

National recognition for growth from the region

How do you build a successful company?

Starting a business is fun. And if it becomes a success, that's even better. A look behind the scenes at four of these success stories.

MASCHA PRINS

Eindhoven

They are even working in the hallway, at VA Imaging in Eindhoven. The company is already outgrowing the recently acquired office at Strijp-S. "Fortunately, we can expand", says founder and director Gaspar van Elmbt. 'Working in the hallway' also sounds worse than it is. There are desks, carpets and plants. It is just an office without its own walls in a business complex.

VA Imaging, formerly Get Cameras, is one of the 45 companies from the region that received a *Gazellen Award* from *Het Financieele Dagblad* yesterday. This prize is awarded annually to companies that have shown a turnover growth of at least twenty percent for three years. Success stories.

VA Imaging sells industrial cameras. Van Elmbt: "They are, as it were, the eyes of a machine." When he started seven years ago, his ambition was to make the market more transparent, without account managers who make separate quotes for each assignment.

"Just like it works for consumers with a webshop," says Van Elmbt. Successfully, because the company now has offices in Germany and the US and customers in more than fifty countries. VA Imaging itself employs 25 people with twelve different nationalities. That diversity is a great advantage, says Van Elmbt. "To understand customers and communicate with them, but also to learn from each other's culture."

Recognition

A webshop for companies, but with a traditional service. That was also what Niek Giebels and his partner had in mind when they started PromoXL in Helmond 4.5 years ago. Customers can order products with their own logo there. Giebels: "They are not busy printing products on a daily basis, we are. That is why we always think ahead." An approach that is appreciated. Not only by customers, but also by industry, as Giebels knows. That recognition is nice, something that also applies to winning the Ga-zellen Award. Giebels: "Also for ourselves, to just stop and think about what we have achieved. All our capital is in this company. With that we have built something that motivates us, and we also see this in our employees." Ten people now work at PromoXL, including a number of students. Giebels: "They are studying graphics or commercial economics and can gain experience with their part-time job. And for us, that creates a nice dynamic in the team, so that knife cuts both ways."

Erik Neeskens knows all about setting up a company with his own savings. Almost sixteen years ago, he started Prowise, supplier of digital school boards, with a partner in Budel. In the meantime, Prowise offers a complete education system, tailored to individual students.

Neeskens: "We really had a flying start." The company initially focused only on the Netherlands. But to reach the target group, they went to London for a trade fair in the field of education and IT. "Of course, there were also all kinds of international parties there, and two weeks later a

container was on its way to Denmark." With 250 colleagues in several countries, the company has now grown into a leading player in the education market. "We are successful because we keep everything in our own hands," says Neeskens. "For example, the software and teaching materials that our experts develop, but also the vans that our installation and service teams use."

Teaching materials

They don't need mechanics at Eindhoven's STE Languages, but they do need teaching materials. This company, which originated in Philips, has been operating as an independent language school for almost thirty years with customers throughout the country. Director Wilfried Gradus, who runs the company together with Mathilde Lageman: "In the Netherlands, there are many international companies where people need to be able to communicate with each other. We tailor our services to that." Lageman also knows that this is important: "Language is incredibly important to avoid feeling isolated." STE expects to continue to grow in the coming years. Gradus: "We aim for sustainable growth. We want customers to remain satisfied."