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# CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

**WTS GLOBAL CEO WIM WUYTS HAS A CLEAR VISION: TO MAKE HIS COMPANY THE WORLD'S NON-AUDIT TAX PRACTICE OF CHOICE.**

WORDS **CHRISIE MCCLATCHIE** • IMAGES **MICHAËL SMITS**

**W**hen Wim Wuyts joined WTS Global as CEO in 2017, after nearly a decade with Belgian steel wire manufacturer Bekaert, he knew exactly what he wanted to achieve in his new role. “I strongly believed that one strong global tax firm needed to emerge to serve everyone from the conglomerates to mid-size companies to individuals,” he tells *The CEO Magazine*. It’s a conviction that has only become stronger in the years since he started with the Rotterdam-based business.

As it happened, his vision aligned with WTS’s Chair, Fritz Esterer, a finding discovered across a dinner table “a good five years ago”, Wim smiles. It was a meeting of like minds. Today, they work towards a common goal. “We want to be the go-to non-audit tax practice in the world,” he says.

It’s a big ambition for a company founded as recently as 2000, but Wim and his colleagues are on the right track, already counting multinationals such as Siemens, Allianz and E.ON as clients. “At the same time, we are the firm of choice for what we call in German the *mittelstand* companies – medium-size enterprises – from a few hundred million to a few billion euros in turnover,” he shares. »

IN FOCUS

NAME:  
Wim Wuyts

COMPANY:  
WTS Global

POSITION:  
CEO

LOCATION:  
Rotterdam, The Netherlands



## CEDEP GLOBAL EXECUTIVE EDUCATION CLUB – LOCATED IN FONTAINEBLEAU, FRANCE, OPERATING GLOBALLY

A unique collaborative executive education community created by and for the world’s leading companies

### WHERE MINDS MEET, GROW AND SUCCEED TOGETHER

When five international companies first established CEDEP in 1971, their vision was to create a unique executive education space that was both managerial and humanistic in scope. Not only would senior managers come together to learn more about the inner workings of organisations, but they would also take a step away from day-to-day operations to reflect on themselves and their organisation.

Fifty years later, CEDEP has evolved into a highly respected executive education club co-run and co-governed by 20 international non-competing companies, including global icons L’Oréal, Renault, Biomerieux, ITT, Bristol Meyers Squibb and Tata Steel.

And remaining true to its roots, CEDEP enables diverse members to share best practice and tackle real-world executive leadership challenges within a collaborative and highly engaged learning community.

“In such a fast-paced and complex world, CEDEP provides senior managers with a safe environment for deep reflection, intellectually



“In such a fast-paced and complex world, CEDEP provides senior managers with a safe environment for deep reflection, intellectually stimulating discussions and unrivalled networking.”

THOMAS HINTERSEER, MANAGING DIRECTOR, CEDEP



stimulating discussions and unrivalled networking,” says Thomas Hinterseer, managing director, CEDEP.

“We believe you can’t think your way into new acting. You can only act your way into new thinking. So we push participants to experiment, reinvent and be bold enough to move outside their comfort zone,” he adds.

### AGILE AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING

CEDEP’s programmes are customised or open to multiple companies and are delivered either in person, online or as a blend of both in small, dynamic and highly participative groups.

With a rich ecosystem of members from various industry sectors such as utilities, engineering, financial services, healthcare, logistics and transportation, CEDEP offers a unique opportunity for senior managers to collaborate, brainstorm and self-challenge from different perspectives.

“CEDEP’s independence means we operate very differently from a traditional business school.”

RAVI SHANKAR, PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, CEDEP



“CEDEP’s independence means we operate very differently from a traditional business school,” says Ravi Shankar, programme development director, CEDEP.

“We are free to bring together some of the world’s top academics with experts in business from our extensive network of partners to create leadership development programmes that address specific problems.

“This agile and flexible learning structure means we can go further and dive deeper. For example, we always ask the question ‘why’ at the start of a new program to allow us to look at challenges from different perspectives and define each collaboration’s purpose. This unique approach leads to innovative, highly relevant and actionable learning.”

If you’re looking for a leadership development environment where you can be intellectually challenged, ask unusual questions and discover unorthodox thinking, all within a safe and supportive ecosystem, then please join us.

Contact Mohsen Fattah, head of international business development at CEDEP for more information: [mohsen.fattah@cedep.fr](mailto:mohsen.fattah@cedep.fr) or visit our website [cedep.fr](http://cedep.fr)

## “WE WANT TO BE THE GO-TO NON-AUDIT TAX PRACTICE IN THE WORLD.”

One such name he can drop is Lotus Bakeries, responsible for “the best cookies in the world”, he claims. “We also serve at the individual level and our clients include CEOs and elite sportspeople.”

There are also the niche areas of interest such as the arts and helping governments develop their tax policies, especially on the African continent. “For example, Rwanda aspires to build the best financial service centre in Africa,” he reveals. “We will help them achieve that as we work together on tax policy and other consultancies.”

WTS may still be “the challenger in the market”, as Wim describes the company, but in the two decades since its formation, it has already grown its network to more than 5,000 people in more than 100 countries. A strategy of partnering with strong local players as member firms has propelled such a rapid ascent. So no matter where in the world someone finds themselves, “if you want to be served on anything that starts with tax, you can call us,” he says.

Alongside his C-suite responsibilities, Wim is actively involved in nurturing future tax leaders through a variety of educational posts, including Program Director at the CEDEP Global Executive Education Club, in both Fontainebleau, France, and Silicon Valley, California. “For four weeks of the year, we have senior executives from 25 of the world’s leading companies come to us,” he explains.

Wim’s life is busy, but that’s just the way he likes it. In 2015, his pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in Spain inspired him to pen a travel book and reflection on international tax management called *On a Journey*. “I’m very active, but I love it; it gives me drive and energy,” he says.

Like every leader, he has faced one of the greatest challenges in his career in the shape of COVID-19, but the company’s agility and commitment to what he calls the three Cs – caring, communication and creativity – saw it emerge even stronger. “As a firm, as a group of colleagues, we grew closer together, even in front of a screen,” Wim confirms. “I hope that our relationships with our clients will be better than before.”



From a personal viewpoint, he acknowledges that a shift has occurred in how he views the world. “I hope from here we will move towards a globalisation 2.0, where we really make an impact on big topics like climate change, migration and banking systems to strengthen society not just in Europe but also around the world,” he says. If we don’t grasp the chance, he warns that the COVID-19 crisis will be one of lost opportunity. “It should be the basis for a truly inclusive global society.”

Wim’s personal aspiration is to grow one per cent, “even 0.1 per cent” every day, and it’s a motto that is spreading through the corridors at WTS as well. “We are the challenger in the tax market,” he points out. “That makes us entrepreneurial and agile. It’s fun but takes a lot of effort. We work extremely hard as a team. Maybe even too hard,” he smiles. ■