

Hi, and welcome to our Playbook!

This playbook details how we conduct great innovation projects, and how we run our company. This is our ever-evolving manual, gathering all the information about French Bureau, so that clients, team members and future hires can benefit from everything we've learnt.

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Introducing: French Bureau

Our Mission

We are a business innovation studio dedicated to large corporations.

For these big guys, we have gathered a unique set of high-end skills. We leverage our entrepreneurial mindset and expertise to accelerate their innovation in a positive and meaningful way.

Our mission is to enable large corporations to (re)conquer the place they deserve on the global innovation stage.

Advocates for a Positive Economy

As innovators, we are striving for a **positive economy** and we hold ourselves strongly to this value.

Specifically, when working for our clients, we aim at building solutions that are:

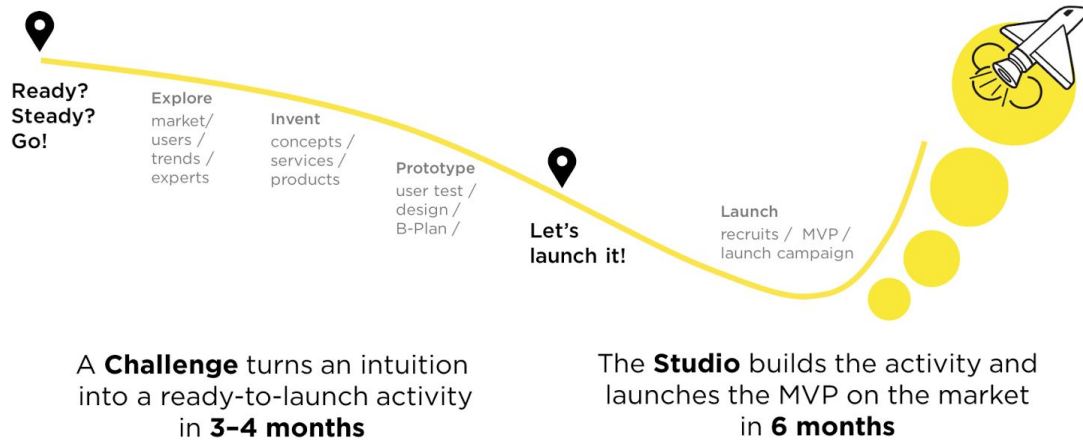
- **viable** economically;
- **creating positive impact** for customers as well as for employees;
- **thought for the long term** and for the interests of generations to come.

And when not working for a client, we build our own innovation projects, which we believe the economy and people need.

What we do

Our goal is to bring meaningful innovations to market, by turning intuitions into proven opportunities and bringing Minimum Viable Products to market. We fulfill this mission through 2 main activities:

- The “**Innovation Bureau**” - Set to conduct 3 to 4 months “**Innovation Challenges**” - Meant to detect and understand market trends linked to the digital revolution, quickly imagine and prototype new products and services based on identified market opportunities;
- The “**Studio**” - A startup launch-pad dedicated to large corporations willing to explore new markets, usages and technological territories, test new business models and seize the opportunity to create upcoming business development levers.



This structure provides our clients with a real innovation booster: with us, our clients go from an intuition to having an MVP on the market within 10 months.

Our value proposition

Above anything else, the value that we are delivering to corporations is **swiftness** for their innovation ambitions.

We built French Bureau with the core belief that, to generate innovations which are both meaningful and ready-for-market over the course of a few months, 3 core competencies had to be brought together: **Business, Design, and Technology**.

Our entire methodology aims at bringing together the best of these 3 worlds, and to consider all 3 with equal importance. Thanks to this “magic formula” of ours, we provide our clients with the capacity to detect, build and launch innovations at the speed of a startup.

Challenges

What is a Challenge?

Challenges are what we call the 3-4 months innovation projects that we conduct in our Innovation Bureau.

A challenge starts when a client asks us to solve a business problem.

Over the course of the challenge, we will explore market trends, study our users, conceive solutions, prototype the most promising one(s), test it with users, and build a viable business plan and launch roadmap.

At the end of a challenge, we provide our clients with a ready-to-launch new activity.

Want to know more? Keep reading, the sections below detail our methodology and deliverables :)

Challenge Teams

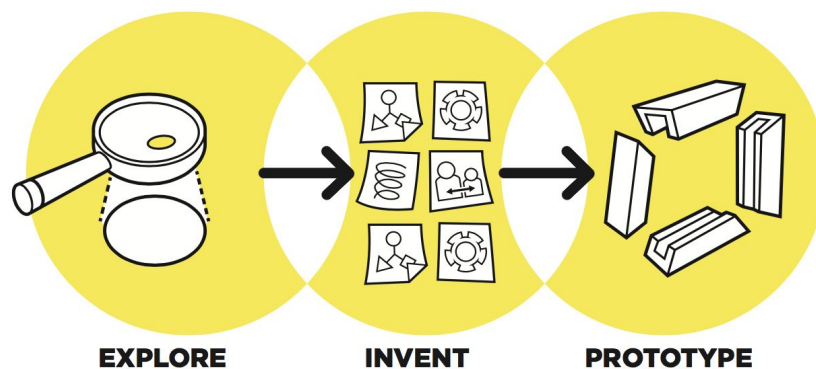
As soon as a challenge is launched, we bring together a top-notch team of three innovators, which mixes Design, Business, and Tech skills.

One of the team member is the “Challenge Lead”, and has full ownership of the challenge. The first and foremost mission of the Challenge Lead is to make sure that everyone on the team is excited about the challenge! He/she also makes sure that the project stays on track and reaches the highest level of ambition for French Bureau and for the client.

To ensure the best communication possible within teams and with the rest of the French Bureau, we rely a lot on Slack and Google Drive.

Challenge Schedule

Our challenges typically last between 3 and 4 months. It consists of three consecutive phases:



Phase 1 - Explore (~4 weeks)

The first phase is dedicated to exploring the market and the users. We want to get to an intimate level of understanding of the field we’re in.

To achieve this, here’s what we work on - simultaneously:

- Analyze the market trends through all the available studies and materials;
- Target specific countries and benchmark all the cool innovations we can spot on these markets;
- Spend time understanding the client and how the business is operated (through interviews, field observation, etc.);

- Map out all of the actors at stake and their interactions with one another;
- Interview and immerse ourselves in the users' lives;
- Spend time on the field, visiting and observing users in all physical locations related to the challenge;
- Meet with experts or startups working on a similar problematic to gather their insights; attend any major event or exhibition related to the challenge's problematic (NRF, SXSW...);
- Conduct quantitative surveys on 500 to 1000 consumers to validate;
- Synthesize our learnings & insights into an impressive graphical rendering :)

At the end of phase 1, we have identified (and backed with facts) the key areas of opportunities for the next phase.

*We share the result of this phase with the client during the **Immersion Day**, a 1-day participative workshop that validates our learnings and starts laying out opportunities.*

During the immersion day, we dedicate time to collect all the spontaneous ideas and intuitions that our client has in his mind - these ideas serve as a valuable input for the launch of phase 2!

Phase 2 - Invent (~4 weeks)

This second phase aims at qualifying the opportunities we detect, imagining and defining 4 or 5 solid concepts we believe in, and test them with final users.

Here is what we work on during this phase:

- 6 ideation & debate workshops (we call them "idea-bating workshops"), where our objective is not so much to brainstorm wildly and freely, but rather to debate, challenge and build on each others ideas, to turn them into substantial concepts;
- Qualify the value of our concepts under 3 criteria: **user desirability, technological interest, and commercial viability**;
- Another powerful tool that we use to select the most promising concepts is to regularly ask ourselves "**would I spend the next 3 years of my life developing this activity?**". It really helps us re-focus on the right track.
- Document all the non-selected concepts into the challenge's "treasure chest", describing the concept and the reason why we didn't keep it;
- Design the wireframes and/or 3D-models of the selected concepts (4 to 5 concepts);
- Test our concepts with users: we do this via online tests and/or focus groups;
- Evaluate the first commercial and financial projections, and benchmark similar / existing offers on the market.

*At the end of phase 2, we pitch to our client the 4 to 5 concepts we have developed during the **Pitch Day**, a ½-day workshop demonstrating the concepts and their potential. Our clients can then select one (or more) concept(s) they wish to push to the next phase.*

Phase 3 - Prototype (~6 weeks)

The third phase is when we become makers. We prototype the concept into a “Minimum Lovable Product” and design the operational plan to bring it to market.

Here’s what we do during phase 3:

- Build the Minimum Lovable Product (MLP): We shape a prototype which is advanced just enough to visualize what the end-product will look like, to eliminate any remaining doubt on technical feasibility and design, and to experiment the main user scenarios. This [Medium publication](#) defines an MLP as “not completely functional, but just enough to fall in love with”, and that is what we are aiming at! When necessary, we build two separate prototypes, a functional and a visual one;
- Design the solution: If our innovation deals with a digital platform, we will then define the target solution blueprint, including all components high-level architecture (mobile app, website, back-office, data engines, APIs), the way it will communicate with its digital ecosystem (SaaS platforms, content providers, partners back-offices).

If our concept is based on an object (home appliance, connected object, vending machine), then our engineers will draw its blueprint and design its internal electronic and mechanical components.

And in some cases, it might be a bit of both!

- Define the pricing strategy: For each revenue stream, we define the target pricing mechanism, which can be either fixed “menu” pricing (list price, product feature dependent, customer segment dependent, volume dependent) or dynamic pricing (negotiation, yield management, real-time market, competitive bidding). We define the target price by combining the results of 3 approaches: cost-based pricing, competition analysis, and customer price acceptance.
- Build the Business Case: We estimate potential **revenues** with 3 hypothesis (from most pessimist to most optimist), for all different revenue streams: product sales, usage fees, subscription fees, lending/leasing, licensing, commissions on intermediary services, advertising...

We break down the **cost structure**, as per:

- *The key activities*: we estimate the human cost (in FTEs) of the main activities required for the project. These activities can include: design, manufacturing, logistics, distribution, support functions, training, promotion... For digital products, it also includes the platform’s build costs, integration, deployment, maintenance and support, and continuous product developments. This is also the moment when we determine which of these activities should be outsourced;

- *The key resources*: we list the resources required to build & operate the service, and we estimate their cost. We take into account both physical assets (facilities, vehicles, machines...) and intellectual assets (proprietary knowledge, customer databases, patents...);
- *The key partnerships*: we identify the target partners (suppliers, subcontractors, strategic allies...) and obtain a first quotation from them.

- Test the concept: We submit the concept to users to validate its desirability, the usage scenarios, the pricing and the overall product-market fit. We test the consumers' interest in our concept by using:
 - Online tests: fake landing pages and measuring the results of paid campaigns;
 - Brick-and-mortar tests: we create a 24h pop-up store and display the product
 - Focus groups & usability tests: we watch users test our products in front of us and measure their interest for the concept;
 - Crowdfunding campaigns (kickstarter, ...) to measure traction and collect as much user feedback as possible.

- Build the launch & growth strategy :
We formalize a marketing strategy for the concept, which covers:
 - Brand-building, and key elements of the customer-brand relationship;
 - Growth strategy, detailing the targeted acquisition channels and 5 clever growth hacking tactics to boost adoption during the first 6 months;
 - Digital marketing: community management, traffic management, paid media strategy...

- Formalize a 6-months operational roadmap
This roadmap indicates in which order and under which timeline the different activities should be completed, for the first 6 months.
The roadmap also highlights the main identified risks.

At the end of phase 3, we invite the client to the “Demo Day”, where we proudly show these results. At this point, the client has all the material needed to make an informed decision of Go/NoGo to launch the activity.

Deliverables

A challenge brings our clients & us from a business problem to solve to a ready-to-launch activity within the course of 3 to 4 months.

At the end of the challenge, these are the elements we deliver to our clients:

- **The prototype**, in the form of a Minimum Lovable Product. The prototype has the target visual aspect (UIs or product design) and a level of functionality enough to simulate the key use cases and demonstrate feasibility.
- **A technico-functional brief** (written document <10 pages) describing the concept's functionalities and structure, as well as the technical solution: blueprints, high-level architecture, integration plan.
- **The business plan**, which takes the form of a word document <20 pages detailing the ambition, along with an Excel file detailing the financial projections.
This document details:
 - the project;
 - the market study, including competition analysis & opportunity analysis;
 - the product: main functionalities, user journeys and high-level technological solutions;
 - the key activities;
 - the strategy, including key partnerships, pricing strategy, growth strategy;
 - the financial projections (with the detailed version in a separate excel file).
- The synthesis of **users feedback**;
- **The operational roadmap** for the first 6 months with key activities and including identified risks).

Overall, we aim at providing our clients the same type of material as a startup founder would when raising funds from VCs.

How much involvement from our clients?

We have designed our methodology to conduct our innovation challenges in a very autonomous way. We work from our own offices, and we only ask our clients to attend 3 key meetings:

- the **Immersion Day**, used to present all the exploration work (market studies, users interviews) done during the first phase;
- the **Pitch Day**, used to share the 4 or 5 concept shortlisted at the end of the second phase and allow the client to finally select the concept to be prototyped;
- the **Demo Day**, used to fully unveil the concept which has been deeply studied and prototyped.

Beyond these 3 ultra-mandatory meetings, we adapt ourselves to what functions the best for our clients. We've seen the following types of clients:

- **the “very busy” ones:** 120% staffed on internal priorities. Willing to fully outsource the challenge. With such clients, we only keep a weekly 30-min call. To be sure that they don’t suffer from any “tunnel effect”. During this call, we update them on our progress, share any concern and ask for support if needed. In such case, we only ask the client team to attend 3 key meetings mentioned above.
- **the “involved” ones:** Willing to be involved to the project. In this case, in addition to the 3 key meetings, we invite the client’s team to participate to our regular meetings and workshops: exploration debriefs, idea-bating rounds, prototype-design workshops.
- **the “fusional” ones:** Willing to detach some key resources to the project. In this case, we’re happy to invite one or several person to join the challenge team, by being physically based with the team in our offices, and full-time dedicated to the project. It is a deep-dive in our innovation journey, to discover our method and be able to bring it back to their company.

Our Favorite Work Methodologies

We’ve designed our methodology for conducting innovation challenges with a great deal of inspiration from the works of other companies, entrepreneurs, and thinkers. Here are the key methodologies that work well for us:

- We draw significant inspiration from the **Design Thinking** methodology, as conceived by the Stanford d.school. In particular, we found many valuable elements in [this “Design Thinking Bootcamp” document](#), for the moments of our challenges which require us to be user-centered.
- **Rapid Prototyping:** during our challenges, we’ve found that representing our ideas on paper very early on was a great way to help us share a common language. So, very early in the ideation process, we start sketching & prototyping our ideas, and we start discussing tangible objects and interfaces. We love how some simple scribbling and sketching already takes us a long way !
- **Lean Startup** approach: we follow the mantra of confronting our concepts to the field as fast as possible. The Lean Startup approach is all about creating desired products, and getting them in the customers’ hands faster, to validate learnings. We also want to apply this method to ourselves, and to our own internal processes.
- On the business side of things, we often turn to the **Business Model Generation** and **Value Proposition Design** canvas, by Alexander Osterwalder. We find both of these frameworks helpful to help us take a step back from our concept and consider the bigger picture.

Tools & Technologies

When it comes to the tools and technologies that we work with during our challenges, we aim at efficiency and simplicity.

We tend to go towards general-purpose technologies, widespread, with active communities. This makes our work easier to share with others and to re-use after a challenge.

When prototyping digital products, we mostly work with:

- Adobe Creative suite, to create the wireframes and visuals
- Invision, to animate these wireframes and create the step-by-step user scenario
- Paper prototyping
- Javascript for web-prototyping
- Python for data-oriented projects
- ... or whichever technology is most appropriate for the concept (angular js...)

When 3D-modeling physical products, we mostly work with:

- Solidworks
- Rhino
- Keyshot

When prototyping physical products, we mostly work with:

- Arduino and / or Raspberry Pi modules
- .. and dismantling existing products with our sharpened pens & knives!

When user-testing our products, we mostly work with:

- Fake landing pages
- Usability testing

How to engage with us

First contact

Our first and foremost criteria is our mutual eagerness to work with each other. So we won't harass our contacts, trying to obtain a meeting at all cost. Everything will start by a simple discussion, during which we will present what we do and how we proceed. So you'll know what to expect from a challenge with us :)

At this point, if it makes sense, we'll ask you to formulate a question on a business innovation that you would like us to work on.

Exploration Note

Here we are! First of all, we will give you a 4-letter code name, as we do with each of our prospects. Our code names start with a K: KVAS, KFET, KINT, KAAT, etc...

These code names ensure that when we discuss our clients' challenges in cafés or restaurants, we're not shouting your company's name.

Then, we immediately start a pre-challenge work, by bringing together a team of 3 people mixing business, technology and design acumen, who will dedicate 5 full days to deepdive into the subject. After a week, you'll receive your "Exploration Note".

The Exploration Note is a 20 to 25 pages document, we usually build in 3 parts:

- **Market analysis:** What are the market trends? How are customers evolving?
- **Innovation benchmark:** what are the innovative things we've spotted around the globe around your subject?
- **Innovation possibilities:** some preliminary ideas that could be followed to launch an innovation challenge on the subject.

With such Exploration Note, we aim at:

- embarking the team on a steep ramp-up, to bring our knowledge on the subject to the appropriate level;
- showing our future client what we've got, and trigger a "WOW moment"!

After reviewing the memo, we set up a second meeting with the client to share our findings and thoughts about the subject. If you can't help but to work with us (and we hope you will), then we can proceed... and launch a Challenge!

Intellectual Property

All the work done during the challenge by our Innovation Bureau belongs to our clients.

At the end of a challenge, a client can either:

- decide to **keep the IP** to conduct the project internally, and develop & launch the concept on his own;
- **transfer the IP to a "NewCo"** to be incubated and launched within our startup studio;
- accept to **transfer us the IP**, in exchange for a minimal participation in the startup we would launch through the studio.

Confidentiality and Exclusivity

We strictly respect the confidentiality of our clients' information. A full Non Disclosure Agreement is included in our contract when we start the Challenge.

Billing

We intend to keep our billing model as simple as possible:

- When the Challenge is launched, 20% of our fees are billed. This allows us to immediately book all the external resources that we will involve in the exploration phase (experts, labs, poll platforms, etc.).
- At the end of the first phase (“Exploration”), an additional 20% will be invoiced;
- At the end of the second phase (“Ideation”), an additional 30% will be invoiced;
- At the end of the third phase (“Prototyping”), the remaining 30% will be invoiced.

We'll ask you to grant us with short payment term - as we consider ourselves as a startup too, cash-flow is key!

RFPs

We usually do not respond to RFPs. We are a small company, and we dedicate our time and resources to deliver value to our clients. Writing the extensive documentation that RFPs require, and explaining how we would adapt our methodology to fit some obscure guidelines would take valuable time away from our existing clients.

How we operate

The French Bureau state of mind

Our company culture gets defined a little more each day, and there are a few values that we feel strongly about. They define the “French Bureau way”:

Bold Optimism:

We want to convey the positive energy that we have! We bring this enthusiasm to our clients and to the challenges we work on.

Kind Honesty:

When giving each other feedback, we make it a point to say what we really think, in a kind and honest manner: no detours, certainly no passive-aggressive formulations, and always with a great respect for the person.

Having Fun!

We don't take ourselves too seriously. We take a great deal of pride and pleasure in what we do, and our lighthearted working atmosphere reflects that!

Flat and Open

We want French Bureau to remain a transparent company! We value the passion and engagement that each of us has for the company and it's inner workings.

Within French Bureau, all the internal information is accessible to everyone on the team. It applies to: the company's salaries & equity levels, commercial activity, financial indicators, etc...

Internal Tools we couldn't live without

We put a lot of focus on keeping our processes and tools as lightweight as we can. So we focus on the ones that make our lives easier and help us save time. Here are the few tools we couldn't live without:

Slack! We are huge fans of slack. "Default to slack" is our absolute unwritten rule, no exceptions. We love slack's simplicity and playfulness, but most of all, we love how slack enables us to keep track of everyone's work, and progress, even from a distance or in delayed time.

We've taken the habit of "slacking" everything we're working on (sharing an update once a day is the very minimum). And when working on a challenge, everyone on the challenge team commits to reading everything that is posted in the related channel.

Apart from slack, here are the tools we are working with:

- Google Drive: all of our company documents are on google drive. Every project we work on has a dedicated google drive folder, where everything is stored.
- Google Documents: we like being able to work simultaneously on google docs. So by default, whenever we find ourselves writing or formalizing anything, it will be in a Google Doc.
- Gmail: we use our Gmail mailboxes exclusively for our external communication, meaning mails with clients, external partners, or our personal network. A French Bureau teammate typically receives less than 1 email per day... We all love it! So refreshing compared to all of our previous lives.

We've also tried a bunch of project / task management tools: Trello, Asana... but, truth be told, none of them made the cut... Our challenges are moving fast, and at this speed, we've found that task management tools don't bring enough value to outweigh the hassle that it is to use them. So instead, we simply keep track of our tasks either in a shared google doc, or with sticky notes on the wall at the office.

The workday

The typical workday for a team member is typically from 9am to 7pm. While it may be longer in some occasions, this is the goal we hold ourselves to. If any team member is consistently working longer than this, we take it as a sign that there's a problem to be resolved.

Everyone has the freedom to organize his/her workday in the way that best suits her/him, and may opt for different working hours. 9 to 7 is simply the standard timeframe for all of us to know when we can schedule our meetings.

As a team, we intend to maximize our productivity by searching for the smartest way to exceed our clients' expectations, including seeking for outside expertise for occasional help. We consider that the number of hours put in has no direct correlation with the quality of work produced.

Remote Work

The way we prefer to work is for all team members to be physically together. We value spontaneous communication over written feedback, and we've found that our best work happens when the team sits at the same table.

That being said, we do keep some flexibility, and anyone can work remotely when needed. To keep things simple and transparent, our rule of thumb is to inform the team in advance on slack, and making sure we're connected and proactive on slack and by phone.

Performance & personal progress: OKRs

To follow the personal development of our teammates, we use OKRs, which is the tool Google uses to set personal goals and targets. Each quarter, we all write down our personal targets for the next 3 months in areas we want to grow in our career. We'll then try our best to hit these targets in the next months.

All OKRs are visible to the whole team, and we all try to coach each other and provide plenty of motivation to make sure everyone is spending time to focus on growing in areas that are important to them.

We believe that feedback is a gift, so we use self assessment and peer reviews to help people grow. Each employee has also the right to give feedback to his manager. Don't just be kind, be true!

Everyone has some talents to share, so we strongly encourage all Frenchies to share their talents with each others no matter what role they have: learn a new language, give a cooking class, a new martial art or teach how to use Indesign.

Building startups of our own

And when not working for a client, we build our own innovation projects, which we believe the economy and people need.

To conduct these innovation projects of our own, any teammate can spend up to **20% of his time** on an idea that she/he wants to develop and form a team. She/he will follow the same methodology as the one we use for external challenges.

New hires

What we look for

We exclusively look for alphas: people that are undeniably smart, empathic and generous.

We value these qualities more than a diploma or credential.

To recruit new team members, we almost exclusively rely on personal recommendations of our teammates. All of us try to co-opt the best people we know!

Hiring process

Interested in joining our adventure and having fun? We are constantly looking for talented people to join us, so please contact us, either on LinkedIn or at paris@frenchbureau.com.

You will first meet with two Frenchies, with different profiles. And if both agree that it seems like a good fit, you'll be invited to meet the founders!

We issue permanent contracts (CDI) to all of our new hires. No need for temporary contracts when we believe in you.

Compensation: Salaries & Equity

We're pretty open about our salary and equity policy: all of our compensations are shared and transparent within the entire team. As simple as that.

Here is how it works:

Our **salaries** are solely based on the level of experience. At French Bureau, everyone within the same range of experience level is offered the same salary, regardless of their field of expertise, or any other factor.

Fair salaries are very important to us as it ensures our attractiveness to talent and the sustainability of our growth. We want to bring great people in, and reward them with the fair level of salary.

Our **equity** policy follows the same logic. We made the decision very early on that we wanted to distribute equity to all employees. This materializes the ambition that the company and its success belong to every teammate.

Every new hire is granted with shares in the company, in the form of equity options.

The allocated share depends on two factors:

- the risk taken, which we measure by the size of the company at the time of recruitment
- the position within the company: with more commercial activities and higher expectation, Challenge Leads hold a higher stake in the company's development, which is rewarded by a higher equity.

As for salaries, our equity distribution is open and shared within the team.

We think that demystifying salaries and equity in such a way contributes to the cohesion and trust within the team.

If for any reason, you feel like you deserve a different compensation to package you are offered as a new hire, we invite you to explain why in a short and well-reasoned paragraph. Your request will then be shared to the entire French Bureau team, who will make a collective decision.

In the future, we want to follow the footsteps of [Buffer](#) and [Hanno](#), two companies which have paved the way to complete pay transparency, to the point where each employee chooses his/her own salary.

Let's get in touch!

Let's build something great together.

Drop us a line: paris@frenchbureau.com



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