



BUILDINGPASSION

The International Edition

Laura Stevens



Dorothee Pape

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You can get a lot more out of any company.

You can get an organization to move the way you have in mind.

Originally a designer and now a design manager, one of my jobs is to orchestrate change processes in companies and to translate them into visual results. My advantage is that I can always look at companies from a distance. This way I'm able to view them in a completely different light and to see things that other people have missed. But these things are still felt subconsciously.

I don't build buildings. Neither do I design them.

I build companies and I design ways of putting them where they want to be: in the public eye.

I do that for all sectors, but the building industry is special to me because it's a part of my background. Swapping ideas with an architect or contractor is like talking to my alter ego.

A building is more than just four walls. It's a reflection of who you are. Take a look at how you live or what your office looks like. That's you.

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Workshop

The desired image of the building sector – in ten years' time
by Dorothee Pape

The key question within the scope of this theme was:
'How can your company distinguish itself from the rest and secure a better position in the market?'

This question is all the more relevant considering companies often resemble one another and given the compelling need to stand out from the pack in today's economy.

Only those organizations with *character* are the future. *Personality* is the only stable factor at a time when we are surrounded by change. A clearly defined identity is essential to a company's survival. The image reflects this identity, how people perceive you.

Workshop results

The workshop also focused on the existing identity versus the desired image:

Conclusions and recommendations

How do you move from the present situation to the desired image?

Society and community

More than ever before, building is becoming a social affair. Hierarchy alone will not allow you to achieve your goal; instead, you need passion and steadfast direction as found within a communal context. This calls for flat project organizations where content alone is key.

Redefine your position

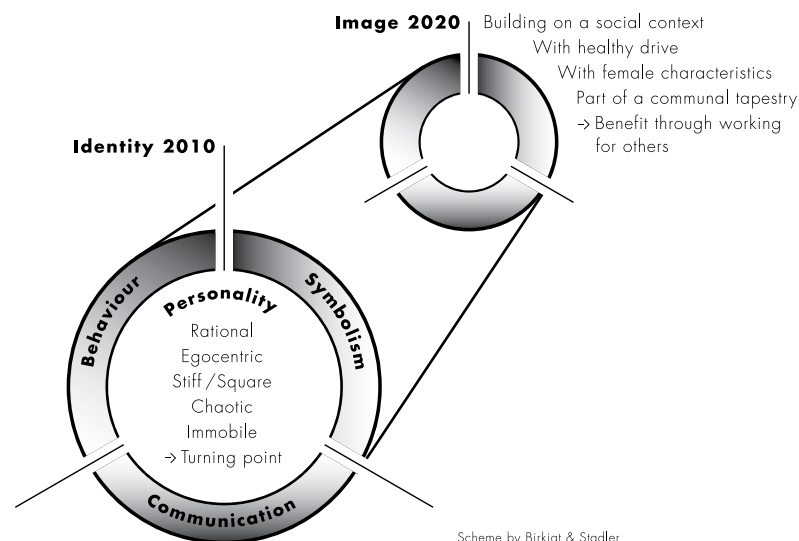
You now have a communal role. You claim your position, but not the process. You are present at different times at different places. When and how is up to you. Projects then become more organic. You don't toss anything over the fence. You are an ally.

New positioning

Look at the previous points. Do you still need to present yourself as an architect, contractor or developer to the outside world?

Do away with outdated stigmas and stereotypes. You have a new role, a new position. You could mean something to others, more than they may realize. Communicate this as well!

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Europe

Cultural differences Between Belgium and the Netherlands

The Dutch sometimes confuse Belgian modesty, courtesy and formality with uncertainty. That teaches you to adapt.

Study workshops, debates and meetings of all kinds begin promptly on time in the Netherlands. This is quite different in Belgium! In Belgium, you wait for the majority of people to show up (especially the important people) before you begin. In Belgium, it's quite normal to postpone a gathering for fifteen minutes to half an hour. The question and answer period in Belgium is rather a form of courtesy that gets either limited response or no response at all.

At communication level, although we speak the same language, there are many Flemish words that are misinterpreted or even completely misunderstood in the Netherlands. Certain language that in Belgium would be considered too direct, too frank, is quite normal in the Netherlands. This makes communication in the Netherlands much easier.

I think that as a Belgian you work towards a compromise, making do with what you have. One begins from concrete possibilities and then reconciles them, reinforces them to the maximum. In the Netherlands people prefer to enter into conflict as a means of circumventing limitations.

The structured approach of the Dutch process, its precision, is enjoyable to work in and easy to embrace.

In the Netherlands people seem to need to bargain. It isn't enough to recognize that a fee proposal is reasonable. Satisfaction is only possible when they are able to say "Let's meet each other halfway" so that savings are demonstrable!

The formal "you" carries a different weight in the Netherlands. In Belgium it's clear that you should address people you've just recently met with the formal "you", especially if they're older than you are. This evolves naturally over time.

A Belgian thinks more individually. The Dutch think collectively. A Belgian sees the government as a necessary evil and doesn't expect the government to do or to solve very much for him. A Dutchman has high expectations of his government. The Dutch government interferes much more in business as well. A Belgian architect dares, using common sense, to draw simple conclusions. Dutch architects like to make things complicated.

Christine de Ruijter

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Germany

Netherlands versus Germany

In my view, the Dutch are very accommodating. You can just walk in and make yourself at home, say what you want and be very direct with each other.

I think that this makes the Netherlands a land of opportunity. Its openness and enthusiasm have allowed me to discover my way in life. My life in the Netherlands has made me calmer and more able to enjoy myself. The Dutch love good company and, as they say themselves, 'it's crazy enough to behave normally'.

But I think there's also a pitfall in this culture. People are so enthusiastic and they love good company and being *normal* so much, that this often goes at the expense of speed, precision and being purposeful. Germans work to win, while the Dutch do it to have a 'leuk' (fun) time together.

And actually there is no direct German translation for this particular word: 'leuk'. That says it all.

Dorothee Pape

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Laura Stevens

Creator, author &
Leading Lady Building Passion



Balance

A 'balancist' is someone who seeks balance in every facet of life. Creating and recreating balance can be a conscious choice. Sometimes it's as simple as finding the right piece of the puzzle. It finally fits.

There aren't enough women in top positions in the building field. Anyone who says there already is a healthy balance, simply doesn't have a clue. For those who believe it's not a necessity, I dare you to read on. Mixed teams working side by side have better results and improve the strengths of these teams as balance is achieved. I'm not a feminist, I'm a balancist.

Diversity is a means to survival and a healthy recipe towards success. The first book, Building Passion - Sterke vrouwen in de bouw was completed in December 2009. Women who have an extraordinary passion for their work in the building business told us about their drive to being successful. The energy they created touched each and every one of us connected to the book. 'Building Passion' was born from the goal to make the women working in the building and real estate field more visible. The top 2 level layers of decision makers are desperately in need of qualified women.

The second book, 'Building Passion – The International Edition' elaborates on the cultural intervention we experience while working in countries other than where we were born. Finding a balance was more extreme for these ladies and that extra challenge of understanding each other was added.

Working in different cultures has changed their lives. The greatest common denominator of these cultural changes is that we understand better the different interpretations of what we say and do. When we stop and really try to listen to what our building partners need, synergy of this cultural cooperation creates a brilliant result.

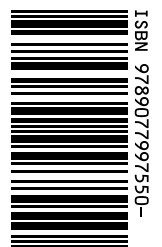
We see here Dutch women working abroad in fields of architectural and urban design, construction and real estate, or foreign women building their careers in the Netherlands. How do they deal with cultural differences in business? What added value do these cultural differences offer?

Our quest is – again – to ask the reader the following questions: "What will I do to help more women to our top? What am I going to do to enrich our company with the diversity of culture and new approaches? Do I believe in this better balance?

And, indeed so, how will I make my influence be heard?"

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never have to work a day in your life.

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