

Vendis Handbook - Welcome to Vendis 🚀

Vendis builds “the CRM that actually understands you”—an AI-native, voice- and chat-driven sales companion that frees people from data entry in form fields. A product people want to use.

We apply the same philosophy to how we work: keep things natural, remove friction, and empower humans with AI. Compared to all other CRMs we are aware of, the product should feel magical, not mechanical. We don’t settle for "better than other CRMs" – we strive for truly magical solutions that redefine the category.

Vendis is a place to enable and foster greatness with extraordinarily talented individuals to the best work of their lifetime. It is your talent and drive that make Vendis great.

Thanks for being on board with us,

Sebastian & Thomas



Rocket ship lifting a sales rep above a mountain of paperwork

Why We Exist

Sales is the backbone of every economy. Without Sales, there is no economy. Rather sooner than later, every sales person needs a tool to help manage the sales process.

Sadly (and good for us), the tools at the disposal of people who do Sales are subpar. Sales reps spend 28% selling and 70% on admin. CRMs haven't changed in the last 15 years and bombard the user with the mission to fill out form fields. People use CRMs because they have to, but not because they want to.

Our Mission: We put the Relationship back in CRM through AI-first technology.

Our Vision: Become the leading next-generation CRM while staying small in head-count and huge in impact.

Our Customer: A small-to-medium size business that has the same CRM problems as we have - and don't care about "enterprise" features (example: permissions). For the foreseeable future, we do not actively market to enterprises (means: dealing with legal teams, >500 ppl with large buying center teams, discussions about on-premise, 500k+ integration projects, etc.).

Our Culture

Vendis runs as a serious high-performance pro team. We blend our own pragmatism with Netflix's Freedom & Responsibility with 37signals/Basecamp's Calm Company mindset, Amazons Day-One/One-Two-Door-Decisions:

("A two-way door decision is one where if you get the decision wrong, you can walk back through that door, revert to where you were, and there are few (if any) ramifications. You can make these decisions quickly and locally. A one-way door decision is one where it's quite difficult (if not impossible) to walk back through that door if you get the decision wrong, so these decisions are made more methodically")

Core Values

Value	What it means day-to-day
Ownership	You spot problems and fix them—no hand-

Pragmatism	holding.
Tempo	Default to simple, proven solutions; ship daily.
Kindness & No Ego	Speed matters. We optimise for cycle time.
Fun & Curiosity	Challenge ideas, never people.
Integrity & Openness	Explore, experiment, learn. Celebrate small wins.
Inspiring	Radical Candor, transparent decisions.
	Aim for outcomes that wow customers.



Minimalist sports scoreboard showing “Team Vendis 7 : Status Quo 0”

Freedom & Responsibility

1. We live in flatland. There is no hierarchy, with only one exception: Sebastian and Thomas have the ultimate say. Everybody else is a peer and should be convinced by great ideas.
2. Act like an owner – spend company time and money like it's your own (it actually is). Do things which build measurable and predictable returns for the company. You choose the tactics. We value you for making wise decisions in ambiguous situations.
3. Take smart risks – we'd rather learn fast than play it safe and slow. If you or others (inevitably) make mistakes: admit and correct them quickly - and share your learnings: Make sure we don't repeat the same mistake as a company.
4. No permission needed – if it's right for Vendis, ship it and share what you learned. Your ideas are what drives Vendis forward. You take the role that suits you and your skill-set. Ask a colleague if you need a second opinion. Even better, ask a customer - they pay your salary in the end after all.

Manager of One

A Manager of One sets their own direction, prioritises, and executes without babysitting. You are your own executive. Your calendar is yours to defend. Deliver outcomes, not excuses.

High-Performance Team

1. We're a team, not a family.
2. We're like a pro sports team, not a kid's recreational team.

That means in practice:

- Dream-team: Every seat is for a stunning colleague who elevates the rest. We hire senior A-Players only. We know how frustrating it can be to work with people who drag you down.
- If we find an outstanding junior person, we're happy to support his future journey, as long as this person contributes from day one. We can only support one or two apprentices at a time.
- Candid coaching: We learn from each other. We say directly and politely what we think, even if it is controversial. Continuous feedback keeps performance world-class; persistent under-performance triggers going separate ways.
- Lean is king: we stay < 20 people for as long as possible, amplified by AI. We always strive to stay as lean with as little processes and admin as possible: Either you write software or you sell software.
- Long term commitment: Vendis values long term commitment and loyalty over

job hopping - as long as the performance is outstanding.

- Sense of urgency: We do not have a magic wand here, everybody what we are doing can be done by others as well. We might have a 6-12 months market lead, but that's it. As always, great execution beats any idea. Have a strong bias for action, avoid analysis-paralysis and always keep your sense of urgency, but don't focus too much on the competition.

Judgement Principles

1. Customer impact first: We are not building an academic exercise, but a product people want to use. Always remember not to reinvent the wheel and to overcomplicate solutions.
2. Think long-term, but optimise short-term: Find a great balance between premature optimization and building code smell. Make sure you differentiate between two-door- and one-door decisions (always discuss the latter with the team). Smartly separate what needs to be done now and what can be improved later.
3. Disagree and commit: Which is why we take the time to think, debate, persuade, listen and reconsider and then, someone, decides. There might be times when you have a different opinion - but when there's a decision, everybody needs to be on board.
4. Evidence over opinion: Challenge every decision from anybody anytime, but have hard evidence on hand and not just "gut feel". Never be afraid to run an experiment or collect data.

Product Ownership

You own the product. We don't have "product owners" (let even alone "product managers"). We strongly believe everybody should "own" the product and build something they would like to use themselves.

So don't think in technical features, think in Customer Outcomes.

Therefore in order to understand our product, understanding the technology isn't enough: you must understand our strategy, market and customers deeply.

Communication & Candor

Communication is key in our setup. Therefore, we value people who listen and communicate well and calmly and share information openly and proactively.

Slack is our only tool of internal communication. We avoid internal e-mail, unless we really have to (e.g. because we're communicating with external parties). We expect everybody to answer in reasonable timeframes. If you're deep in something, that's fine - but an answer shouldn't take long: <1 hour during local working hours is our norm; outside that we expect async within 24h. The GTD principle applies, if you can solve something in under 5 minutes, do it right away.

When we have our first US employees, we'll define a core overlap time window to simplify communication.

If it's not in Vendis, Slack, Github or at least GMail/GDrive/Calendar, it doesn't exist. We are a fully remote organization: Written first. So document and communicate as much as you can with others. There's no such thing as overcommunication in a remote setup. When using Slack, try to use Threaded answers to keep the channels and topics clean.

Most development chatter happens in #dev. General announcements are in #all-vendis.

Remember to share your learnings, new tools, best prompts/workflows in #knowledge-sharing.

But remember that communication at Vendis is a pull principle: You are responsible that you have all the information you need. If you think you do not have all the information, if you are missing context or if you would like to be included in a certain decision: Just ask. There are no invalid questions. But do not assume to get everything served on a silver platter.

But remember: Say the hard thing ego-less and kindly. We have zero tolerance for brilliant jerks.

Politics

We respect everyone's right to participate in political expression and activism, but please refrain having political debates on our internal communication systems at work. Vendis as a company does not weigh in on politics publicly, outside of topics directly related to our business.

How We Work

Remote-First & Async

The mothership, Vendis, Inc. is a US Delaware company, but we are a remote-first company without physical offices. We hire anywhere in Europe and the US, mainly for time zone reasons.

We believe that our cross-border-setup from Day 1 gives us access to the most two interesting software markets in the world, US+EU. We have no intentions to expand to countries like China.

Lean Agile

We work on a very lean agile method, without the formal overhead. We use Github Projects as a Kanban board.

Similar to OpenAI, we don't have a fixed roadmap, we rather work very iterative.

We have more great ideas than we can implement anyway, so we work very customer-driven. If a customer needs a feature to buy the product, commits to sign up and it makes sense of 95% of all customers, we build it.

We still maintain a healthy balance how to prioritize bug fixing and making features better vs. new features. We rather have a core feature done in magical-wow-perfection than shipping lots of half-baked features. Remember, AI is about the magical feeling.

Sebastian and Thomas oversee the product progress and together with the team we decide weekly what's best for Vendis. If we need to change direction, we'll do so immediately.

Collaboration First

Be highly collaborative: Pair-program, code-review and learn from others as much as you can. We don't believe in the genius backyard inventor.

Meetings

Our main philosophy is: Code wins. There are no planning committes. Planning is guessing. Got an idea? Build a quick proof-of-concept to prove an idea. Remember our bias for action: Spike something, show it and we decide if we push further into this direction.

Often the founders have built for our first customers features and shipped them the day after they were requested.

Meetings are rare - and that should stay that way. Documented decisions are the norm. If you feel to need to call in a meeting with more than two people, prepare it - similar to Amazon's policy - with a paper, not a pitch deck. Attach this in Slack+Calendar to the meeting invite. Never do meetings longer than 30 minutes unless you have a really good reason to.

Teamwork Rhythm

In our early days, we plan and develop in weekly cycles. Sometimes daily.

This might change later and may be extended by cool-downs for bug-fixes, reflection, and planning - but at this time, shipping features customers want is our highest priority.

Daily Check-Ins

We try to do a daily 15-minutes huddle in #dev for a general check-in, but asynchronous status reports at the end of the day are the most important. We follow the classic pattern:

- "What did/will you work on today?"
- "What did/will you work on tomorrow?"
- "What stops you from doing great work." (optional, if you have a blocker)

These async updates keep everyone in the loop without status meetings.

If we do have Sales wins, we also celebrate them in Slack

AI-First 10× Mindset

We live and breathe AI.

We strongly believe that the new AI tools - Codex, Claude, Github Copilot, etc. - will boost the productivity of every colleague by at least 10x. That's our chance for our team to stay small and exceptionally powerful.

Therefore, it's not optional but mandatory that every teammate wields LLMs, agents, and automation to multiply output. Always ask yourself: Is that something an AI could do for me?

We do expect you to learn rapidly and eagerly and to keep up to date daily with the latest technical developments in our industry. Because AI is the fastest moving industry in the world right now.

While all being excited about AI: Obviously, we take the protection of our customers data very seriously - not just in GDPR/CCPA sense, but in reality. Always remember that one serious data breach could be the end of trust in our company.

Using AI effectively is a baseline expectation and a non-optional skill for every Vendis teammate — just as Shopify's memo declared. If you're not climbing the AI-learning curve, you're sliding.

Pair Programming

We strongly believe in the power of pair programming as our main guideline to maintain quality. Do it as much as you see need, but at least once a week, especially if you are new to the team.

Flat Structure

We don't have any titles (or bosses or managers). Titles don't grant power; but ideas and results do.

Therefore the only hierarchy we have are the two founders: Sebastian & Thomas set the vision together with the team and have the ultimate say.

Github Rules and Daily Shipping

- Code merged to main hits production immediately, guarded by automated tests and CD.
- Code merged to dev automatically deploys to dev.vendis.ai
- We maintain a linear history, no merge commits.
- We always squash the commits of the branches before merging to dev to keep the history clean and logical.

Emergencies

If there's an emergency in production, you'll open a slack channel and notify everybody who can contribute immediately. Unless somebody else explicitly states "I'll take it from here", it is and stays your problem and your responsibility to fix it.

Company Culture

Formal requirements to become a member of the team

None.

("None" especially refers to diplomas, grades, age, gender, background, etc. We don't care at all.)

General requirements to become a member of the team

Be a stunning colleague: We value people who accomplish amazing amounts of important work in a short time.

Either you write software or you sell software - just be insanely great at what you do.

Same as Valve, we value T-Shaped people: Have a broad amount of general knowledge about our stack - but go deep and expert in at least one area.

And remember to bring your friends.

Working with externals

We are not shy of getting temporary contract help from outside, but only as long as it highly valuable and covers areas of expertise we currently can't or won't cover.

Rituals & Gatherings

- Monthly Retro & Demo Day: show, reflect, tell, celebrate wins.
- We plan to do Annual off-sites: new city each time, for strategy, lightning talks, and bonding.

Onboarding

Day 1 pair with a Vendis Buddy (peer). Goal: commit code or make a customer-visible contribution within 48 hours.

Compensation, Benefits & Stock Options

Vendis started self-funded by Sebastian and Thomas, so we need to be conscious of our budget in the beginning. We absolutely aim for fair and market-benchmark compensation (top-quartile remote EU/US rates) especially after our first institutional funding round.

Every offer is expressed as **Total Compensation (TC)** and you choose your personal **cash-equity mix**:

- **Base salary** – Your fixed compensation.
- **Elective equity swap** – You may convert up to 25 % of your base salary into extra stock-option value. *Example*: if the standard cash base is €100 000, you can opt for €80 000 cash + €20 000 worth of options. No money leaves your pocket today; the reduced cash simply determines the size of your option grant.
- **Benefits** – 25 flexible days paid time off + local public holidays.

If you need something for your daily work, ask Sebastian or Thomas and they will organize it.

Employee Incentive Stock-Option Plan

Term	Detail
Instrument	to local best tax practice (e.g. VSOP in Germany, ISO in the US).
Vesting	Industry standard: 4 years with a 1-year cliff.
Strike price	Set at the latest 409A / fair-market value; you pay it only when you exercise.
Pre-seed bonus	Until our first priced round you get a 2× <i>multiplier</i> : every €/ \$1 of salary you swap becomes €/ \$2 of option grant value.
Refresh cadence	Equity is reviewed annually.

Employee development and performance reviews

We do not do any formalized "performance reviews" or employee development. We assume you are smart and self-disciplined enough to self-improve.

Your impact must be amplified by AI: we value how reflexively you apply AI tools in daily work.

If you are not happy with the performance of a co-worker: talk about it. We all make mistakes from time to time and need a little help. Peer-review and coach each other and give feedback. Be kind and make time to help colleagues.

You should always seek what's best for Vendis, rather than to look out just for yourself.

But this can only go so far. The ultimate measurement of your work is the output: How much shippable, customer-valuable work does somebody get done? That's the only thing we care about.

Remember: persistent under-performance triggers going separate ways.

Technology & Workflow

- Stack: Rails 8 · Hotwire · ViewComponents · Stimulus · Tailwind 4 / Flowbite · ; DynamoDB, OpenSearch, Redis; AWS with CloudFormation.
- We've chosen DynamoDB & OpenSearch for long-term scalability reasons, which also keeps the team lean. It is a proven scalable solution and we develop with scalability in mind. Thomas is the main AWS deployment lead.
- We try to avoid JavaScript where we can. We are primarily a Rails company.
- AI: Access to the best models available.
- Tooling: Slack, GitHub, AWS CI/CD, OpenAI, Google Workspace.
- Code automatisms
- Live Monitoring goes to #monitoring. #dev-updates is more chattier including Github.
- Code merged to the dev branch automatically deploys on dev.vendis.ai
- Code merged to the main branch automatically deploys on app.vendis.ai
- We maintain a linear history in Github, no merge commits.
- Sales: Obviously we use Vendis.
- Security: We are dealing with sensitive customer data, and protecting this data is everyone's responsibility. Therefore, security is not an option, it's a necessity. We move fast, but we never cut corners on security. If you are unsure about a decision, ask a colleague and do a peer code review.
- Four eyes: We pair a lot and do peer-to-peer code reviews for every major feature.
- Quality bar: Reasonable test coverage - mocked models and integration tests-, zero flaky tests, “you build it, you run it”. You become the DRI (Direct Responsible Individual) for every feature you build.

Policies & Procedures (Highlights)

Time management

We keep highly focussed 40-hour weeks as the norm, and we don't care where and when you work. So respect if you get a slack message on sundays, but also respect if a colleague won't answer it immediately. When you're off, be off.

While you might sometimes choose to do some extra hours, especially in our early company days, to get something big shipped, working overtime should not be the norm.

This all bases on mutual trust. Don't break it.

Code of Conduct

Respect, zero harassment of any kind, limited political chatter, assume good intent.

Side Projects

OK: Occasional paid talks, small OSS project contributions. Not OK: Competing products, anything that uses company IP, or impacts Vendis time/energy.

Always remember: We are a profit-driven company, not a charity.

Device & Security Baseline

Remember: We are dealing with sensitive customer data.

Mac only, full-disk encryption, locked-screens-by-default, auto-updates enforced, 1Password, signed commits with SSH + GPG Keys on YubiKeys.

Founders Commitment to You

We promise clarity of purpose, autonomy, and meaningful ownership in a company built to scale revenues, not head-count. If you love building, thinking, and shipping with AI at warp speed—welcome to Vendis.

Let's build great things!



Team avatars high-fiving through laptop screens

What's next?

Help us to make this book better. Comment, question, or open a pull request anytime!