

# From New Zealand to Belgium

Urs Bolter on a journey across Belgium



*A few times a year we are visited in Sint-Niklaas by Urs Bolter, international consultant at Blum since 1995. Urs is not simply a consultant, some call him Blum's best kept secret! We spoke to Urs and asked him for his recipe to success.*

## **Urs, how did you get to know Van Hoecke?**

I had some contact with the Benelux delegation during an international meeting. Not surprisingly because the most noise came from the corner in which Van Hoecke could be found! This attracted my attention and this is how I got to know Peter Van Hoecke and his sales colleagues. It was a very pleasant evening and there was plenty of opportunity for discussion.

## **Was it immediately clear to you what value you could bring to our company?**

No, far from it. The Belgians were not initially interested in consultants, and certainly not ones from Switzerland (*laughs*)! But I was fascinated by the story: the origin, the history, the values behind the company. When I visited Van Hoecke later on it was immediately clear to me that it was all so genuine. It just had to be revealed to the outside world.

## **What was first on the list of things to do?**

To start with I was mainly involved in managing the generation transition. The previous generation had a directive style but this is less effective in a contemporary organisation wishing to take control itself. Nor was there any talk of team leaders or experts at the time. It can often be easier to manage the change process from a distance.

## **Do you think you were able to make a difference?**

It was mainly the staff at Van Hoecke themselves who made the difference. I was just the facilitator and gave them support. I can honestly say that it's always your recipe. I just add a touch of the right seasoning... And from time to time I reduce the heat a little!

## **How do you see Van Hoecke in the world of Blum?**

I see lots of organisations, all across the world. I have already visited five continents so far in 2016. Here I am in Belgium, last week I was in New

Zealand. Each organisation is very different of course, but I can really say that you are truly unique. The Van Hoecke spirit, the dynamics and the company's vision are held in very high regard among international colleagues. And once again that is thanks to the composition of the recipe. I can only encourage you to keep it up.

## **What do you consider Van Hoecke's best achievement over recent years?**

Your recent award (*Factory of the Future*) is certainly wonderful recognition, but the integration of Orion (*Organisation in development*) was by far the best strategic decision you could have taken. After all organisations are in constant motion, and certainly ones like yours. The people are what make this organisation what it is and it is essential to have their optimum collaboration.

## **You just said that you have already been to five continents in 2016. What do you consider to be the biggest differences?**

The great thing is that human reactions are the same all over the world. People experience hope, job, passion and sadness in the same way. But the way in which individual organisations deal with these is entirely different. The challenges are often very diverse. What certainly does not work is to throw out everything that's already there and to replace it with something new. It is often the way you do something that is key. And working together to find the right way is incredibly interesting.



Urs at work in our company with just one of his methods: team dialogue.