



Piet Wybe Wagter, Sogeti Netherlands CEO

**“Change should always be top of mind. It’s a crucial part of modern leadership”**

50 YEARS

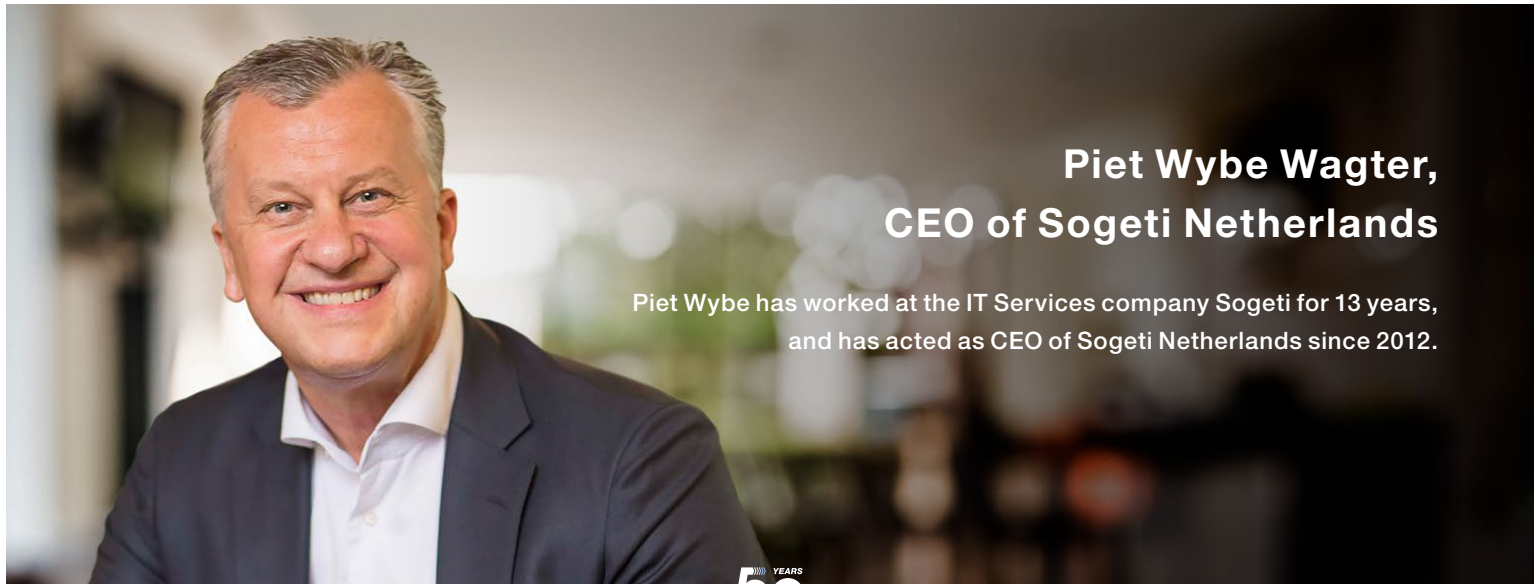
In Search of the Extraordinary Executive

How to make sure your people are motivated to change:  
**A CEO’s perspective**



**Mercuri Urval**

It's All About People



## Piet Wybe Wagter, CEO of Sogeti Netherlands

Piet Wybe has worked at the IT Services company Sogeti for 13 years, and has acted as CEO of Sogeti Netherlands since 2012.

50 YEARS

In the article “How to successfully drive change in your organisation” we discussed the importance of situational judgement in making sure your people are motivated to buy in to your change vision. But how do you make sure all your different stakeholders are willing to change in the same direction?

To answer these questions, we sat down for an interview with Mr Piet Wybe Wagter. He has worked at the IT Services company Sogeti for 13 years, and has acted as CEO of Sogeti Netherlands since 2012. During his years as an executive within a rapidly changing industry, Piet Wybe has gained a unique perspective on how to successfully drive organisational change.

“Change should always be top of mind. It’s a crucial part of modern leadership. The only thing that is permanent is change, and the speed is very fast today, especially within our industry. As a leader, you really need the ability to adapt yourself and your organisation even faster than changes in your surroundings”, Piet Wybe says.

A key to find your way through change and keep growth speed is, according to Piet Wybe, a high level of innovation. And if the organisation lacks innovation, you need to find a way to change that. In fact, lack of innovation and growth speed was the main reason why Sogeti Netherlands decided to change its organisational structure a few years ago.

“We found that the entities were too small and the boundaries were too strong, which decreased our ability to innovate. Therefore, we decided to create larger entities in order to spur innovation, increase speed and create more value to our clients.”

### ***How did the people within your organisation react to the change?***

“Changing an organisation always creates some tension. So many people, so many reactions. But the reactions were very positive in general because the change gave air to people and to the portfolio”, Piet Wybe explains.

A key to the success was the fact that Sogeti Netherlands did not change in order to avoid a crisis – they changed in order to take advantage of new opportunities.

“

**Many tend to believe that change is about being in a crisis”**

Piet Wybe Wagter, Sogeti Netherlands CEO

“Many tend to believe that change is about being in a crisis, and that you need to change very fast. But there is also change for the long term, which I believe is actually much more important. In this case, we weren't in a crisis and we had enough time to ensure that everyone properly understood why we changed and were both willing and able to do it”, Piet Wybe says.

He argues that successful change leadership is about being proactive, and incorporating change as a natural part of the organisational culture.

“If you are in a crisis and need to change due to bad performance, you're already too late. I think the key is to be proactive and view change as an ongoing process. Change should be part of your organisational culture; it shouldn't be a surprise to your people when you initiate a change. They have to feel that it will come”.

Piet Wybe refers to the book “*Will it make the boat go faster?*”, in which Olympic gold medallist rower Ben Hunt-Davis explains how his team became successful by always focusing on whether or not an activity actually made the boat go faster.

“

**What's in it for them? The answer will be very different depending on who you're talking to. In order to successfully reach and influence a certain group or person you need to understand their motivations, their fear and their capabilities”**

Piet Wybe Wagter, Sogeti Netherlands CEO

### ***When the need to change eventually appears, how do you make it happen?***

“The first thing you need to do as a leader is to develop a clear vision of the future. Define a dot on the horizon and say ‘Ok that's where we want to go, let's stick to it and take us there.’”

“Basically, change is about how to make the boat go faster, how to reach your dot on the horizon. You have your people and your resources, so what can you do to achieve your vision? You will need to find new opportunities, be creative, look at innovation, bring new people, learn, take risks, and always ask yourself whether or not it helps you to achieve your change.”

Once you have developed your vision, you need to get people's commitment and willingness to buy in. The key, according to Piet Wybe, is to successfully translate the vision into a clear message that spurs on motivation.

"Change is based on people. Without their motivation, change will never happen. You have to explain the change in a way they can readily accept and be motivated by. Why are we changing? What will happen? What will be the outcome? Not only do they need to understand why the change is good for the organisation, they also need to understand why it is good for them."

Since people are different and will react differently to change, Piet Wybe is keen to point out that you cannot use the same message for all groups and stakeholders.

"In an organisational change you have a lot of stakeholders, each with different values and opinions. So as a leader you must adapt the messaging, your storyline, to the people you want to influence. Your management team will need a different message than your sales team, and even on a personal level you will need to adapt your message. One message will simply not fit all".

### ***How do you know how to adjust the message to different stakeholders?***

"You always have to ask yourself what's in it for them? The answer will be very different depending on who you're talking to. In order to successfully reach and influence a certain group or person you need to understand their motivations, their fear and their capabilities. This is a very difficult task, but extremely important", Piet Wybe says.

In addition to adapting the message to different stakeholder, Piet Wybe also highlights the importance of adapting one's leadership style.

"When driving change as a leader, you need to make sure that your people are able, willing and motivated to make the boat go faster. But you also have to be able to steer the boat in the right direction. To do this you will need to be both rational and emotional, and everything in between. But when is rational key, and when is emotional key?

It's a challenge, but I think that's the most exciting part of leadership".

### ***Finally, what are your best advice to a leader who wants to drive change?***

"You have to accept that change is everywhere and that you continuously need to adapt. Sometimes it's easy, but sometimes you need to give yourself and your organisation more time. Strive to make change a natural part of your organisational culture, and bring it back to your people", Piet Wybe says and continues:

"Motivation is the key to successful change. You need to empower your people, let them learn and make mistakes in order to grow. If people find a way to grow, they also find a way to be accountable. And if they are accountable, they become more committed and motivated."

## Writer

### Rik Zuidmeer

*Rik Zuidmeer is Director of the International Business Office and Team leader in Amersfoort. In these roles he is working with his teams on providing best-in-class solutions for our clients nationally and globally. He is responsible for the co-ordination of International projects, resource planning and pricing strategy within Mercuri Urval. With his 17 years of experience Rik has significant experience from leadership development, working with leaders to improve their own and their organisation's performance.*

50 YEARS

[www.mercuriurval.com](http://www.mercuriurval.com)

**Mercuri Urval**

It's All About People