

BUSINESS

The man behind one of Aalborg's unknown business successes bought his own forest

Most people see Lars Bentzen in a suit and tie. But he has his own space, where the attire - and the tasks - are completely different



He is behind one of Aalborg's unknown business successes with 150 employees and an annual turnover of over DKK 100 million. *Photo: Bo Lehm*



Peter Simonsen Editorial Manager

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Bo Lehm Photographer

He's big abroad, but virtually unknown at home.
But his results speak for themselves.

In the heart of Aalborg, overlooking the fjord, he has built a company with 150 employees and an annual turnover of over DKK 100 million.

The whole world is his workplace. He arrives early and leaves early. And he recently bought his own forest.

Here is the story of one of Aalborg's unknown business successes - and the man behind it.

Hospitals and an entire aviation system

It's a shame to say that Lars Bentzen flaunts the achievements and successes that he has led over the past 17 years.

One explanation may be that the 49-year-old owner-manager sometimes finds it difficult to explain exactly what his company does. Because the tasks it fulfils are in many different directions.

But let's give it a try:

Lars Bentzen is behind the consultancy company NTU International. It is based at Vestre Havnepromenade in Aalborg, but lands most of its orders outside the country.

Far outside.

Typically in less developed countries, NTU International is hired for large infrastructure projects ranging from energy supply to water, transport and aviation security.

A good example is Africa, where Lars Bentzen has built ministries, hospitals and an entire aviation system from scratch.

- "The exciting thing about Africa is that you can turn things around there. We are helping to create fundamental changes there," he says.



Most people see Lars Bentzen in a suit and tie. But he has his own space, where the attire - and the tasks - are completely different. *Photo: Bo Lehm*

In short, the business model is to support public authorities and private utilities around the world to better serve citizens in their local communities.

It all starts with a tender on the world market. For example, from development banks or the EU. Here, NTU International assembles a consortium or bids alone for the tender that has been put out to tender.

And if you win the job, the big machinery starts.

A tin shed in Madagascar

Like when Lars Bentzen was tasked with building Zambia's aviation directorate back in 2012. From the ground up.

Before that, EU aircraft were not allowed to fly in and out of the country, but NTU - in collaboration with both internal and external specialists - organised security protocols and other issues so that it is now safe to take off and land aircraft at the airports.

Shortly after, Lars Bentzen was in Madagascar for another project.

- And there I was, standing in a tiny airport with only one aircraft landing and taking off, talking to the only airport employee sitting in a tin shed. He told me that he had indeed been visited by a two-man team from NTU nine months earlier for our African aviation security contract. They had checked the protocols. That's when you begin to realise how far out in the corners of the world we've been," says Lars Bentzen.

What began in 2007 as a one-man business has grown into a global organisation with a multitude of different nationalities working in the office.

And although Lars Bentzen is not a man who flaunts his success, his business adventure has not gone unnoticed.



Lars Bentzen is a trained business economist. *Photo: Bo Lehm*

He has been nominated several times for Owner-Manager of the Year in North Jutland - including this year. Among other things, for his focus on work-life balance. Something that is not a foreign concept to Lars Bentzen.

He says he arrives early and leaves at 15.30.

Retention tactics

- Our work culture means that staying late at the office is not cool. We plan our way out of it. Of course, there might be a change in the tender specifications just before we have to send out a tender and you have to be on the ball, but that's it.
- "It's a better tactic for us if we want to retain employees, so that they can work for us in the long run. And new employees are told that the work doesn't get any better if they spend all evening doing it," says Lars Bentzen, who works closely with Aalborg University on recruitment, among other things.

Approximately 45 of NTU International's employees are located at the head office in Aalborg. The rest in other locations around the world.

Last year, the Aalborg company had a turnover of DKK 123 million and earned DKK 10.5 million after tax.

Owning your own forest

Besides owning a large company in Aalborg, Lars Bentzen has a veneration for outdoor life and nature.

This is one of the reasons why he bought half of Oxholm Forest in Jammerbugt Municipality a few years ago.

The 144-hectare forest is located west of the town of Brovst and near the northern coastline of the Limfjord.



Photo: Bo Lehm

The forest has become Lars Bentzen's sanctuary. A breathing space where, together with his forester, he spends time working on biodiversity initiatives, among other things.

For example, they have recently planted 30,000 oak trees and a year ago they started excavating a new lake.

-It's fantastic to walk around out there and follow the course of nature. Part of the forest has been designated as a forest of particular natural value, and I'm happy about that," says Lars Bentzen.

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