



ANNUAL FAILURE REPORT

2024



PULSE
FOUNDATION

"BEAUTY IN THE UGLY"

2024 has undoubtedly been one of Pulse's best years.

The number of entrepreneurs we've had the privilege to support has grown. The heartfelt testimonies we've received confirm the quality of our work. More volunteers, supporters, and inspiring speakers have joined our movement. Our message has reached further than ever before. It has been, without a doubt, a great year.

Of course, we are proud. Of course, we love success. But we wouldn't truly appreciate it if we didn't make space for the small missteps and big blunders that made those successes possible.

Once a year, we choose to officially celebrate our F*ckUps. The moments that made us sweat, the near-misses, when success could just as easily have been failure—if not for a stroke of luck.

Not as an exercise in vulnerability-washing. Not for fun. But because of what it reveals—about ourselves, about how we each see the same event differently. Because of the marks it leaves on how we grow as a team. Because failure, whether it shakes us to the core or leaves just a subtle imprint, changes us.

What is not difficult is not meaningful.

Once a year, let's enjoy the beauty in the ugly.

THE ONE WHERE

THE IMPOSTER

DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE



You've probably heard the saying, "Fake it until you make it." When I accepted the role of Program Director, I told myself: *Okay, you can do this. Just fake it for a while, and it'll be fine.*

I honestly thought I wouldn't have to fake it for long. But then reality hit—hard. And suddenly, **impostor syndrome settled in like an uninvited guest who refused to leave.** *What am I doing here? Is this really my place? Am I the right person for this job?*

Was it fear of failure? Sure, a little. But more than that, it was the fear of *disappointing*—of not living up to the expectations placed on me. I didn't want the program to fail because of me. And at times, I truly believed that was exactly what would happen. The responsibility felt heavier than I had anticipated.

Fast forward a year, and guess what? Both the program and I are doing pretty well.

We've successfully launched the 7th BEyond cohort, growing our community to over 70 companies. Our impact on the Belgian entrepreneurial ecosystem has never been greater, and we're on the right path.

So, what have I learned from this?

- **Confidence is key.** Even when you don't feel it, own your space.
- **Trust yourself—your gut, your intuition.** It's usually right.
- **Learn to say no.** (Still working on this one...)
- **Find the balance between ambition and knowing your limits.**



HOW TO STOP...

BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE



Early 2024. New year, same me! Even before the year began, I knew it would be intense, or at least eventful. Everything relied on meticulous organization, a delicate balance, a system that works... but what if something broke?

On a personal level, I had a lot going on. Intensive training for a ski race in the high mountains (perfect for someone from a flat country, right?), and an emotionally-draining IVF journey with my partner. **It weakened me more than I realized.** We kept going, but it was bad news after bad news. To make things worse, I was hit by a relentless streak of insomnia.

You see the picture? It was starting to weigh on me.

Professionally, everything seemed on track. The crux of the year (November) was behind us, and we were continuing our work steadily but surely. And then something wasn't right. We tried to find solutions, and we tested new processes, but nothing worked. The problem lay with me and went deeper. I felt drained and unable to keep up. **My biggest challenge? Setting boundaries** – and more importantly communicating them, in the right way.



A clash was inevitable. I felt the tension rising, but I had no bandwidth left to deal with it. Every piece of feedback felt like a personal attack, and I reacted poorly. I was physically and mentally exhausted, and emotionally very fragile.

Something had to be done!

I needed to step back, but I was paralysed by a feeling of guilt towards my colleagues. Finally, I sought help and was put on forced rest. And suddenly, everything became clear. **My batteries were empty, plain and simple.**



Stopping in time saved me from a much more complex recovery. The guilt I felt toward my colleagues was soon replaced by a deep sense of gratitude for their unconditional and sincere support.

I isolated myself in the mountains, my ultimate sanctuary. And I slept – oh, how I slept! 12 hours a night for several days in a row. Gradually, **I recharged, and rediscovered the joy of life itself.** Three weeks later, I was back at the office, more motivated and engaged than ever!

So, what lessons have I learned? Listen to yourself. Don't ignore red or even orange flags. **Act before it's too late.** And trust your circle – the support of my team and loved ones, especially my wife, helped me get back on my feet faster than I ever imagined.



P.S. I'M GOING TO BE A FATHER!

MY BIGGEST FAILURE:

NO FAILURE BIG ENOUGH



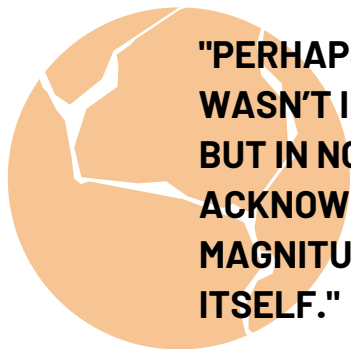
As I reflected on the past year, searching for my biggest failure, I came up empty-handed. The missteps I could think of felt irrelevant, uninteresting, and not worth mentioning.

This might seem like a good thing, but actually it raises a different question: Did I challenge myself hard enough?

Having no significant failure might suggest that I stayed within my comfort zone. Yet, last year was anything but comfortable. My family and I moved to Mexico, which meant managing the foundation from 10,000 kilometers away. While this transition ultimately turned out to be a success—both professionally and personally—it required immense fine-tuning and energy along the way.

Finding the right balance on the family side was a challenge that took nearly nine months to navigate. Who takes priority? Whose work comes first? These questions were constantly at play, forcing me to rethink and adapt my approach to both leadership and family life.

It was a delicate dance between ambition and presence, responsibility and flexibility. And in that process, I wonder: Did I make enough space for failure? Did I take enough risks?

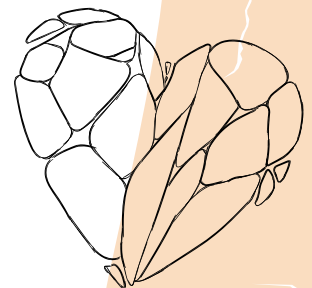


**"PERHAPS THE REAL FAILURE
WASN'T IN MAKING MISTAKES,
BUT IN NOT FULLY
ACKNOWLEDGING THE
MAGNITUDE OF THE CHALLENGE
ITSELF."**

Perhaps the real failure wasn't in making mistakes, but in not fully acknowledging the magnitude of the challenge itself. Maybe, in the pursuit of making everything work, I didn't allow myself the room to experiment, stumble, and truly test my limits.

Growth often comes from the moments where we push beyond what feels manageable, where we fail and course-correct. So, if I take one lesson from this past year, it's this: **Success without struggle can sometimes be its own kind of failure.**

The real challenge moving forward will be to embrace discomfort even more, to take bigger swings, and to remind myself that failure isn't just something to avoid—it's something to aim for.



THE PIT STOP PARADOX



**"WHEN GOALS EVOLVE BUT
OBJECTIVES STAY THE SAME"**

As COO of our Foundation, one of my responsibilities is ensuring that our team operates within a clear and structured framework for setting and tracking objectives.

Sounds simple enough, right?

Align personal goals with our overarching strategy, check in regularly, and stay focused. After all, in an entrepreneurial and ever-curious team like ours, new opportunities pop up like mushrooms after the rain—exciting, but also a recipe for distraction.

To counter this, we successfully implemented quarterly pit stops each year—dedicated moments to reassess our direction, fine-tune priorities, and realign our focus for the months ahead. A solid plan... or so we thought.

And then, January came. Cue the annual evaluations.

As we sat down to review the year's progress, we realized something quite ironic: we were evaluating team members against outdated objectives—ones that had been set a full year ago, before pivots, new projects, and evolving priorities had reshaped our reality. They weren't entirely obsolete, but they certainly weren't reflecting the latest shifts.

That's when the second oversight hit us: while we had focused on recalibrating objectives, we had **neglected to build in regular feedback loops** and ended up with the classic once-a-year review ritual—hardly the dynamic, real-time approach we strive for.

Lessons learned? Take the time to formally update objectives, ensuring they evolve alongside our strategy. Create spaces for continuous feedback—not just during evaluation season, but as an ongoing practice. Most importantly, involve everyone in the process — **alignment isn't just a manager's job; it's a collective effort.**



So, while we may have briefly lost our way, at least we've now updated the map. Onward, with clearer direction and hopefully **(or not?)** fewer surprises next year!

ON THE EDGE OF OBLIVION



Since stepping in as Revival's Program Director, my mission has been clear: to raise awareness, to strengthen partnerships, and to reach more entrepreneurs in need in Flanders.

Simple on paper. Difficult in reality.

Engaging participants has been a real challenge. Over two years of efforts, we could only convince 12 to join us. The program is free, and is designed to help entrepreneurs bounce back, but bankruptcy is unpredictable, and shame keeps many from seeking help.

We decided we needed to reach 20 participants, or we'd have to shut down the program. It would be very hard to swallow – after all the investment, and knowing there is a need to be addressed – but we too needed to recognise when it was time to pull the plug.

We gave ourselves six months to succeed.

Hearing the stories of entrepreneurs inspired us to go all in and try everything to achieve our goal. We redoubled our efforts, tried new approaches, and **in the face of failure, we tried and tried again.**

And then **suddenly, we cracked it.** In a single month, we received more than 65 requests. In that moment, we had achieved our objectives and more.

The question today is not IF to exist but HOW to exist. We must now try to meet the demand that we have, with the resources we possess.

Will we succeed? That is a story for another report.

