

TeleWell on osa suomen internetin historiaa

TeleWell Oy – Finnish expertise

TELEWELL OY · SUNDAY 7 JANUARY 2018

TeleWell Oy

TeleWell is, in many ways, a pioneering company. Furthermore, what also makes the company special, is its long history and family ownership that has lasted for decades.

FROM BANK CLERK TO MODEM ENTREPRENEUR

The history of TeleWell Oy began in the 1980s when **Markku Åberg** worked in a bank managing telecommunication-related matters for bank customers. After having dealt with customer connections for a while, Markku started to think that there could, in fact, be another way to make a living. The knowledge-seeking man that he was, Markku read many international magazines. In one of those magazines, a software developed by **Malcolm Messiter**, an English oboe player, caught his eye. 'I contacted Mr. Messiter and suggested that I create a Finnish version of his data-transfer software.' The IT guru, who played in the London Philharmonic Orchestra, got excited about the idea, and that's how it all started.

Alongside his career at the bank, Markku studied at Business College Helsinki (previously Liikemiesten kauppapisto) in the evenings. 'There were 36 of us entrepreneurially-oriented students and a skillful and inspiring teacher. It was a great stepping stone to entrepreneurship and a great place for networking', says Markku, who is still clearly excited about entrepreneurship.

'When I was working at the bank, I noticed how companies started to want to take care of their banking matters and connections themselves. The bank showed the way to the future', Markku reflects and tells that he changed his career at the bank to owning a company. The first company was called ATK-palvelu M.Åberg Ky (still same original VAT number in use), and it was off to a good start when it got Nokia as its client. Nokia then bought the software for 12 different languages and sold it forward. The software was called 'Trans-Send', and it could even be described as the predecessor of the internet

FAMILY BUSINESS

Markku's wife, **Sinikka Åberg**, was on maternity leave from a job in the social sector when Nokia became a client of the company. 'At home, we had robots that coded floppy disks or disks for the computer program. I took care of the baby and the robots at the same time, as the robots, too, required regular attention.' As time passed, Sinikka left the social sector behind and became an important part of the family business. Together, the couple has built a successful company path in which the collaboration with a competent seller and the realisation of softer values has borne fruit and created a good vibe around the registered trademark 'TeleWell'.

In 1988, the company was merged with the limited company of the owners and renamed as Easytel Oy (VAT still the as in 1980's). At the beginning, all work was done in a garage, and the focus was on telecommunication software. The couple quickly understood that they also needed devices, modems, to get the connections up and running. 'At first, we bought modems manufactured by other brands and sold them to support the software, but then we gradually started to develop our own product brand and range, which we named TeleWell. We got a lot of calls about the modems and our customers were

confused when we answered the phone with the name EasyTel. So, in 1995, we changed the name of the company to TeleWell Oy.'

GOOD REPUTATION IN ASIA

The manufacturing of modems, or having them manufactured, in a foreign country requires a great deal of knowledge and good relationships. Over the years, Markku Åberg has established warm and confidential relationships with subcontractors in the Far East. 'The relationships are so strong that if one of our subcontractors moves their production to another factory, Markku – and the TeleWell products along with him – will follow.'

Technology keeps developing and the industry keeps constantly changing. How does TeleWell keep up with the development?

'I am interested in the industry and I follow it constantly. I read magazines, stay in touch with the subcontractors, and google quite a lot', Markku lists his sources of information. 'It is important for us to be part of the development that the majority of Finns currently need', he continues. 'When it comes to new technologies, being a pioneer can include many risks and prove costly.' Markku has, however, been wrong about some things sometimes. 'I used to think that 4G will not work, but here we are, leading with the 4G and 5G technology. Technology is something that no one will offer us on a silver platter, it is one's own interest that is the most important tool.'

THE WORLD WILL NOT RUN OUT OF COMMUNICATION

'Communication, i.e., data transfer, will not cease to exist in the world. This basic idea is what we base our operations on, and we make an effort to guarantee our customers the best possible way to communicate.'

Introducing new products to the Finnish market is not simple. 'It takes an unbelievable stack of certifications before a product can be launched onto the Finnish market. First, you have to produce test products, and then you have to conduct numerous tests, meet the requirements of various regulations and provisions, and apply for approval', Markku sums the process up. Sinikka continues in the same spirit by saying that 'There are at least a hundred stages to complete before a product is ready for the market.' Even an experienced entrepreneur makes mistakes, and everything has not always run smoothly for the company. 'Sometimes we have picked the wrong dark horse', the couple reflects.

Both Markku and Sinikka think that the best part of being an entrepreneur is that no two days are the same. Entrepreneurial freedom is also important to the couple, whose interests include gardening and exercising. 'Now, we also have three grandchildren, who mean so much to us.'

In addition to industrious entrepreneurship, also sound collaboration partner choices can be described as keys to TeleWell Oy's success. The company uses many Finnish subcontractors. 'We cannot know how to do everything ourselves, so it is sensible to concentrate on what we are good at and let professional partners take care of logistics, accounting, and customer service, for instance. We have already collaborated with good partners for 35 years, and we have also made an effort to find local partners to support us.'

Markku describes himself as a playful rascal who sees a bright future for TeleWell Oy. 'We have sold almost as many devices as there are citizens in Finland, so this is a good path to continue on.' 'In the future, we will develop even faster devices to facilitate our customers' communication. We have many loyal customers, and our products are available in both museums for digital technology and new product catalogues for communication technology.' The Åberg couple, who are almost in their sixties, have tentatively started to think about retiring, but that time will come when they find a good new owner for TeleWell Oy. Latest new trend in company is EV car charge cables and systems.