

## Egon Beaart

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“My ‘pure’ approach  
to leadership is a  
niche in itself”

Never before had the dissertation of a BSN student lead to questions in parliament. Well, there is a first for everything, as they say. His name is Egon Beart and his dissertation revolved around good leadership in the Dutch Ministry of Defence. Moreover, it focused on how it could be improved. The answer in one word: humanity.

Egon's research was so in-depth and extensive that it took him four years to graduate. In between 2009 and 2011 Egon interviewed over 400 employees of the Ministry, external advisors, academics, representatives of the Union, leadership experts and members of Parliament. "At that point I thought it was absolutely necessary to speak to all these people, while now I realise how much work it actually was. Every interview took about 1,5 hours, can you imagine?" It resulted in a Cum Laude graduation and one of the most extensive and in-depth dissertations in the history of BSN.

In essence his research elaborated on how not structures and procedures determine the success of the department, but how people – talents, potential and role models – are the responsible factor. Egon suggests that, to support desired behaviour, an organisation needs to focus on persistence, (corporate) identity and personal leadership. His conclusion was tested in four separate case studies – which all proved successful.

The day his research was published in September 2011, it immediately led to parliamentary questions. Egon's research questioned the way leadership was executed within the Ministry of Defence and provided a lot of insights into how to improve it all throughout the ministry. It has been brought up in the political debate more than once over the last two years. Members of Parliament want to discuss the implementations of the research, and see how they can be taken to a next level. Although a meeting with the then Minister of Defence was scheduled, the cabinet fell before the meeting could actually take place. There has been contact between Egon and the new Dutch Defence Minister, but so far it has not led to an encounter. "Unfortunately," Egon adds. "They fully support my vision,

but the question is how it will be translated into their operations and policy. It is an ongoing project in which people should start thinking long term instead of letting the short-term vision dominate. The seeds have been sown," says Egon.

He started working at that same ministry over thirty years ago. Prior to that he served in Lebanon in the early eighties – a time he recalls as 'very interesting'. "I strongly believe in peace and by serving the army in a war zone I contributed to this belief." After serving in the army he joined the ministry as a technical employee. Over time he witnessed a change in his own personal perspective: "I shifted from looking at straight facts more to the human side of things, and to personalities in general. From a 'beta' to an 'alpha' type of person, so to speak." To this day, Egon's focus has been on people and how they can change, both as persons and within organisations, as long as they have the courage to do so. "The context and environment around us determines our actions. We all say we want to change, but only very few of us have the guts to actually do it."

He did. Egon turned 55 this year and decided, after 33 years of loyal service, to leave the ministry to start his own company. "The MBA and my research played an important part in the decision," he reckons. "Besides inspiration, it sparked my consciousness and somehow pulled me out of a pattern I had been operating in for a long time. Although it might not be the most obvious time nor age, I see this as a very challenging and wonderful opportunity to develop myself further. Even though nowadays start-ups focusing on leadership are part of a hype and therefore operate in a very competitive market, I am convinced that my 'pure' approach to leadership is a niche in itself." <<