



Goodbye rivalry. Hello teamwork. And get started with the new business plan

How do you transform a DKK 56m overdraft into credit in just 18 months and sell the same business three years later at a vast profit? A deal that is simply win, win, win for the seller, the staff and the buyer. This is something Knud Troelsen, founder of the KVIK concern, and Holger Hansen, Development Director, know something about. Both are certain that the Pathfinder concept played a vital role in this success. That is why, for the second time, they are sending their whole management team on the Pathfinder programme.

Knud Troelsen, Managing Director of 3Boel A/S, remembers all too clearly how unsettling it was around the year 2000 for KVIK to have an overdraft of DKK 56m. At that time he had run the business for 17 years and had always earned money. But in 1998 the company, Kvik Kitchens, took a wrong strategic turn. “We got over-confident and focused on a franchise concept with large-scale, 1200m² shops. And even though we believed that our concept was sustainable, we couldn’t find anybody to take up the franchises,” says Knud Troelsen. “By 2000 we were DKK 12m in debt. The bank said ‘Stop’ and we were up against a wall of suspicion. It wasn’t pleasant. For that whole year we lived in a state of fear.”

KVIK’s management team on exclusive Pathfinder course

At an event arranged by Herning Carpenters’ Guild, Knud Troelsen happened to hear Lasse Zäll’s talk about the Pathfinder concept and made a crucial decision. “It struck me that we needed to go on the Pathfinder programme - all 16 of us, both management and middle management. What we needed was to learn to move in the same direction. Given that we had no money, it was quite a large decision, but off we went on an exclusive Pathfinder course and worked only on our particular case during the training. And we really got to the heart of the matter,” says Knud Troelsen. He goes on,



Knud Troelsen, Managing Director
of 3Boel A/S and Pathfinder

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“We became much more aware. We found out that there was actually some internal rivalry going on between two of our concepts. Instead of moving and working in the same direction, there was too much personal baggage involved and too much focus on the individual. For example, as we worked towards our vision and goal, there would be disagreement about who should do what. So the course represented a process of division, between those who were committed to the goal and a belief that the team is more important than the individual, and those who were not.”

Resources and self-recognition

“We used the Pathfinder resources and concept right away. We worked out what challenges were facing us. We defined the goal and the roles. We developed a new strategy, which focused on simplicity. And we became expert at making business plans to which everyone was committed. We learned an important lesson: it is not strategies that yield results, but rather business plans and consensus in the management team. And the supreme importance of the business plan in relation to budget!” says Knud Troelsen and adds, “We learned a lot from the Indian philosophy of life: look inside yourself and ask yourself how you can contribute to things, what responsibility you have for the state things are in. This led to an awful lot of self-recognition.”

The best staff interview in the world

Holger Hansen continues, “A 3-week course like this is like the best staff interview in the world – not the cheapest interview in the world, but one which covered every facet of every single participant. You experience your colleagues and they experience you as the complete human beings we are. Suddenly it is perfectly acceptable to show both your strong sides and your weak sides. Everyone is accepted for who they are. It becomes clear who works well in stressful situations, who accepts their role and gets on with things, who calmly and strongly works through things, who is good at rounding things off and drawing conclusions, who creates good or bad energy in the team etc. And we mustn’t forget that our Administrative Director, Knud, participated in exactly the same open and honest manner as the rest of us.”

Business plans yielded results

Knud Troelsen returns to the management team’s understanding of the significance of business plans. “We got really good at making business plans, using them correctly and describing them correctly, so they could operate. And when we received three offers within the space of three months for the purchase of the company, there is no question that that was thanks to the results of our three-year plan and what it had helped us achieve. No one in the industry doubted that it could happen. Everyone respected us and once again the bank trusted us! Since then the company has been an enormous success story for the new owner. We got an excellent price – a three-figure million sum. The buyer has earned good money. And the ten staff members who were shareholders also got their share of the profits. So we all became millionaires on the same day! So now we can make our investments from the heart, because we are passionate about creating something with other people. We also use a lot of our capital growth for charitable purposes. Looking back, I can say that the Pathfinder programme played an invaluable role in our return to health and our future success.”

The new management team will also be Pathfinders

Holger Hansen concludes, “The Pathfinder programme gave us the resources, the foundation and the conditions for the new development. We went on a common journey of self-recognition, developed common reference points and a new, shared language. We became clear about our mission and vision and we formulated a set of values, which we believe in and put into practice. One of our beliefs is, that the team takes priority over the individual. It is so easy for a group of people to work together, if they are simply clear about the goal and have the will to reach it. But precisely because what we learned on the Pathfinder course has so much become part of us, we have noticed that it is hard to communicate the principles to those who are not in the know. That is why we are also sending 3Boel’s new group of leaders on the Pathfinder programme.”