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# Alumni Leadership series featuring Charis Heuzé, Chief Financial Officer of CB-CERATIZIT

In the Alumni Leadership series, we follow the inspirational career paths of several Deloitte Luxembourg alumni. In this second feature, we will follow the journey of Charis Heuzé, a 19-year-old mother who overcame all challenges to become a leader and relocate to China.



**Charis Heuzé, at CB-CERATIZIT head office in Xiamen, China**

With over 20 years of experience in the financial service industry, Charis Heuzé joined Deloitte Luxembourg in 1999 as a junior accountant. She left Deloitte as an Audit Manager in 2004, to join CB-CERATIZIT in Luxembourg. She is now Chief Financial Officer and is based in China.

*“Many young studying mothers give up higher education as this situation is quite challenging. But it is possible to do both at the same time. I was not willing to give up, and my strategic choices led me to whom I am today.”*

## Charis, would you share your background with our community?

**CH:** I am French and German, born in East Germany, where I grew up until 1987. At the age of 11, I moved to France, close to Troyes, where I learned how to speak French and went to the university in Reims.

I became a mother at the age of 19, and this influenced my educational choices and career path. Many young studying mothers give up higher education as this situation is quite challenging. But it is possible to do both at the same time. I was not willing to give up, and my strategic choices led me to whom I am today. I decided to pursue a DUT, which is equivalent to a Bachelor’s degree in enterprise accounting today (Business Administration and Management). Afterwards, I did a Master’s in “Maîtrise des sciences techniques comptables et financières” (Master in Finance-Controlling-Audit). My mother also helped me a lot during this period.

## How did your journey with Deloitte begin?

One day, while finishing my Master’s, I saw a Deloitte advertisement on the wall at the University. My first thought was: “Wow! They are really looking for my profile! I speak German and French and had studied Accounting and Finance, so this is made for me.” Indeed, being multilingual became very important for my future career as it was necessary requirement to start my career at Deloitte, known as the Fiduciaire Générale de Luxembourg at the time.

I therefore decided to apply, and the next day I got an interview. I passed the test and was offered the job. In June 1999, before I had even received my diploma, I joined Deloitte as a junior accountant. Young and motivated, I gained experience in accounting, debit and credit, and T-accounts and did a few small audits. At that time Deloitte sent us juniors to different clients to do the daily accounting. In my case everyday early in the morning I did this type of job for “Esso Tankstelle”. That’s how you learn accounting.



### **How did you evolve in your career? What steps did it take?**

After a year and a half at Deloitte, I realized that I was more interested in the area of auditing. Therefore, I considered changing department. I submitted the request and passed an internal interview. It worked very well. I was working as an auditor of industrial companies. As an IRE (commissaire d'entreprise), I had some theoretical know-how in banking and investment funds as well and could have moved into that sector, but I preferred to stay humble and remain in the industry sector.

I was a Manager when I decided to leave Deloitte. For me back then, it was a question of work-life balance. I was considering whether I would like to stay at Deloitte and continue my career development to go for a partner position. At that time, it was very rare to see women in leadership positions. I decided to choose another path, and I am very happy with the decision I made.

### **What was the most challenging experience in your career?**

When I joined CERATIZIT in 2005, the CFO was looking for a Group Finance Manager. At first, the team was just one person, but then it grew fast following the rapid expansion, M&A of the CERATIZIT Group. In 2010, I started to work on a due diligence project for a potential Joint-Venture partnership between CERATIZIT and the Taiwanese group "Chun Bao" (CB) with production mainly based in Mainland China. That's when I started traveling to Asia as part of this project.

Sometime after the Joint Venture contract was finally signed, they offered me the position of CFO of the CB-CERATIZIT Group, even though I didn't speak Chinese. I accepted because my daughter was already studying at university at that time. Becoming a CFO was a logical next step from my previous role. I moved from manager to CFO, becoming a more strategic advisor for the company, responsible for financial planning, process changes and analyzing the company's data. Due to the joint venture, a lot of politics were in play. It has been a very enriching working experience for me.

*“It has been 17 years since I left Deloitte and I still feel like part of the family. In the Audit team, we always really supported each other, and these relationships remain strong. My best friend today is from the Deloitte family. She even came to visit me in China.”*

### **What skills or knowledge did you develop at Deloitte that you are still using today?**

From my experience as a CFO, experience and knowledge of how to perform the most basic accounting tasks are crucial. Before you dive into planning and analyses, you need to have accurate figures. I always made sure that the figures were accurate before analysing and taking any strategic decisions. It seems logical, but I know that there can be many figures that are wrong.

Even the most basic skills you acquire will help you in your career, no matter your seniority level. They will help you at any time and be useful even many years later. Knowing the accounting fundamentals of balance sheets and profit and loss accounts has helped me a lot in my career.

### **If there was one piece of advice that you would like to share to our community?**

It is very important to be aware of your own strengths and weaknesses. I am proud of all the steps I have taken in my career and the fact that I managed to be a successful leader and mother at the same time.

Gaining accounting knowledge from the basics on helped me to quickly analyze and understand complex issues which made me more and more confident over the time. There are, of course, some areas in which I am not an expert, but I know what I am doing. My staff is stable because they believe in my knowledge and guidance. During the COVID-19 pandemic some of the team members were unable to work, and I was able to assist. It is useful to know that you can rely on yourself for basic tasks as well.

# Raymond Krawczykowski joins the Deloitte Luxembourg Alumni community

With almost 20 years of experience in the international tax industry, Raymond Krawczykowski leaves Deloitte at the end of the month. In this farewell interview, Raymond took a moment to share his journey at Deloitte since 2004, and his insights about tax in Luxembourg.

**From your experience, what do you consider are the biggest challenges and trends facing tax field in Luxembourg?**

**RK:** I would say that it is about the complexity of the field. In the past, tax was easier and you could do it on your own. But every year, regulations became more and more complex, including more detailed and technical rules with less clarity around them.

That definitely is a challenge, but at the same time it is exciting. It makes things even more interesting as we get into a lot more complexity. And in addition to that, because there is less clarity, we have an obligation to be even more interactive with colleagues, in order to develop a point of view, a position.

All of that could become a threat if not handled properly. But if it is done properly, it can push you to become even more integrated. Back 20 years ago, we had a lot less specialties than we have now. Today you need a couple of specialists to develop things. Teams are even more important today than they were in the past. The challenge is always to find the right specialist and team up with them – as it was a bit arrogant to think that we can master and monitor all those different skills and technical aspects.

That is also what we offer to our clients today. We do not do everything on our own, but we involve the right specialist at the right time to get best ideas and solutions or just to mitigate the risk to the maximum.

*“We are not on our own: we involve the right specialist at the right time to get best ideas and solutions or just to mitigate the risk to the maximum.”*



**Raymond Krawczykowski, Tax Partner,  
soon to be Alumni**

In his over 20 years of tax experience, Raymond has advised clients on a wide variety of international tax issues, including mergers and acquisitions, assistance with structuring acquisitions, repatriation of income planning, leveraging acquisition vehicles and tax structuring of infrastructure funds for Private Equity houses.

Raymond has led Deloitte Luxembourg's tax practice between 2012 and 2020 and has been a member of the Executive Committee from 2009 to 2020.



## **Luxembourg tax outlook in global economy: what are your predictions for the upcoming period?**

You need countries which are able to provide services, like Germany produces cars or France produces wine. We also need countries which are able to understand specific kinds of industries. In international tax, you need a very specific community to make things happen. Luxembourg has that strength and focus. Luxembourg developed all the required infrastructure which some other countries did not.

Some years ago, I was struggling with one Deloitte partner in another office to harbor jurisdiction on the Eastern countries. Not to tell them that they should do something, but rather to motivate them to create an international tax department. Why? Because we need that swiftness of interactions between people. We need to make sure that in those countries, someone will be dedicated and focused on the work. The easy aspect is to do compliance to some extent. Getting and creating a team that is also focused on advisory is part of the M&A advisory. Sometimes that is what is difficult to understand for those who are out of the jurisdiction. We need to create that network, also outside, with other partners. Luxembourg has been doing that for many years and it is now part of the Luxembourgish DNA.

I believe that the future of this country is still very bright in terms of investment management, and activities. Luxembourg understands everything sufficiently to not miss out on anything and to put all the pieces of the puzzle together.

*“In international tax, you need a very specific community to make things happen. Luxembourg has that strength and focus and developed all the required infrastructure.”*

## **How did technology shape the evolution of tax practices?**

It is probably two sides of the same coin, or the Yin and the Yang. There are a lot of positive things. First, you can rely on the technology to perform the basic tasks so you can focus more on managerial tasks. This is something that everybody embraced with satisfaction: we don't need to do those little things we were doing in the past, now we have computers and AI to do that for us.

The negative side is that we could become lazy, in the sense of entrepreneurship and joyful spirit within the team. That doesn't really work with digital. We should not be lazy. The computer is helping and assisting us in doing a number of things, but it is still important to take the time to go and discuss with people. It is not because we have all of the technology that we shouldn't continue to invest and spend time, in a genuine, positive matter, with people and colleagues. If not done properly, it could become negative, but if you are aware of that, then it works.

*“The biggest evolution that Deloitte made since I joined is in the direction of entrepreneurship. Entitling and empowering people to do what they do best, but also allowing them to make mistakes. This is the way to learn and grow.”*

## **You have been a member of Deloitte Luxembourg since 2004. What is your view on the evolution of the firm?**

The biggest evolution that Deloitte made since I joined is in the direction of entrepreneurship. Entitling and empowering people to do what they do best, but also allowing them to make mistakes. Out of one mistake you get ten huge successes, and this is the way how you learn and grow. For me, it was really inspiring to work in such a positive and fun atmosphere. I am happy that I was part of this team of entrepreneurs. I have enjoyed collective work in tax team meetings but also experience sharing with colleagues from other service lines and colleagues across the world.

I really enjoyed the work we did at Deloitte over the last 18 years. I am very happy that I had the opportunity to witness the growth of the team and to see some of the very young people taking high responsibility within the organization, as partners or as members of the Executive Committees. It feels great to see them succeed.

## How would you describe Tax professionals?

Most of the tax people are naturally introverts, including myself. We are more focused on the matter and the details, than we are on the people. I believe it is a requirement to do the job well, and one gets a lot of satisfaction from that requirement. But on the other hand, we can't be sole traders, we need to be part of a team if we wish to have a more successful career.

*“Deloitte offers that possibility: to connect with great professionals that can influence our way of thinking and connecting with each other – embracing in that way the concept of the constant evolution of our character. ”*

## And what about talent management? Has this become less complex than it was 20 years ago?

The management of people has always been the most complex aspect of work – not only for the tax department but probably for all service lines in the firm. I do not think it got more or less complex but rather I would say it was and it is the most important and the most complex aspect of our work. As soon as you have two people sharing an office, you need to think about management of that relationship. This probably consumes the biggest part of our thoughts: to ensure that we can handle it properly. But in the end, it provides you with a lot of satisfaction at the same time.

There is a lot of humility around that. I do not believe that there is one single manner to do it. You need to constantly adapt to the situation, the team you are working with, or the stress level you are exposed to. Therefore, those management skills need to change and evolve according to the people and the circumstances... I would not say it is easier today than it was 20 years ago – but it represents a constant evolution and a very rewarding challenge. You always try to give your best and provide them with guidelines but at the same time you receive so much. It is a mutually growing expertise, a two-way process.

## How did you manage work/life balance?

I believe it is impossible to have a work-life balance in our line of work, especially if you are expecting to become a partner. It is all about managing the imbalance and the disequilibrium to make the best out of it. I am not negative about that; it makes it very interesting too.

Firstly, you need to take care of yourself and make sure that you build a “trustful” environment with your family so your children are not too angry at you . The reality is that I did not spend a lot of time with the children. Really not enough time. We know that It is not about the length of time you spend with them but more about the quality. It is a very difficult balance to find.

And of course, your life partner plays a crucial role in that, having trust, interactions and managing the family. Most important is to support each other and deciding on priorities. More than work-life balance, I believe we should talk about compromises and prioritization.

## What are your plans for the future?

It has been a heavy book, one like Tolstoy or Dostoevsky. Though I admire these authors, once you finish such a book comes the need to pause and reflect. To take some time and look at what comes next.

So, to answer the question, I would say that it will be a break to reflect on all of those years. There is no rapidity or swiftness in terms of having to speed and look at something immediately. I do not rush as it would be a mistake for me.

*“It was great to be part of Deloitte and be a partner there and I now look forward to joining the Alumni community. Still, I will be missing the many intense interactions with such great clients. ”*

# Let Talent innovate and create the future: How Deloitte encourages start-up spirit

Never has it been so critical to uncover and empower hidden innovators. Deloitte does not leave growth opportunities untapped, or talent disengaged. Instead, the firm believes in driving people development through opportunity — by helping professionals discover their passion, realize their ideas and blaze a trail into the future.

*“It is our people that will create tomorrow’s next big thing – and not the technology on its own.”*



## Innovation Ambassadors program

Launched in December 2021, the Innovation ambassadors program offers the chance for every Deloitte Talent to master digital, technology and innovation topics, get ahead of the market, and be able to advise, coach and train peers and clients. The program is open to everyone, no matter their grade or service line

## D.GET: Deloitte intrapreneurship program

Innovation has always been at the core of our organization. To foster this culture, we rolled out our intrapreneurship program in March 2022 to the entire firm.

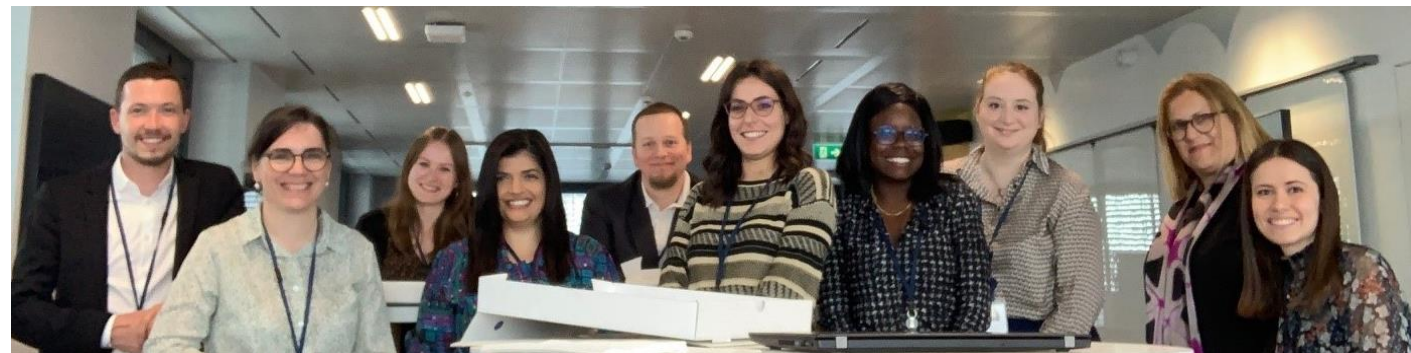
D.GET helps employees develop their own ideas, gives them the chance to pitch their concepts before a jury, and provides them with the necessary means to transform their theories into reality. We believe our people have exceptional talent, and with this program, they can help shape the future of the firm, the consulting industry, and the market.



## Meet the Kairos team!

Together with other Luxembourg companies, Deloitte has launched a program to develop a digital platform that connects local NGOs with market players that can help them solve their everyday challenges.

The platform will bridge solidarity actors needing help on certain projects with employees/businesses ready to dedicate their time as volunteers. The expected outcome is that NGOs receive support to carry out their essential work, while companies can positively contribute to society.



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