

## Pierre Klees : Anyone can be a mentor provided they shoulder their responsibilities.

By Murielle Lona

Try to conjure up a picture of Pierre Klees' inviting living room, and the myriad signs of his various enthusiasms. This is where the meeting took place. We were struck straight away by how very attractive the place was. It could be compared with a museum, thanks to the paintings by famous artists and, above all, the celebrated cigars which Pierre Klees delights in and has especially made for him in Cuba. A place like the man himself, who greets us today, offering us coffee and biscuits. Elegantly garbed in a grey suit with matching bow tie, Pierre Klees is anxious to share his experience of life and his aspiration to see humanity make further progress. Owing to his deep faith in the human being.

Seventy-six-year-old Pierre Klee needs no introduction. After graduating as an engineer he successfully completed business administration studies in the United States. As part of his civilian career he has played a key role in various companies, such as ACEC, la Poste, Biac (airport) and Vinçotte. He is an old hand at management boards, because he has had and still has several directorships on his belt. He is currently a member of the Epegon's board of directors. As a result of Pierre Klees'



decision to follow a Masonic path he has held leading positions in the Grand Orient of Belgium (which has ties with the Grand Lodge of Belgium) .

### Morality and ethics

The difference between morality and ethics is a cherished theme of his, one that is often confused in the mind of the general public.

"Morality refers to the rules governing behaviour in a social group, laid down collectively in the light of custom. This is the well-known distinction between good and evil. Our Western society is heavily influence by Christian morality. Thou shalt not kill !

An ethical system is either individual or collective. Individual ethics brings us face to face with the question of what meaning we invest our lives with. How can I, as an individual, relate to this morality? Translated into group action,

ethics becomes a collective act."

There is a clear link with people governance. Pierre Klees believes that people governance prompts human beings to adopt a joint approach to asking questions about the purpose of a business. Consequently, it consolidates feelings of pride, of belonging to the process involved in carrying out a joint endeavour.

A system for spelling out business ethics, people governance helps the members of a company in their joint policy work, thus enhancing business continuity and longevity.

### People governance does not conflict with the profit motive

A company is duty-bound to perform well and make profits, aims that are perfectly in keeping with people governance rules. People governance is based on the principle of creating value-enhancing opportunities for the company in the long term, by way of employment or wealth. Academics are currently at loggerheads about how to compute the effectiveness of people governance. Such a human-related process requires time.



Against the background of the business world, Pierre Klees is convinced that leaders have to step in in the case of a few of the system's characteristics. The time of the all-powerful leaders, on a par with the Pope, is over.

Pierre Klees likes to tell an anecdote about Alcatel France's purchase of an outstanding and exceptional wine, the Gruaud Larose (Château Gruaud-Larose is a winery in the Saint-Julien appellation of the Bordeaux region of France. Ed.).

At the end of the year the CEO of Alcatel Belgium invited the important members of staff to a meal preceded by a speech delivered by the head of the group. When he had finished, the CEO asked if there were any questions. Pierre Klees, the youngest invitee, said :

"Mister Chairman, you uphold and apply the idea about the need to focus on one's core business. Why did you, acting in the capacity of Alcatel, buy Gruaud Larose?". The guests were flabbergasted. The leader replied: "I really appreciate you asking that question. You are quite brave. I love this wine, the region and I am realising one of my dreams. Buying this product creates added value for my company." And history showed that this leader was

right. Faced with certain problems, the company was compelled to sell its wine, thus achieving a surplus value.

## Leadership is gaining confidence

Encouraging one's superiors and the shareholders does not constitute a major challenge. Believing, these people with decision-making powers are eager to support the idea. The main hurdle is putting the idea into practice at field level. Because it is difficult to gain the confidence of those called upon to strike out in a new direction. Those who have to complete the task start reflecting, they come out with constructive criticism. The skill is to develop leadership, to accept a NO and, from time to time, to say NO.

Leadership involves a joint discovery of a positive process for the company. It also involves surrounding oneself with good staff. The team has no need of people reluctant to work together towards the same aim. That signals the death of a company. All sides take part in a joint endeavour, while making their individual contribution to the whole.

Pierre Klees stresses one key quality of leaders: listening. He recommends leav-

ing the other person the opportunity to speak, listening carefully to the person and taking action. He cites the example of President Kennedy, who used to seek the opinion of his brother and his closest advisors. Once the opinion had been given, the American President wasted no more time discussing, he acted.

## The difference between people governance and human resources

People governance is a strategic factor, a transversal process in the organisation, whereas human resources management is a component of this strategy at the level of the implementation process.

People governance concerns any individual or group exerting an influence on the company, in-house or out-house, while human resources management is focussed on the internal aspects. People governance's weakness is the newness of the concept. Those who embrace it are called upon to try to spell out the idea and make it easier to understand. Time will be on the side of people governance.

## Closing quotation

"Of all acts, the most complete is that of constructing." Paul Valéry

