



# Corporate Network

During its last Solvay BVS, the School had the opportunity to welcome Murielle Machiels as its guest speaker. Learn more about her vision on how to adapt your business techniques in digital times.

## Why the digital transformation of my company almost failed?

by Murielle Machiels

When I was appointed CEO of an educational publishing company, I was facing many challenges. Almost all our brands were declining, we lacked focus, we didn't have the right organization to make new brands, we had to prepare for the digitalization of our market and our private equity shareholders wouldn't allow a decline in profit because they wanted to sell the company at a high price. And I didn't want to compromise on my values and restructure. I was determined to find another way to increase profits and prepare for the digitalization.

### We started by working harder

I started with a very classic strategy that consisted of a strong focus, new processes and a new organization, strong promotions and a new digital strategy. We all worked very hard and it delivered first results rapidly.

A digital transformation is not at all "doing the same as previously" but online, it is a 180° change. Everything changed: our strategy, objectives, business models, products, processes, job descriptions, ecosystem, competitors, systems, ... And it didn't change once, it changed constantly.

### ABOUT MURIELLE MACHIELS

**Murielle Machiels** is an expert in digital leadership and organizational transformation. Until recently, she was the CEO of an educational publishing company. By combining ontological\* coaching principles with business techniques, she led her company successfully through the digital transformation with great financial results and increased happiness of her employees. Today, she supports other leaders and organizations through their transformation and is academic director at Solvay

Executive Education for the online course: Authentic Leadership for Digital Times.

\* Ontology is the study of humans as whole beings with their mental thoughts, their emotions and their body.

### Working harder was not possible anymore, we had to work smarter

Changing those things was the easy part. Internally, we were facing big issues:

- We all had too many things to do making it difficult to focus. We still had to deliver the "old" that represented 95% of our revenues but had to do the "new" as well.

- The decision process became too slow or inefficient. By the time a decision had reached the management team (if it did) and went back, new information was available making the decision ridiculous or the opportunity was gone or the problem had become a crisis.
- Our plans kept changing all the time, sometimes even before the implementation had started. It was driving everyone mad.
- The need to collaborate between departments was so big that it had outgrown our functional structure. We were organized in functions around a process. The problem was that the processes kept changing. So, the departments needed to align around the new information. And the people weren't finished aligning around one change when the next change was already there, and the next one and the next one. As a result, people were spending more time in meetings trying to align than doing their actual jobs. That created silo thinking as the people needed to have a sense of control.
- And finally, all the above was increasing the stress levels and we started having burnouts.

It became clear to me that our traditional business techniques weren't serving us anymore. The speed of change was shattering them. We had to implement new business techniques like working in iterations or agile, in cross-functional teams, increase empowerment, define a purpose, ...

## But I had to adopt a new professional identity first

The new business techniques didn't deliver the results we expected at first. Not because those techniques were the wrong ones but because I didn't have the right mindset and leadership habits to implement them. During the digital transformation of my company, I lost my professional identity. My previous identity had served me very well through university and in my career but was now standing in the way of my success. I had to adopt new leadership habits and become a new kind of leader, better equipped for our digital age. And I wasn't the only one to go through that process, my management team went through it as well and everyone in the organization. Without the new mindset and leadership habits, we were going to fail in implementing the new vision and techniques. And that is why we almost failed, and why one in three companies disappear within five years.

We had to learn to manage our energy and fears instead of our time, learn to let go and accept some chaos, learn to trust in order to empower, adopt a growth mindset instead of a fixed one, learn to choose the best interpretation instead of being right, learn to listen to each other and increase empathy, learn to fail fast and try again, learn to manage through values.

### LEADING AUTHENTICALLY IN DIGITAL TIMES

Adopt a digital mindset and increase your impact and peacefulness with the QiLeader online course

The QiLeader online course is for CEO's and senior leaders who are transforming their organization for the digital and volatile age with a new kind of mindset and culture. It is also for managers who would like to increase their authenticity and increase their impact and every person operating in a fast-changing market.

#### MORE INFO ON :

[exed.solvay.edu/digital-leader](https://exed.solvay.edu/digital-leader)

[Read the leaflet about this programme](#)

### ONE IN THREE COMPANIES DISAPPEARS WITHIN FIVE YEARS

Most companies realize they have to transform their business models, strategy, culture, organizational structure or ecosystem to thrive in the digital market. But only a few succeed because they fail to realize that in order to become successful in the digital age, the leaders need to transform first.

### THE GOAL OF THE QILEADER COURSE IS TO HELP YOU INCREASE YOUR IMPACT AND PEACEFULNESS IN THIS VOLATILE ERA

The online course will guide you through the four habits of an authentic leader in digital times. By transforming your mindset and your habits, you will see your organization and market with new eyes. You will see new possibilities that might have been invisible to you.

