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BNP Paribas Personal Finance invites you to discover The Way, the podcast that explores the paths of consumption. Entrepreneur, business leader or researcher. Up the Way gives a voice to those who act day after day to build a more sustainable consumption. Welcome and happy listening!

00:00:39:09 - 00:01:04:17

Hello Zoé, I'm Jean Thierry. Such a leader is the founder of Bio Viva Edition Bio Viva Sustainable Development and the founder of the small Viva Foundation. I am an agricultural engineer and have a master's degree in biochemistry. Above all, I am passionate about living things. Since I was a child, I have always put my nose in the earth trying to look at what was going on there.

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It's just in me and so I have to orient my studies, then my professional life. To enshrine respect for the living. I was a graduate and at the time you had to join the army or possibly be a national service volunteer. I made my choice and fortunately, they sent me to a small island in the Caribbean called Saint Lucia, with a program that was to develop a territorial project that was intended to really offer sustainable development for the populations.

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It was just after the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. And so here I am setting out to set up scientific programs, programs, an economic program, because we had to make the structure viable, manage the stakeholders, communicate and try to make sure that all these little people agree for a desirable future. And it worked.

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A year later, the bottle of champagne was thrown at the boat financed by the French cooperation. Everyone was happy and the next day, I found Pêcheurs in the marine reserve. And then, I said to myself, in fact, it's more complicated than you imagine. So I went to him and I told him, I don't understand, you've signed all the agreements and you're fishing in the reserve.

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He said to me, but what reserve? I understood that in fact he was not necessarily aware of it and the devil is hidden in the details and in the working groups. Yes, there are fishermen, but there are several categories of fishermen and that is really significant. When we work on these subjects, it is because there are fishermen who fish offshore, others who fish on the Seine with a net and others who fish with a trap and he fish with a trap and therefore close to the shore and therefore in the reserve.

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As I had also worked a little in cognitive science, I said to myself, but there's something wrong with this. I work on the system, I try to organize, to make sure that everyone gets along. But the real problem, it is human, is that in fact we have to work on the human being, the person as such and therefore on his behavior.

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And it worked a lot on me. And I, who was destined to travel the world, to set up national parks, reserves all over the world, really, I said to myself, no, that's not what you should do. If you really want to be useful, you have to invent something. And that's when the idea came to me.

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I will always remember it. I was on my desk which was two meters from the beach. I said, I'm going to make a game.

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I'm not a player. I knew nothing about it. This idea followed me. I have finished my cooperation. I went back to France, to my parents, whom I haven't seen for a few years and apart from them, I created a game. And now, I work like crazy 18 hours a day, with an obsession that was to tell the story of life for simply the average person who knew nothing about it.

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Well, that he can discover while having fun this incredible chance that we simply have to be alive for 15 billion years. The birth of the universe, then the birth of life at 3.9 billion years ago. Its evolution, the invention of sexuality which allowed the explosion of biodiversity and where we were, in 1995, what were the stakes. I was talking about climate change, I was talking about the disappearance of biodiversity, but I wanted to make it nice and fun.

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And I released this game. But he was very innovative because the plateau was the first time in the world that we saw a plateau that took up the projection of Peters, who is a German geographer who, unlike Mercator, who positioned Europe at the centre of the planisphere, started from the equator. And so it gave another vision of the world. And then no country, no borders with the environment.

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So I took a map that represented the biomes, i.e. the large natural environments. And for nights and nights, because I was working at night at a friend's house who had an Apple computer, it was very rare at the time, which was not very reliable because he brought me a couple of times, created point by point this map that didn't exist, which represented another version of the world.

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And that, plus the content, plus a game mechanic. At Christmas 95 under the tree, I put the first living organic prototype and I put it. I introduced it to the family by saying Bah this is what I'm going to do.

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The principle of bio vivant is to learn while having fun and it is based on a pedagogical principle which is The method is three to learn, appropriate and act. Because it's great to

discover, we have fun but in the end what do we do? So here, the principle was to have a map with destinations. We had to go with circles at the time, circles as round as the earth.

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The pawns had the shapes of drops of water, because water is life and the points to be won were spiral shapes. Because the spiral is the most present form in the universe, from your DNA molecules to the most distant galaxies. They have a spiral shape and so you had your destination card, you went to these natural environments, you were asked a number of questions.

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I actually invented the commented multiple-choice questions because once again the goal is not to know, it's to learn. So we have three choices, so we have at least one chance in three and the other two answers are so far-fetched that a priori it's quite easy. And then there is a commentary that allows you to deepen the theme addressed.

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When we have answered well, we create a map that tells you a flush that knows how to flush water without drying up. If you say this phrase three times without making a mistake, you earn two Visa or Bathroom Singer points. You never forget to turn off the water when subscribing in the shower. So the idea was to give nice ways to act on a daily basis and to make people think about once again, the best way to protect the planet.

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I'm not an entrepreneur, at least I wasn't. I later discovered that I think I had the fibre. I go to a first show. Boom! First prize, second salon. Boom, first prize very fair thirteen first prize. I year in France I year in the United States Games of the year in Canada. I say to myself, I think I've got something, and since November 96, JO has been going there, making his way to try to explain in joy, in good humor, how important it is to respect the world around us.

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Following your intuition is really a piece of advice that I will give to everyone. So it's advice that may seem far-fetched. Because what is intuition? It's deep down to be convinced that this is the right thing to do, that it's the right thing to do. And I, honestly, was ashamed. At first, I was ashamed to make money because in the beginning, I made a lot of money.

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I said to myself, but I want to save the earth and I earn money. What's this story? And on top of that, by making games while I was studying. Well, I understood that in fact not. When you take risks, when you borrow money from your parents anyway. No, not at the time of the 300,000 francs.

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My parents didn't have excessive means, far from it. They trusted me, I was able to repay this money and it allowed me to earn it. Moreover. And in the end, I said to myself no, be

proud of what you did because it was very risky and two you did what no one would have imagined you could do.

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But it's you, it's really you. And so on after the many failures. Because the life of an entrepreneur is anything but a long, quiet river. And I'm in love with mistakes because it's mistakes that make you grow. So after several mistakes, it becomes stupid. But it's important to make mistakes because it means that we take risks.

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And I've taken risks, sometimes recklessly, because I'm really committed, because I want to show the way, because I'm made in France, because 100% of our games are produced from renewable energy, most of which comes directly from rooftops. The factory with solar panels that I paid for on land that doesn't belong to me. Well, I tried everything because I want to show that it's possible.

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Little by little. So I learned a lot and I always had this flame against all odds. I don't care. That's where I must go and I will go. So pugnacity is a key word when you want to be an entrepreneur. When I decided to create my company, I had a key word called coherence. I said to myself, I don't know.

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Designing a game about respect for the planet and making it in China ten or 15,000 kilometers away doesn't make sense, and so I looked for printers and I had specifications on eco-design, a word that didn't exist at the time and I made myself in quotation marks, has them repacked nine times out of ten.

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And then there was one who accepted. I was in Lorraine, he was in the Drôme, he was taking over his father's printing shop. We were both 25 years old and he said banco. I wanted recycled paper, obviously recyclable. I didn't want plastic, obviously, no batteries, but it seems simple. But in fact, we had to invent what was called the dunnage box.

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It's very much alive. They invented the cushioning box. That is to say, you take a piece of cardboard with folds and cut-outs. Dad, you train him and it makes a game box. Whereas before it was, let's say, a cardboard box in which you slip a plastic to put the elements in. I didn't want that.

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Since then, we've been copied, but that was already a first signing. Then there was all the symbolism of the elements that I explained to you. Then I did some sourcing to make sure that this game could work economically. At first, obviously, it's not profitable. You produce 3000 of them, I find a first customer because you have to get started.

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I borrow the money from my parents. This customer tells me I'll take 3000 from you. I told him ok on such and such a date, I'll call you to tell you that the game will be ready, that it will go to print on the day. He says to me, "Who are you again?"

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I said I'm nice. The organic founder, he will place an order with you. He said yes, I'm cancelling the order. Welcome to the world of business and commerce. And I told him, sir, it's not possible. He says Well look, actually no, they're not good, so I said You can't do that.

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And for 1 hour, I held the spittoon for him to place an order for me, and at the end, he told me Ok, I'll take 1500, he orders the 1500, he sells them and recommends the second part and the adventure is launched. And now, I'm incredibly lucky because in terms of communication, it went very well. My first appointment with another buyer after the toy show because you have to do trade shows, frankly, that helps a lot.

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So it's less strong than 20 years ago and than in view of the past. But at the time, it was the trade shows that made you known and you met your customers. And there, there was another old woman who has since disappeared, who gives me an appointment in the Paris region. I go there with my little briefcase and my little game and in the waiting room with a guard in front of me and my look is made.

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Are you coming for a job interview? JBA Oh no, not at all. I'm here to present a game about the environment I just created. It's good, I'm interested. Then I play the game. I saw the demo, and then at the end, he hands me his business card. He said to me, can we see each other again? I say ok, I see my client buying it to reference the game and I say hello to him.

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Then I unfold my presentation. I'll stop you right now, I'll take it from you. I heard about you for half an hour every other day. You had an interview. There, I understood when the power of communication was more free because I couldn't finance a TV commercial. One thing leading to another, all this took off.

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And then I had this partner who was in the waiting room and was in fact a big distributor who placed a very, very big order with me, with whom I signed an exclusive contract. And then in the first year, he still sold 18,000, which was considerable. And that's where Caster came out. Not great but still, and I had ordered 30,000 of them.

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So that's year two. I get a call. Well, we cancel the wet contract and the contract, but why did we make 18? yes, but we didn't make 30,000. I later found out that he was in financial

difficulties and in the end they cancelled the contract. But as they had exclusivity, I could no longer sell and so I went international.

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So immediately we translate the game into several languages and it's also a bit of a trademark because it's really dice of the content. We play educational games, it's never easy to translate, especially with real scientific rigor. But today, Joshua is translated into Chinese, Romanian, Greek, Arabic, English, Italian, Spanish of course, even Slovenian.

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We had versions. International doesn't scare us, despite the fact that it's still quite complicated. Here, we limit the damage because we manage to sell them. Well, the profitability is lower and then we get our contract back and we resume distribution in France.

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So today, when about thirty employees, we are based in Montpellier, Burger édition will create and develop and market more than 200 different games for young and old, on the theme of the living, but also a little culture and they are characterized by their simplicity, their playability, the emotion and the conviviality that it really generates.

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Our first email from a child, so his mother, sent us the email. The child had created the nature challenge in Italian. It was I don't remember on what theme. Finally, you have to realize, it's a child who creates 36 cards, who draws, who writes the content to show his attachment. Say when are you going to release my game?

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I think that's extraordinary and it's a real proof of attachment to the brand. But the Nature Challenges, today, are nearly 80 different references in France and abroad. In the territorialized version, it is the number one seller of French games. According to September 2024 figures, more than 500,000 are made each year. And that's really our spearhead and locomotive.

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In any case, in our sector, we need a locomotive and wagons. If you don't have a locomotive, a game or a collection that pulls the rest, it's very complicated and we have this chance that has allowed us to make ourselves known and to enter the families. And the best thank you you can give me is that when I meet more often women who tell me that I grew up with the first living organic game, my children play with nature girls.

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Thank you. I say it's okay, I've done my part and today we have the pleasure of releasing a new collection called Défi Nature Protect. And it's extraordinary because I'm trying to change the company's business model, which is quite virtuous. But by closing the loop, it works. The following way collectible cards are based on the principle of rarity.

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Except that at Bioviva, scarcity will be linked to the scarcity of animals in real life. So today, there are 583 milk-black rhinos left. There will never be more than 583 cards. Nature Protect Challenge Rhinoceros was hammering. At the same time, we finance the protection of the eastern black rhinoceros thanks to the Bio Viva foundation, which has established partnerships with NGOs in the field.

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And then, I tell myself it's not given to everyone, it's very difficult, but we believe in it and that's what I want to show the children. I play, I collect, I protect, I play again, I collect, I protect. And the more I collect, the more I protect animals in real life, to show children that they have the power to act.

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So we often say that your power to act, to vote, is your credit card. That's it, it's the collectible cards. Nature Protect Challenge.

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When you make educational games for the general public, you need several skills. It takes three. The first is scientific veracity. To be sure that what you say is really scientifically proven. The second is pedagogical engineering. How we allow better learning. And the third is graphic design. Make the games beautiful. I will add a fourth which is the game mechanic.

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I'm not a game mechanic, but I have three people on my team who do this all day long. They have been passionate since they were very young. I'm passionate about the living. They are passionate about game mechanics. It's a great mix and it allows us to develop 200 educational and family games for the general public.

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But above all, it is collective intelligence that must be developed for it to work. There is no magic recipe. Every year, there is a game that explodes the counters. One wonders why no one has the recipe. On the other hand, what we do know is that if we make a good educational game, we need a gameplay that is very simple, content that is funny.

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It has to be beautiful and it has to generate conviviality and pleasure. It is not a question of making scientific content, but it is necessary to make scientific content and, if possible, accessible. So that's our job, it's a real know-how. And Buat is one of the few companies in our industry that has ten people dedicated to designing games.

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Generally, our competitors look for authors, adapt the game in terms of visuals, keep the concept of the game mechanics and spread it. There is no such know-how, there is no

desire to create specific content that meets well-defined needs. To make a good educational game. Because it is a necessary condition, but it is not enough.

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What is needed is to communicate a lot and make the game known and reach a critical size so that it takes hold at the level of children.

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How can we measure the impact of live games on children's behaviour? Is a very good question and as a result, we decided to hire a CNRS researcher who, for two years, worked on the evaluation of biological games living on the environmental behavior of children. He will publish. The results are really interesting. The sample size is too small. So he went to several schools, he did an incredible job and he took sociologists and economists.

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He filmed them. They sequenced the images to look at the child's behavior in relation to his reaction. Really great! I enjoyed doing this work and this is only the beginning. It is essential to say we make educational games, but what is the impact? How do you measure it today? The science is a bit weak on these subjects, but it's part of Bua's societal mission to advance the schmilblick.

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So the advantage of having in-house collaborators who work on content by us, I think we have the largest database in the world of content on living things, treated in a funny and amusing way. And so it is natural for us to respond to requests for customized tools. And so we territorialized Défi nature La Défi nature Corse Défi nature Québec All the overseas territories.

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And we go very far since, for example, for Défi Nature Ile de la Réunion, we translated into Creole, the local language, in Mayotte, we did it in China too. So we have to find a translator. For Reunion Island, we decided to mobilize the children of a school because the teacher loved our work. We said OK, you're going to choose the children, three species endemic to Reunion Island and they chose three.

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Except that there is one that is not the photo, it is a spider. There is a naturalist. He went into the forest and picked up the animal, took a picture of it. It measured, it rained and we integrated this characteristic into the game of the. On the other hand, you can't imagine the enthusiasm of children for a biodiversity that concerns them, especially in the islands where there are great difficulties in conserving endemic species.

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But in Wallis and Futuna, there are 15,000 inhabitants. You can't imagine the impact of Biodanza games on children. It's the first time we've talked to them about their own animals. They are super happy. It's not super profitable, but it feels so good! I think of these children. And then there's something else, which is that there is.

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Viva offers the best ethical value for money that is made in France with an incredible eco-design. A nature challenge is €9.90 organic Viva the game is €29.90 have the games are less than €30 and I can tell you that there is the material in it, that it's the quality, that it lasts, that it is passed on from generation to generation.

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The idea for the East Foundation was born one night in 2017 when I'm a bit used to taking notes with a system. A pen that lights up at the end, it allows me to take notes without disturbing anyone and I create something. And the next morning, it was noted that it offered 1 million games to refugee children. We are in the middle of a refugee child crisis and it bothers me a little.

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I talked to my executive committee about it, I said listen, I have this idea, what do you think about it for your crazy children, let's go? And so, I went in search of NGOs that were interested in this project. We had the games translated into Arabic by Syrians and then we launched a first production of 50 zero zero Nature challenges in Arabic.

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And for it to work, you have to communicate a lot. So I took a lot of time to contact the press, the media, etc. For the launch of the Bio Viva Refugee Children project. And I'll always remember the day before the press launch, I was in a radio station to make a recording and in the waiting room I saw Johnny died. I told myself if for the launch it's going to be dead, indeed know that you're dead For the launch, we went under the radar in absolutely no mention of it, but that's how it was.

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Nevertheless, these 50,000 games have been distributed, and we have extraordinary testimonies, photos and videos. In fact, what we wanted was to put a smile on the face and give a little hope to these kids. And this was beyond our expectations. Unfortunately, Kuwait came along, so we couldn't make our million games.

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But the adventure was launched. And then I was told But your project is extraordinary, I'm creating a foundation because at the time, it was a project and I created the foundation. It's not that I regret it, but it's that it's work, that it takes a considerable amount of time. They are volunteers, but at the same time, I now tell myself that it's done, we're going to try to see how we can create a link, even more so between the Viva organic activity and the Foundation.

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And it was there, and by chance, that I was able to make the link between the creation of the Nature Protect Challenges collection and the Partner Foundations that are partners of the Bio Vivant Foundation. And that, I find that. In the end, quite great. But again, follow your intuition from an idea in the middle of the night to offering 1 million games to

refugees, you find yourself creating a business model that mixes your foundation, partners and your professional activity.

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The success of a game relies a lot on communication and that's why for several years, we've been working on the adaptation of natures into TV games. The stakes are very, very high and we are currently discussing with channels and producers to ensure that this project sees the light of day. And it's fundamental for the AA's activity because it will allow us to travel internationally with a complete ecosystem because today, there are nature licenses, there are books, there are magazines, there are story factories, there are radio stations every year we make we make dice, games

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radio. The TV project must see the light of day so that people can finally take off internationally. You'll notice that we don't have a nature app because I try to avoid screens for children. We have to find the right compromise. I did seven years on TV, I was a host on Nulle part ailleurs on Canal, then a columnist in Les Maternelles on France Cinq.

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I still have the illusion that I may believe that there is an interest. And the broadcaster I went to see yesterday and he told me very clearly: In fact, you have to understand one thing today on children's channels, it's that those who don't have a screen watch TV, so fewer and fewer of them don't have a screen at the age of seven.

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Unfortunately, this is the case. And in fact, one does not prevent the other and you have to invest in all possible and imaginable media. I often say if I can make a child aware of a drink, I do it. And because there is too much negative information, there is too much false information and we don't talk about the essentials and the children.

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And that's what's missing is the program we are carrying. Of course, it will have variations on social networks, provided that it is well done. But you have to get the message across and TV remains an interesting medium, even if it's not as strong as it was even ten years ago.

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Sustainable development and a strategic consulting, executive coaching and training company on social responsibility issues. It was 2003, and I received a call from the Ministry of the Environment, which told me Jean Thierry. The government is launching the national strategy for sustainable development and they want to make it official at the Salon de l'Agriculture. And since we had developed the national parks game with them, they contacted us.

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And so I told them, Look, great, do you give me carte blanche? Ok. I designed a 70-square-meter maze for them in the inculture salon of all colors or three meters 50. An unlikely

thing on an institutional stand where no one ever goes because it's culture. We prefer to hit the asses of cows and say hello to pigs.

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And there, oh surprise, we had printed 5000 sustainable development card games and small card games for all the participants in the maze. So the show must start on Sunday. On Wednesday, we had more of a game. All the ministers came to have their portraits taken and the President of the Republic, in this case Jacques Chirac, had his card game on sustainable living organic development in his hands.

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And then, I said to myself, the methods for the general public, it can work with the State, local authorities and companies. And here I was, creating a new entity and we had the wind in our sails. At the time, I had global contracts with very large French companies, from the CAC40 to the international market. I recruited five people in Paris, five people in Montpellier.

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Then came the subprime crisis in 2008. Overnight, all the contracts were cancelled. I fired everyone except one person. We had to start from scratch and today, we're going. Sustainable Development is still there and with this particularity that, after all, other firms do not have. It's that our approach to social responsibility is positive, benevolent, human-centered, with an entrepreneurial experience that is quite significant to the ears of managers because in front of them, they don't have consultants, they have managers, know-how and methods to really anchor the company's societal commitment in the heart of the strategy and the employees.

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Our strength is human potential. We believe in collective intelligence, we believe in the ability of human beings to transform themselves. But we need meta skills, we need foresight, we need collective intelligence, we need ethics and all that. In fact, we have concentrated eight years of development in a tool called Metamorphosis, which we have just released, to support the Executive Committees and then all the teams towards this great adventure that is the transformation by integrating societal issues.

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In fact, what is difficult for an entrepreneur is to manage the amplitudes. In any case, it was my case with extraordinary successes on certain points and failures that I suffered, which I felt absolutely did not deserve because they were not at all in line with my values. But it's also business, as some people say.

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And I believe that behind that, we must keep the faith. Above all, you have to never forget the good times and in the end, there you go, I have plenty of proposals to buy Olivia but I don't want to sell because the adventure is not over. I already have two children who are 21 and 23 years old and I will give them the choice of taking over one or the other of the companies.

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Secondly, I firmly believe in nature challenge TV projects. Thirdly, I want to take the Défi Nature Protect business model as far as possible and from that moment on, depending on the decisions of each of them, I will see what I would do with my entrepreneurial adventure. We only have one life and we must, we must, we must understand who we are.

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You have to, you have to ask yourself what my life mission is. I am lucky enough to have innately known what my life mission was and I am the happiest of men. Because even if it wasn't at all what was planned, imagined, once again, I can go back ten generations, there isn't a business manager in my family or a house painter.

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There's my uncle, but, but actually, when you learn to understand who you are, and I say this especially for young people and young entrepreneurs, don't go for the money, don't go for the money because obviously it's important and it's necessary. But I believe that we must also teach children from an early age what money is and especially who they are and what motivates them.

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I believe that we each have a life mission and we can't miss it. I've seen too many people go through a crisis, in their forties, in their fifties, and to be in very comfortable companies that paid very well and say to themselves but in fact I'm not in my place, so the better you do it.

00:33:59:23 - 00:34:30:20

It's almost the end of year celebrations, Look at the Viva organic catalogue, you are bound to find what you are looking for and above all, we cannot live without you. It is thanks to you that you exist. It is thanks to you that this very committed entrepreneurial adventure exists. Treat yourself, it will be good for the planet and future generations. Find all the episodes of The Way on your usual podcast platforms and on the BNP Paribas Public Finance Private Personnel website.

00:34:30:24 - 00:34:45:09

The links and references cited by our guests can be found in the introductory text of each episode. See you soon.