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Growth, in
many ways,
captures
KPMG
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New CEO Stephanie Hottenhuis on progress at KPMG:

‘Our culture is our biggest asset. We can win thanks to that unique culture’

Three months into her role as a CEO, Stephanie Hottenhuis is still positively surprised by both the spirit of KPMG’s people and clients. Her agenda for KPMG? Making progress in every possible way. Progress not only measured in numbers, but also in terms of the wellbeing of people and society. Hottenhuis: ‘I have a very human-oriented view on progress.’

Progress. The word comes up often when speaking with KPMG’s new CEO. Stephanie made a name for herself in the world of business by combining a result-driven approach with a good eye for the transformations in society. She was and is a firm believer in a diverse culture that is inclusive

to all people. KPMG only has a chance to make real progress if the people working for the company and the people working for its clients enjoy working together, if they feel free to challenge each other to improve each and every one’s performance, Stephanie stresses.

What has impressed you most about KPMG in the past few months?

‘The depth of knowledge of our people. The content and the insight that we bring to the market, but also to society at large. I also noticed a sense of pride, a well-shared sense that we have something to offer.

Another skill of ours, which has been mentioned by clients and stakeholders, is that we are very personable. We have a deep human understanding and insight in the work that we do. We stand out as personalities, which I feel is a big differentiation to other organizations. It makes us unique.’ >



Progress in the Netherlands according to Stephanie Hottenhuis

'We often measure progress in numbers. Which isn't necessarily bad, because you need KPI's to substantiate your gut feeling. But at the end of the day I think our branding and content, people-driven progress, shows a definition very close to my own, which is that progress needs to be measured against the feeling of wellbeing and welfare of the people in in our society.'

'Something I believe is very special, is that we are described as "the most Dutch" among our league of competitors. That, of course, has a lot of positive connotations, because the Dutch are known for their entrepreneurial spirit, global presence, open-mindedness. As the most Dutch, we can step out and be innovative.'

What is the biggest challenge you see for KPMG?

'To collaborate more. We've said that we want to become a more innovative firm, more inclusively collaborative and more high-performance.

Nobody can do that alone.

We have a fantastic team of individuals, strong personalities, and with the power we could unleash with passing the bowl to each other more and working together, nobody could beat us.'

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Our purpose statement contains two very powerful words: inspire and empower”

'Our biggest opportunity is that we could be a formidable cause for the digital transition in the fourth industrial revolution, as well as being a part of our clients' journey to that society, where people will be even happier and healthier, enabled by machines.'

'I believe the biggest improvements can be made in our culture. We want to innovate faster by leaving behind our natural aversion to risks, while managing these risks responsibly and pushing for more effectiveness.'

How can KPMG become a trusted company again?

'For us the most important thing is to accept quality as a part of who we are, not what we do. We want to show the world that we don't do this because regulations or society expect it, but because it is who we are and what we stand for.'

KPMG is a partner-owned organization. Why is that so important to you?

'The personal co-ownership of the company creates positive commitment and passion. We see a lot of value in the years of experience of our partners, the long mileage they bring to the firm. I think that, together with a very strong bench and a strong pyramid of up-and-coming young people, that makes

a very strong and sustainable formula for success.'

KPMG has offices all over the country. What have you experienced outside Amstelveen?

'People have developed their own office culture, which is

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The biggest challenge I see for us is to collaborate more”

very rewarding and really fun to see. For example, in the South people talk a lot about their quality of life, being 'bourgeois', about enjoying life. At the same time, the people in Rotterdam are proud of the business instinct they develop at the heart of a business-city.'

The brand-promise is 'people-driven progress'. What kind of employer does KPMG strive to be?

'We want to achieve an inclusive culture that makes everybody feel at home in their workplace. Only then can people bring their best selves to the company, its clients and the world. We quantify gender diversity and we measure it against set targets, which we have met. However, this is not enough. We have to do more. I think there is a wider ambition and expectation to encourage diversity in its broadest sense at an individual level.'

Looking at sustainability and citizenship, where does KPMG stand right now?

'We have included the concept of pro bono working hours on social purposes. We also encourage people to be active and passionate members of their communities. As KPMG we also support several causes and institutes in areas of education, diversity causes et cetera. But even if we look at what we do as a business, a lot of our engagements have to do with how we help our clients improve their sustainability. In a business sense, in a people sense and in a planet sense: profit, people and planet.'

There is quite a lot of turmoil and societal insecurity at the moment. From a business point of view, how does that relate to you?

'The need for assurance has never been greater. This has a lot to do with huge shifts in society: the sustainability shift, the technological shift, the energy shift, a political shift and the desire to tolerate no errors. People are asking a lot of questions: how do these changes impact them? What is their future at work? Are the robots really coming, and what are they going to do to me, my family, my children's future employment? This is why I think our purpose as a firm has never been more relevant. Our purpose statement contains two very powerful words: inspire and empower.'

How will the company look in three years if your wildest dreams come true?

'In my dreams, in three years' time we will be an organization where people aspire to spend their career. Where they can develop themselves and learn. It will be a place where outside people know there is something really special happening. But also that in three years we will have re-established ourselves as a provider of trust.'

'Last but not least, we would like to be the most inspiring and assuring provider of trust to society. Once again in trust, but also in growth. And that growth is not only business growth, but also personal growth. So growth, in many ways, really captures KPMG.' □