



FEB INTERACT

Mirjam Knockaert, Petra Andries & Evy Van Lancker

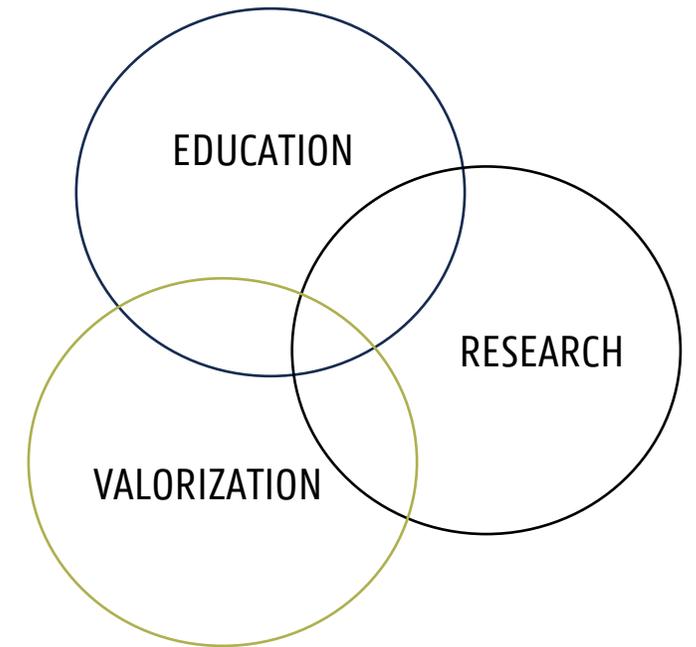
16 December 2025

 **FACULTEIT ECONOMIE
EN BEDRIJFSKUNDE**
**CENTRE FOR
ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH**


**UNIVERSITEIT
GENT**

CENTRE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH

- Established in 2017
- Interdisciplinary consortium of professors and researchers
- Ranked 2nd in the “TCU global University Entrepreneurship research productivity ranking”



STIMULATING INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

OUR TEAM

- Principal investigators belong to
 - Department of Marketing, Innovation and Organization



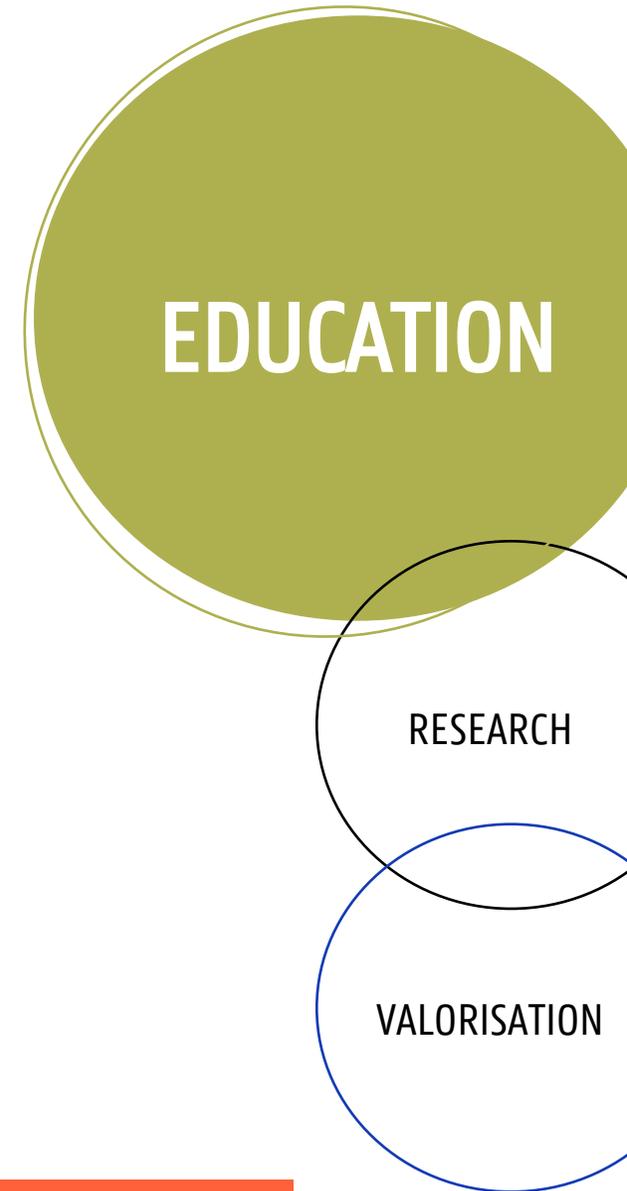
- Department of Accounting and Finance



**CENTRE FOR
ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH**

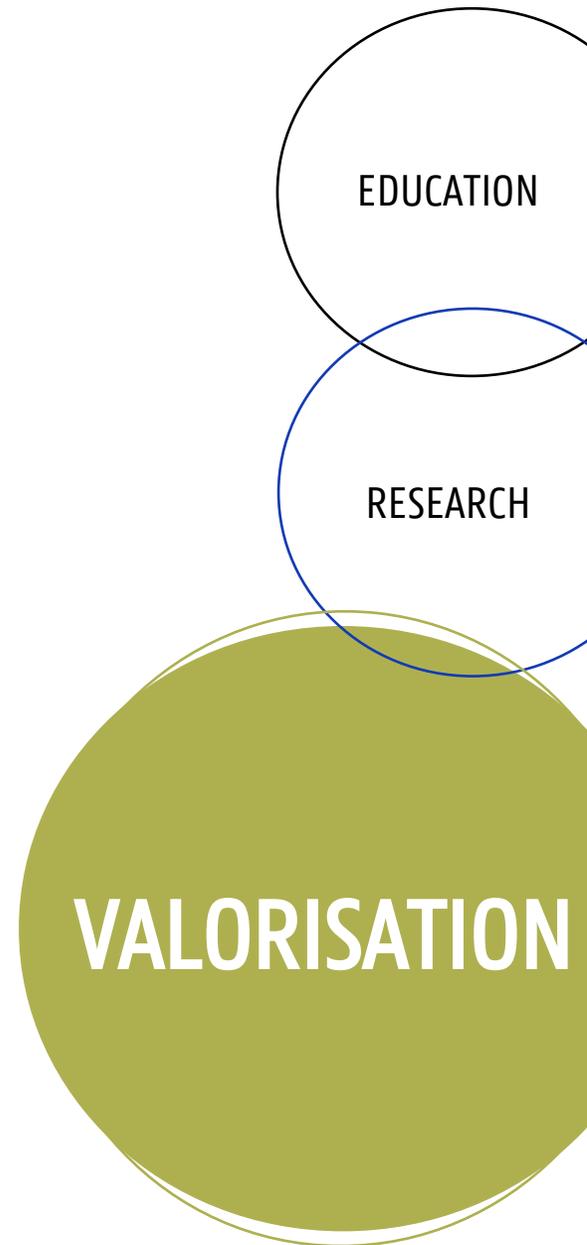
CENTRE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH

- “Prepare students for a career in entrepreneurship or intrapreneurship”
- 6 entrepreneurship courses
- Different perspectives:
 - Practice versus theory
 - Starting versus scaling
- Responsible for all entrepreneurship courses
@GhentUniversity



CENTRE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH

- Multichannel research dissemination
 - Opinion editorials, white papers, ...
 - Guest lectures, panels, workshops
 - ECOOM, EC projects,....
- Promotion of local ecosystem



CENTRE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH

- Strong international network, vb. TUM, Cornell University, ...
- We act as associate editors for some of the top journals in the field
- Research questions with academic and societal impact





Examples of our recent research projects

- Career decisions of entrepreneurs
- The role of sports for entrepreneurial well-being
- Distressed entrepreneurs
- A joiners' perspective into entrepreneurship
- Team and board functioning and their impact on performance and innovation
- The impact of intermediaries (collective research centers, science parks, incubators,...)
- Research commercialization (spin-offs, licensing,...)
 - Self-healing concrete (EC project)
 - Alzheimer disease (EC project)
- The role of technology (including AI) for entrepreneurship and innovation
- Sustainable practices in entrepreneurship and innovation
- Entrepreneurship in specific contexts: social entrepreneurship, student entrepreneurship and academic entrepreneurship

Collaboration with Dyzo in order to gain insights into venture distress

- Started collaboration in 2018, following an interest by PhD student Karlien Coppens
- Coded about 8,500 intake forms
- Engaged in a longitudinal study with 10 Dyzo clients
- Resulted in 4 published papers, and 1 in the pipeline
- Resulted in 25 master theses on the topic
- Basis for one PhD trajectory, also relevant for 2 others
- Resulted in a number of internal and external presentations for Dyzo and frequent consultations (e.g. customer satisfaction surveys)



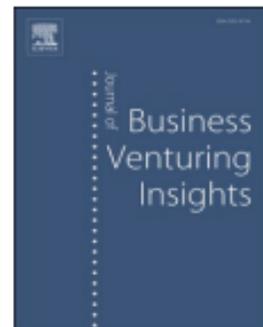


ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

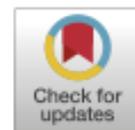
Journal of Business Venturing Insights

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jbvi



The significance of entrepreneurs' physical health for venture distress and exit[☆]

Yasmine Van Heghe^{a,*}, Mirjam Knockaert^{a,b}, Holger Patzelt^b, Johan Wiklund^c



Research questions

1

How important are physical health issues (in comparison to mental health and other issues) for venture distress?

2

To what extent are entrepreneurs faced with physical health issues more or less likely to (in)voluntarily exit their venture?

Data

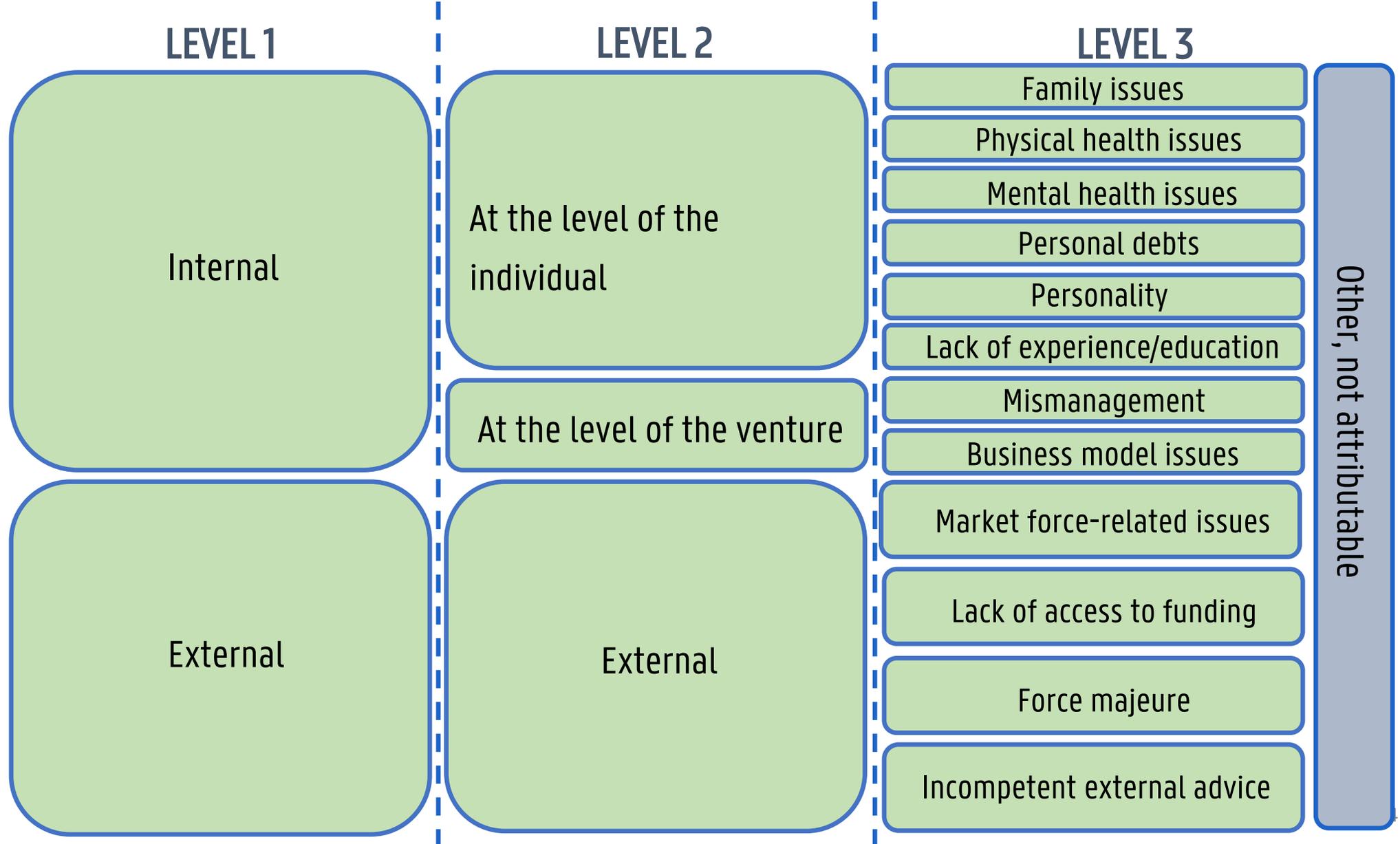


- 8,193 filled out intake forms for period 2016-2019 => Final dataset: 1,752 observations

	2016	2017	2018	2019	TOTAL
Calls for support	2,565	2,932	3,289	3,208	11,994
Filled-out intake forms	1,190	1,311	2,487	3,205	8,193
Final dataset	362	543	585	262	1,752

- Matched with information from the Crossroads Bank for Enterprises (CBE)
 - Check legal status

Coding sheet



Percentage of entrepreneurs who pointed to at least one internal factor ...	82.65%
<i>At the level of the individual</i>	36.42%
Relation/family	13.07%
Health issues	16.89%
Personal debts	4.51%
Personality	1.77%
Education and experience	2.97%
<i>At the level of the firm</i>	56.51%
Mismanagement	32.48%
Business model problems	27.68%
Percentage of entrepreneurs who pointed to at least one external factor ...	33.39%
Market forces	19.18%
Lack of financing	1.94%
Force majeure	7.99%
Incompetent external advice	3.54%

Related to a **higher/lower** chance of the firm to still exist after 3 years

Other studies using the Dyzo data

emerald **insight**

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Special Issue: Entrepreneurship and Well-Being: Research Progress and Challenges Ahead



SPANISH ACADEMY
OF MANAGEMENT



Entrepreneurs' thriving after venture distress: The role of self-compassion, learning, and venture failure

Business Research Quarterly
2025, Vol. 28(3) 618–634
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DOI: 10.1177/23409444241293813
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Karlien Coppens¹  and Mirjam Knockaert^{1,2}

AI-barometer

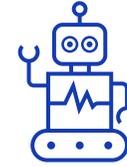
- ECOOM, funded by Flemish government (WEWIS)
- Regular survey of \pm 9.000 firms in Flanders
- >30% response rate
- Questions on AI-adoption, drivers, barriers, and impact
- Resulting in policy reports, scientific papers, and industry collaborations



Adoptie en gebruik van Artificiële Intelligentie bij Vlaamse bedrijven
situatie 2023

AI-barometer

- ECOOM, funded by Flemish government (WEWIS)
- Regular survey of ± 9.000 firms in Flanders
- >30% response rate
- Questions on AI-adoption, drivers, barriers, and impact
- Resulting in policy reports, scientific papers, and industry collaborations



In 2023:

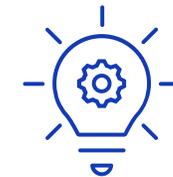
1/3 used at least one AI-technology



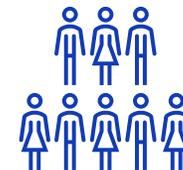
1/4 of adopters develops own AI-solutions



ICT security and administration as most common applications (1/3)



1/2 of adopters report innovation or cost reduction impact



Limited impact on employment

AI-barometer

- ECOOM, funded by Flemish government (WEWIS)
- Regular survey of \pm 9.000 firms in Flanders
- >30% response rate
- Questions on AI-adoption, drivers, barriers, and impact
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Overcoming difficulties in knowledge transfer: Harnessing the power of AI to drive process innovation

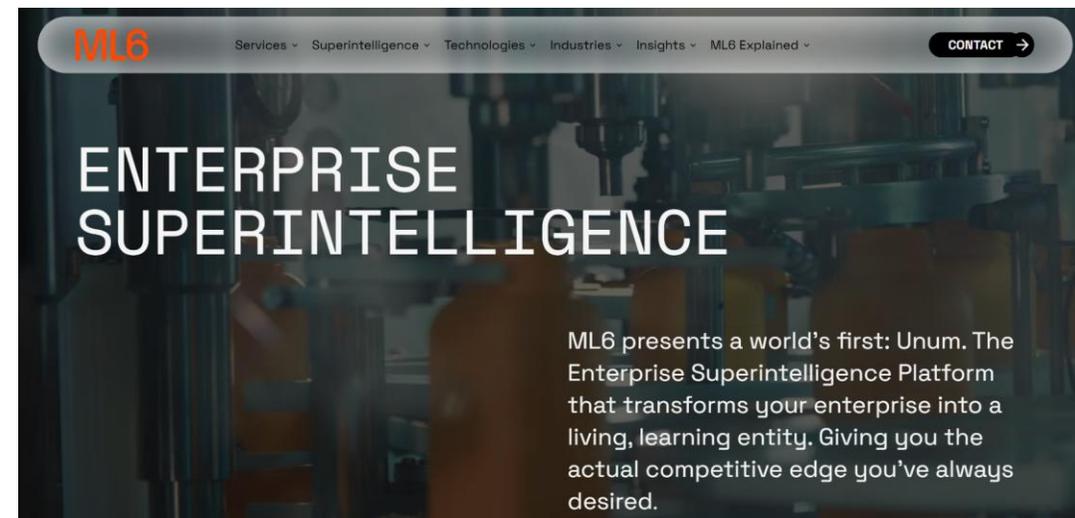
Thomas Standaert  , Petra Andries 

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.technovation.2025.103350> 

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ENTERPRISE SUPERINTELLIGENCE

ML6 presents a world's first: Unum. The Enterprise Superintelligence Platform that transforms your enterprise into a living, learning entity. Giving you the actual competitive edge you've always desired.

Sustainability-barometer

- ECOOM, funded by Flemish government (WEWIS)
- Regular survey of \pm 7.000 SME's in Flanders
- >30% response rate
- Questions on sustainable goals, activities, drivers, barriers, and impact
- Resulting in policy reports and scientific papers



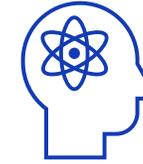
Duurzaamheidsbarometer

Duurzaam ondernemerschap bij Vlaamse KMO's
situatie 2024

Sustainability-barometer

- ECOOM, funded by Flemish government (WEWIS)
- Regular survey of \pm 7.000 SMEs in Flanders
- >30% response rate
- Questions on sustainable goals, activities, drivers, barriers, and impact
- Resulting in policy reports and scientific papers

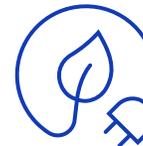
In 2024:



Only 1/3 SME's had substantial knowledge on sustainability



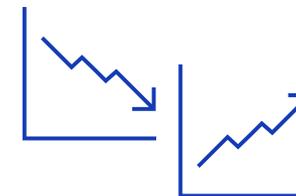
85% invested in employee wellbeing



61% invested in saving energy



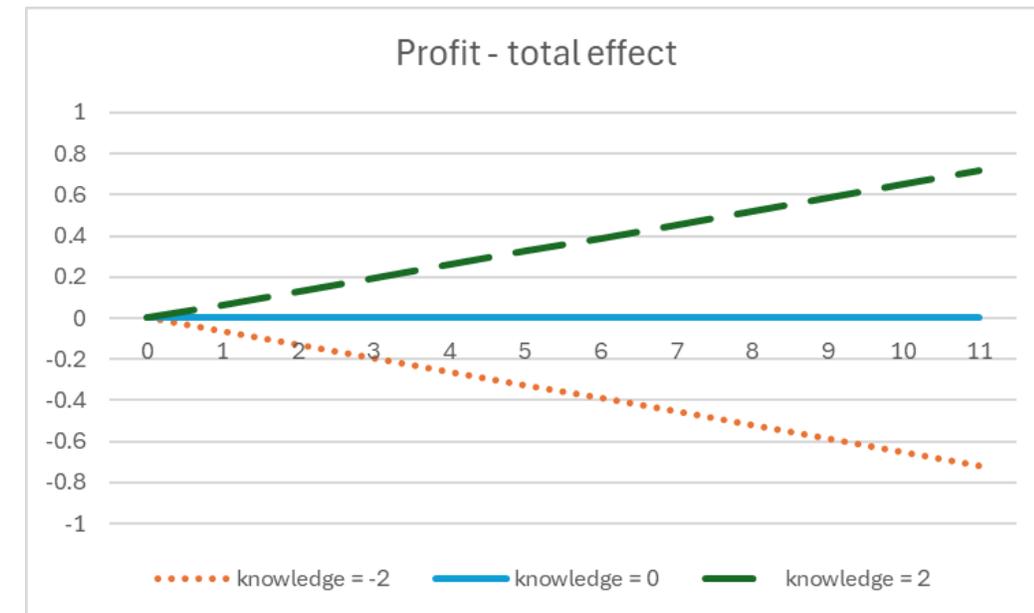
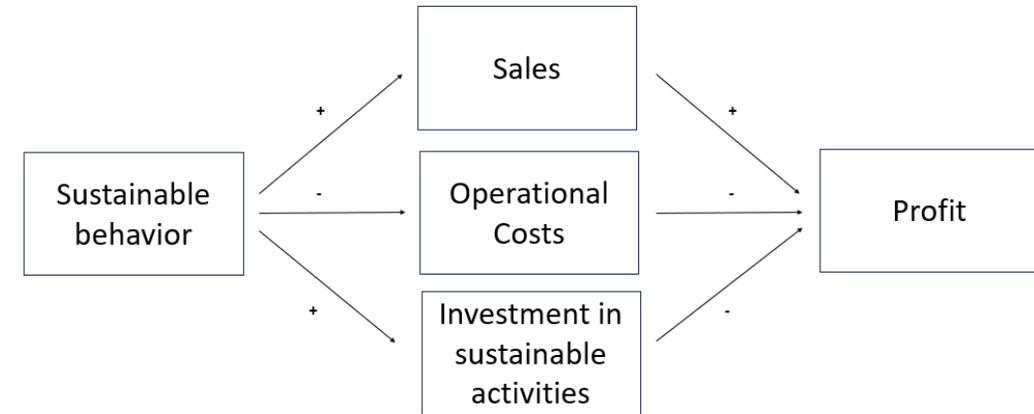
>80% reports positive societal and ecological impact



Mixed results in terms of financial costs and benefits

Sustainability-barometer

- ECOOM, funded by Flemish government (WEWIS)
- Regular survey of ± 7.000 SMEs in Flanders
- $>30\%$ response rate
- Questions on sustainable goals, activities, drivers, barriers, and impact
- Resulting in policy reports and scientific papers



Joiner onderzoek

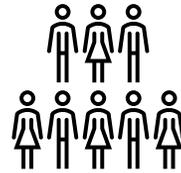


Ondernemerschap – factoren voor succes

FINANCIAL CAPITAL



SOCIAL CAPITAL

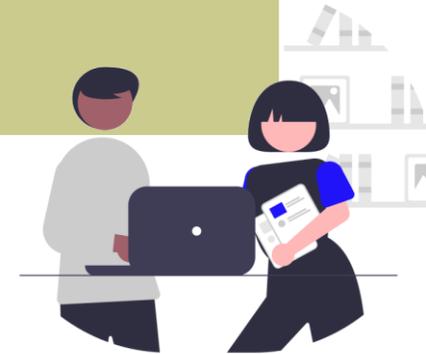


HUMAN CAPITAL



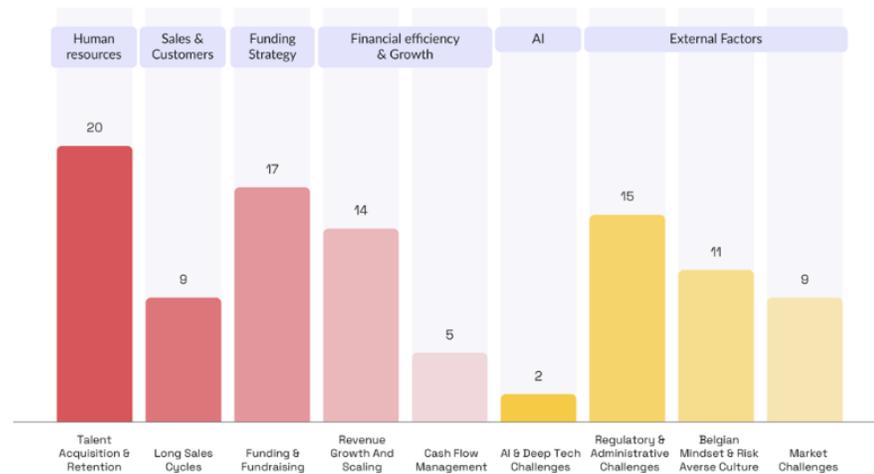
THE PEOPLE CHALLENGE

THE PEOPLE CHALLENGE



WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST PAIN AS A START-UP?

% of respondents



Note: Excludes uncategorized answers (11%)

Source: dealroom.co

Analysis: BAIN & COMPANY SYNDICATE ONE



Talent is the biggest pain point for founders — finding the right people at the right time is incredibly challenging in Belgium's small market, and administrative complexity adds to the difficulty of building and scaling startups.

Matthias Geeroms
Co-founder & CFO, Lighthouse

THE PEOPLE CHALLENGE



1 Rekruteren van werknemers

2 Een team samenstellen

The Role of Joiners for the Development of New Firms: A Literature Review and Future Research Agenda

Chapter | First Online: 02 February 2024
pp 157–182 | [Cite this chapter](#)

[Evy Van Lancker](#)  & [Mirjam Knockaert](#)



Journal of Business Venturing
Volume 38, Issue 4, July 2023, 106315



Preparing for scaling: A study on founder role evolution

[Evy Van Lancker](#) ^a  , [Mirjam Knockaert](#) ^{a d}  , [Veroniek Collewaert](#) ^{b c}  , [Nicola Breugst](#) ^d  

REKRUTEREN VAN WERKNEMERS 1

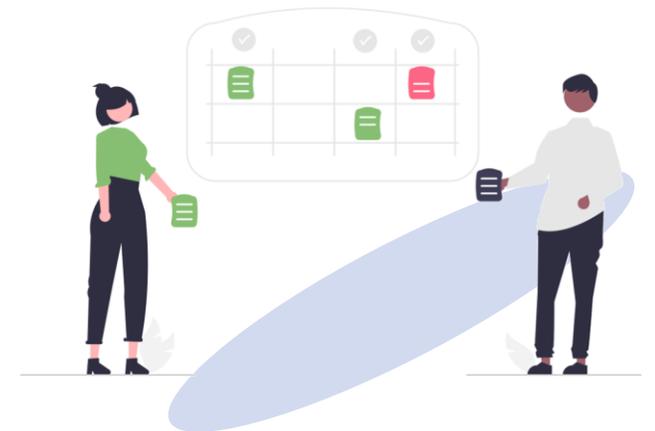
“The first 10 hires will set the base for the next 80 hires.”

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REKRUTEREN VAN WERKNEMERS 1

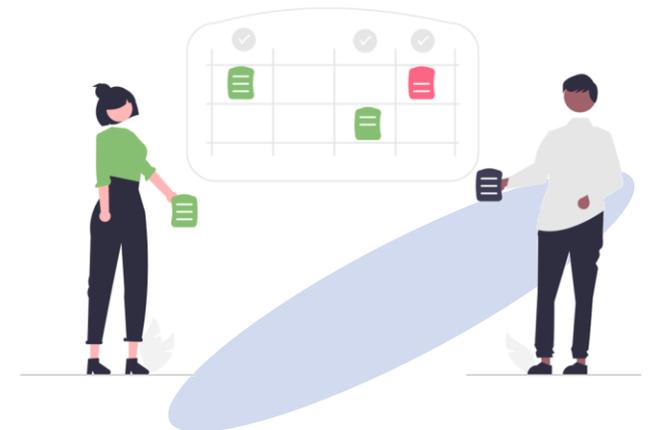
Startup ↔ Gevestigd bedrijf

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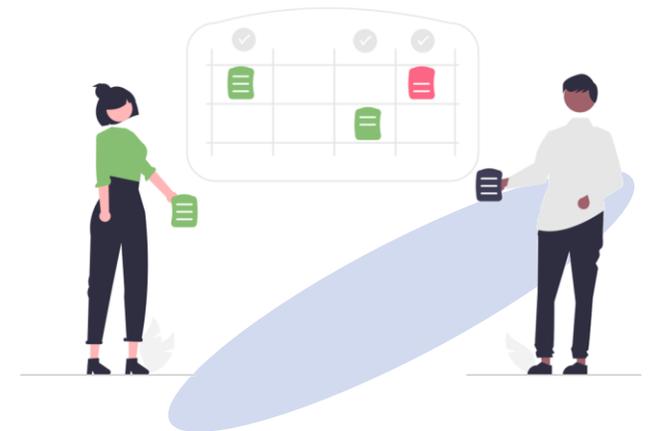
Joiner \rightleftarrows Corporate werknemer

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[Evy Van Lancker](#)  & [Mirjam Knockaert](#)



REKRUTEREN VAN WERKNEMERS ¹

Joiner → Autonomie

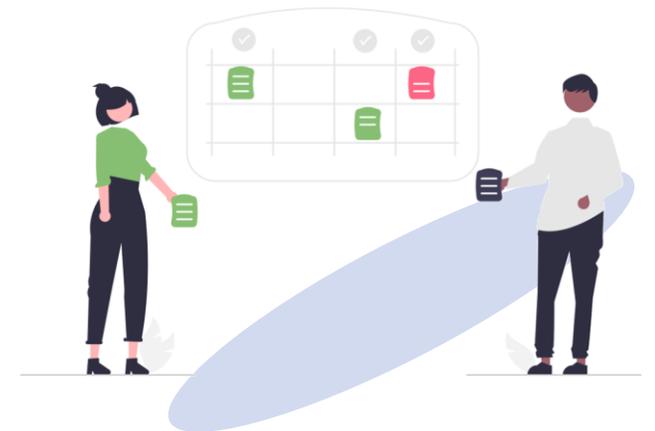
Startup cultuur

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[Evy Van Lancker](#) ✉ & [Mirjam Knockaert](#)



REKRUTEREN VAN WERKNEMERS 1

Belang van employer branding

Differentiëren
Vb. visie, cultuur

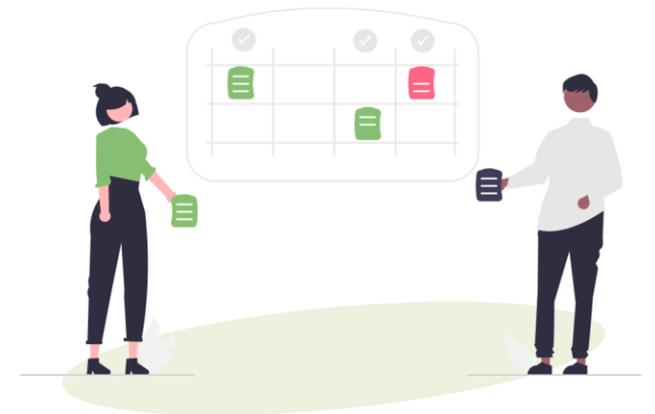
Legitimeren
Vb. award, opleiding, financiering

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[Evy Van Lancker](#) ✉ & [Mirjam Knockaert](#)



EEN TEAM SAMENSTELLEN 2

“Switching from a founders-only context to personnel is a critical tipping point – you become employer and must lead by example”

Aline Muylaert (Go Vocal)



EEN TEAM SAMENSTELLEN ²



Journal of Business Venturing
Volume 38, Issue 4, July 2023, 106315



Preparing for scaling: A study on founder role evolution

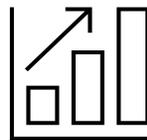
Evvy Van Lancker^a  , Mirjam Knockaert^{a d} , Veroniek Collewaert^{b c} , Nicola Breugst^d 

Hoe evoluen de **rollen** binnen een ondernemersteam tijdens het schalen, en hoe **beïnvloeden joiners** dit proces?

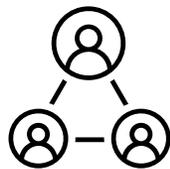
FOCUS OP FOUNDERS EN JOINERS

EEN TEAM SAMENSTELLEN 2

Schalen = proces waarbij ondernemingen



– streven naar duurzame **groei**



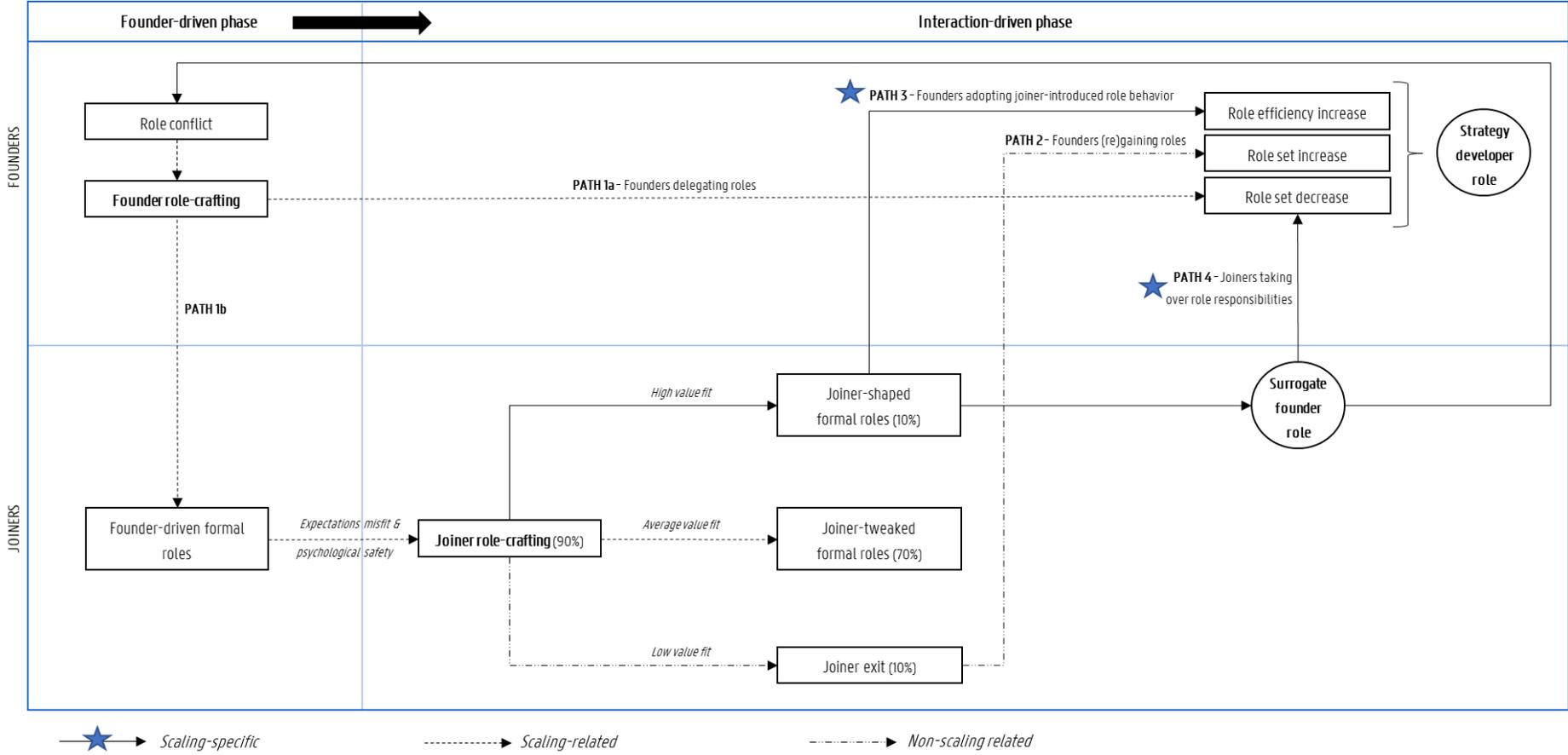
– de interne structuur en organisatie veranderen
in functie van nieuwe bedrijfscontext

EEN TEAM SAMENSTELLEN 2

Opvolging gedurende 18 maanden:

- Participant observaties
- Interviews & member checks
- Archiefmateriaal

Voorbeeld



EEN TEAM SAMENSTELLEN 2



EEN TEAM SAMENSTELLEN 2

WAARDOOR?

Founder en joiner role-crafting

EEN TEAM SAMENSTELLEN **2**

ROLE-CRAFTING

Het **veranderen** van een rol in termen van **wat** men doet
en met **wie** men communiceert om er
persoonlijk voordeel uit te halen

EEN TEAM SAMENSTELLEN 2

Founder role-crafting

Founders delegeren taken

TOP-DOWN



Joiner role-crafting

Joiners nemen taken over
op eigen initiatief

BOTTOM-UP



Conditities?

Psychologische veiligheid &
cultuurfit

EEN TEAM SAMENSTELLEN 2



Het belang van een **'hustle mentality'**



“They will be essential when we scale as **they will act upon our [the founders'] behalf**. In the long run, they will start to form an extra layer that we need to withstand the elevated demands of scaling.”

- Van Lancker et al. (2023)

EEN TEAM SAMENSTELLEN 2

Founders = 'architecten van nieuwe opportuniteiten'

Joiners = 'vakmannen die nieuwe opportuniteiten co-creëren'



LOPEND ONDERZOEK

Carrièrepaden binnen ondernemerschap



Alumni-founded
startups
880+

Alumni founders
that raised more than €10M
87

Spinouts
166

Former employees of Flanders unicorns and \$1B+ exits are founding the next generation of scaleups

The trend indicates a new generation of operators coming back, bringing capital, expertise, and networks to drive startup growth.

Flanders unicorn factories



CENTRE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH



Centre for Entrepreneurship Research

Interdisciplinary research centre dedicated to the study of entrepreneurship and related phenomena - Ghent University.

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Evy.VanLancker@UGent.be



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