful to invent your own path.”

NEWS #04

“
The right sound signature is true to the brand, and has the capacity to stand out, attract attention, and trigger engagement.
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MICHAËL BOUMENDIL

- Co-Founder and President of Sixième Son
- EDHEC 1994

Listen to EDHEC’s sound identity
With a PhD in Marketing and Innovation Studies from the Eindhoven University of Technology and a Research Master in Business Science from the Louvain School of Management, Michael joined EDHEC in 2013 and was appointed Head of Faculty of the Marketing Department the following year. His recent research focuses on visual and written communications for luxury and consumer goods companies. In addition to his academic talents, EDHEC will be reaping the benefits of Michael’s international background: he has studied and worked in the Netherlands, Belgium, Japan and the USA, and holds both Italian and British passports.

One of Michael’s primary goals in his new role will be implementing EDHEC’s Impact Future Generations strategic plan from a faculty point of view. “I want to empower professors for the digital transformation and ensure the school has the right staff to offer increasingly hybrid programmes,” he explains. “I also want to look at how we can support and promote entrepreneurship among our students. This generation is particularly agile and proactive, and I think we can learn a lot from their mindset.”

EDHEC aims to produce high-impact research of real practical use to both students and businesses, and the school’s commitment shows in several recent research rankings that assign a placement to institutions based on their academic merit. The SSRN places EDHEC third among Business Schools in France and 30th worldwide in all disciplinary fields, while RePEc ranks EDHEC first among Business Schools in France and 65th worldwide in financial markets.

“It is my responsibility to ensure the research we do here is shared and valued within our different programmes and that it makes an impact on society as a whole,” says Michael. “It is crucial we stay connected to the real world, using our work to help overcome societal challenges and acting as a force for change,” he concludes.
Prepare to see some new faces in some of EDHEC’s key management positions. The School has recently appointed Michael Antioco as Dean of Faculty and Research. An EDHEC professor since 2013, he was also Head of Faculty of the Marketing Department since 2014. Another significant appointment is Benoit Arnaud who, as Dean of Programmes, will manage all EDHEC Business School’s programmes: Bachelors, Master in Management, MScs, MBAs, PhD in Finance, EDHEC Online and Executive Education. Benoit Arnaud is at the helm of a newly created Programmes department, focused on fulfilling the goals of EDHEC’s strategic plan, namely fostering the hybridisation of knowledge and competencies, as well as encouraging synergies and promoting innovation within EDHEC’s portfolio of programmes.

**New expertise in the classroom and in the lab**

EDHEC also welcomes the arrival of nine high-level international new professors and researchers for the 2020/2021 academic year, who combine academic excellence with high quality teaching. This recruitment furthers the School’s strategy of expanding its faculty in line with its Impact Future Generations strategic plan, which aims to hire ten additional professors every year, without any significant increase in student numbers. With these recent appointments, the School is bolstering its teaching potential in disciplines that resonate with its strategic priorities: entrepreneurship, artificial intelligence and, most notably, law, where two new professors are joining the EDHEC Augmented Law Institute, new Center created in 2020 and headed by Professor Christophe Roquilly, Honorary Dean of Faculty and Research.

The school is investing in developing its management and teaching lineup, with a number of key nominations. Two main targets: materialize EDHEC’s strategic objectives and offer every student a unique learning experience.
From promoting home deliveries to organising online music festivals, EDHEC associations are paving the way culture, commerce and sustainability are EDHEC associations’ answer to the health crisis. Community engagement is the best way to respond to the current health crisis. With this firm belief, several EDHEC student associations took positive action.

Helping retailers stay afloat

Le Chti is a 60-member strong EDHEC association that publishes a city guide called Le Chti Grand-Lille. Last November, the guide started relaying initiatives taken by Lille’s shops and retail outlets to keep their business running during the lockdown: click & collect, home deliveries, etc. “We want to help retailers as much as we can!” says Chloé Rance, EDHEC Master student, MSc in Strategy, Consulting & Digital Transformation and President of Le Chti Grand-Lille. This is why Le Chti also started an online community funding campaign to help outlets make it through the lockdown.

Santa Claus rocks!

Every year, an EDHEC association called Le Père Noël est-il un Rocker ? organizes a music festival called Le Perno, with the aim of raising funds to buy toys for children from low-income families. This year, the festival went online. For four days, in December, participants were given exclusive access to professionally recorded live performances, interviews and DJ sets. Each participant was encouraged to make a donation. “We are convinced the festival has never been more important than during this period of lockdown,” says the Le Perno team. Who said rockers don’t have a soft heart?

Funding microcredit initiatives

With close to €73,000 collected, EDHEC came out second among all participating universities and Business Schools in The Rise’s 2020 fund raising campaign. Each year, The Rise funds grassroots initiatives undertaken by micro-entrepreneurs across the world. This year, EDHEC even came out first in overall involvement, with 7% of all students participating.

Helping others: A WINNING MOVE, WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH
In particularly challenging times, from a financial standpoint, the EDHEC For All programme aims to change the game for students in need. The objective is to offer new opportunities at EDHEC for students whose social background was traditionally keeping them away from high profile studies. An endeavor with increasingly ambitious goals.

190 additional scholarships worth €3,000 to €4,000 each, as well as 10 high impact scholarships covering 50% of a student’s total tuition fees: this is the ambitious target set this year for the funding campaign of the EDHEC For All scholarship programme, as part of the school’s EDHEC Foundation. With a 12% increase in scholarship applications this year, it is essential that EDHEC gains the ability to offer a matching response, opening new opportunities for young talents with ample merit but limited financial resources. The school has always promoted equal opportunity as one of its core social values. It is EDHEC’s ambition to contribute to creating a forward-thinking and inclusive society, by training a new generation of managers coming from increasingly diverse backgrounds. Indeed, putting business performance at the service of future generations is one of the cornerstones of the EDHEC for Future Generations 2025 strategic plan. The EDHEC For All programme carries this ambition.

An incredible 1,600 individual donors and 40 corporate patrons have already contributed to the EDHEC Foundation’s initiatives, including the EDHEC For All programme. “I made a donation to support EDHEC’s social engagement and drive” says Patrick Van Den Schrieck, EDHEC 1965, CEO of Laboratoires Sarbec and Platinum Circle Donors. “The scholarship programme allows deserving young talents with limited resources to join the school, something for which I feel particularly receptive. I also made this donation to help EDHEC expand its horizons and innovate continuously. This is particularly relevant to me, as I am convinced broadening one’s horizons goes hand in hand with promoting diversity”.

All EDHEC’s friends and stakeholders are welcome to join the effort: donate.edhec.com.
Should you trust conventional ESG scores to evaluate the sustainability performance of your investments? Not that simple, says EDHEC-Risk Institute’s Scientific Beta, with new research data that demonstrates the opposite.

Established in 2012 by the EDHEC-Risk Institute, Scientific Beta is a premier academic centre that provides fundamental and applied research for the investment industry. Scientific Beta aims to favor the adoption of the latest advances in smart beta design and implementation by the whole investment industry. Since 2015, Scientific Beta has also been offering highly advanced strategies in the area of ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) and climate change. Early 2020, the Singapore Stock Exchange acquired a majority stake in Scientific Beta.

Challenging accepted notions

In 2019, as part of the European Commission’s action plan on financing sustainable growth, European co-legislators introduced new obligations pertaining to sustainability disclosures, obligations that Scientific Beta’s research finds are relying excessively on ESG scores. On a wider scale, focusing increasingly on ESG scores is seen as shifting investors away from what truly counts. “Many asset managers and index providers construct portfolios or benchmarks that provide very significant improvement in ESG scores” says Frédéric Ducoulombier, ESG Director at Scientific Beta. “Yet, our academic research has underlined that these ESG scores are doing poorly at guiding investors who are concerned about social welfare and environmental sustainability”.

Reconsidering ESG scoring

In other words, relying on ESG scores as a meaningful indicator may drive to investments in companies with a negative impact on greenhouse gas emissions, for instance. “To help prevent greenwashing, beware of labels and go beyond climate benchmark standards” recommends Frédéric Ducoulombier as a valuable takeaway. ◆

For an in-depth perspective, read Scientific Beta’s white paper.
EDHEC’s governing boards that oversee the school’s current activities and future plans, students are lending their perspective – and gaining some themselves.

Like many schools around the world in 2020, EDHEC shifted quickly to remote learning in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis. But, how to know whether this new approach to learning is working out in practice for students? When members of one of EDHEC’s governing boards are seeking the views of students, they don’t have to look far. They can just turn to a fellow board member – who happens to be a student!

In fact, more than a dozen students sit on the decision-making boards that oversee how the school functions and its budgeting and planning process, providing a student perspective on a wide array of issues: How can EDHEC become more diverse? Why would students consider contributing to a school from which they graduated? What programmes should be prioritized in allocating financial resources?

On these and other questions, students are weighing in as full board members, providing a valued perspective while developing insights into the school, boards and themselves.

### Broad representation
As a non-profit association, EDHEC is governed and guided by boards. First is the General Assembly, a body of more than 40 representatives drawn from stakeholders with the school’s ecosystem: alumni, industry, local community organizations, professors and other staff members.

Among the Assembly’s members are 12 students, each from a different programme. Two of the student representatives also sit on the Assembly’s executive Board of Governors, which meets regularly to provide advice and make decisions, including those that are presented to the full Assembly for approval at its annual gathering.

At least one student representative also sits on EDHEC’s Ethics Board, which provides guidance and advice to the full Assembly and the governing committee, including on issues involving social responsibility.

More student representatives can be found on the Endowment Foundation Board, which is more independent of the other bodies and supports actions, research and training on diversity issues.

### A view of reality
Student representation on EDHEC boards is not only natural but essential, says Bruno de Pampelonne, EDHEC 1981, Chairman of the Board of Governors, who facilitates how the boards work. “Students, and particularly, student experience are at the heart of the EDHEC model.”

BRUNO DE PAMPELONNE
EDHEC 1981, Chairman of the Board of Governors

“Students, and particularly, student experience are at the heart of the EDHEC model.”
Student input is essential to better understanding how EDHEC’s offer is being received by its most important stakeholder. “We can ask questions and for certain issues, we may be asked specifically for our views as students on a subject,” says Carla Hervé, who represents BBA students in the General Assembly.

The feedback provided can influence current activities as well as the design of programmes that will be experienced by future students. “We have a role to be a voice of reality and what the school is truly all about: transforming students into leaders,” says Sami Messebel-Thune as one of two student representatives on the Board of Governors. “We’re given the opportunity to be heard on issues like EDHEC’s 2025 Strategic Plan or improving communications between the school’s leadership and students.”

A win-win proposition
For students, serving as a board representative can offer additional ways of connecting with their learning environment. “EDHEC is not just a school, it is a business in itself and I want to acquire a better understanding of how it works,” says Moïra Yoka, a member of the General Assembly. “It’s also an opportunity to become more involved in the school and meeting new people at a time when there are fewer ways to connect due to Covid.”

In addition to providing input, sitting on a board also gives students exposure to experienced school leaders and business professionals, providing additional opportunities to grow and to learn new leadership and communication skills for the future.

“Being entrusted with this responsibility to represent my peers has helped me gain self-confidence,” says Noa Aknin, who sits on the Endowment Fund Board. “It’s also motivated me to get involved in other groups, including an association of students from 22 French Business Schools where I serve as General Secretary.”

Jumping in
The importance of being involved in and learning about what’s happening at the school is a recurring theme among the student representatives. It’s at the heart of the advice they have for their classmates.

Says Carla, “Serving as a member of the Assembly has given me a global understanding of EDHEC and all of the things that it does that aren’t always visible to us as students.”

Gaining a new perspective can lead to increased involvement in shaping the student environment. “Instead of just complaining about something, be part of changing it,” says Sami. There are plenty of opportunities to make your voice heard and you’ll learn a lot just by getting involved.”

Adds Noa, “I would advise anyone to seize opportunities to take part in additional activities at EDHEC, whether it’s serving on a board or doing something else. Take chances and create memories. This is a once in a life opportunity!”

CARLA HERVÉ
EDHEC International BBA student

MOÏRA YOKA
EDHEC Master student, MSc in Global and Sustainable Business

NOA AKNIN
EDHEC Master student, Business Management track

SAMI MESSEBEL-THUNE
EDHEC Master student, MSc in Business Management Apprenticeship
In our last issue you introduced EDHEC’s new strategic plan which will serve as a basis for our discussion. Could you sum it up for us?

Emmanuel Métai: For twenty years it was “EDHEC for Business”, and we had big victories under this principle, especially in the field of research. But in the world we live in, and the one this generation is building, business per se is not enough. We had to invent ourselves a larger purpose, one in line with the big issues of our time. We needed to “reconcile business and society”, that’s why we have decided to make the shift from EDHEC for Business to EDHEC for Future Generations.

Our goal has always been to make an impact, as our motto states. Now it is time to make a bigger, wider, more sustainable impact. We defined three priorities to build a sustainable model and stay competitive: Research, especially oriented towards sustainable finance, Programmes & Education, to broaden the horizons of our curriculums, and Knowledge Transmission Model, to leverage the technological transformations in the field of education and build ourselves a stronger platform.

In light of this new-found purpose, what do you think the role of a Business School should be? And are our students aligned with those goals?

E.M.: If I may go first, I’d say Business Schools will have to make business a powerful tool to serve future generations.

Siddhant Chaudhary: I agree with this analysis. Business Schools have to evolve, because future careers won’t look at all like the ones we have today. They will be more fluid and instead of focusing on a single industry or field, we’ll be dealing with several throughout our careers. We need transferable knowledge and experience. Especially regarding technology and data, which will be the most valuable commodity in the coming years.

Noa Aknin: When we come to a Business School, regardless of our path before that, we are relatively new and green. Our knowledge and experiences lie within the boundaries of academic education. The real power of a Business School is to reveal ambitions through a large array of experiences, opportunities, classes, people, and so on. Within the three or four years we spend in a Business School, we mature and are exposed to many options. The goal should be to graduate with a clear path forward in mind for at least the next two or three years.
Sarmad Fateh: Adding to all this, I’d say the role of a Business School should be to sensitize a wide range of people coming from very different backgrounds to the big challenges our world faces, like sustainability, climate change or increasing wage gaps. We need to become more aware of those issues, and be taught how to move away from shareholder-premacy to be able to bring value to all communities and stakeholders. The move EDHEC is making is in line with those of many companies all over the world who are reevaluating their priorities and investment in order to have a more positive impact. The things that have gone wrong in the past can be corrected if we all move in the same direction.

Louise Chantrel: Business Schools help us build ourselves while building a better future. They help us not only in figuring out what we want to do but also what kind of world we want to build. That’s what makes them valuable.

How can you use the education you get from EDHEC to become “part of the solution”, as Dean Métais said?

N.A.: Being in a Business School, especially a top-ranked one, gives us a voice, and the opportunity to meet like-minded people to collaborate with and make our ideas grow. Having the ability to speak up is how we can have an impact.

S.C.: We can affect change by being aware and active. Aware by being constantly exposed to the complexities of the world, and active by making our future jobs elements of a positive change. At some point we will need to be willing to compromise profit to create that change.

L.C.: Business Schools are places to make ideas a reality. I know that if I really want to change something, I’ll have the capacity to do it.

E.M.: I like the idea of speaking up, like Noa said. Business Schools should give you opportunities to raise your voices, all of them. But I also sincerely hope you’ll get the conviction that you also have a lot of opportunities to act. Entrepreneurship is key, look at our alumni! Some of them chose to act, with ambition and boldness. Like Noa said, Business Schools should act as revealers.

Speaking of revealing talents, what kind of leaders do you think the world needs? What qualities should they possess?

N.A.: We need people who want to reinvent things, who see something not quite right and work to change it for the best. We need curious, open-minded individuals, with experiences in different environments, industries or countries. That’s how we can foster empathy.

S.F.: The leaders of tomorrow need to be more human-centric, more responsible. Power cannot go unchecked. We need people who understand that profit maximization is not the only way of doing things, we need people who put transformation before transaction. Leaders do not need to know everything in depth but they need to be adaptable, have a vision and a big picture. And they need to be ready for change, because it’s the only constant.

S.C.: Adaptability is going to be very important. With the many challenges businesses face, even when they have all the data to support their choices, companies often drag their feet when it comes to embracing change. The world is progressing rapidly, we need leaders who can move their companies forward and bring about change while adapting to an ever-changing world.

L.C.: Besides knowing where they are going, leaders need to acknowledge past mistakes to be able to grow from them, learn from them, and of course not make them again. Having a fresh way to look at things, boosted by curiosity and open-mindedness, is the best way to build a better world.

...
**BIG CONVERSATION: Economy & Society**

**E.M.** It’s amazing because the intent of our founders, back in 1906, was to train and educate responsible leaders, citizen leaders. At the time, the focus was on caring for workers, but the core principles remain the same today. That’s why I’m confident that EDHEC will succeed in this next phase: it’s in our DNA. Twenty years ago everyone wanted to be in marketing or financial consulting, work for big company. Today, we’re seeing a generation who cares about ethics, about purpose, about impact. You also all talked a lot about change, and adaptability. It’s a key question for us: how can we teach change? Teaching people how to be agile and become change-makers is not easy, but that’s where I think broadening your horizons with new subjects will teach you how to adapt, how to learn and how to transpose knowledge from one field to another.

**Moving on to technology and knowledge transmission: what do you think a Business School will look like 10 years from now?**

**S.C.** I think two things will play a critical role: data and the internet. With the Covid-19 crisis, a lot of schools have developed the capability to hold classes online or had to rethink the role of the campus. I don’t think this transformation will stop once the crisis is behind us. The infrastructures that have been developed proved their efficiency. Regarding data, it is already the most valuable commodity in the world, so subjects like Data Analytics and Machine Learning will not be cutting-edge but vital for all students and all Business Schools.

**E.M.** Do you think your professors will be replaced by robots or machines then?

**S.C.** No, nothing will replace in-person teaching because business needs real life, real experiences and real people. But the role of teachers will evolve, with many more tools at their disposal to enhance their teaching.

**N.A.** I think differentiation will be in the Business School’s capacity to deliver a tailor-made experience to its students. All schools will have integrated technology to their learning platforms. But the ability to use machine learning to design the learning experience and personalize it to each and everyone’s taste and needs, will be a competitive factor.

**S.F.** It will be more experiential with more specialized knowledge available thanks to technology and globalization. We’ll be able to have access to experts we couldn’t have in person, business cases we wouldn’t be able to experience without an augmented way of doing things.

**To finish with a simple question, what do you want to learn and experience?**

**N.A.** Basic skills that will be expected from me in a company. Practical and modern business cases with the latest trends. And I also want to explore fields outside of the traditional Business School curriculum and find out how I can link them to my future career.

**S.C.** I want to learn by doing. And keep on widening my horizons. Something like gamification has had a tremendous impact on my education at EDHEC. I have started to apply this to all my other classes and it’s been a true revelation.

**L.C.** I’ll take all that I can learn! And I want to be able to differentiate my diploma by choosing the classes most suited to my abilities and my plans. It needs to be like me, an expression of who I will be as a young professional.

**S.F.** More than anything, I want to maintain a strong exposure to new and upcoming subjects. And I also want to keep meeting individuals with different backgrounds and experiences, that’s a very good way to grow.
The 2020 generation of students has been deeply challenged by the Covid crisis and they will enter the job market at a particularly turbulent time. What are the implications for how schools like EDHEC should be preparing students for the future? How should classes be taught? Student performance measured? What lessons can be learned from the disruptions of the past year that can improve the quality and usefulness of the student experience? Four current students offer their ideas and observations on the education of tomorrow.
THE ROLE OF THE PROFESSOR

With an infinite variety of learning sources available online and the possibility of attending classes remotely or via recorded sessions, must the role of the professor be redefined in order to continue to add value to the learning experience?

... A definite yes, according to Noa Aknin, EDHEC Master student, Business Management track. “Particularly in the context of distance learning, I feel that capturing students’ attention is one of the major challenges today for professors. If we need more information about something, we can simply Google it. The professor’s role therefore needs to be focused instead on identifying great topics and the questions to be answered and then engaging students by providing insightful and relevant documents and creating a structured discussion.”

... For Louise Chantrel, EDHEC International BBA Student, the traditional role of transmitters of information has been replaced by a more explanatory responsibility in which professors help guide students forward into an active life that is undergoing rapid and dramatic change. “Professors can bring not only their experience in a profession or sector, but also a certain life experience and keys to reading and understanding working life that cannot be found on the internet.”

... The teaching of classes online is an area for improvement says Global MBA student Sarmad Fateh. While recognizing that the migration of classes from in person to online is still recent, “online classes with slides and professor narrating in the background is not the best way to go about it. Professors need to step up their game to make sure that the students don’t feel bored or distracted during class.” He says that professors that have found ways to introduce interactive aspects – such as making students click screens or ask questions – have been able to keep classes exciting and engaging.

... “Professors must tailor their content and delivery to their students,” according to Siddhant Chaudhary, EDHEC Master student, Business Management track. Doing so will enable them to differentiate the value they bring from the multitude of informational resources available online. Some possible approaches? Creating dedicated discussion forums for students, choosing relevant case studies and simulations, using online tools to make study materials more visually informative and engaging, designing course schedules based on class reactions, trying out multiple resources to see what fits students best, and designing tests to identify areas for improvement rather than to simply rank students. “Professors should see the growing use of online resources not as a challenge to their positions, but as an opportunity, one they must make full use of to evolve and grow with the times.”

...
CHANGES TO THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Has the social distancing imposed by Covid created new barriers to reflection and creativity? With opportunities for interaction in the classroom with peers and the professor, how can we imagine a more effective learning environment for the next school year?

... Change is not only desirable; it is mandatory in the eyes of all of the students. “The situation we’re currently living through is extraordinary,” says Louise Chantrel. “It creates obstacles to learning and makes concentration and interaction more complicated. We need a new working environment that brings more benefit to students than harm, as is currently the case.”

... How to improve on the current situation? “A new learning environment should include creativity and personal development classes with time slots dedicated to drama lessons, public speaking, or creative writing,” proposes Noa Aknin. She says that doing so can help offset the loss of opportunities for reflection and creativity that were possible prior to social distancing through links made outside of class or during informal talks.

... The benefits of online interaction also should be factored in, argues Siddhant Chaudhary. “The pandemic has made us realize that nothing can completely replace live, in-person interactions but the online tools we have developed have advantages that will last even after the pandemic is over. The infrastructure that has been built to support it will help us design a system that complements live interactions and classes, giving more flexibility.”

... An example in a social context underlines the point. The Ketchup programme, created by EDHEC students, helps connect students online who might never have met through traditional on-campus interaction.

... “While online team meetings are just not as effective in brainstorming as in-person meetings,” says Sarmad Fateh, Global MBA, “online tools like Slack or Miro have interactive capabilities that can help groups to start working together. We used these tools extensively during our ESAC FIT CHAIR initiative (aviation sector) in our strategy course and it was a lot of fun.”

...
Some proposals for improvement appear driven by frustrations with traditional methods of evaluation employed during the pandemic. “It’s unfair to expect that students will always have first-rate internet connections that won’t falter during exams,” says Sarmad Fateh. “Evaluating students based on participation in online classes isn’t good either due to all of the cross-talk that occurs.” Instead, students could be tested on several different elements such as an online exam with randomized questions, a case, a paper, a group case and a brief verbal quiz.

All agree, however, that problems with testing pre-date the pandemic. Says Louise Chantrel: “Evaluation problems existed before long before the digital age (lack of ink, transport problems, printing errors, cheating). We just learned to adapt ourselves and the environment accordingly. Many of the current problems are due to the sudden and unexpected change, and improvements are already being felt. For me it is clear that the criteria must evolve. For a school that wants to train us for tomorrow’s and not yesterday’s world, it is important to establish criteria accordingly.”

The need for changes to traditional testing is a unifying subject. Siddhant Chaudhary suggests more practical forms of assessments, like group projects, case studies and simulations, assignments, essays and business games. “These are a much better alternative to both standardized and traditional testing because they encourage students to actually understand and apply, in a scenario that is much more representative of the real world.”

“Standardized testing is a little obsolete and has shown its limits,” says Noa Akinin. “In the working world, we are constantly evaluated individually on our writing and oral skills so we should find this same balance at school. I think professors should favor one-to-one oral testing for their subject and not only do it during group projects. This could also encourage professors to modify their programme and direct them towards practice more than theory.”

Has the pandemic cast new light on the limits of standardized testing? Technical problems, concerns about cheating and lack of time issues have resurfaced questions about the relevance of traditional evaluation by exams. Are they reliable tools for preparing students for the future?

TESTING THE LIMITS
As EDHEC students contend with changes to their ongoing academic life, the professional landscape of their future is also shifting. To best accompany students who wonder whether their career dreams may have been upended before they’ve even graduated, EDHEC’s career development and corporate relations office has been adapting to the times.

“In the wake of the Covid crisis, we needed to look at the events, programmes and tools we’ve developed over the past 10 years to ensure we could effectively continue our mission of guiding students toward their first careers,” says Anne Zuccarelli, Dean of Educational Experience & Operations, at EDHEC Business School. Among the innovations, the Job Hunting support scheme: an online tool to help students prepare their career search step-by-step.

Another change: holding all fall term recruiting events online, a decision that produced unexpected dividends, according to Anne Zuccarelli. “By virtue of not having to travel to our campuses, more companies were able to participate and at a more senior executive level. It was also more accessible, with students from multiple campuses able to attend.”

Intergenerational sponsorship

The counsel being provided to students on internships and job hunting is also evolving. For interns, interacting online means a more proactive approach to networking is required, such as following up with colleagues encountered in a meeting and connecting on LinkedIn with people who are interesting, even if the link to the student’s desired career area isn’t immediately apparent.

The school also has further tapped into the resources of its potent alumni network. “In addition to the traditional mentoring relationship, we established a more informal ‘parrainage’ network,” explains Anne Zuccarelli. “This allows students to seek a quick word of advice from alumni in specific sectors throughout the world. It’s a simpler, more agile and personalized exchange from which a number of our students have benefited.”

Adaptive response

Agility and flexibility are major themes in the advice being provided to students seeking entry paths to the job market. While there are widespread perceptions of a weak job market, EDHEC’s survey of recent graduates shows there has been little drop-off in hiring activity, says Anne Zuccarelli. “Companies appear to want to maintain the flow of graduates into the workforce. At the same time, students need to be prepared to rethink their plans and come up with Plan B or C. For example, starting out in another industry to pick up skills that will allow them to switch to a job in their preferred industry.”

How are students viewing their changing career prospects? “It’s normal for the initial reaction to be concern. But, with some discussion and reflection, we’re seeing resilience, openness and a willingness to dive in and explore. And, also, a recognition that this is just their first job. The world awaits!”

BY ANNE ZUCCARELLI

Dean of Educational Experience & Operations, EDHEC Business School
Over the past 10 to 15 years, pension funds and other institutional investors have been investing consistently in infrastructure companies around the world. Yet, until recently, there were very few benchmarking and valuation tools to help them determine the correct price point of a given asset or track the performance of their infrastructure investments.

Putting it in numbers

That’s the job of EDHEC Infra, an infrastructure investment index provider founded five years ago in Singapore, with a grant from the Singapore government and the support of several banking partners.

“Because the majority of global infrastructure assets are not publicly traded, there has traditionally been a vast knowledge gap when it comes to gauging investments” says Frédéric Blanc-Brude, EDHEC Infra’s Director. “As part of our research, we collect, aggregate, analyse and standardize raw data, to help investors measure risk and evaluate performance, in a market where the number of transactions per asset is very low and prices are often kept private”.

Thanks to a comprehensive team of researchers, analysts, developers and writers, the group tracks 6,000 private infrastructure companies across 25 countries and maintains a database from which exclusive data can be extracted. A wide selection of assets in eight main categories are considered, from roads and airports to data centres and satellites, from gas and water utilities to power plants and wind farms.

Tracking market performance

From its data, EDHEC Infra produces a series of market indices and analytical research products, distributed through Scientific Infra, a private company created over a year ago to market the group’s expertise and output. “We can build different types of indices, on any given infrastructure category, from a representative sample of the companies in our database” underscores Frédéric Blanc-Brude. “This helps investors better understand the risk profile and volatility associated with a given infrastructure sector and track the performance of their portfolio against a trusted market reference. Investors can even evaluate the performance of their individual portfolio managers”.

EDHEC Infra’s distinctive added value lies in its academic nature. “As part of EDHEC, our roots and DNA are in academic research” concludes Frédéric Blanc-Brude. “Our work goes way beyond collecting information from asset companies”.

To fully understand the benefit of this unique approach, you just need to remember that during the first Covid lockdown period last spring, EDHEC Infra was the only provider able to maintain a consistent data flow.

EDHEC INFRA: Shedding light on useful investment

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Over the past five years, mistrust of large corporations has doubled. Today, one in two consumers say they don’t trust brands. Consumers now are better informed and more aware of a product’s social and environmental impact. Yet, whilst the food sector may be moving towards more transparency, this is not the case with the household product sector: it’s one of the most opaque sectors with the highest lack of transparency about product risks! And 91% of household products contain carcinogenic substances.

A new mode of consumption
This is what led Maxime Deguine and Nicolas Simon, both 2016 EDHEC graduates, to create La marque en moins. Their range of household products has nothing to hide and guarantees products that really are in the customers’ best interest. The idea began when they were both in London where Nicolas worked for a flourishing vegan yogurt startup and Maxime for Mars, the world’s leading confectionery company. “Excess packaging drove me mad”, says Maxime. “I realized that big corporations are structurally incapable of making a difference and Nicolas was convinced that small companies can make a change. So, we decided to create our own company to reinvent a new mode of consumption and sell household products for what they truly are.”

Back to basics
No more flashy packaging, aggressive marketing, or dubious substances. Superfluous ingredients are removed to focus on the essential: creating healthy and fully ecological products, at the right price, and made in France. La marque en moins sells a range of concentrated laundry, dishwasher and surface cleaning products online and delivers them directly to consumers’ letterboxes. Products are guaranteed 98%+ natural and come with an innovative refill system. And because La marque en moins relies exclusively on word-of-mouth recommendations from its existing customer base, the importance of impeccable quality and of never disappointing clients is vital. As Maxime explains, it’s both an ecological and economical choice: “By removing marketing, brand and packaging expenses we can lower the price of our products, which are normally more expensive because they contain nobler and pricier ingredients”.

Imagine a world where companies serve consumers, not the other way around... Or a world where companies put positive impact before profit. This isn’t a simple fantasy, it’s La marque en moins’ ethos. The recently launched company sells efficient, healthy, ethical and ecological household products.

SUCCESS STORY: Marketing & Entrepreneurship
SUCCESS STORY: Marketing & Entrepreneurship

EDHEC’s robust network
Creating *La marque en moins* was no easy task. Maxime and Nicolas stumbled upon a host of twists and turns and in addition to sourcing and convincing the right suppliers, raising funds was certainly the biggest challenge. It’s hard to convince people when you are young and inexperienced! The first person to come onboard was another EDHEC graduate, Guillaume Richard, *EDHEC Entrepreneur of the Year 2010*, and CEO and founder of O2 Care Services - the leading personal care and household services company in France. “Guillaume gave us the chance to develop O2’s own brand of detergents which combine efficiency and safety. And that’s how we got started. The EDHEC network was very supportive and actively contributed to the crowdfunding campaign in June 2019 which financed our initial orders.”

Making a positive impact
Maxime and Nicolas have good reason to be pleased. In less than six months, *La marque en moins* has already convinced 20,000 customers and sold more than 1 million products. Growth is higher than expected and the €505K which they have just raised from private investors will be used to further develop the business. The aim is not to increase their profit margin, but make a bigger impact on creating a more positive world. For them, the sky’s the limit when it comes to making the world a better place. “I’m convinced that brand names are no longer important. Now it’s a company’s global positive impact - from production, to delivery and end-of-life - that counts”, says Maxime. “And the current health crisis is amplifying positive impact initiatives like ours.” For Maxime, impact companies are the foundation of the future. “Making a positive impact should be automatic for all businesses and not treated as a side topic”, recommends Maxime.

### Advice TO FOLLOW

For Maxime, it’s all about being daring and broadening your horizons: “There is so much more out there than you think when you graduate from a business school. Don’t simply follow tried-and-tested paths: step outside your comfort zone and look into every single possibility. I was convinced that I wanted to work for a large corporation, yet it didn’t work out for me. Every year, lots of EDHEC graduates become entrepreneurs and they can count on them for support! But bear in mind that being an entrepreneur is tough going: you become a problem solver and you absolutely have to respect your client, supplier, and investor commitments. It’s non-negotiable.”
Every surfer keeps an eye on the horizon. In the case of Nadia and Adrien, the perfect wave came in the form of a business idea. Both are students at EDHEC International BBA students, Nice Campus. As Nadia explains: “We dreamed of combining our degree with a shared passion for surfing, craftsmanship, and the Mediterranean lifestyle.” Noticing an unfilled niche, they dived into Garage Handshaping. The company offers bespoke shaping and design of surfboards. Working closely with each customer to help them achieve their dream board, the result is a unique creation every time. Adrien says their approach is a key part of their difference. “We like to involve the client as closely as possible, not only in expressing their wishes, but to give them an appreciation of the craft at every stage. They love the experience.” The EDHEC network helped the pair to meet valuable contacts including investors, the media, and potential partners. Over seven months, including two lockdowns, their learning curve has been steep but rewarding. “We just raised €8,000 through crowdfunding to fuel our brand image,” says Nadia. And the next move? Watch out for a wave of innovative events.

It began life as a pretty basic idea. Léopoldine and her startup partners Victor Vallet and Julia Lumbroso founded a website design agency. As Léopoldine explains: “Our big reality check came after a year of running the agency. We realized the only way to offer low prices was to shrink the number of work hours we put in.” Enter the EDHEC Entrepreneurs team. “They were the first to push us to turn our classic agency concept upside down.” The secret lay in digitalizing the process, industrializing it as much as possible. Before long, WebMyDay took on its new revolutionary form. The agency morphed into a 100% online training academy package include online coaching sessions, web-building tool, and lifetime benefits like elearning access. Working from the hothouse of Station F, Léopoldine points out that their EDHEC incubator contacts also introduced them to some outstanding mentors. “Often 30 minutes of their advice saved us a month of work.”
Behind the clean lines of contemporary fashion hides one of the planet’s dirtiest secrets. As the world’s second highest polluting industry, the textile business has a lot to answer for. But where environmental analysts saw a massive problem, Alix and Charles saw inspiration. Explains Alix: “We all still need clothes, many of us want great style, but more of us want to dress responsibly. Our opportunity is to create fashion based on 100% recycled materials.” It’s an idea people love, with the Made in France touch consumers adore. Thanks to a receptive audience, crowdfunding got their concept off to a flying start. Charles is quick to recognize the role played by their EDHEC contacts. “Initially we launched it as a charity project during our first year at EDHEC. Two years in, we switched to a company model and, with constant guidance from EDHEC professors on the viability of our project, developed the idea.” Now their eyes are on the next collection with a nod to the French landscape. Distribution through physical stores in Belgium and France will follow. In true EDHEC style, Redivius is about making an impact – by making less of an impact.

Something good had to come out of the pandemic year. These three young entrepreneurs believe they found it. Matthias and Nathanaël had been studying at EDHEC. Putting heads together with Gabriel in January, the trio reflected on possible opportunities. Leveraging their combined experience in market finance and startups, they focused on everyday challenges faced by business owners. And inspiration struck! As Matthias explains: “People running businesses are concerned with growing their company. As they grow, they need more people, which means having to set up offices with furniture and equipment. It’s basically a hassle.” Taking that hassle away is the core of Leafer. Says Nathanaël: “Companies are happy to outsource. We offer simple packages where they rent what they need for the short or long term.” Gabriel points out that despite posing many problems, Covid-19 presented an unexpected boost: “Companies needed to provide their remote workers with fully-equipped home offices. Everything from a screen and modular desk to an ergonomic chair.” Plans for the future include raising capital to fund their ambitions. Success is coming.
CASE STUDY: Diversity and Inclusion study

Starting with talks

Does a diploma from a prestigious school like EDHEC boost your chances of enjoying equal opportunities in the workplace regardless of gender, sexuality, race and social background? That is the question at the heart of this extensive study headed up by Hager Jemel, Director of the EDHEC Centre for Open Leadership for Diversity and Inclusion, and which is set to publish results this summer. Researchers performed initial qualitative interviews of around 30 alumni based across Europe, which revealed many had experienced opportunity inequality for issues including class, sexuality, race, disability and parenthood.

Learning surprising results

Interviewees from less privileged backgrounds described how their lack of network and their parents’ lack of experience with the kinds of careers they were targeting had at times held them back. Other interviewees cited their sexuality as an obstacle to progress with one recounting how he had been well-meaningly advised to hide his homosexuality at work. Another interviewee described his regret at disclosing his mental illness to colleagues, whose perception of him changed radically as a result. Hager Jemel highlights one particularly interesting finding: “Many women surveyed said they did not notice opportunity inequality until …”

“Diversity is at the heart of today’s discussion about how to create workplaces that offer balance and promote teamwork. I think people are now, more than ever, looking for a sense of purpose in their careers and considering how a company honors their values when choosing where to work. I also think companies that embrace the value of diversity, as well as building a more inclusive society and attracting forward-thinking talent, see gains in terms of performance.

During the study, I observed that society is moving towards greater inclusiveness in the workplace but that we’re not quite there yet. I hope the work we did will be communicated widely to raise awareness of the issues we uncovered and help bring us all up to the same level of understanding — that’s how change starts.”

ELODIE GAUTREAU
EDHEC International BBA student
CASE STUDY: Diversity and Inclusion study

Getting students involved

While experienced researchers conducted the study’s first interviews, the Open-leadership Centre chose to involve a group of third-year BBA student volunteers to transcribe and analyse the results. “As well as gaining experience with research methodologies used, the students involved got a first-hand look at the fine line between inclusion and discrimination”, says Hager Jemel. As the study moves forward, it will continue to place student involvement at the heart of its methodology.

Making an impact

Contributing to the creation of inclusive and diverse workplaces is one of the key goals of EDHEC’s strategic plan. This study works towards that by opening up debate, finding crunch points, and raising awareness. Identifying the relevant ways in which EDHEC students and alumni experience inequality throughout their careers is fundamental to ensuring they are prepared to face, overcome, challenge, and hopefully end discrimination.

Taking the study further

Following analysis of initial interviews, a quantitative survey was created in French and English and opened up to all EDHEC alumni worldwide. It can be accessed online, takes about 15 minutes to complete, and will be active until March 2021. The questionnaire aims to collect as much data as possible on the most common diversity factors among EDHEC alumni and how those factors have influenced their careers and salaries.

they had children, with several describing a definite career “before” and “after” for parents”, she explains. “Several men said they felt obliged to make changes to their professional choices upon becoming fathers, while numerous women said that it was motherhood and not their gender that made a difference to their chances of promotion and salary progression”.

Through the initial qualitative interviews, we were able to discover some surprising topics of discrimination that we’re perhaps less aware of: for example, men facing negative feedback after having children. I was also struck by the career facilitators we identified—like the importance and potential of having a mentor and activating your network.

Working on the study pushed me to question my own contribution to promoting diversity. I hope that raising awareness of the study’s results will encourage others to do likewise and enable them to adjust their behavior. It was also really inspiring to hear about the twists and turns in the interviewees’ careers, learning how they have overcome barriers and forged their own paths.

Pauline Thomas
EDHEC International BBA student
EDHEC Online has offered Business School degree and certificate programmes in English and French since November 2018. With a current cohort of 417 students from more than 10 different countries, it provides a global and high quality e-learning platform to students of all profiles who cannot study on campus because of their worklife or professional activities.
“EDHEC’s online programme gives me a global vision of my job and more efficiency.”
Ludmilla Woimbée
• Business Developer - Automobile B to B at Business Center Citroën and DS, Citadelle Group
• Programme Manager Online
FRANCE, MARTINIQUE

“EDHEC Online is helping us to listen, analyse, understand and reinvent the company together with our employees to offer an ecological and human experience to our customers.”
Ludmilla Woimbée
• Business Developer - Automobile B to B at Business Center Citroën and DS, Citadelle Group
• Programme Manager Online
FRANCE, MARTINIQUE

“EDHEC online gives me the opportunity to travel the world, live from my passion and study. Studying and being a professional athlete is not always easy and EDHEC Online gives the chance to combine both in the best way possible.”
Camille Delannoy
• Professional kite surfer, currently ranked world number 2
• Online BSc in Business Management
BRAZIL, but also SPAIN, HAWAII, CAPE VERDE, PORTUGAL, MAURITIUS, MOROCCO, etc. Pretty much anywhere there are wind and waves!

Ludmilla Woimbée
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• Programme Manager Online
FRANCE, MARTINIQUE

Grégoire Fabre
• Manager of Pulperia Quilapan
• Online MSc in International Business Management
ARGENTINA

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BRAZIL, but also SPAIN, HAWAII, CAPE VERDE, PORTUGAL, MAURITIUS, MOROCCO, etc. Pretty much anywhere there are wind and waves!
“There are two aspects of the EDHEC Online programme that have been particularly satisfying and fulfilling.

Firstly, especially during these times of isolation, the sense of community achieved through our class meetings, group activities and team projects.

Secondly, the programme’s fast and challenging pace, which makes me push myself and stay at the top of my game.”

Eduardo Disla Cruz
• International Business Coordinator for Tecnoagua
• Online MSc in International Business Management

“EDHEC Online training has enabled me to embrace my role as a manager and feel more legitimate in the position.

It has also allowed me to develop my leadership skills and given me all the tools I need to manage my team’s work.”

Chloë Larsay
• Director of Marketing, Communication and Fundraising at San Donato Group (Gruppo San Donato) in Milan
• Programme Manager Online

“I chose the EDHEC Online MSc programme to challenge what I have learned throughout my 10 years of professional experience.

I also wanted to develop my knowledge about business management and improve my capacity to question, evaluate, act and react.”

Marie-Camille Descamps
• Corporate Brand Manager for Auchan Retail
• Online MSc in International Business Management
Today, you speak frankly of transforming Total for the energy transition. How will you do that? Are you still counting on oil and gas?

Patrick Pouyanné: We have announced a transformation that should allow us to get to net zero by 2050 while increasing our energy offering, thanks to massive investments. Total in 2021 is no longer just an oil company. Total is becoming a broad energy company. In 2050, 40% of our sales will come from electricity (primarily renewable), another 40% from natural gas (including biogas and green hydrogen), and 20% from liquid fuels (including biofuels). So, there will be much more electricity, more gas and less oil – but still some, because demand will remain, and it’s our job to meet it. We producers are often criticized: we are selling oil because there is a demand. If we didn’t do that, someone else would, and we wouldn’t have the revenues we need to finance investments in renewables. It would be a lose-lose situation. In the years ahead, our investments in renewables and electricity are going to rise, and represent more than 20% of the Group’s net investments. So, in 30 years, oil will still be part of the picture, but our business will focus on natural gas and electricity. We’ll be involved in LNG, solar, offshore wind, electric vehicles charge points, batteries, biofuels, biogas and even hydrogen.
China has announced its ambition to be carbon neutral by 2060, and India is investing in the energy transition. Is this change in the energy mix relying on coal the key to the energy transition?

P.P.: That’s the big question for climate change: how will we convince these emerging powers to give up coal, which still accounts for 27% of the world’s energy and 58% of the energy in China. It’s huge. You have to look at what these two countries are facing. When it comes to energy, price, security of supply and sovereignty are crucial factors. An energy system that relies on imports is a weakness. Moreover, in China and India, coal is an abundant domestic resource that represents millions of jobs. It’s a real challenge to convince these countries to address climate change. Without them, the energy transition will not succeed, because that’s where it is at stake. In a way, that is what President Obama managed to do by bringing China into the Paris Agreement. There was a counterpart: Europe and America agreed to commit $100 billion a year to help these countries with their energy transition. Yet today, we are only giving $5 to $10 billion a year.

The question for us here in Europe should be this: when we launch the Green Deal to invest a trillion dollars over the next ten years, should that money be invested here or in India and in China? At Total, we’ve decided to invest in natural gas and renewables in India. ...
Why did you choose to work in the energy sector after leaving EDHEC? Young graduates are not necessarily attracted to this sector. What are its plus points?

Stanislas MITTELMAN: First and foremost, at the time, I wanted work with a global scope, and the energy sector is fundamentally international. As a result, I have worked in France but also in Nigeria, Vietnam, the Philippines, Zimbabwe and England. Secondly, energy is life. Access to energy equals access to education, to development. I am attracted by that idea. Lastly, in the context of today’s challenges regarding climate change and the energy transition, the stakes are high for the topics we’re dealing with, and that’s fascinating.

You operate in some particularly unstable regions. How does a company like Total manage these risks?

S.M.: Total is present in 130 countries. The best protection against the risks you speak of is to ensure that our activities promote the development of the countries and communities in which we are operating in the best way possible. Then, of course, when crises become more acute, the principles of anticipation and security as an absolute value motivate our actions.

Unlike other super majors, Total has chosen to be present across all the value chain, from production to distribution. Why this Rockefelleresque choice?

P.P.: There are two key ideas: the first has to do with the company’s purpose which is to provide affordable, reliable and clean energy to as many people as possible. That means producing, but also delivering energy. That’s why we have oil platforms, as well as 15,000 service stations around the world. The second idea has to do with economics. When crude prices go down, we make less money in the upstream business that produces and sells oil. On the other hand, we will recover some of this money in refining and distribution, the downstream businesses that buys oil. And vice versa. Being integrated across all the value chain helps cushion the impact of volatile price swings. This strategy has made us resilient in times of crisis. It’s the same thing with electricity: we’re producers with solar, wind and gas power plants, as well as in distribution, thanks to Total Direct Energie in France.
Shaping the Next Generation of Public Sector Leaders

Given that tomorrow’s leaders will be exposed to a more complex and uncertain environment and will need to be equipped with hybrid knowledge and solid understanding of both the private business sector and public policy, EDHEC has launched a double degree in Public Management. As EDHEC enters a new era, we asked three alumni who are engaged in public affairs to share their experience.

The health crisis has exposed the world to unprecedented uncertainties and really brought home just how interconnected the public and private spheres are when it comes to addressing society’s most difficult challenges. Complex, global issues such as climate change, high structural debt, and increasing inequalities require the expertise and resources of both the public and private sectors. This is why EDHEC launched a major transformation through its Strategic Plan and the development of partnerships with schools preparing for careers in public institutions.

One School, many possibilities

When they heard about the new double degree Public Policy Management programme run by EDHEC and Sciences Po Lille, Anaïs Aït Mansour (EDHEC 2019), Christophe Boillon (EDHEC 2014) and Victor Pace (EDHEC-LSE 2016) wished they could have studied for it. At the time, they all chose EDHEC to learn the ins and outs of business and benefit from the vast opportunities offered by the School’s tailor-made training programmes. Christophe took a year off during his Masters to gain experience in private companies, Anaïs had a two-year apprenticeship as a Public Affairs Officer with Generali, and Victor went on an academic exchange to Chile, followed by an internship in Mexico and then a postgraduate...
degree at the London School of Economics (LSE). Their experiences confirmed their choice to work in public affairs. Christophe and Anaïs chose the pure player option – French highly competitive public administrations exams – and successfully passed the 2020 ENA exam. As for Victor, his career path to date is quite atypical. After his Masters, he decided to spend his summer break working as a volunteer in Alain Juppé’s presidential primary campaign in 2017. This marked the start of a brilliant career in politics: for three years he worked in Matignon as Press Advisor to French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe, followed by eight months as Chief of Staff to ADP’s Deputy CEO, and is now Clément Beaune’s (French State Secretary for European Affairs) Chief of Cabinet.

Meeting inspirational people, such as the Sub-Prefect for Refugee Integration, also played a key role in my decision to work in public affairs.” Victor too says that his decision was based on meeting inspirational people. “I have always been passionate about politics”, he says. “I was able to meet very inspiring people during the presidential campaign and in Matignon. That’s what convinced me to work in politics so that I could play my part in France’s transformation.”

A world of opportunities

Ministries, prefectures, embassies, high administrative bodies: public affairs offers a great variety of jobs in different environments. For Anaïs, “Careers in public affairs are often misunderstood, almost mythical, but in reality the sector is much more exciting than people imagine.” Christophe completely agrees with this: “Public sector management positions include the same human, strategic and financial challenges as in the private sector. I experienced this first-hand during my two years at the Banque de France, where I helped to optimize their processes.” While Christophe plans to work for the Ministry of Social Affairs, Anaïs is aiming for a position at the French Ministry of Economy and Finance, even though she is still interested in social integration, refugees and internal security. For his part, Victor can’t predict what his next position will be, but knows ...
LEADERSHIP TRENDS: Management & Leadership

for sure that it will be exciting. “I was lucky to be able to move from politics to the business world when I joined the ADP Group, and then return to politics. My years at Matignon were so fulfilling. I worked with the best experts in each sector and was exposed to a wide diversity of subjects. As Chief of Cabinet today, I accompany the Minister on business trips, work on Brexit press releases, and organize my team.”

Adding value with EDHEC

Today, our three alumni clearly stand out among their public affairs peers, with their transversal skills, field experience, fluency in a second language, team spirit, and clear understanding of how companies work. The combination of a company placement and international studies that EDHEC provides was a real plus. Their involvement in the student organization, mainly Agora, meant that they were able to put their sense of leadership into practice. “EDHEC’s graduates are better equipped than the more classic profiles”, says Anaïs. “Our specific mindset, and the fact that we want to make things happen mean that our atypical profiles are highly appreciated and much sought after. A career in public affairs is tough but doable. If you have a strong appetite for crisis management, are not risk averse, and don’t count your working hours, go for it! You won’t regret it!”

EDHEC and public affairs:

The public sector offers a wide variety of careers. While some students choose to take highly competitive French public administrations exams (ENA, Banque de France, etc.) or follow prestigious international administration recruitment processes (UN, IMF, etc.), others may prefer a career in the private sector with a consulting firm or a private company with a public service such as the RATP (Parisian transport authority).

Double degree Public Policy Management programme (EDHEC – Sciences Po Lille):

This three-year programme was launched in September 2020 and aims to train hybrid students seeking careers in public administration and the private sector. It includes two academic years split between EDHEC and Sciences Po Lille campuses, a six-month internship in the private sector, as well as six months of professional experience in the public sector.

Public sector Career Booster:

This initiative was created last year and is available to all students engaged in the double degree. It offers customized career guidance to ensure that students are able to manage their careers in public affairs at all the different stages: understanding sector trends, hiring processes (how to pass the ENA exams) and networking with companies and graduates.

EDHEC ALUMNI ENGAGED IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS

ANNE DE BAYSER


was Deputy Secretary at the Elysées until October 2020, winner of the 2019 EDHEC of the Year award

LAURENT SAINT-MARTIN

EDHEC 2009

is currently General Rapporteur for the budget in the French National Assembly and Senate.
Catching the wind

Such a project cannot hinge entirely on desk work and interviewing experts, however. From the project’s onset, the team aimed at getting a proper field perception. A first successful round of crowd funding in August 2020 provided the initial part of a €150,000 total budget for the project. This early funding helped acquire Aquarelle, a wooden ketch (sail boat) that will be used to travel across the Atlantic Ocean for a full year, to experience first-hand some forward thinking initiatives in Spain, Morocco, Senegal, Cuba, Colombia and the USA.

Impacting future generations

Through the Utopia project, Baptiste aims to drive awareness and offer future generations the perspective and strategies that will help them build a better future for themselves. Utopia’s long-term purpose is to empower tomorrow’s decision makers. “We want to send a positive message that we still have the right levers in hand to take action” concludes Baptiste.

Tackling plastic pollution

A student on EDHEC’s MSc in Entrepreneurship and Innovation programme, Baptiste is also a born ocean preservation advocate, raised on the coast of Brittany in a family of sailors. “To me, bringing together my business education through EDHEC with my interest in understanding the implications and complexities of protecting the sea was a no-brainer” he says. This was the start of a project called Utopia, initiated in 2019 to identify and promote novel solutions to reduce our society’s global plastics footprint.

Moving upstream

Baptiste’s initiative quickly picked up momentum, with over 20 participants joining the association, from Business School graduates to industrial experts. “We quickly found out that to offer meaningful strategies, we needed to trace and map the plastic value chain all the way up, from marine pollution to waste management, to production processes in different types of industries, even questioning the use of plastic as an economically viable option, product type by product type” explains Baptiste.

What’s NEXT?

Baptiste believes in moving in incremental steps. “We aim to produce a first draft of the encyclopedia by June 2021, before we set sail on Aquarelle from August 2021 to August 2022” he explains. But before that, €40,000 of funding still needs to be raised through additional partnerships. A series of conferences and school presentations will follow upon their return, before a final publication of the encyclopedia by February 2023. Baptiste is already thinking beyond that, with the idea of turning Utopia into a consulting company that will advise corporate entities on reducing their plastic footprint. A second expedition is also on the drawing board, this time on a larger scale.

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Baptiste de la Gournerie knows it: cleaning the world’s oceans starts with tidying up the production processes and practices of our industries. This was the starting point of a novel project to rethink the use of plastic in our society. Welcome to Utopia.

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Writing the book

The group’s research effort will lead to the production of an encyclopedia of plastic, that will be Utopia’s prime deliverable. The encyclopedia will take a bird’s-eye view of the topic and offer strategies and solutions to mitigate our reliance on plastic. The point is also to give industrials, citizens, researchers and politicians the multidisciplinary perspective they need to steer their course of action. The encyclopedia will also provide the material for a series of video documentaries for a wider audience.

Impacting future generations

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Covid-19 is now both a health and an economic crisis, and the latter is likely to hit us hard – especially the younger generations. As the job market slows down, what impact will it have on those currently entering the workforce? The EDHEC NewGen Talent Centre teamed up with top engineering school CentraleSupélec Alumni to explore the question.

The schools, EDHEC and CentraleSupélec Alumni surveyed alumni from the last 30 years, during which the world experienced the 1993 recession, the dot-com bubble in 2001, and the global financial crisis of 2008. They were asked about the impact of timing on their careers and what advice they would offer graduates entering the job market today.

1. When the going gets tough, the tough get going

One major difference between those who entered the job market at a difficult time and those who did not was how they found work. Outside of a crisis context, 39% of those surveyed said that employment followed an internship or short-term assignment, compared to 29% for those jobhunting in a crisis. In parallel, speculative applications yielded far more success for jobhunters during a crisis (24%) than for those who left education at a ‘better’ time (18%).

2. Look for the silver lining

The majority of survey respondents who started looking for a job around the 1993, 2001 and 2008 crises reported reaping benefits from their seemingly disadvantaged position. 62% said that the experience had given them the opportunity to develop agility, adaptability and resilience.
3. This too shall pass

While it would be natural to think that entering the job market with the world in the grips of an unprecedented health crisis would put the brakes on a career, the experience of EDHEC and CentraleSupélec alumni says otherwise. An overwhelming 79% of survey participants who started work in a difficult context said that their career did not suffer in the long term.

4. Do the hustle

The survey’s participants had plenty of wisdom to offer the graduating classes of 2020 and 2021, which can be summarized in seven key points:

- Be proactive and stay visible on social networks
- Search methodically and prepare well for interviews
- Define your job hunt criteria
- Stay flexible
- Activate your network
- Do not rule out an international move
- Have patience and persevere

So, while getting that first job might take a little longer, the long-term impact of entering the job market during a crisis is minimal and might even prove beneficial. EDHEC and CentraleSupélec Alumni will be following the progress of their latest graduates closely over the coming months; find out how they are faring in the next EDHEC ‘Placement Survey’ to be published in March. Read previous placement reports.

Read the full results of the study.

Read the full results of the EDHEC – CentraleSupélec Alumni ‘Entering the workforce’ survey.
WHAT IT'S LIKE FOR US: students have their say

What does it mean to be an EDHEC student or recent graduate in the era of Covid?

Against the backdrop of a world health and economic crisis, EDHEC students and recent graduates were asked to share their thoughts on their school and how it will help them make an impact during their working lives. They took a look back to offer advice to their teenage selves, and a look forward to speculate on the long-term consequences of Covid for business.

“"If I could offer advice to my 15-year-old self, I would tell her that your career - and your life - is not a one-way street. There are always options to turn round or take a different road. That's what EDHEC is helping me do. By allowing me to reconsider my career choices and move into an entirely new industry and working environment, my studies are also enabling me to make a more meaningful impact on society than I have in working life so far. The MBA programme is unparalleled in its diversity, and I have spent a year working with and learning from a very international team of classmates. They have given me a greater understanding of the opportunities and challenges in our globalized society and made me a much better mediator and potential ‘translator' between different cultures and leadership styles.”

“"If I had known on the day lockdown hit that it would be my last day on campus, I would have done a lot of things differently. First of all, I would have gone to thank my Master’s Director, Ms Coisne. She was really there for us during our consulting project, always supporting and pushing us to go further. I would also have taken the time for some long walks around the campus, enjoying a few last moments within the school’s excellent infrastructures. I would have had one last meal in the canteen and taken advantage of the sports facilities one last time, for example. And, of course, I would have spent time talking with classmates that I may never see again.”
“EDHEC is a unique school because it is very dynamic and therefore full of surprises. The EDHEC associations work so hard to gather students and create original and amazing events, even during the pandemic. I feel like I’ve really flourished since starting here, developing both my hard and soft skills – everything from leadership and organizational skills to my capacity to listen and stay open-minded. During lockdown, I kept motivated by following classes online and participating actively. For group projects, I encouraged my team to meet for video conferences to pool our thinking and support each other. I think that remote working will be a lasting result of the Covid crisis in the professional world – international business travel will never be the same!”

EDHEC MASTER STUDENT, BUSINESS MANAGEMENT TRACK

“EDHEC is unique in the impact it has on students and the working world. It offers us an incredibly effective network along with a strong sense of solidarity through both good times and bad. I think that sense of unity is what will help me make an impact in this world, even more than the academic work. EDHEC is more than a school, it’s also a mindset, which makes and will continue to make a difference in the long term. EDHEC has helped me open up and taught me not to be afraid; I hope to be able to bring that into my future career. Entering the workforce after Covid will require greater flexibility. Even for students, it has forced us to reinvent ourselves and our working methods, finding solutions that will help us adapt and keep moving forward. That has made a profound impression on me.”

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EDHEC INTERNATIONAL BBA STUDENT

“At EDHEC, students’ personal growth is considered just as important as our academic and professional success. My studies here are helping me develop my business skills, but also my sense of empathy. I believe my time at EDHEC will enable me to make an impact in the world on a foundation of experience and global awareness. I’m very proud to be part of the EDHEC family. When I graduate, I hope to bring a sense of fellowship and humanity to the working world. Relationships with the school and other students have always been important for me and I’ve tried hard to maintain them, even during lockdown, through remote tools and group work. I think the pandemic has taught us all a lot about resilience, and will make our generation better at knowing what we do and don’t want.”

EDHEC MASTER STUDENT, BUSINESS MANAGEMENT TRACK
Rail depot turned startup hub

Station F was born three years ago, in Paris’ trendy 19th district. Formerly a freight train depot, it was given the ultimate makeover and transformed into a 34,000m² thriving startup scene. Perfectly aligned with EDHEC’s entrepreneurial ethos, the school has a base within the incubator, to mentor startup creators.

EDHEC Entrepreneurs’ startup Studio

November’s virtual visit opened with Justine Soudier, an EDHEC graduate who is now Director of EDHEC Entrepreneurs.

“We have created a programme that challenges ideas and boosts creativity, particularly for students and graduates who have an idea for a startup,” explained Justine. Budding entrepreneurs can participate in Ideation workshops to help develop creativity. They can also follow a 15-week boosting programme known as the Lab. Lastly, projects can be pitched to the EDHEC Studio, “a one-year programme with the goal of getting startups to generate a turnover. You have access to our co-working spaces, our communications department to help visibility, HR to recruit interns and to a multitude of experts”, added Justine. “These include top managers from SEB, Starbucks, Leboncoin, Paypal, the list goes on. It’s a truly exciting opportunity that has led to success stories like the healthy food app Yuka, which has more than 15 million users.”
EDHEC’s two-year Master in Management GETT track is designed for future business managers with a particular interest in disruptive change through innovation and technology. It comes as no surprise that participants had a steady stream of questions during the visit. Many were keen to know how they can join the EDHEC Entrepreneurs Lab and Studio and what the qualifying criteria are. “Any EDHEC student or graduate can apply, and all resources are 100% online,” explained Justine. “It’s perfect for people who want to challenge their imagination and find a business idea. We are proud to have worked with more than 600 projects in the Lab and founded 50 businesses in the Studio.”

Station F: An international adventure

To reveal more about Station F, head of startup programmes, Marwan Elfitesse was the next speaker to take the virtual floor. Marwan, EDHEC 2011, was perfectly equipped to give advice on how to break into the startup world. “Station F has over 1,000 startups, more than 40 VC funds and over 30 international incubator and accelerator programmes,” he explained. He also highlighted the international nature of the organization, with the highest proportion of foreign startups coming from the US and English being the working language. An aspect that was of particular interest to GETT students, who spend part of their EDHEC training abroad at prestigious schools in the US (Haas School of Business, University of California, Berkeley) and Korea (Sungkyunkwan University, SKK GSB). “Station F is an entire ecosystem, that includes a co-living extension that houses up to 600 entrepreneurs,” Marwan added. Making it possible for startuppers to bounce ideas off one another at work or at home. Marwan ended by answering questions from students, who were particularly keen to learn how to turn their startups into success stories.

Rising startup stars

Drawing the visit to a close were two startup founders, Aymeric Grange, co-founder with Thomas Arnault, EDHEC 2013, of sustainable toiletries brand 900.care and Sophie Wilford, creator of “See My Vet”, a remote veterinary platform. Both are currently part of EDHEC’s Studio programme at Station F. They explained how they are using Station F and EDHEC resources to bring their product to market. They received dozens of questions from EDHEC students who wanted to understand the more practical aspects of launching a startup, such as how to make a prototype or build a successful revenue model.

Closing comments came from EDHEC GETT Director Ludovic Cailluet, who ended the visit on a note of optimism after witnessing heartwarming “passion and energy” from students and participants alike.
In a world thrown into turmoil by the Covid crisis, with industries under siege, business models shattered and career plans capsized, what does the future hold for today’s students?

For EDHEC alumni and recipient of the *2020 EDHEC of the Year* award, Philippe Guerret, it’s a world of opportunity.

“Everything we do needs to be reinvented, whether in business, in law, in every part of society. For those willing to dare to be part of it, it’s a time of exciting and extraordinary challenge.”

He sees one of the key roles for EDHEC as preparing today’s students for the rapidly changing professional world that is increasingly flexible and mobile. “It’s already rare for someone in my class to spend their entire life with the same company; today’s generation will have the challenge of rethinking how we work and do business – changes already occurring that have only been accelerated by Covid.”

Another priority for business schools: continue to work to bridge the gap between the academic and the real-world needs of businesses, preparing students for flexibility, not to fear failure and to know how to celebrate success.

Philippe’s path to entrepreneurial innovator was far from conventional. For this, EDHEC provided a good training ground. “Being uprooted and thrown into a new environment with a mix of people from around the world and with different backgrounds was my first experience with autonomy. It also meant learning about the greater power of working collectively, a lesson reinforced in playing rugby.”

He describes his professional experience as less a career than a series of projects. Even during stints with established multinationals, the renaissance theme is evident. “At PepsiCo, there were obviously enormous global resources behind us but it was at a time when they had no presence in Europe so we had to create everything from scratch.” Likewise, at VINCI, where he helped launch new concession models for airports and freeways. In the world of duty free operations, a weak presence in the airline and airport market required more reinvention while managing UGC’s audiovisual rights during its takeover by Canal+ added yet another experience in flexibility.

**Adapted learning**

He’s never been one to follow a straight line along his wandering career path. Today, by combining his experience with industry, technology, patents and people, Philippe Guerret finds himself at the head of a green revolution in agriculture.

**Professional serendipity**

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This role of change agent is one he knows well. Philippe Guerret is the founder and CEO of M2i Life Sciences, a French industrial firm producing pheromones, a biological alternative to conventional pesticides for crop protection. As such, his company is a leader in an ongoing global transition to greener, more sustainable agriculture.

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With this as his background – and at a point in his career when he was preparing to return from the U.S. to France, it was an easy decision to forego a perhaps more secure, traditional salaried position in favor of creating a totally new company. “I didn’t set out to be an entrepreneur. It was really a product of series of fortunate life experiences: an academic background where I learned to adapt, the professional opportunities I was offered, the great people I met along the way…”

Growing green

His first independent venture also introduced him to a new influence: industry. First co-founding and managing a firm supplying active ingredients to pharmaceuticals, then leading a life sciences company in the field of optometry.

In late 2012, he founded M2i Life Sciences, which he describes as “an industrial company with an innovative technology platform helping to drive the world’s transition to bio-ecology: one of the main challenges facing today’s and tomorrow’s generations.”

The firm produces a synthetic version of substances naturally emitted by insects, known as pheromones. These biomimicry products protect crops by disrupting, trapping or repelling insects through non-harmful smells and are a sustainable alternative to conventional insecticides.

The environmental benefits are multiple. With its products being sold in 60 countries, the firm’s products displaced 20,000 tons of pesticides in 2020. In addition to contributing to biodiversity – “Let’s save the bees,” says Philippe – there are benefits for climate change by cutting the consumption of the fossil fuels used to produce pesticides and a reduced carbon footprint through the preservation of forests, water resources and soils.

Real products real customers

Having positive impact on the world’s ecology isn’t the only source of satisfaction for Philippe. “We are working to help the greatest number possible in terms of health, agriculture, and the environment. And, we’re doing so as an industrial company that also creates real jobs for real people, working in real plants to manufacture real products that are useful for society. A strong country is one that has plants and a robust industry. It is one of the byproducts of the Covid crisis that there is a new appreciation for the importance of being able to make things ourselves.”

Beyond capitalizing on being in the right place at the right time, what are the leadership qualities needed to achieve success? “Setting a good example and communicating,” says Philippe. “Also, being willing to make decisions, even if they’re not always going to be right. To progress, we have to be willing to fail. We also have to remember how to celebrate our successes. It’s what inspires, and gives hope and meaning to what we’re doing in our day-to-day life. It’s what builds bonds and makes us a collective force. And with that collective force, together, we can move mountains.”

Spoken like a true rugby player. ♦