

# Successful Merger in Ten Months

How do you succeed in merging two established traditional companies and create one company with one shared culture, where all 600 employees feel as a team – in less than a year? Jesper Hjulmand, Managing Director, and Charlotte Pommer, HR Manager, both in SEAS-NVE, were not in doubt. They applied the Pathfinder concepts.

In 2002-3 the management and all the bosses in SEAS – in all 28 people – participated in special company sessions under the Pathfinder Programme. The merger with NVE was under way in the following year, and the companies decided that the Pathfinder concept should be the principal management paradigm of the new merged company – SEAS-NVE. In the first instance 15 NVE managers joined the programme. Then the entire new top management level participated in a special merger module, a joint development created by internal counsellors at SEAS-NVE and Pathfinder. Subsequently 30 team leaders participated in a similar course, and in 2006 they went through the entire Pathfinder Programme.



Jesper Hjulmand,  
Managing Director  
and Pathfinder

## Pathfinder Tools on All Levels

During the first year after the merger, Pathfinder succeeded in unfolding the Pathfinder project in the organisation, engaging all the employees. Pathfinder tools were applied to identify the company's strategic values, which, true to the Pathfinder spirit, focus on 'the complete human being'. In the organisation values such as balance, loyalty, honesty, and a spirit fit for fight function as internal maxims for all employees.

## Proactive Planning

Proactive goal oriented planning was applied in the context of the merger and the development of the company's overall strategy for 2006-8. Graphic game plans can be seen everywhere in the company: every department has concretised the overall strategy with graphic game plans for precisely their department – at team levels and at individual levels: In the context of employee development conversations, the employer and the employee create a joint effort in which they make the overall strategy relevant, concrete, and visual in a personal game plan for every individual employee.

## Game Plans

HR Manager Charlotte Pommer: "Photostats of graphic game plans are on display throughout the company, which makes it transparent to everyone what goes on in the various departments. And everyone has invested in them with their heart and soul: in the accounting department our control team baked a gigantic cake decorated with their game plan; in the storage department they made a neon model of their game plan; in the distribution sector the game plan was outlined in

## Brief Information about SEAS-NVE

SEAS-NVE is Denmark's largest customer owned energy company. Its core competence is to deliver energy and communication services to customers in Denmark.

The company provides a wide span of products, ranging from the core product of electricity to advanced consultancy services about wind turbine technology. In an overall view you can separate SEAS-NVE's products into three main categories: electricity products, consultancy services, and net products.



SEAS-NVE's main office is in Svinninge, but two technical branches are located in Haslev and Sdr. Ørslev respectively. The company employs approx. 550 people distributed across the three departments. SEAS-NVE has a turnover of approx. DKK 2.8 billion and a balance of DKK 9.8 billion.

Source: [www.seas-nve.dk](http://www.seas-nve.dk)



copper wire while another department had their game plan printed on place mats. These are very creative and efficient ways to implement our strategy in the organisation.”

### Shared Management Foundation

Jesper Hjulmand says: “We are very focused on management and culture. These elements were central in our proactive objective for a successful merger. In the long term perspective we wanted to create a strong brand, indicating that all our actions are founded on the concepts of value based, transparent management. All the management models are based on the Pathfinder ideas. By educating the entire management in the Pathfinder programme, we have reached a shared foundation for management across the organisation. The result is that we exercise management from the same point of view, regardless of whether we are managers, departmental heads, or team leaders, and regardless of where in our three locations we work.”

### Warrior Culture

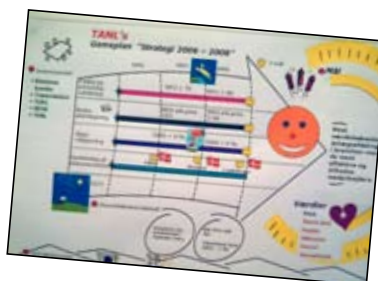
Jesper Hjulmand continues: “Furthermore, the Pathfinder concepts suit us really well. In our organisation we do not intend to be ‘victims’. We want to be ‘warriors’ in the way described in the Native American philosophy of life, which we find in the Pathfinder programme. The only difference is that we call warrior mentality ‘fighter spirit’. That creates more positive associations, and ‘fighter spirit’ certainly characterises people who have participated in the Pathfinder course.”

When the team leaders returned as Pathfinders, they were radiant. Their eyes said it all: “Come on, challenge us with your ideas! We are ready! And I must admit that soon we were way behind,” says Jesper, stressing the importance of a thorough preparation at management level, focusing on how to receive the employees, when they return as Pathfinders: “The team leaders had brought along projects, which they worked on during the entire Pathfinder course. All managers met and went through the projects and the Pathfinder concepts in order to refresh our memory and be on top of things when our colleagues returned. We were ready to respond with challenges and confidence, when they arrived with all their energy and fighter spirit. They are extremely motivated! And the Pathfinder experience has made them much more robust. They show no trace of the “cry baby” mode. This has also meant that today the team leaders are part of the management. Sending the entire management on a Pathfinder course is quite simply the best investment we have made!”

### Fighter Spirit

Charlotte Pommer continues: “We attempt to foster a fighter spirit culture. For this reason we also have a strategy project entitled ‘Fighter Spirit’ like one of our four central values.”

Charlotte Pommer relates that the Fighter Spirit project is a three day course for all 600 employees: “We run two courses a week for 26 weeks! They take place in a nature school and many of the elements from the Pathfinder Programme



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constitute our points of departure: the wheel of change, the warrior – victim concepts, learning from your peak performances, dialogues about our values and our clients.

It is a huge success, which has really united the organisation. The teams are mixed with people from our three locations, who have different professional backgrounds and come from different departments. By bringing people together in this way – in teams working together intensively to fulfil 113% goals – we create a fantastic energy. New relations are established and you get a greater understanding of each other – professionally and as human beings. You get a better understanding of the business angle by hearing how other people in the organisation contribute via their daily work routines. The purpose is also to convey the Pathfinder concepts to them. In this way we have a shared management foundation and a shared conceptual paradigm, a shared language throughout the organisation – regardless of whether you work as a cafeteria assistant, fitter, accounting manager, or director. That is indeed remarkable.”

### Confidence Building

Jesper tells us that the management attends every single course, talks to people and gives presentations about performing and growing like a team. He himself also participates in every course as ‘the guest of the evening’ round the camp fire. He says: “The campfire gives us the possibility to enter into dialogue. In the daily exchanges the fitter or the office assistant may experience the manager as a very remote person. When we sit and discuss for five or six hours, it doesn’t take long before we open up and relate to each other as human beings. Basically this is about confidence and honesty. I express – in open and honest ways – how I feel and I encounter the same confidence. So we start a dialogue where all views are represented.”

He continues: “Basically it is very simple: You get what you give, so if you offer openness, honesty, and confidence, that’s what you’ll get too. Confidence breeds confidence. That is my clear conviction. And if you are fully confident that the employees and your colleagues possess the resources to manage the various challenges, then they also demonstrate

that they do have these resources. It is also a Pathfinder concept that each of us contains much greater potential than we think.”

### Results

Jesper says that one of the goals of the merger strategy and the coming years is a high degree of employee satisfaction: “Our goal for the first year after the merger was an employee satisfaction of 70%. We compared ourselves with a national average of 71%, and achieved a result of 73% satisfied employees. In a merger year it is an extraordinary result to get such a backing from the employees, while also honouring our turnover goals. That was significant.”

Charlotte continues: “The mutual confidence also results in increased efficiency. We all have an understanding of the direction in which we should move, the reasons why, and the basis of these goals. In that way it is much easier to take responsibility and make decisions, regardless of your position and level in the organisation.

Charlotte also relates that the Pathfinder concept of ‘the complete human being’ – at work, in the private sphere, and on the personal level – is in focus: “The belief in the individual’s resources and our values – balance, loyalty, honesty, and fighter spirit – also means that we have done away with registration by the hour! Of course we still operate with economic parameters with regard to the cost and benefit of the various projects, but we are not measured in terms of the time we take to do it. We now have job time for everyone – in fact the employees themselves made this suggestion. In this way we work, when there is work to be done and the company needs us, and then we take time off, when our family or we ourselves need it. This is blind confidence and it works!”

At regular intervals the management of SEAS-NVE go on external trips together in order to ‘keep the pot boiling’, as Jesper Hjulmand says. In 2008 he and Charlotte Pommer both participate in the continuation of the Pathfinder Programme ‘Natural Leadership’.