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If you didn't grow up as a street child, you'd better start thinking like one!

If you were to take a flight to Guatemala City and were required upon arrival to hand over your mobile phone, passport, bankcard and moreover had to compete with the youngsters living on the street, guess who would make it. Why should it be like that?

Because those who win on the streets are those who are geared to survive. They have adopted a creative way of dealing with the VUCA (Volatility Uncertainty Complexity and Ambiguity) environment in which they live, because they manage to keep their heads above water in tough surroundings.

Understanding how certain individuals tend to be more successful than others in this environment can provide insights that are exciting for our own companies and organisations, particularly now that the markets have come to resemble the realities of life on the streets.

Can the keys to success in the street environment be transferred to organisations wishing to undertake successful management for preventive purposes?

It is based on that question that StreetwiZe was born in 2007, created by Arnoud Raskin, social entrepreneur pur sang and founder of Mobile School.

Mobile School is a non-profit organisation offering informal education to street youth, aiming to boost their self-esteem and help them discover and develop their talents. Together, Mobile School and StreetwiZe form the Mobile School Group; a unique hybrid business. StreetwiZe invests 100% of its profits in Mobile School and relentlessly helps in increasing its social impact worldwide. Over the years, StreetwiZe has enabled the Mobile School Group to transform a 100% charity funded non-profit organisation into a self-sustainable social profit business.

StreetwiZe is a collective of authentic trainers that strengthen your employees through high involvement and connection. They design unique learning experiences through which companies, teams and employees are offered tools to cope with increasing complexity and change. The StreetwiZe approach is no nonsense and rock 'n roll ... like street life.

Street Skills

Faced with ongoing disruption, complexity and change, companies need employees with an entrepreneurial spirit, sense of purpose and self-esteem

more than ever. Therefore, they need StreetwiZe. StreetwiZe has developed their Street Skill model and use street-experience as a metaphor in their approach.

All StreetwiZe interventions are based on the street skills model. Surviving the streets is an achievement. During their work on the streets, spanning almost 20 years and 24 countries, Mobile School have come to know many extraordinary youths and have found and interacted with those boys and girls who make the impossible possible, despite their situation.

Over the years, street youth consistently inspired with their stories and experiences. In examining these stories, Mobile School began to see a pattern: street survivors all had a highly developed and very specific set of **street skills**: four crucial skills that street youth use in dealing with challenges in a constantly changing and uncertain environment.

- The first skill is **Positive Focus**. Rather than being negative pessimists, street survivors generally adopt a positive attitude and do not lay the blame for their situation on

others. They go looking for opportunities rather than complaining and holding others responsible for their situation and lack of opportunities. If you have a positive outlook you will be in a position to recognise positive opportunities. The lesson of the street is that when you have to contend with a fundamental crisis, maintaining a positive attitude is crucial for your survival.

- The second skill is **Agility & Resilience**; being flexible and fast enough to seize new opportunities and bounce back quickly after a setback. Resilience is the ability to be able to anticipate changes during the course of time and recover from disturbances and problems on a lasting basis. Agility is the capacity to achieve this through taking quick and effective measures.
- **Proactive creativity** is the third essential skill. Doing things differently, without the outcome being decided upon. In other words, daring to take risks and believing in your ideas. If you are expecting your new idea to be applauded but find it greeted with skepticism you naturally end up being discouraged. When an innovation is unsuccessful, it is the owner of the idea who fails. You cannot blame others for a failure to take on board the innovation. Innovation means reinventing the world. You go into battle with what is and you do not do that from your sofa.
- Last but not least: **Cooperative Competition**, the balance between your own struggle and the respect of and cooperation with others. It is the natural counterpart to the previous street skill, proactive creativity. Street children living alone are not in the majority. „Stronger together“ is a rule that is all the more relevant the more stiff and fierce the competition is. Consequently, street children tend to forge alliances, opting to join a group, so they simply have more chances of surviving. However, in spite of cooperation within the groups, fierce competition also reigns within the group. Knowing when to compete

and when to cooperate is essential in surviving.

True Hybridity

StreetwiZe's profit-generating activities deliver insights and resources for Mobile School's non-profit activities. Consequently, StreetwiZe helps to consolidate the Mobile School.

However, the Mobile School non-profit activities in turn provide the context, mission and sense of meaning and purpose needed to offer StreetwiZe an outstanding learning framework in order to produce a greater impact for its customers. Consequently, Mobile School helps to consolidate StreetwiZe

The harmony and complementary relationship between the two sides of the equation create a unique and authentic position in order to maximise the benefits for customers both in the non-profit and for-profit sectors. The Mobile School Group summarises this in a 360° Impact Model. If the methodology describes how they act, the 360° Impact Model is who they are. StreetwiZe and Mobile School are not two separate organisations, they are one. This way authenticity and connection to the mission are ensured.

Social Impact

However important financial management and financial health are, social impact is the main driver behind the Mobile School Group.

Decision making in the Group is based on a clear mission statement, financial and social impact figures, topped up by regular interaction with all stakeholders. The true added value is hard to measure: it's all about sustainable development of people and society, self-esteem, talent development and well-being. Moreover, the Mobile School Group's products are so diverse, it is hardly possible to calculate a unique impact. Despite a clear impact on people, exact pre- and post-measurements of sustainable development are extremely complex.

Besides that, daily positive feedback from street children, partner organisa-



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tions and StreetwiZe clients confirm the added value, which reduces the need of the organisation to prove the value and quality of its interventions. The measurement needs to be done mainly to obtain correct information to manage the means. Together with Accenture, StreetwiZe • Mobile School created an Impact Score Card, to support management decision making based on a coherent and sustainable social impact dashboard.

StreetwiZe started in 2009 with workshops based on the four streetskills. Today they are seen as a complete learning and development supplier that prepare and support companies in dealing with complexity and change. In 2016, they worked for over 100 multinationals such as DHL, NIKE, BASF, USG People, Accenture, Rabobank, Coca Cola, BNP Paribas Fortis, BARCO, AXA, Deloitte, Vlerick and AB Inbev.

The Mobile School Group continues to grow and invest in the future, for example by offering digitalised educational content to its Mobile School partners, and by developing a case management application for street workers, enabling them to tailor activities to their target group and register their impact on the streets.

For more information, you can follow StreetwiZe • Mobile School on <https://www.facebook.com/SWZMS>, mail to info@streetwize.be or have a look at <http://www.streetwize.be/en> to discover their way of working, products and client references.

Author:

Joyce Trémérie has degrees in international business economics and HR management, and over 15 years experience in a HR /management consultancy and non-profit environment.