

CEO for a Day – 2017 Edition



Jean-François Heris

Philippe Masset

Muriel De Lathouwer

Jean-Pierre Clamadieu

John Porter



Sebastiano Federighi

Iyas Ait Benhiba

Romane Goldmuntz

Loik-Mael Nys

Lenka Slezakova

CEO for a Day

Five brilliant students shadowed five CEOs! They share their experience with us

About CEO for a Day

Using a rigorous selection process, **Odgers Berndtson Brussels** chooses **five top students of the Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management** to spend a normal working day shadowing a CEO of a well-known Belgian company.

The aim is to **help these students accomplish their career objectives** and to show that they do not need to go abroad to find great opportunities.

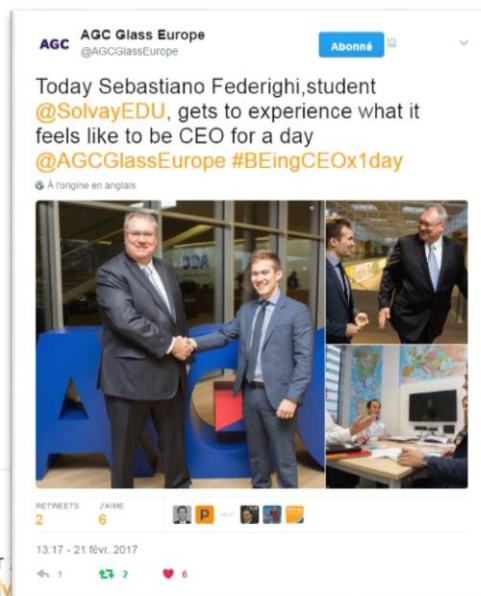
What about the selection process?

The selection process is divided into **four phases**:

1. The jury looks for leadership initiatives in the applicants' resumes
2. An on-line Hogan leadership assessment is conducted
3. Telephone interviews help to centralize impressions
4. Semifinalists spend a half day in the Odgers Berndtson Brussels offices, interacting with all partners and participating in group exercises and speed interviews

The jury carefully **matches the selected finalists and CEOs**, considering key elements such as sector affinity and personal/cultural fit.

[More details of the event here.](#)



What did you learn from being a CEO for a day?



LENKA SLEZAKOVA

*Selected student for Telenet
Solvay Master of Science in Management Science*

The CEOx1day was a great learning experience. First of all, I learned a lot about myself. The selection process involved **personality and leadership assessments**, as well as tailored, personalized feedback. It was great to find out how other people perceive me and to interact with other like-minded students!

The learning, however, expanded exponentially during my day with John Porter, the CEO of Telenet. As the day progressed, I got involved in numerous meetings and talks – about the company’s strategy, processes, marketing, and more. It was incredible to see **how all the things that we have learned in school as separate subjects align together to generate value**. It also reminded me of how important it is to consider things with a big picture perspective.

As **digitalization and the challenges of the future** were the central topics of the day, I could contribute with some insights from my startup experiences. It was really interesting to see how several concepts from startups could be applied in a big organization.

To sum up, from a personal standpoint, the day with John Porter made me understand that **a career really is a long-run project** formed out of a number of different experiences and endeavors. Sometimes as students, we are so focused on succeeding that we neglect what an important lesson a failure represents. I think for the future, one should definitely not be afraid of failing, as long as valuable lessons can be drawn out of it!

Useful Links

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Sebastiano Federighi

*Selected student for AGC Europe
Solvay Master of Science in Business Engineering – QTEM Program*

Thanks to CEOx1Day on February 21st, I had the incredible opportunity to spend one day alongside Jean-François Heris, CEO of AGC Europe.

I had two particular objectives when attending the meeting with Jean-François Heris: understand what it's like to be a CEO and, having the bold ambition of becoming one myself, assess the path I will need to take.

Although the day as a whole was too wonderful to put into words, two moments clearly stood out. The first one is when I had the chance to participate in a meeting regarding the Kinestral project roadmap. Although the conversation was quite technical and difficult to follow, the **insights** I could take out of it were exceptional. The second moment I enjoyed the most is simply when Jean-François and I sat down for lunch. During this one-hour lunch break, we were able to speak openly about topics and really get to know each other.

To conclude, this day was filled with lessons. However, if I had to pick one key takeaway, I would say **that the most important task for a CEO is to listen carefully to ALL employees.**



Loïk-Maël NYS

*Selected student for Solvay
Solvay Master of Science in Business Engineering*

There are three main learnings I took away from my wonderful experience with Jean-Pierre Clamadieu, CEO of Solvay Company: **leadership, vision and competitiveness.**

In terms of leadership, my key take-away is that **being approachable is the founding pillar of leadership.** It is too widely thought in academia that leaders work on their own and are difficult to approach. I want to aim at the same level of leadership that I observed with Jean-Pierre Clamadieu: inspiring and leading people by **treating them with the same level of respect and gratitude.**

My second learning is the vision Jean-Pierre Clamadiou has for Solvay. I have had a hands-on glimpse of **how a clear vision shapes a bright future** and triggers people to work in the same direction. **Taking the time** to align people to understand and own this vision at their level within the company is a key success driver.

The last key learning of this experience has been to **better understand how companies such as Solvay can position themselves in a competitive landscape**. Obviously, first mover advantage is part of the answer. Yet in the long run, this is not an asset that will maintain the differentiation before the competition. Caring for all stakeholders and integrating people and environment in your decision-making is another key point. As Jean-Pierre Clamadiou said: *"Will you feel comfortable justifying any decision before your shareholders and / or during a press conference? Will you blush... or will you shine? This is up to you. Being competitive is, first of all, about not building an empire on quicksand."*

To conclude, I am very grateful to have been able to shadow one of the greatest and most brilliant CEOs we have. My one advice to anyone willing to be part of the next generation of leaders is the same one Jean-Pierre Clamadiou told me on the 23rd of March: *"At the end of the day, leading people comes down to one very basic concept: having the right mindset"*.



Romane Goldmuntz

*Selected student for EVS
Solvay Master of Science in Business Economics*

When you ask someone *'what does it mean to be CEO ?'*, there are few chances that this person will be able to give you a concrete answer. However, if you say that you are holding that position, he/she will be very impressed. During the day I spent with Muriel De Lathouwer, I learned about what it takes to be a CEO and why people are right to be impressed.

Being a CEO means time management. You have a lot of issues to solve or decisions to make in one day, and in a short amount of time. It was impressive to see what Muriel could tackle in only one hour.

Being a CEO means being the company's image. Everything you do, or are, in a professional context can impact your company's reputation. Therefore, you need to be aware of your speech in every situation. This is why Muriel has a Corporate Communication Manager who advises her.

Being a female CEO is not the same as being a male CEO. The gap is closing - Muriel told me this several times, but stereotypes are still well established and a large group of people are still expecting a man in this kind of position. However, this is a problem that can be overcome with time and Muriel faced it remarkably well.

These are only a few of the insights from my experience; the list is long and I will definitely apply what I have learned in the future. CEOx1day is an amazing opportunity that any aspiring leader should take.



Iyas Ait Benhiba

*Selected student for Bank Degroof Petercam
Solvay Master of Science in Business Engineering*

Philosophically speaking, I participated in the CEO for a Day program to confront and challenge my convictions. Spending the day with Philippe Masset, CEO of Degroof Petercam, confirmed what I believed: Leadership isn't a rank or authority. It is a choice. The choice to lead by example to inspire as many people as possible.

Throughout the day, I participated in interesting conferences, board meetings with top executives and workshops on the digital transformation of the bank. This allowed me to learn more about the structure of the bank, the political tensions that some decisions can impact, the management of people and the way Degroof Petercam empowers clients to achieve their ambitions.

Through all the different meetings, Philippe helped me realize that there are no simple things, only a simple way to look at things. Since our behaviour is a function of personality and the environment, I witnessed that by making it right, every single one of us will have the capacity to do remarkable things.

In addition, this experience helped me to deconstruct some widespread misconceptions present in our system. We need collaboration instead of competition. A real leader is someone who sacrifices the numbers for the people and not the people for the numbers. It showed me that collaboration and trust are complicated notions that you can't instruct or impose. It takes time and requires honesty, integrity and awareness (of yourself and others).

Last but not least, I confirmed that education does not stop after graduation. I was always a strong advocate of lifelong learning but now, more than ever, I am committed to sharpen my existing skills and to develop new ones. This experience helped me mature in lots of ways, both on a personal and professional level.