

**Jacob Morgan 00:00**

gonna upload your audio and video so that I can download it. It probably takes like 2030 seconds, but just don't hang up right away when we're done. Alright, and then I'm going to record my footage directly to my camera. If for some reason you see like the video cut out, it's still recording. It's just sometimes when it's uploading and we're recording at the same time, you know, the bandwidth issue can be weird, but trust me, I'm there and everything will be recorded just fine at the very end.

**Jacques van den Broek 00:28**

It's one of our core values, to know to trust and to serve.

**Jacob Morgan 00:31**

So I like it. I like it. Alright, I'm going to push record on my camera here. Alright, so we're all good to go unless you have any other questions. If not, I'll jump right in.

**Jacques van den Broek 00:44**

Sure. Why don't you Alright, cool.

**Jacob Morgan 00:47**

Hello, everyone. Welcome to a another episode of the future work podcast. My guest today Chuck Vanden Brook. He is the global CEO of Randstad. And today, we have a fascinating conversation going to be looking at the future of work and a bunch of other fun stuff. Jack, thank you for joining me.

**Jacques van den Broek 01:04**

Yeah, great to be here.

**Jacob Morgan 01:06**

So first, to get started. I wanted to learn a little bit more about your your background, your story, and how you got to be CEO. So take us through a little bit of your history and how you got to where you are. Yeah, sure.

**Jacques van den Broek 01:21**

Well, I started in this business a long time ago, I'm now 61. But I started 34 years ago, when I was 27. Pretty coincidental. I studied law, I found out during studies that I didn't want to be a lawyer, but then still finished it because it's a good entry point or whatever. And then I landed a management trainee job, which I thought was a good basis to start and learn. I knew I was going to be working private sector and commercial work there for one and a half years was okayish. And then like probably 50 to 60% of the people that join us. I was approached by a run start consultants that I knew privately and said, you know, you might want to fit in nicely with us. And why don't you come over and we'll have a conversation. And yeah, I started from the ground up very small, typical High Street Branch to unit for consultants. And I liked it immediately. You sort of own your own store. It's very fast paced. At the end of the week, you you've seen your results, how many people you have at work, how many new clients you had. And yeah, I entered when we were very fast growing as a company, so 20 30%, organically. So there was not a lot of time to train me. So I'm one of the worst trained persons in the company, probably. But anyway, and yeah, I grew with the business. I liked it. And a few months later, I was

appointed to a bigger brain region, when I was 33, became a board member of the Dutch organization. And yeah, you know, ever since and you don't plan to become a CEO, that's not how it works. Yeah, I'm actually not great at listening to my bosses. When my boss says no, to me, that has always been the beginning of a great idea. And that's sort of the culture, I still nurture within the business deliberately. So because the business is very decentral. i We have close to 5000 branches. People need need to take decisions every day, you cannot from a sort of central head office mindset say this is what you need to do when this occurs. So I preach this, you know, follow your own lead in the interest of your talent and your clients. And that's worked for me. Yeah, work should have come. For

**Jacob Morgan** 03:48

people who are not familiar with the company, maybe you can give a little background background information around what you guys do, how many employees you guys have?

**Jacques van den Broek** 03:57

Yeah, so we are a Dutch company. If you were public companies for 30 years now, but still in the intrinsic values of the company. We're a family based company in staffing, so temporary work to begin with, but now full HR services, so anything you could think of around HR services, so temporary work, fixed jobs, assessments, outplacement and training and we do everything. We do that in 39 countries. And we place probably 2.32 point 4 million people in a job every year. Wow. Very proud of that because that's the impact we're having right? from all walks of life. So from blue collar work all the way up to the level just below the C suite. In it and logistics in food. Well, you name it. We do it. Back to that family things To our founder who's still alive, he's 88 years old Fritz Gulch meeting. He wrote a thesis as an economics major on temporary work and started his own business when he was also 27. Right away like me. But very early on, nowadays, everybody talks about sustainability. And that sort of thing, maybe already in the 1980s, in his annual reports, wrote that a company doesn't have the right to exist, if they're not valuable to society. And because we're a service company, which is invisible, right, you can't see a service, he sort of formulated values that we live by, and that we want to be recognized for. So to know, to serve and to trust, simultaneous promotion of interests so that the business is complicated, because you cannot just concentrate on the client or just concentrate on the talent on just concentrate on your own results, you constantly need to balance that. Yeah. And that's what is simultaneous promotion of interest comes in, and then striving for perfection. If you're a perfectionist in our job, you'll go totally bonkers. But, you know, trying to do the job as good as you can. So that's who we are a lot of growth from within strong culture. Now, of course, I grew up from the shop floor, but 88% of the management has followed a similar path as I have, because there's no formal training for this business.

**Jacob Morgan** 06:26

Yeah. And how many employees you guys have? 40,000. Wow. Okay, so very large company.

**Jacques van den Broek** 06:34

Quite 40,000. Most of that are consultants in the field, working with clients and talent every day, in roughly 4800 branches across the globe. And again, placing 2.22 point 3 million people in a job every year.

**Jacob Morgan** 06:54

Before we talk a little bit about some of the trends that you're paying attention to I'm very interested just specifically in in your leadership style. So it sounds to me like you're a big believer in things like curiosity, getting people to ask questions, can you talk a little bit about your leadership style and your approach to creating this kind of a culture at your company?

**Jacques van den Broek** 07:16

It's very hands on. So we say we're an operational company. So I still have my own clients. I still trained consultants and management, and in Brenda COVID, but still in branches every week with clients every week. So I'm a firm believer that, let's say innovating, and staying relevant is very much by being out there. Yeah. Also, on innovation, we founded our innovation fund seven years ago, to really see what's out there surrounding our business with technology does to HR services. And I managed that myself. So I didn't hear you know, hire a few very intelligent consultants. And then we're innovative. Now, firmly believe that you need to feel it yourself. So that is the management style, quite accessible nonpolitical, the interesting thing about a business like ours is I always say everybody has the same profile as the CEO, that just younger, everybody comes from, you know, college education is ambitious, want to go wants to go places. And that's the kind of environment we want to create. That's why growth is so important, because of course, I grew in the business when when I started in the business, it has less than 1 billion revenue today 24 billion. And when the business grows, people can grow and people can make a career with us. And that's very important.

**Jacob Morgan** 08:44

What are some of the trends that you're paying attention to? When we think about the future of work? Obviously, you're working with a lot of companies, a lot of different geographies where? What's catching your attention in the world of work at the moment? Yeah,

**Jacques van den Broek** 08:57

well, we of course, saw what the labor market was coming to. I I'm sometimes surprised that governments are surprised with scarcity or mismatch, because you, you see things coming. Now you see the advent of technology, you can sort of make a projection on how many people that would need to fit. You see ecommerce coming up. You see aging populations of people leaving the workplace, and you can make those calculations. So what we did, we saw the mismatch and the scar city come in. What does that mean for a company like ours, or for recruitment in general, by the way, so recruitment is pretty straightforward. You need someone you put out an ad or a job posting whatever you do, people react, and then you make a selection. But we knew that less and less people would be reacting to them. That it's going to be a changing from a client market to a candidate a talent market. So that's important. So we concentrate on creating this biggest data lake possible have now currently some 200 million people that we are in constant contact with. So, of course, when I was in, when I was a branch manager, I could only in my hands have Around 100 250 people, when and when they left, I could never stay in contact with them, which is a pity, because many temps start with us as a temporary worker when they're relatively young and early part of their career. So we saw that technology will enable us to stay in contact with people throughout their working life. And that is very much what we're trying to do. The added value is that you know, we are and we stay relevant partner for you, where are you in your job life? How do you match up to people with the same profiles are things changing in your

life, you get a family, you want to work from home, that sort of thing? Well, you can come to us and we can have a discussion. And that starts with technology, artificial intelligence, but at the end of the day, it always ends up with a conversation like we're having, we call that second touch. So that is very important. On the client side, we saw that companies would be you know, in need of people, not just in need of people, but also at the same time having the big challenge of keeping their own workforce Fit for the Future. Because on the one hand, we see, you know, Scar city tough to find people at the same time. And the sectors are technology, healthcare, education, anything around ecommerce. At the same time, there's still many people, millions who are in what we would call repetitive white collar jobs, banks, insurance companies, governments, those jobs will disappear. So working with with, with our clients, and with the people into those organizations to say, Okay, where can we get you to, and ideally, matching the supply and demand. That is really what we see coming, we're very active there, advising governments advising individual talents and companies. But that's, that's a hard journey, it's a hard journey to to really be aware of what's happening. So let me give you an example. We did a questionnaire, a survey amongst a few 1000 people, and we asked them who's responsible for your career for you, you know, providing for you for yourself and your family. Just 25% of people said me 75%, the government or my employer, and that's a big, big misunderstanding. Yeah, it is 100%, you. And we're trying to, you know, be an advocate for this responsibility.

**Jacob Morgan 12:52**

I'm a big believer in that, too. I mean, I always tell people, you can't rely on educational institutions, or your companies to teach you everything you need to know to be successful, you got to look out for yourself. And I think this is a big mindset shift as well, because I think a lot of people believed, you know, over the past 20 30 50 100 plus years that your company would take care of you that the government would take care of you that if you needed to learn something your company is going to teach you or you're going to learn it in school. And now we're seeing that that's not the case at all. And everyone has to have a little bit of that entrepreneurial mindset that that push that drive, because ultimately, it's it's up to you. And I'm actually very shocked that only 25% of people said that they were responsible for their own careers. I mean, it's, it's crazy to me.

**Jacques van den Broek 13:42**

Yeah, well, you know, and talking about the companies, they do regard it as a responsibility not just to train people to do the work in their company, but also to train people to make them employable outside of the company. But in a way, the majority of my clients are struggling with the fact like, they've got this great infrastructure of testing and training tools and that sort of thing. But people are no no flocking to it. They sort of shy away from from, you know, Is this really necessary?

**Jacob Morgan 14:15**

Yeah. So it sounds like, you know, obviously, there's a lot of talk of a great resignation. So you were not surprised by that. It sounds like you had data you had to research. You saw this coming. And when people started talking about it, you were like, Yeah, well, we knew this was coming. So you weren't surprised?

**Jacques van den Broek 14:33**

No, no, we weren't surprised. And something interesting happened in the beginning of COVID, in the first year of COVID. And now, in the first year of COVID. Actually, people were quite happy with our employers. They were quite happy with the fact that they were taken care of, of course, everybody was sort of, you know, what is this and that sort of thing and working from home and that sort of thing. Most companies handled this relatively well. They stayed good and well in contact with the people. How are you doing that sort of thing. So that was good in the first year. And we do these researches frequently, at least once a year. In within, in the second year, like now, we see this yeah, great resignation, we call it the Age of Enlightenment, and all of a sudden people like, Yeah, well, by the way, how dependent EMI or my employer, because in the first year of COVID, we all talked about the mass unemployment that would stay. But that didn't happen. And I said that COVID is a blip. So the the inherent scars of the inherent mismatch, the changes that people need to make on the labor market that was already quite apparent. And now, yeah, people are, and what is it like two thirds is really thinking about, you know, I might, I might, I might want to make a change. So that is, yeah, maybe worrying for an employer, right? Yeah.

**Jacob Morgan** 16:01

Yeah, no, it should be. One thing that you mentioned earlier, and we don't hear much conversation about this anymore, you were talking about automation and jobs that were going away. And if you like, before COVID, this was a very big area of conversation. And then during COVID, the AI and automation conversation sort of died down a little bit. And it became much more about that COVID and hybrid work. But I'm actually curious, because you mentioned that some jobs were going to go away. So according to your data and research, are you seeing a lot of jobs being taken away by technology? And if so, which areas? Are you seeing that happening the most?

**Jacques van den Broek** 16:39

Yeah, so I spent a lot of time, three, four years ago, really saying, you know, it's not about the blue collar jobs, everybody thought blue collar jobs would disappear. And actually, that's not the case. So if you talk about the consequences of of AI for jobs, I always say there's three things which are important, and that you can work with the first one is which your head different levels of non repetitive work, which a personality and personality can be in sales can be in client and customer contact can be in healthcare can be in education, and with your hands with dexterity. So a lot of jobs like order picking and whatever, and will take a long time for those jobs to disappear. So your typical human elements, personality, improvisation reading a conversation, that sort of thing will not be replaced by AI. But repetitive jobs, which we mostly see in white collar, so So RPA is robotic process automation, that will take place quite quickly, and we see it already. And funnily enough, a lot of systems certainly in Europe hinges around the stability historically of these white collar jobs. And also when we look still at the education that people are choosing, and the demand is almost the opposite. Because I and I talk a lot to parents, also, you know, this, this, the safe administrative job is not the safe job. There are different jobs. And if you if you talk about the COLAs, societal appreciation of jobs, in technology, of jobs in corners, installation, like these real basic plumbing, repair jobs, those should be way higher up on the ladder. And by the way, also the salaries are going up quite drastically, whereas in white collar, nothing's happening. And that is, yeah, if you're now if you're now in your early 40s, you will not end up in that job, let alone with an employer.

**Jacob Morgan 18:51**

So are you worried about the role that technology is gonna play? Are you optimistic, and you'll just think that, you know, create lots of new jobs and opportunities for people out there?

**Jacques van den Broek 19:01**

You have many jobs are becoming more attractive because of technology. Because, look, look at the job of the consultant that run start a lot of the boring stuff, administration looking for candidates, it's been done by technology and and that goes for a lot of jobs. So in that sense, I'm optimistic, but you need you need to take the bull by the horns and not wait for this to happen. In general, that goes for a lot of things. If you just wait, then bad things are gonna happen to you. So is, Am I happy with the way my job is going to change? Have an open conversation with your employer about your job? I've heard I'm having many conversation with my clients where I say you should just say to your full workforce that you can't guarantee and you're not sure that everybody will be working with you or in the same job in the next three to five years. And this is a big debate that you want to have discussion with everybody in the company Because the good news is we're going to be short on people in general, we're going to be short on people. But if you don't change it, then you have a lot of people stuck in jobs. And well, I also said, By the way, that economic growth is going to stall if you don't feel these jobs, in climate change in technology, and in any commerce in healthcare education. So, yeah, I'm gonna, I'm optimistic by nature that goes with the job, by the way. But it goes too slow. If you talk about institutions, governments, educational institutions, we're going to, we're going to slow on this.

**Jacob Morgan 20:37**

It's interesting, because and I would imagine why a lot of leaders might be scared to have that conversation, right? Because, you know, if you go to your workforce and say, hey, you know, I don't know how many of you are going to have a job here in the next three to five years. I'm sure a lot of leaders are worried that people are just gonna quit right away. Like, why, if you're telling me that now, I'm just gonna leave? You know, tomorrow. Does that? How do you deal with that?

**Jacques van den Broek 21:03**

Yeah, well, this is about communication, right? Yeah. I always say to people, we don't pay you to be present, we pay you to perform so implicitly, Enron stock. The message is also not because of technology, but because of performance, that you can have a great future here. But you need to perform. Right? So I think that's good. It's the start of a conversation, right? It is, why am I telling you this, I'm telling you this in your own interest. Because if we you we as a company, and you as an individual in my company, don't develop a plan B within the next one to two years. I think I'm irresponsible towards you as an employer, and you're responsible towards yourself.

**Jacob Morgan 21:47**

Makes sense. You mentioned something that optimism goes with the job. And I'm curious why why you said that, and why you think it's so important for leaders, not just CEOs, but leaders across the board to be optimistic. And what does optimistic actually mean?

**Jacques van den Broek 22:04**



Yeah. Well, let's talk about COVID. March 2020. So from day one to day two, we saw it coming in Asia, but then it went very quickly, in a few weeks. For our business, we lost on a 50,000 people, employees working. And of course, if that if that trend sort of continued, well, yeah, where is this? Where is this going? My day was totally changed. I used to fly around the world meet people, blah, blah, blah, I was stuck at my desk at home. And everybody was feeling that. So my role as I see it, is that first of all, to explain to people, what do we think is happening? And I said to them, there's two things we don't know. The first one is how deepest is going to go? And the second one is, how long is this going to take? So those are two themes that we need to go dive into ourselves. Let's first go to all our clients. Let's go first of all our companies have the conversation with our clients where they are feeling. So I tried to push the energy outward, so to say and not staying at home, of course, you stayed at home, but you visited everybody virtually. And then within a few weeks, we started talking about the possibilities. Not Oh my God, what's happening to us. But what are the possibilities here? Because people look at a leader. And if things are going great, it's not so important. But in these situations, if the leader is like, guys, I don't know. So what do they think? So what I do is I run a lot, and I always start running with a problem. And ideally, I come back with a solution. So yeah, that is that has always worked for me. And I think that's important, not be naive, you know, I'm always happy that that's not what I'm trying to say. But I firmly believe we'll get out of it. Not just that, but we'll get out of it better than ever. And that's what we did. So in the midst of of last year, we defined a program internally on growth and on doing things we never did before as a company. And we pulled it off. So very proud of my people. high satisfaction, employee satisfaction. Yeah, funny because it's cynical, right? So COVID A lot of people sick, even dying to me in the first first wave. But then, yeah, as a company, we had a great year, if I can say so. Yeah. We learned a lot about cells.

**Jacob Morgan 24:42**

Yeah, it's it's interesting, and I like that you mentioned that being optimistic isn't just about being happy, because I feel like sometimes people make that up, right. They're like, how can you be optimistic and so happy and I think those are different things. Being optimistic is just hopeful and try To create positive change, it's not just blindly saying, oh, everything's fine. There's no problems. Being optimistic is I love that.

**Jacques van den Broek 25:10**

People know, I'm actually I'm never happy on the performance itself. Well, we're a young business, and we're all market leader, but we get 6% of a huge market. So opportunities are so Bountiful, that it's always like, I always call it worried but safe, you know, happy with yesterday, but not happy with tomorrow. And that's a subtle balance. depends a bit on who you're talking to. Right? Yep. For Zoltan, I should be happy but always upbeat. For my direct reports, it's a different picture.

**Jacob Morgan 25:45**

Yep. And I think leaders need to know that you can be scared and still optimistic. So you could

**Jacques van den Broek 25:49**

Yeah, and then share it with people. So so I'm certainly influenced weeks like, Hey, guys, we're going to get out of it. I don't know why. And I don't know how, but we'll figure out a way you need to be opened up.

**Jacob Morgan 25:59**

Yeah, I love that. So I feel like one of the things related to that, and we've been hearing a lot about this lately, is this topic of vulnerability and leadership? I'm curious to hear your take on that. And what role you think vulnerability plays is vulnerability, important for leaders now?

**Jacques van den Broek 26:16**

Very, some, a lot of people always say that jobs I'm having. It's you're lonely as lonely at the top. I don't feel that way. Because of the vulnerability. I'm just sharing with my team and with my people and some some broad sense, having, you know, future goals with hundreds of people how I'm feeling and how I'm doing at home, and how my kids are doing. And that helps. That has helped me Oh, it also helps, I think people that you can be open and honest about that. So yeah, as always works for me, people are sort of always know where I am. What does

**Jacob Morgan 26:55**

vulnerability actually mean? Because I feel like a lot of leaders sometimes struggle. This means just like sharing everything about yourself, or how do you conceptualize what vulnerability means for other leaders out there?

**Jacques van den Broek 27:07**

Yeah, well, it's, I also use it in a way. So for example, sales is very important in any business, but certainly in our business. We're a low margin, highly competitive business. So sales is important. So I share, and I'm good at sales, by the way, but I share the fact that I'm still nervous. I'm nervous for a pitch, nervous or meeting new people, and certainly in this virtual way, how to connect with people, and I share that with them. Two things. First of all, there's Oh, he also has that, of course. But the second one is that I also talked about overcoming that vulnerability by just doing it and therefore setting a bit to seem like you know, we're all in it with it doesn't stop with just feel anxious, you know, you got to do it. And the more you do it, the better you get at it. So that is that's important. But that's just me, that's just not a general thing. But I'm, I'm a family man. So next to the career and my wife has also had a career I share that. Why do I share that? First of all, because I'm proud of my wife, the second of all, because we're a company with 65% women. So I want to tell them that, you know, I know what they're up against. And I can support that. And then yeah, I got my two, my two sons, I talk about them just to be close to people.

**Jacob Morgan 28:29**

Yeah, let people know who you are. Yeah. Have you? Like, what? What made you be vulnerable? Because and, again, a lot of leaders, I think, struggle with this, because they don't want to be vulnerable. They're scared to be vulnerable. Is there something in your company or your your culture that helps encourage this like, basically, what I'm trying to figure out? What are the variables that need to be present to make vulnerability work for leaders and for people in the company?

**Jacques van den Broek 28:57**

Yeah, as always, it's about how you behave. You can talk about this, I can say to you, you need to be vulnerable. But if if you don't see me acting that way, so it's very tough to talk about this, you just need



to, you know, put your money where your mouth is. But it goes back to these values, so to know, to trust and to serve. I also I also talk a lot about how I messed up and all the mistakes I made to, you know, to make people aware that it's better to make the mistakes because then you try and blah, blah, blah, instead of just talking about successes, because that's boring. So that's how you try to instill a culture, if you will. And I mentioned I also train so in our company management, always trains and training. We train teams so it's not you go to a classroom whereas people you never met their colleagues when you don't work with them. Now you train with people you see every day because improvement lies in you know, improving the team and then the real stuff gets through to the forefront. And that all helps. So there's many aspects of our culture that vulnerability is good.

**Jacob Morgan** 30:07

Have you ever had either for yourself or for members of your team? Stories of one vulnerability backfires? Like when you share something and I don't know, maybe people use it against you or people see it as a weakness has that ever happened for you? Or anybody that you know?

**Jacques van den Broek** 30:24

No, not really. I think the reverse. So for example, I find it still very tough to fire someone. So when on a Monday, I need to fire someone, the whole weekend is like, oh, shit, there's something I've got to fire. This guy's like going to the dentist. I share that. So yeah, and things go wrong. But yeah, I don't care about right or wrong. I care about doing and trying and trying again, and that sort of thing. So the Trust has never been no idea. I think we as a company, we have sort of a cleansing mechanism where people sort of fall out. Because the majority comes in young. So you're this is what people know. And that's how they're being brought up. So you get this again, cleansing mechanism of politics and that sort of shit.

**Jacob Morgan** 31:16

Yeah. What about for leaders who want to be more vulnerable, and they're listening to you? And they're thinking, wow, you know, sharks really doing a great job of this, I want to be more vulnerable at my company. How do I start? Where do I begin? Like, how do you embrace vulnerability and be okay with sharing and making mistakes? Because again, this is really hard. I think for a lot of people in general it work. So if they want to emulate what you're doing, how do you any any steps, any things that we could do?

**Jacques van den Broek** 31:46

Sure. Well, first of all, is, in general, by the way, be who you are, you cannot be a different person at work. That's very tiresome. Also, it goes with communication, right? So I'm sitting here with Elise. And when we communicate externally, we tell the truth. So when we're not doing well, in the US, for example, was doing well in us. But in theory, in a business, I always say why that's the case. No, because we're unlucky, or we had the wrong clients. Yeah, we just didn't do that well, and we had to replace people in the team. And the truth always helps, because you can be consistent with the truth. Second of all, it is what is important to you in your life. So I value my family, and therefore I'm vulnerable on my family. So but there's all in as a bit of an instrumental thing to it, because you need to talk about and think about what you want to improve in your company. So if I want to improve the sales capacity, and the risk taking in sales of my people, I talk about my own vulnerability in sales. So that

might be different per company and per business. But so aim, your vulnerability are two things you and what you want to improve in the company.

**Jacob Morgan 33:07**

I like that approach. Yeah, I think it helps create that trust and that that connection. And maybe one more question about this, is, are there any barriers that keep people from being vulnerable? So again, you've worked with a lot of companies, and I'm sure your pay attention to some of this stuff? What are some of the factors that kill vulnerability or that keep people from being vulnerable?

**Jacques van den Broek 33:30**

Yeah, it's more to the fear of the unknown. You mentioned it yourself. Like, if I do this, what could be the risk of me doing that? Yeah. And in general, I like taking risks. So my former CFO would never let me use the sentence from data center. So if you're fully in control, you're not going fast enough. So you got to embrace that. In our business. That's okay. Because this is not a business where if you make one mistake, it will hurt you for 10 years. So, you know, you can just, you know, innovate and only innovation. And I said to my people, you know, why don't you go and experiment a bit. And at some point, we have 400 initiatives in the company was totally out of control. But that's better than people saying, Yeah, but yeah, he's saying that, but if I spend money in and it goes wrong, then blah, blah, blah. So I talk a lot about my failures. I talk way more about my failures than I talk about my successes. Just to set the scene. Yeah. And there is not risk. There is just no risk there. Just try it.

**Jacob Morgan 34:32**

All right. Well, speaking of failures and mistakes, you've mentioned this a few times, I'm sure a lot of people watching listening are thinking, well, I want to know about his mistakes or failures. So do you have any particular mistakes or failures that come to mind? The bigger the better? Because I want people to know that leaders make mistakes leaders fail all the time. So what's the mistake and maybe what did you learn from it?

**Jacques van den Broek 34:53**

Yeah, well, let's start small. So my second branch of Of course, I'm the CEO. So I was always very successful. And everything always worked like a charm for me. So I had this branch with 16 consultants, it was all going great. And we had a great atmosphere and blah, blah, blah. And then one consultant Quit. Quit. And I liked the guy, we had a good rapport. Yeah. I liked it. A few good years here, but I want to do something else. Okay. So said to my boss a bet his name was bet bet quit. Yeah, asshole. And my boss said, so you couldn't have done anything differently for him to keep on now? Of course, not tried everything, you know, you know? Why should he quit? So? And then he said, Well, maybe you should give it a bit more time. And so that was the first one. So as a mindset again, so back to things which I find important a leadership, what could I have done differently? I'm a firm believer that stuff doesn't happen to you, you know, you can influence this. And you always need to, you know, hold up the mirror. So a few years ago, at 100, top 150 management meeting, I gave everybody the best tool that I think Management provides, which is a small mirror, first look there, and then, you know, then there might be something that you couldn't. So you know, is that a mistake? No, it sort of changed the way I looked at things. Then another one, HR outsourcing, hey, you're into trends, podcast is around trends. And probably some 1015 years ago, the trend was really full HR outsourcing. So every

company will go to full HR outsourcing starts with payroll in your build Personnel Administration on top of that, and once you have all the data, you can build all the services on top of that. That's a good idea. So we are going to go into payrolling. And personal administration, everybody thought it was a great idea, I was in the board already presented it to the analysts, everybody happy, we bought the company, we bought another company, we probably sunk 150 million into it. And then it didn't fly. So we had all these workshops with all these HR leaders, clients, you know, this is what we have. So if we implement that with you, we have that data. And you can the whole suite of surface you can build from rasa. And they were really, so there was fear in that room like that, taking my job. And they didn't feel like buying all that from one service provider worked. And it was too much of a technology play. So having a payroll and an automated all these collective labor agreements, and the software awaited and building that software was not really our strong suit. So after 100 and 50 million, roughly, we close it all down. So that was probably my my Yeah. Was it again? Was it a failure? Right? At least 150 million people get fired for that?

**Jacob Morgan 38:01**

Yeah. So what did you you learn from that? Because, you know, a lot of people make a little mistake. I mean, I make little mistakes all the time. And oftentimes, we beat ourselves up over little mistakes, right? Oh, I should have said that, or I didn't. But you know, here you are, as a leader of a big company, 100 \$50 million mistake, which I can't even imagine. How do you? Well, first, what did you learn from that? And second, how do you get over that to keep that? You know, how do you avoid that mistake? From not just crushing you and from keeping you from innovating and wanting to do other things in the future? Because that's a hard thing to get over?

**Jacques van den Broek 38:38**

Yeah, that's a good question. Well, I'm sort of, what did we believe in? Right? And it was not just us. So everybody said this is going to happen. This is the road to glory. And actually, we were quite successful. In the beginning, I, a large client of mine gave me our payroll 17,000 people. So the beginning was good. The sales story worked, people. Yeah, it sounds good. But we underestimated the complexity of building that technical backbone. So what I learned from it is called the maker by discussion, we do have a lot of tech in place, but constantly don't overreach. And at the same time, concentrate a little bit more on the sweet spot of what we do, which at the end of the day is still temporary work, permanent placement. So don't deviate too much from the core. And it's easy to say because we still have 94% of the market we don't have, so that's good. So this was too complicated for us. It was to call it aggressively a market move and the market didn't follow us. But yeah, if you ticked all those boxes, you had a plan you executed on the plan. Yeah, then you can't really blame anyone in the company you tried and was one of the more expensive cautious.

**Jacob Morgan 39:58**

And how do you see second part of that question is when you make a mistake like that, or any mistake for that matter, how do you keep going and still want to innovate and try new things. Because I know a lot of people, when they make a mistake, they beat themselves up, they go into that negative self talk, I'm never gonna do this again, like, I'm just gonna stay in my own lane. So how did you keep going after that mistake and not beat yourself up over it?

**Jacques van den Broek 40:21**

Yeah, go to clients. So because clients always have new questions. One of my there's no mistake, but I get excited really quickly. Like, oh, this is a huge opportunity. So you go out again, you go to clients, like, okay, so this didn't work. You didn't want to buy that. But where would you be happy if I will do that, if I will do that. And then the next opportunity presents itself. So that is, in our business, at least, very easy. But again, this is a lead. This is a leadership trait. If I would be there like yeah, I'm not gonna do this again, then I need to immediately quit my job, by the way.

**Jacob Morgan 41:01**

So it seems like the positive self talk and I love, I guess you don't need to be a CEO, you could just be a leader even in

**Jacques van den Broek 41:08**

leadership. I wasn't the CEO in those days. No,

**Jacob Morgan 41:11**

okay. No. So it sounds like for anybody, whether you're a leader, or even an individual contributor, if you do make a mistake, it's always good to, would you call it curiosity, like going back out and talking to customers looking for new ideas? Is it the curiosity that kept you going,

**Jacques van den Broek 41:27**

let me explain something that I teach my people, and then the bosses of those people are like, Oh, my God, here he goes again. So I always say to people, if you've got a good idea, you went to your client, and he asked you something, and you firmly believe that's a good idea. You go to your boss, and your boss says, you know, that's not great. Not now, then you should still do it. Because you believe in it. And, you know, your boss knows no, he's not been there. So don't ask for permission, ask for forgiveness, if I love

**Jacob Morgan 42:00**

it. That's what I tell people all the time. I love that quote, I'm so glad you said that.

**Jacques van den Broek 42:04**

That has worked for me. And that has worked for quite a few people in our business. Because innovation is something that in the beginning people saying yeah, that's not a great idea. So just give another example. So I was with a client many years ago, you know, Mentos, the meat that you meant, of course, actually. Yeah. So it's one of the few candies that everybody in the world likes. And it was originally Dutch company nowadays, it's Italian, and was one of my clients. And I went there and the client said, you know, yeah, we run the shifts. So we're, we started six in the morning, 11 at night, in the weekend, you're never there. In the weekend. I have this student pool and it needs more management, but it can't you chip in? I said, Yeah. Why don't I you know, put a branch inside your tree? Oh, well, that's a good idea. And I just go with your shift. So I called head office in those days, I was 29. And I said, I got an opening up a new branch. Oh, okay. Where? Yeah, and the client? No, no, we don't open up branches at clients, little cities. You're new, right? Yeah, no, no, no. So okay. So I said, Well, anyway, and I still had two desks and a computer. So I just started that brain. So you know, a few

weeks later on the 50 people at work called me from head office. When was this new branch again, this number 2000. Whatever? Is it that said the client? Oh, so today, we got 2200 of those. So if I would have listened to my balls, I probably wouldn't have done that. And maybe someone else would have done it. But then still, it outplacement the same. I went to a lot of clients and I said, Yeah, well, you want to place people but you know, we're automating I got an older workforce, we need to get rid of people that you also learn, of course. So asked here, the management is not it's not a great idea. still did it. Today, we got a thriving outplacement business. So, you know, you mess up, but it's all about trying.

**Jacob Morgan 44:09**

So don't listen to your boss was the advice. I love that if you've got a good idea if, if you have a good idea. So I suppose in order for that to work, though, you need to have that kind of a culture, right, because I think people are comfortable doing that at Randstad, because you encourage that, but at the same time, I'm sure that a lot of companies out there where if somebody were to do that they would get fired right away. Or they would you know, like people don't always feel comfortable doing that. So I'm trying to imagine like, what is required to create that corporate culture? Because I think you're a unique CEO who encourages these things and is vulnerable and says, don't listen to your boss. If you have a good idea, do it anyway, like I got your back. A lot of leaders aren't like that. So how do you how do you make that

**Jacques van den Broek 45:03**

But I do think is that a lot of leaders are like that, but people just say, God, we should also with our answer that you should do that because you'll get fired. So, but then you need to have a discussion. And that's what I said, I'm listening branches and leadership is the the branches were very, very, you know, operational company again. So we're having that discussion. And then you're just, you know, sitting on the edge of the desk saying, okay, so what are what are some client questions? Wow, that and then, okay, so have you tried it? No, I have not tried it, because maybe it's not allowed? Well, is it someone who told you wasn't allowed? No, actually, no. Why don't you try it? So that sort of there's a lot of misconception also, when leaders still, if you would ask them that which are not totally possible do this. So people sometimes move themselves into a corner, which is not necessary. Yeah, it is. It's, you know, what you talk about, right? So what you care about gets.

**Jacob Morgan 46:01**

So it's, it's kind of an analogy. So I play a lot of chess. And by the way, one of the world's top chess players is from, from where you are, and you should Giri, Dutch player. And so I play a lot of chess. And you know, one of the things, whenever I'm playing chess, I take lessons with a grandmaster and we go over my games. And sometimes when we go over my games, he says, How come you didn't make this move? Or how come you didn't do this? And I said, Oh, you know, it just it looked scary. Or, you know, I thought I was gonna get checkmated. And you know, in the chess world, he says, You're seeing ghosts, meaning like, you did not do something because everything was fine. There was no threats, nothing bad was gonna happen. But it was just mentally, you're seeing ghosts. And I think in the world of kind of like what you're talking about. A lot of people don't do things. They don't try things because they see ghosts, they assume their leaders going to be upset. And it's,

**Jacques van den Broek 46:54**

that's an interesting observation. And if you allow me let, if we go from leadership to what we discussed earlier on people making relatively drastic changes to their work life, that's the same thing. And objectively, it can't go wrong. Because objectively, we're short on people. What I see in our outplacement business, for example, is that is pretty traumatic, because people Yeah, they get fired, and you know, 70 to 80% of people then say afterwards, I should have done this years ago. So when it happened, you know, oh, my God, I became a teacher, I always wanted to be a teacher, I didn't want to stay it, that sort of thing. So yeah, the fear of the unknown, the ghost, and of course, but that's more of a systematic thing, the whole the mortgage, the security and that sort of thing, right. So, but different topic, maybe for different podcasts, but we need to change also the labor market organization from what we call jobs to work, because then each changes can be more easily made. And in Europe, you get severance and sevens, of course, is well meant, but at some point it it hampers you from changing. Because if you've been working 20 years as a company, you're like, you get like more than a year of severance. If you go to new job, you got zero. That is strange stuff.

**Jacob Morgan 48:16**

Yeah. It's very bizarre. Do you think loyalty still exists in the corporate world?

**Jacques van den Broek 48:24**

Absolutely. Very much so. But you need to earn it as an employer. And that is very much what we now see in these great enlightenment is working from home. Yeah, the threshold to change is definitely lower. And as a company, you cannot. That's why we say you need to really have a proactive talent strategy, you need to go out to people and say, How can I make your job more attractive? How can I change your work balance? What have you learned from COVID? And how can we accommodate you? That's a big change. So everybody, sort of when the pressure was high, everybody moved to work from home and all the management was sort of okay with it. But now we need to get to the situation like yeah, okay, so you liked it, I still want to have you in the office, like two days, three days a week. So we it's not just that you fully define where we need to get this new order of things, and facilitate your work from home space and the way we communicate. That is That is definitely out there. You need, you need to really, really get that going as a company otherwise, you lose out.

**Jacob Morgan 49:33**

We only have a couple minutes left. So just maybe one or two more questions for you. One, I think I read you passionate comic book collector. Is that right? Yeah. So I'm very curious. Have you taken any leadership or life lessons from comic books and apply them into how you lead or work or think about business and if so, do you have any stories about which which one is most relevant for

**Jacques van den Broek 49:56**

you? Well, let me answer a bit different. So for me, comic books are a way to, to lighten up. So to say, so I never take myself very seriously because I'm close to a comic book character. I like I like them. I like you know, comic books always endwell it's always funny and interesting enough. So if you know Tintin. Yeah, yeah. So he's boring, because he's perfect. And all the characters around him are sort of funny because they're imperfect. So, you know, I see myself not as the boring sort of, you know, always right person. But I see myself as the characters around it, who are impatient, and sometimes they mess up. And that helps to not keep myself too seriously.



**Jacob Morgan 50:58**

Adventures of Tintin? Yeah, just because yeah, I've heard of that. That's interesting. Yeah, I love Well, there's some comic books out there. I love the movies as well. But it's not everyday you need to see. It's very

**Jacques van den Broek 51:13**

much so. So this is a bit a big divide between Anglo Saxon and Europe. So for me, we call them comic books. But still it is the French Belgium. Culture, those those books from the from the 50 6070 are still being made. So the comics are the the American ones. That's not what I like the Superman Batman that that's that's not what I collect.

**Jacob Morgan 51:37**

Got it. Got it. Alright, and maybe last question for you to wrap up. So for people who are listening to this, you know, most of them are usually leaders in some capacity. What advice do you have? So when you think about how the world of work is changing, a lot of people are confused, they're probably scared. They're trying to figure out what they should be doing. Do you have any advice for how how they can thrive personally and professionally in this world that we're part of now?

**Jacques van den Broek 52:03**

Yep. Yeah, it is, in a sense, strange. If there's so many, so much insecurity for people, I want to say to them, you know, we're going to be short on people, people are gonna fight for your qualifications, but you might be in the wrong job long term. So you need to find out what your employer was very open to this conversation, what you will be doing five years from now, and you need to really dive into what makes you tick in your job. And it might be that just 10 15% of your current job might be the core of a totally different job. So be open. Again, talk about a with your employer, that man might sound scary. But if your employer is going to give you a hard time, because you go to him like you're unsure, if you want to stay with him, then you're with the wrong employer anyway. So take that risk. There's lots of great jobs out there, you know, but consider a very open job change. Of course, you can go to the likes of us to talk about employability jobs of the future, which are going to be in demand and the type of training you need to do and we do these employability scans. So that might be helpful. So you know, don't be insecure. But it is absolutely your responsibility to stay employable to stay attractive for Livermore.

**Jacob Morgan 53:24**

I love that advice. And I love the kind of permission for people to understand that if you're working for a company that doesn't allow you to do these things where you can't be vulnerable, you can't bring your ideas. It's okay to admit that maybe you're part of the wrong company and you're working for the

**Jacques van den Broek 53:37**

wrong leader and you're in the lead. So go somewhere else don't don't get stuck in this traditional employer employee thing.

**Jacob Morgan 53:44**

Yeah, life is short. So you gotta and I love the the message. Okay, got it. Got to take control over yourself.

**Jacques van den Broek** 53:50

Yeah, yeah, my age get shorter every day.

**Jacob Morgan** 53:54

Well, where can people go to learn more about you and your company? Any any links or resources that you want to provide for people?

**Jacques van den Broek** 54:03

Yeah, well, we have to run some Employer Branding research, which is very much about what makes people tick in the workplace, what they appreciate and also the jobs of the future capabilities. We have the run sort work Malta, which sort of tells you a bit about motivation of people at these these green enlightenment comes from that. Yeah, there's all sorts of research accessible on our website, whatever makes you tick, also more sectoral finance professionals, IT professionals, whatever your background is, so any, if not just walking to break.

**Jacob Morgan** 54:38

Very cool. Well, thank you so much for taking time out of your day. I mean, I loved your insights and stories, and some of the things that you shared. So thank you again, really appreciate it. Yeah. Was fun. Okay. Bye. Bye. And thanks, everyone for tuning in. My guest again, has been Jack vanden brick. He is the global CEO of Ronstadt, and I will see all of you next week. All right, we're all done. Let me push stop recording everywhere