

Professor of The Hague University of Applied Sciences on How Businesses Understand IT JBC

A few decades ago Jaap de Bie started studying two different fields: language study and information technology, and then started working at the Netherlands Railways. It was then that he realized how difficult it is for company representatives to understand “IT jargon:” just about as difficult as it is for IT specialists to understand business. And that many other organizations, be it a pension fund, an insurance organization, or public transport companies, had similar problems. So an important mission was born in the work of Jaap de Bie: for many years he contributes to bridging gaps between “business” and “IT”.



Today Professor Jaap de Bie works at The Hague University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands in the Information Security Management section: ISM. This year he agreed to participate in the [International Polytechnic Summer School](#), and taught a course on “Business cooperation and information security governance in collaboration of EU's and Russian enterprises.” In his interview with SPbPU International Office, Professor Jaap de Bie spoke about the peculiarities of the ISM sphere, why, after several decades of work as a consultant in companies, he decided to start working at the university, and also gave useful advice to foreign students.

- Professor de Bie, Information Security Management is a very popular field today. Can you tell us about its main features?

- Key goal of Information Security Management is to manage risks of an organisation in the field of its valuable information: business information must be available when needed, business information must be correct in order to offer a good basis for decisions, and sensitive business information must be kept confidential if a restricted group of people is allowed to know about it

Focus points in this study are knowledge and how to apply this knowledge in practice. My field of expertise and research is an extra layer: how to customize expert knowledge while applying this knowledge in practice. Customizing knowledge comprises two crucial components. First, the client understands and accepts what the ISM expert communicates. Second, the ISM expert understands what the client needs and delivers a solution that fits in an optimum way in the organization. Therefore, knowledge and applying the knowledge is being enriched with how to communicate, how to argue, how to adapt, and how to connect. Today, these skills are still rare and this is one reason why many IT and ISM projects fail.

- How and why did you choose to work at the university?

- Eleven years ago, after some decades of working as a consultant in companies, I decided to start working at the Hague University of Applied Sciences, where ISM was just introduced as a new field of study. I wanted to combine work in practice and teaching, and this is just great. Why? Because, as a teacher, I can tell my colleagues in an organization that we need to work "by the book." And in the university of applied sciences, I can explain to the students that solutions, as written in a book, are not complete and not perfect for all situations - and I have quite some anecdotes from practice to make my point clear for the students.

- Has the coronavirus pandemic had a major impact on your work?

- All students and all teachers in The Hague had to learn how tools for e-meetings work and how working together this way can be done effectively. For most students, study discipline has been a serious issue as they were just alone in their apartments. For most teachers, direct contact with students was lost for a large part in e-lectures. We got used to the new working style in just a few weeks. But now, after more than a year of working and studying from the home or apartment, many students and teachers want to go back to school. Students and teachers agree here: a part of the program done in school, and a part carried out online would be an optimum choice.

- How do you feel about teaching online in general? What advantages and disadvantages do you think it has?

- Teaching in a classroom, in my view, has some great advantages: students and teacher have personal contact, the teacher can adapt a lecture when students show that they are not alert or do not understand, and the students can be invited to be interactive to have a great Socrates style dialogue, finding solutions

together, instead of classic one-way teaching.

Online teaching is quite impersonal, especially when students switch off cameras. Being interactive in a lecture is harder for the students. But online teaching has certain advantages too: in case of a pragmatic issue (like students suddenly having a lot of questions just before an exam), an online lecture can be set up in some minutes without bothering about finding a classroom. And what is more, students will be prepared this way to work with their peers via e-meetings, and this will probably experience to be very useful for them as it is expected that many professionals will not work 5 days a week in the same building anymore, but just some days. And, ISM is a very internationally oriented study, so students will also be prepared then for international e-meetings.

- Is this the first time you take part in our International Polytechnic Summer School? Why did you decide to take part in it?

- It was my first time to take part in the International Polytechnic Summer School. I decided to participate because our universities have a cooperation contract and I would love to see cooperation happen. Therefore, I decided to be a first mover in this cooperation. I add here that I like the warm personal touch that my Russian colleagues offered me. That felt like a warm welcome and it certainly helped me to decide to go for the course.

- What are the special features of your course “Business cooperation and information security governance in collaboration of EU’s and Russian enterprises?” What are its strong points?

- In my opinion, the students should answer this question. They were my target group, and I wanted to offer a great experience to them where they can learn and have some fun too. This is why I asked for a student survey with regard to the quality of my lectures.

I hope, the students found out that I did not just want to transmit knowledge and to show how to apply this knowledge. What I tried to do was to focus on my specialist area of expertise: customizing in applying knowledge. Therefore, I offered a lot of information about Russian and Dutch culture, about how to do business according to organizations that have a lot of information and practical experience to offer, and also how to focus on risks and addressing these risks while making great steps in Russian-Dutch cooperation.

- Have you ever been to Russia? What places in our country would you like to visit?

- A number of years ago, I have been in Moscow for just a week. This experience was great, beyond expectation. Saint Petersburg is on top of my list. Volgograd seems to be a beautiful city. And I would like to visit a city in Siberia once, for example, Irkutsk – but not in winter. I believe, Russia has a lot of beautiful places to offer.

-Would you like to participate in the International Polytechnic Summer School in a traditional (not online) format?

- Certainly! I know some great colleagues in Saint Petersburg, I have seen movies and pictures from Saint Petersburg, and, being a Dostoevsky fan, I would like to see some famous prospects, and to visit the Hermitage. And, I could offer a better-customized course than as I could adapt to the students that I would see in action.

- What would you advise international partners and international students on how to be active in this difficult time when many of us still work online?

- To the colleagues, I would say: stay positive and grasp the opportunities of flexible e-lectures. To the students: your apartment is not a prison and you can go out. So make some contacts with fellow international students to enjoy some time together. And, on some days where you feel tired, enjoy that you can follow an online course and do not have to run for an early lecture!

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