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2021-1-CZ01-KA220-HED-000031187

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Case Study

Social Entrepreneurship



Case Study – Good Sailors

History of the Good Sailors

The history of the Good Sailors dates back to 2002. At that time, Filip Molčan decided to leave the Czech Technical University and start his own company, which since its foundation has focused on providing information technology (hereinafter referred to as IT) services (Molčan, 2021a). The initial impetus that led to achieving social overlap was the fact that one of the first employees was a programmer, Jiří Maule, who had a disability. Jiří served on the board of the organization as Chief Technical Officer, but sadly passed away in 2021. It was precisely thanks to him that the journey to find meaningful work for the disabled began. Since its inception, the organization has striven to provide meaningful work for disabled people, whom it views as “good sailors” (Kocourek, 2014; Good Sailors, 2023a).

Good Sailors is now headed by three co-founders, the aforementioned Filip Molčan (Chief Executive Officer), Darina Maule (Chief Financial Officer) and Luděk Šafář (Good Sailors, 2023a). The development studio focuses primarily on tailor-made application development. Currently, the company not only provides services in the field of IT solution development, but also engages in other activities, such as running its own accelerator for disabled entrepreneurs. Other entrepreneurial activities include the GSail enterprise system, company filing-service training, the Dobrá spisovka e-filing service, operation of the Disway travel portal, operation of an art studio, the production of charity souvenirs for national parks and the Czech Parks e-shop. Among other roles, the enterprise operates information centers in České Švýcarsko, where people from this national park region with a disadvantaged start on the job market due to their disabilities have found employment (Molčan, 2021a; Salov, 2021). The social enterprise is gradually developing, and the fact that the company is still operating today may be a result of this approach (Molčan, 2021a).

Implementation of Public Benefit Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals

The Good Sailors stands on the proper foundations, as can be seen from Table 1.

Table 1: Good Sailors – awards won

Year	Awards	Purpose of the award
2010	Employer without barriers (winner)	This award highlights businesses that adequately employ people with disabilities in terms of their qualifications and create equal working conditions for them on the open market.
2014	Employer without barriers (winner)	
2017	Employer without barriers (winner)	
2015	New Europe 100 Innovators	This award recognizes the 100 greatest innovators in Central and Eastern Europe who are transforming the region's society, politics or business environment and demonstrating new approaches to prevailing problems.
2018	TOP Responsible Company in Diversity (2nd place)	This award highlights businesses that strategically promote diversity, inclusion and flexibility in the workplace. This includes age, gender, disability, etc.
2021	TOP Responsible Company in Diversity (2nd place)	
2018	Vodafone Company of the Year of the Ústí nad Labem Region (winner)	The Hospodářské noviny award for business approach.
2018	Most economically successful company in the Ústí nad Labem Region (winner)	The Hospodářské noviny award is given to a company whose economic health as represented by the Cribis Index identifies it as a suitable business partner.
2021	Most economically successful company in the Ústí nad Labem Region (winner)	
2021	SDGs Awards (semifinalist)	The SDGs Awards recognize projects that make a positive impact on society and the planet.
2021	TOP responsible small company	TOP Responsible Company is a unique rating of large, medium and small-sized companies that recognizes activities in the field of sustainable business and responsible business behavior.
2022	TOP responsible small company	
2022	TOP Responsible Leader in Diversity	This award highlights leaders who strategically promote diversity, inclusion and flexibility in the workplace. This includes age, gender, disability, etc.

Source: Association of Social Responsibility (2023); Good Sailors (2023a); IBM Company of the Year (2023); Konto Bariéry (2021); Top odpovědná firma (2021); Vodafone Company of the Year (2021); New Europe 100 Innovators (2021); table created by the author.

Table 1 above can also further include participation in the Social Entrepreneur of the Year 2010 and 2015 finals (Good Sailors, 2023a).

It is therefore clear that Good Sailors has not yet lost its passion for fulfilling its mission for the public benefit. Filip Molčan himself believes that social entrepreneurship will become the

standard and replace the traditional approach to business, which is based solely on the generation of profit without making any social impact (F. Molčan, personal communication, March 10, 2023).

The Good Sailors employs 26 workers, more than 80% of whom are disabled. Their customers include e.g. Czech Post, Czech Railways, ČSOB, Datasys, IBM, Innogy, Pražská plynárenská or PRE. The organization carries out entrepreneurial activities in the real business world (Good Sailors, 2023a).

These employees are seen as superheroes with superpowers, because their disabilities are in fact unique abilities, and these open up further opportunities to them. Although nature has placed obstacles in their path, some of these hurdles can be turned into benefits that can be capitalized upon. This is because a disability in providing IT solutions need not be a barrier in performing work duties (F. Molčan, personal communication, March 10, 2023). Therefore, the goal is to discover what benefit can be found in a given disability and how it can be further applied. Thus, disabilities should not be classified primarily as negative factors, but rather as positive ones. Within the Good Sailors, countless superheroes can be found, including, for example, project managers who have proper values and priorities and are able to focus only on essential areas, or people with obsessive compulsive disorder, whose meticulousness ensures that the human factor has no chance of failing. They also include programmers with autism spectrum disorder, who can work with algorithms like no other. However, the crucial factor is that these people are integrated back into the labor market, treated as healthy individuals and have the chance to further develop their abilities and skills (F. Molčan, personal communication, March 10, 2023).

It is therefore clear that, in its approach to business, the Good Sailors is committed primarily to fulfilling the publicly beneficial goal of employing people with disabilities and potentially supporting the creation or acceleration of new projects that benefit people with disabilities. In this way, the Reduced Inequalities SDG can also be met. Further links to the SDGs are shown in Figure 1, which presents public benefit objectives that can be associated with SDGs. These socially beneficial activities are fulfilled by the Good Sailors through the social, economic, environmental and local dimension (Good Sailors, 2023b).

Figure 1: Good Sailors – fulfilling public benefit goals and SDGs

<p>Social benefit (SDG 10 Reduced inequalities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employing more than 80% of people with disabilities, • integration support, long-term training and individual development of employees' work competences, • adapted workplaces for disabled individuals, • employees participate in running the company
<p>Economic benefit (SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • independence from an external provider, • independence from the public administration or other economic entity, • more than 51% of profits are reinvested, • revenues from the sale of products and services account for at least 30% of total profit.
<p>Environmental benefit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consciously contributing to efficient resource management (e.g. paperless operation, use of artificial intelligence and new technologies, support for remote work, etc.), • formulating its own principles for environmentally-friendly business activity and adhering to these principles.
<p>Local benefit (SDG 11 Sustainable cities and communities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prioritizing the provision of services in the region and supporting the development of the local economy, • preferentially employing people from the Liberec and Ústí nad Labem Regions, • cooperating on a preferential basis with local market actors from the Liberec and Ústí nad Labem Regions (municipalities, towns, non-profit and contributory organisations), • cooperation with local educational institutions and startup accelerators.

Source: *Good Sailors (2023b)*, table created by the author

Filip Molčan (personal communication, March 10, 2023) believes that social overlap can be placed into any entrepreneurial activity, and the future precisely lies in putting social overlap into every business activity. However, he is aware of the fact that incorporating social overlap into business can also be very challenging (Molčan, 2021b).

Findings

Although the Good Sailors could operate as a classic software house, which are countless in number, since its foundation it has been incorporating social overlap and embodying the fulfillment of public benefit goals into its principles. They strive, just as good sailors do, to reach their destination under all conditions and therefore they do not fight against what nature has placed in their way. On the contrary, they try to take advantage of each adversity in life to create an advantage that has social overlap (GoodSailors, 2023a). The social enterprise primarily employs disabled IT specialists, a fact that does not hinder the fact that they delivery excellent services. In fact, their disability is viewed in the opposite way, i.e. as a unique ability that enables them to achieve a competitive advantage.

Below is a summary of the characteristics of social entrepreneurship that the Good Sailors stand for, namely:

- actively communicating the mission of meaningful work for people with disabilities,
- employing disadvantaged groups of people,
- generating profit, which is largely used for the company's further development and investment,
- continuous investment in inventing or developing products with a global reach,
- positive perception of nature (Good Sailors, 2023a).

Long-term social sustainability can be marked as a key factor that plays a role in social entrepreneurship, since long-term social sustainability is a goal of social entrepreneurship (Good Sailors, 2023a).

The success of a social enterprise is thus built on the fact that social overlap forms an integral part of their business activity and that they reap the benefits that stem from it. It is therefore clear that they see the inclusion of disabled individuals as a unique opportunity that opens up other paths to them. Another important fact is that potential profit is largely reinvested into new activities that in turn give something back to society. These activities are designed to be self-sustaining in the future and therefore sustainable in the long term. The goal is for new activities to earn at least enough to cover their operation. These activities are not intended solely as a charitable project – they are meant to have the potential to develop further without additional external support. They are therefore developed and designed to have the potential to be self-sustaining (F. Molčan, personal communication, March 11, 2023).

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