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**Not everything that counts,
can be counted**

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Colophon

ACV Kader is the network for professional and managerial staff within ACV. The framework has grown from the LBC-NVK, now ACV Puls and since 2018 also addresses managerial staff and knowledge workers who are affiliated at ACVBIE. This publication appears four times a year and is sent to all members.

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Preface

A listening ear

Empathic listening is a skill to be developed. 'Listening' may seem passive, but those who really listen, feel movement. I am becoming more and more aware of it. People who listen make a difference. I think it's fascinating.

My stomach turned when I read Rita's interview about her experience with toxic management. And when she described her contact with Nathalie, who works at the Career Guidance Centre, I had goose bumps: meeting someone after a long and lonely journey who 'really' listens to you and makes you feel recognised. Not just formally, but very authentically. Nathalie made a difference. Through her empathic listening, she got Rita up and running again.

Doesn't every change, however small, start with listening? The observation that not everyone feels good about the strict male/female division only came to the public forum because there are people who were open and listened to the signals of those struggling with identity, their pain and needs.

And recently, I spoke to an executive about her well-run administrative team. She was surprised about the job satisfaction, results and constructive professional relationships between colleagues in times of working from home in light of the ongoing pandemic. During a follow-up interview

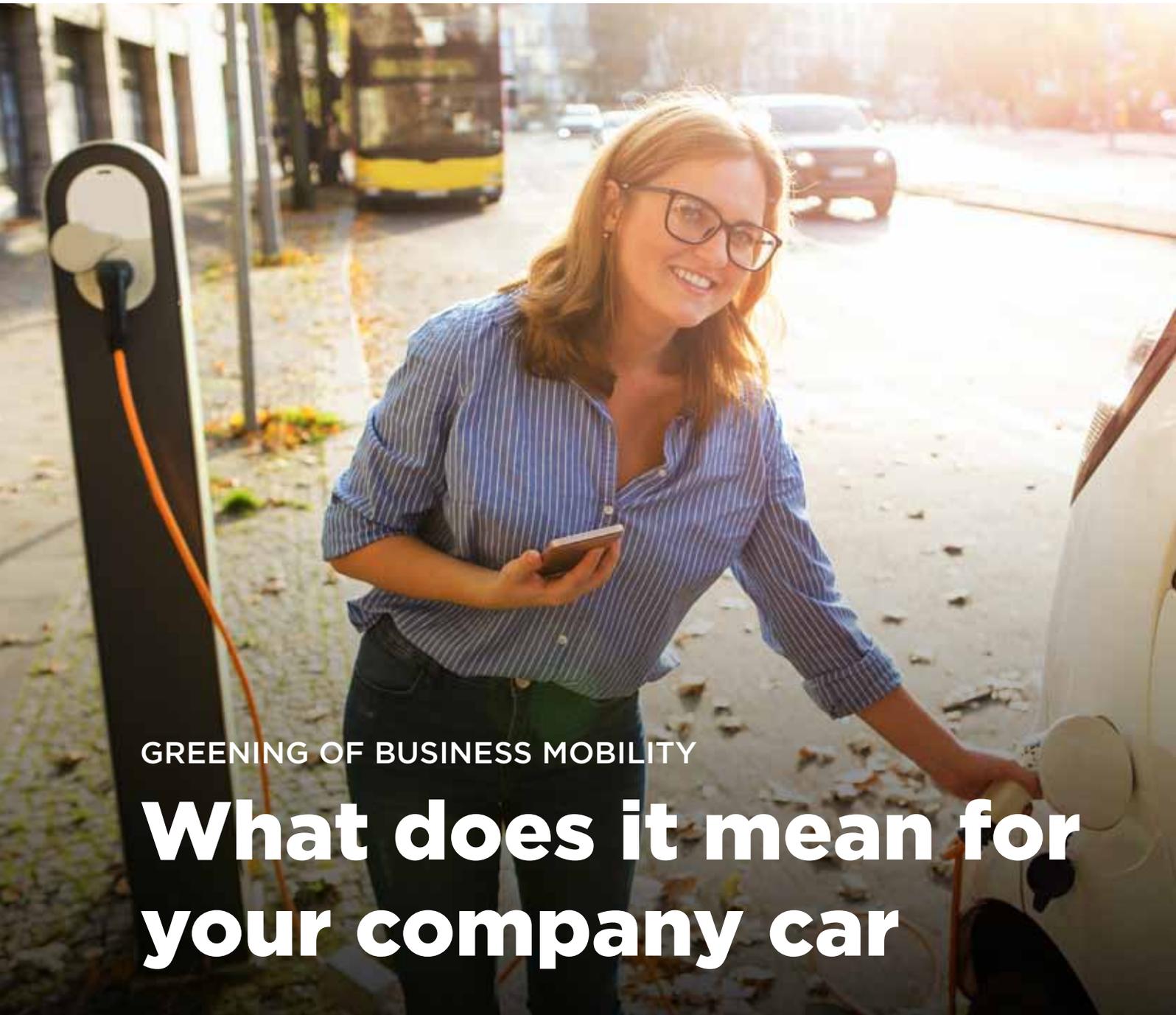
with one of her employees, she kept asking questions, she told me. And that's when they said: "It gives me wings to finally feel confidence from the management in the fact that we are doing our job well, even when we're teleworking."

Although one swallow does not make a spring, we take structural steps forward by providing a listening ear. We go from discrimination to enforceable rights, from a lack of trust in administrative workers to telework for all employees in the company, from toxic leadership to a policy that invests in leadership training ... Rome wasn't built in one day.

During a webinar with European trade union members, a Swedish colleague recently emphasised that what is needed to move from listening to structural solutions is dialogue and more dialogue. Structural social dialogue is the way forward. At all levels, we need to get around the table together ... and listen ... to get things moving.

May 2022 be a year in which someone genuinely listens to you. May 2022 be the year in which you experience movement.

Sandra Vercammen



GREENING OF BUSINESS MOBILITY

What does it mean for your company car

Making business mobility more sustainable is a very important topic for ACV Kader. For many knowledge workers and executives, the private use of a company car is a substantial part of their remuneration package. So it makes sense that we often receive questions on this topic. We'll list the most frequent ones below.

What will change in the coming years regarding my company car on my pay slip?

As of 2023, the notional amount on which you will be taxed for the private use of your company car will be calculated differently. The more CO2 the car you use emits, the more taxes you will have to pay, and increasingly so.

Will I have a tax benefit if I install a charging station at home?

Yes, but the deduction is limited to € 1,500 and will reduce after 2022. Moreover, the station should meet a number of sustainability conditions.

Can my employer change the type of car he offers just like that?

If you have permission to privately use the car, it is part of your salary, regardless of any contractual stipulations. Your salary is an essential aspect of the agreement between you and your employer. It is not to be changed unilaterally by the employer. The question is what the most appropriate response is when this does happen, and what can be considered a unilateral change. You can ask advice from your trade union on this. Additionally, you're probably not the only employee in the company affected by this situation. Consider discussing with colleagues how you can enter into a dialogue with the management, whether or not via staff representation.

I have a company car, but I would prefer other transport options. Can I exchange my company car for a mobility budget?

You're free to ask. And the question will be taken all the more seriously if it's asked by a group of colleagues. At present, it's the employer who decides whether or not to open the possibility of a mobility budget. At ACV, we continue to advocate making this option enforceable. Moreover, until now the budget only existed for those people who had already had a company car for at least a year. Pool cars didn't count. Since 1 January 2022, a mobility budget can also be offered to those who never used their company car for private purposes. Employees are never obligated to accept the offer and exchange their company car. Private ownership of a car is not an obstacle to joining the mobility budget.

Is it true that I can use the mobility budget for housing costs?

If you live close to your workplace, or often work from home, which means that your own home can be considered the main place of employment, you can deduct not only rent, interest, energy or common costs, but also the capital repayments of your mortgage loan from the budget. As a couple, you can each deduct part of those costs from your mobility budget. Or one of you can deduct the entire amount. Costs linked to occasionally working from home, such as the purchase of an additional monitor or an ergonomic chair, cannot be paid with the budget.

I have a mobility budget and my employer is negotiating a new contract with the leasing company, which means that the cost of my car will change for my employer. Will my mobility budget be affected by this decision?

The total amount of the budget will not change, but the costs of the company car which the employer deducts from the budget will. As a result, you may be left with a lower amount to spend on the other pillars. You should be informed by your employer in good time.

If the standards that environmentally friendly cars within the mobility budget should meet change, will my car still be eligible?

The standards in force at the moment an order is placed or a lease contract is signed decide whether or not the type of care is eligible. If those standards change afterwards, they won't affect your mobility budget.

If my employer terminates my employment contract, which role does the budget play in the severance pay?

The calculation is based on the original budget as stipulated in the agreement, with abstraction of the chosen options.

Do you have any questions about the greening of your company car? Ask them via kader@acv-csc.be.

End-of-career

Jan Deceunynck

THE END OF A CAREER

Time for the next phase

Much has already been written about retirement. In this magazine, we feature a number of employees on the verge of retirement and how they experience the end of their career.



“COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT I DID BEFORE”

Eric Loveniers retired from IBM at the beginning of the year after 34 years. A restructuring presented a good opportunity to retire a little sooner than planned. “I actually hadn’t planned to retire just yet. I had noticed that I suffered from a kind of mental fatigue for a while. But it wasn’t that bad that I wanted to leave. But the restructuring presented me with the perfect opportunity. I didn’t have to think about it for too long.”

Eric won’t stop working just yet. He thinks it’s too soon for that. And his wife has a couple of years to go before she can retire. “I graduated as an architect. I have never worked as an architect, but an old class mate recently told me that his architectural firm was looking for an operational manager. I’m very interested in such a position. It’s something completely different from my job at IBM, but I’m excited.” It hasn’t been finalised yet, but the talks are going in the right direction. “And if it should come to nothing, we’ll see. I have the luxury of having a financial safety net. The mortgage has been paid off and the kids have moved out.”

Eric is now becoming self-employed. “I want to have a certain level of flexibility. Keep my hands free. And honestly, it’s also interesting from a fiscal point of view. I have already gathered some information from United Freelancers, the ACV service for self-employed people. They have helped me really well. I’m ready!”



“MY OUTLOOK ON WORK HAS CHANGED”

Luc De Brier is a Carrefour department manager. He will have worked 43 years in two years, and will take early retirement at the age of 61.

“After I turned fifty, the job became really tough. Being able to reduce my hours as soon as I turned 55 was a godsend. Not only did I struggle with keeping up physically, but the job also became more complex. It was more exhausting than it used to be. Back then, I put everything in my job and career. But now that I’ve reached those goals, my outlook on work has changed. It doesn’t have to be like that anymore. It’s time to enjoy life more.”

Still, he keeps his job as a secondary occupation. “Aside from my job at Carrefour, I’ve been teaching at the hotel and catering school for years. I’ll probably continue to do that for a while longer. Because I’ve been doing it for so long, I’m able to combine it with early retirement. I have much more freedom in that job than at Carrefour. It’s also less stressful and more workable. Carrefour management doesn’t really understand that the pressure becomes more difficult to handle for older employees. Workability remains a difficult issue. The result is that everyone who can leave, does so – but the generation after me will have to wait a little longer.

I can take early retirement at 61, but that’s going to be 63 and even 65 in the coming years. A couple of years ago, I was too young. The generation before me was able to leave after a restructuring and I couldn’t. I’m glad that I’m eligible now.”



“MIXED FEELINGS”

Mimi Hermans is responsible for the central purchase department of Z.Org KU Leuven, a psychiatric hospital with close ties to the UZ Leuven academic hospital. As of this year, she will be working one day less. And in May 2023, she will retire.

“I’ve always wanted to work until I was 65. So I have mixed feelings about taking a step back,” she says. Her husband’s passing last year is one of the reasons she has decided to work less. “His death was a big blow for me. Privately, but also at work. I suffered from fatigue, which had never happened before. It’s a little better now, but I’m still completely exhausted at night.” But that isn’t the only reason why she decided to take it easier. “It’s the work itself as well. The policy is bothering me more and more. It annoys me. I realise that young people want things to be different. I’ve been young myself. But since my husband’s passing, I find it more difficult to follow in that new direction. And then you have to be honest. To yourself and to the organisation.”

So Mimi is slowly making way for the next generation. She has a very good colleague, whom she sees taking over. “It remains a little unclear how management sees things.” Mimi will remain in the same position for the time being. “I will not push my limits, though,” she says. “Because otherwise, the tasks will keep piling up, like they used to. But that isn’t for me anymore.”

Gender
Jan Deceunynck



MARTE BILLEN KEEPS GENDER ON THE ACV-AGENDA

**“Feminism is better
for everyone”**

Since a few months, Marte Billen has been ACV's new gender officer. In that function, she wants to work on equal opportunities at work for men and women. We invited her for a conversation about inclusivity, quota and barriers.

Choosing for a job as gender officer is no neutral decision. What made you take that step?

Marte: "I'm interested in the topic. Always have been, even as a student. I obtained a master's degree in *Gender and diversity*. Afterwards, I ended up in youth work. I remained very involved in the topic there too. It's also an important issue for my friends. It also goes beyond the discussion about men and women. Not everyone feels comfortable in that strict division. Being able to be who you are is important, and it was also the topic of "De Warmste Week" last month. Everyone should be able to be their unique or weird self. Even at work. It doesn't matter what you are, as long as you do your job."

In terms of men and women, quite a lot has been achieved, don't you think?

Marte: "I hear that a lot. And of course, it's true. If you look at where we come from, many steps have been taken. We're not in the 1950s anymore. But discrimination is still an issue, even if people think we have come a long way. Take the wage gap, for example. It still exists. That is a real problem, because whether we like it or not, you need sufficient income to enforce financial independence and equal opportunities. And the glass ceiling also continues to exist. There still is no equal flow to higher positions. Women still take on more care responsibilities. So we still have a long way to go. I'm glad that ACV has hired a gender officer again. And not just because it's me (laughs)."

Do you like working for ACV?

Marte: "It's much bigger and more massive than I initially thought. It's an enormous organisation, with so many levels, departments and dimensions. It's a bit of a maze when you first start, but you learn a lot. About retirement for example, which our current campaign is focused on. Because there is still a gap between men and women in that area as well, despite all the progress that has been made."

What do you consider important focal points in the gender debate?

Marte: "Of course, I build on my predecessor Jolien Pollet's legacy. I strongly believe in intersectionality or cross-gender thinking; no one has just one identity. A woman is not just 'a woman'. She's also an employee, young or old, with a particular skin colour ... There are many factors that define a person. And that's what I think is so interesting about my job at ACV. I come into contact with many different realities. I meet people from the field of education and blue-collar trade unions, but also highly educated people and executives. Women and other disadvantaged groups run into barriers in all those contexts. It's very interesting to work with all those differences. We can learn a lot from one another. Exchange good practices. Find ways to address the topic and bring it out in the open. The colleagues at the educator's trade union (COC), for example, have drawn up a plan. Maybe others can learn from that? "

Where do you see opportunities to work on a better gender balance?

Marte: "Feminism is better for everyone. For men, women, companies ... Diversity is a good thing to have. But it also requires an open mind. It goes beyond quota and tokenism. It's about an inclusive policy, and people feeling comfortable. Meetings at family-friendly hours are better for everyone, no? In order to give people real opportunities, it's important that companies have an open mind and really make it possible for people to choose a particular job. And I'm not just talking about men and women, but also people of colour, people with a disability ... If you only see white men everywhere, the threshold for women of colour will remain high. You won't see what you can achieve."

Not everything that counts And not everything that

At the Dutch Rathenau Institute, which deals with the impact of science, innovation and technology on society, Djurre Das has conducted research on digital monitoring.

“Algorithms increasingly determine our living environment. Take, for instance, Spotify, Netflix and bol.com, which predict what you’ll like and address you accordingly. But also at work, more and more tools are available to monitor employees,” he explains. “Monitoring starts with the selection of employees. Algorithms scan CVs and software analyses facial expressions during video interviews. And once you are hired, the algorithm keeps tracking you. Screenshots can be taken of your computer, your e-mail behaviour can be mapped. In fact, everything you do digitally can be

measured. Of course it doesn’t all happen, but in the platform economy, a lot of functionalities are being developed, which then also find their way into other sectors.”

Fortunately, technology is not just there to control. It is also there to make work easier or to help you. “Employers can also use the data to check whether you take a healthy amount of breaks, or if you don’t get up enough to go for a walk. It can lead to more diversity in the selection policy. We found that the intention is often good. But



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sometimes, unfortunately, there are undesirable side effects.”

An often-cited side effect is a loss of autonomy. “In healthcare, apps are increasingly used to boost efficiency, which is a good thing. But it takes away a bit of autonomy. Employees can no longer take responsibility for themselves. They job satisfaction decreases. Moreover, human work is difficult to grasp in mathematical computer logic,” Djurre noted. “We are not always rational beings. And technology often ignores that.”

According to him, it is important that an organisation knows what it wants when it starts digital monitoring. “The first question should be: ‘What do I want to accomplish?’ Because you can measure everything. But what is desirable? And what is relevant? Not everything that counts, can be

counted. And not everything that can be counted, counts,” as he sums it up. For him, the data generated by the algorithms can only serve as a guideline. “The data do not speak for themselves. You should never consider them to be ‘the truth’. The context is also important.”

Because digital monitoring is never neutral, Djurre advocates for good arrangements at all levels. About what is measured and how the data is handled. “Monitoring is not new. It has always been there. But now, monitoring is getting very close to the employees’ skin. Sometimes even literally. So agreements need to be made. Blind faith in technology is somewhat naive. Much is possible. But the promises and expectations sometimes surpass reality. It can’t do any harm to remain a little critical of that techno-solutionism.”

Searching for the right balance

Digital monitoring is not just widespread in the 'hard' sectors. Monitoring is also commonplace in health care. At the Wit-Gele Kruis home care organisation, the electronic nursing file (EVD) is the digital hub for the nurses on the road.

Union secretary Rik De Jaeger explains that the EVD contains all the information about the patient, but also about the actions undertaken by the nurse. He has seen digitisation grow over the last couple of years.

"It certainly wasn't all better in the past," he laughs. "Much of the administrative paperwork has disappeared, overtime is more clearly visible, the nurses' knowledge has increased, the quality of health care has improved ..." But there are downsides as well. "Or risks that we need to keep an eye on."

Fair coaching

Rik has no knowledge of any explicit abuse – but employees are sometimes suspicious about what is registered and saved. "Managers are fair in their handling of that data. They primarily use EVD data for coaching rather than for checking. The management is also more moderate than before, when everything had to happen ever faster. That's also due to the shortage on the labour market. It's becoming increasingly difficult to find and retain nurses. And in that case, an approach that's too harsh has the opposite effect."

"Employees aren't systematically reprimanded if they're working at a slower pace than the average according to the data, or if their hand sanitizer lasts longer and they therefore perhaps do not disinfect their hands sufficiently. The data collected can lead to an interview, but that was also the case in the past."

Soul

But claiming that monitoring only has positive consequences is also a bit short-sighted. "Nurses have told us that digitisation is gnawing away at their job satisfaction. It takes the soul out of their work. Everything they need to do, is listed in the

EVD. But nurses can and want to assess what is needed themselves. Sticking to strict schedules is not always satisfying. Patients don't like it either that the nurses are looking more at the screen than at them."

Nurses often check their EVD immediately when they wake up. "Sometimes literally on the edge of their bed", says Rik. "Because they can see what's ahead of them, how long their day will be and which extras are added to their package that day in the EVD. Because the pressure is on. Sometimes the EVD also provides a bit of online training. Which means that more work is transferred to private time."

The future

"The planning engine, which a while ago fully automatically scheduled the nurses' rounds, has been stopped for the time being. The planning tuned out to be too complex for the machine. Management has taken over again until the planning engine has been improved and can work autonomously again. We'll have to wait and see if that works."

And there is more to come. Pilot projects with smart glasses are currently underway. "They're glasses that project information that helps the nurse during complex treatments. A head nurse can then also watch from a distance. Experiments are also being conducted with apps that remotely read out patients' blood or sugar values, for example. These are all developments that have a significant impact on the nurses' jobs."

The trade union would like to address this issue. "But we have noticed that the management doesn't think it's that important. They only inform us when the new technology is already operational. So there is still some work to be done there."

Bullying at work

Jan Deceunynck



**A listening ear helped
Rita get back on her feet**

A few years ago, Rita Gielen, a commercial manager at a Flemish SME, was bullied into leaving by her employer. After suffering for a long time, she is now finally leaving that dark place behind. Moreover, she is working on a book about her experiences – and those of the peers she has spoken with over the last couple of years.

It has been almost 20 years since Rita started at the – at the time small—company, which she developed into a solid SME together with the general manager. To put the company on the map internationally and make it grow, she travelled all over the world, and 16-hour working days were normal. The company grew from 3 to 30 employees, and revenues increased accordingly. Everything went well. Until she had a burn-out from all the hard work in 2015.

After the burn-out

“When I returned after three months, I expressed that I wanted to take things a little slower,” Rita tells. “I was ready to resume work, but with an external HR consultant, I had come up with a schedule of what I could and wanted to do, and what not. From that moment on, the CEO that I had worked so well with was never really satisfied. He said that if I couldn’t handle the job, I should leave.”

“The company was no longer running as smoothly either, so new investors came along. They brought in a new general manager and commercial manager. I was in the way. I was willing to take a step back or come up with an arrangement on a new division of tasks. I even hired a personal coach to guide me during this process. But they never responded to my proposals.”

Bullying

That’s when the bullying started “I suddenly received negative evaluations, decisions were made without me, I was snapped at during meetings, my phone calls and e-mails weren’t being answered, I wasn’t involved in recruiting new team members, choices I made were overruled ... Whatever I did, I was constantly criticised.”

Rita’s first reaction was to start doubting herself. “Was I really making that many mistakes? Did I do something wrong? I tried to enter into a dialogue

about it, but that didn’t work.” When the situation escalated further, Rita talked to the confidant at work. “He was our accountant. A nice man, but he couldn’t help me. And neither could the internal prevention advisor. It’s probably different in bigger companies, but in an SME, it isn’t easy to act against the general manager as a confidant or prevention advisor.”

Breaking point

Rita reached her final breaking point right before her holiday. She remembers the last confrontation as if it happened yesterday. “I was in an office with the owner, the new CEO and the new commercial manager. It was the day before I was supposed to go on holiday. The new commercial manager screamed something in my ear about my ‘silly face’ and that I would always feel him breathe down my neck. The general manager was laughing about it. She wanted to change my function. I asked for some time to think about it. The CEO didn’t say anything. The new commercial manager said: “Just go on holiday, everyone is entitled to time off.” So I left. And never went back.”

During that holiday, she filed a formal complaint with the external prevention service. She also hired a lawyer, who contacted the company to talk about a plan of termination. But they didn’t want to hear about it. On the contrary, they said they wanted me to come back. In reality, they wanted me to resign, so they didn’t have to pay any expensive dismissal compensation. I was too expensive to fire. So they looked for another solution.”

Trip to hell

The formal complaint with the external prevention service was a trip to hell. “First of all, I had to wait for thirty days before I was able to talk to someone. And then I had to write down everything that had happened very factually and chronologically. ‘You think you’re being bullied, but that might not be the case,’ they said. It was



torture. There was no empathy at all. To prepare a file, I had to relive everything. It cost blood, sweat and tears. A lot of tears. But I had to go through with it. Nine months later, I received the final report from the prevention service. It stated that everything that had happened ‘could be perceived as bullying’. That didn’t help me. I do understand, though. After all, an external prevention service is paid by the company. So it has little interest in offending their client. But it left me out in the cold.”

“My lawyer continued to negotiate with my employer and was able to secure dismissal compensation. It wasn’t about the money. But it was about recognition. I wanted the bullying to be recognised. But eventually, the complaint was dismissed and justice was never done. The legal rules prescribe otherwise, but they are not applied. I was a good employee and I had a good relationship with my employer. We got along perfectly well.

But that changed completely when the new investors arrived and they wanted someone else in my position.”

Listening ear

Slowly but surely, Rita got back on her feet with the help of those around her. “I’ve seen some dark places. I felt worthless because of everything that had happened. A big fat zero. I was broken. A wreck. At one point, I found myself standing by a tree in our garden wondering if the branch would support my weight. I got so scared. I was afraid I was going to kill myself and didn’t want to stay home alone anymore. I made sure that I was alone as little as possible. I knocked on a lot of doors looking for support. It was difficult to find a psychologist at first. There were waiting lists everywhere. Eventually, I did find one and they were able to help me. But I also received a lot of support from ACV at that time. When I asked for help at their Career Guidance Centre, they helped immediately. I was so glad and surprised. Nathalie, my career coach, was the first person, aside from my family and friends, to listen to my story. She made me feel heard, that someone was listening to what I had to say. I was finally being treated as a human being! That was a complete change from all the formal misery I had gone through.”

It has been a couple of years now and Rita has come a long way. She’s working again. At VDAB, where she helps job seekers find employment. Something completely different from what she did before. An empathic job that fits her outlook on life – she just doesn’t like the paperwork. “It’s so important to take care of your employees. Giving your employees opportunities, allowing them to grow, taking care of them as if they were family ... It’s so important. But unfortunately, it isn’t self-evident. Employers often think too much in terms of profit and loss in euros, but they think far too little about the gain in experience and knowledge of their employees.

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