

What creates meaningful work and meaningful marketing?

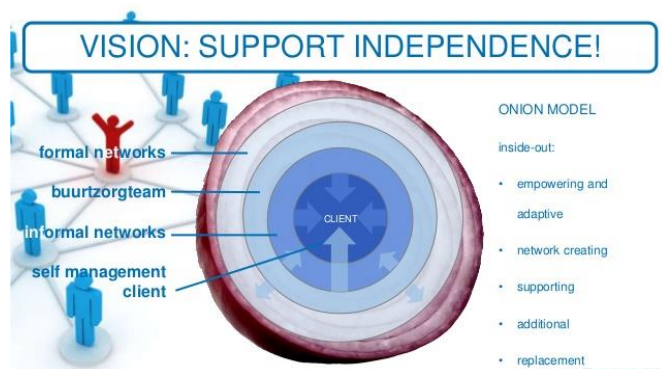
Jos de Blok – Buurtzorg

Article by Soraya Hayani

In 2006 homecare in The Netherlands knew an all-time low. Due to demographic developments, there were capacity problems, the care activities were standardised, and the quality of healthcare decreased while the costs increased. This caused both professionals and patients to be displeased with the, then current, situation.

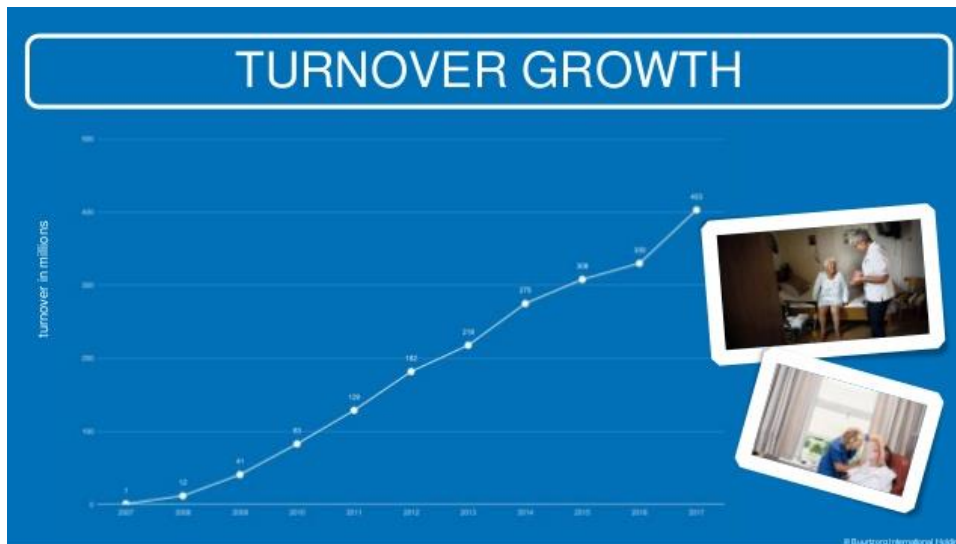
But how can the healthcare in the Netherlands be changed and make it meaningful and successful? This was the question Jos de Blok, CEO of Buurtzorg, asked himself before he started the company. The answer wasn't far away. Instead of letting nurses deal with the administration and standardisation of their capacities, which caused them to become unmotivated and unhappy, he lets them focus on what they love: nursing.

For this, he created an onion model. The client is the core, the heart of the model and the most important of the organization. This is followed by the informal networks, created by the nurses and the trust bond they have with their patients. This layer is then covered by the Buurtzorgteam, who take care of the coordination and administration of the organisation. They help carry the first layers, however, their main goal is caring and helping the inner layers in practising their job; nursing. Lastly, the Buurtzorgteam-layer is surrounded by the outer layer, that consists of the formal network. They provide the circumstances, the low thresholds and minimum complexity in the environment.



Buurtzorg makes independent teams who are responsible for 1 neighbourhood, who are in charge of organising the complete process themselves in line with their preferences. This way, Buurtzorg creates informal networks based on trust instead of hierarchy. An environment where everyone can be at ease. Buurtzorg made relationships important. For the nurses, the patient is priority, while backoffice handles the administration.

The popularity of this model increased and in 10 years, Buurtzorg grew to 50 – 100 new nurses a month and more than 80 000 patients a year. So, relationships and employees as focal point, has paid off. Listening to the employees, paid off. Buurtzorg was elected 5 times “Best employer of the year” and has a patient and employee-satisfaction rate of 9/10. Also, their turnover knew an astonishing growth thanks to this model.



This model, founded and focusing on trust, network creating and reduction of complexity (ICT) was for Buurtzorg the ideal mix to grow as a company and to extend borders. Buurtzorg is active in 22 countries where they use the same method successfully. And they keep expanding to more and more countries. Fun fact: even in China the name remained “Buurtzorg”.

Now how do they organise the marketing of Buurtzorg? Because they have such an interesting view on entrepreneurship and succeed to transform neighbourhoods in a caring socially active environment, they rely on word of mouth. Also, they catch the interests of the media by being so proactive in their policy. Free PR and marketing thanks to politicians who loves to visit the neighbourhoods from time to time.

This model isn't for every company, but Buurtzorg is a good example of how it can work in sectors like healthcare. Focussing on and trusting the capacities of the employees instead of making a list of “to-dos” without consideration, can be a good tool to keep your employees motivated.