



# A New Direction

The leading training solutions provider in Germany, Integrata has increased its business by expanding into new markets.

Images courtesy of Integrata

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- Ingmar J. Rath

For more than 50 years, since the company was founded in 1964, Integrata has been providing training solutions for businesses in Germany and around the world, including the United States, South America, the Middle East, Asia, and Australia. Integrata has more than 80,000 participants who train with the company every year, and acquire qualifications in IT and personnel and organisational development. The company's tagline is 'inspire, qualify, change', and the company ensures that each training solution it provides lives up to this motto. According to Integrata's owner and CEO, Ingmar J. Rath, Integrata has a long history but the best is yet to come for the company. Ingmar sees the growth of the company positively, and does not believe in limiting potential. "My philosophy is never think and act in limits, but in possibilities," he says.

Ingmar, who has been the CEO of Integrata since 2009, decided to purchase the company after searching for a new investment opportunity. He formed a team to evaluate potential businesses, and they agreed on Integrata. "I was searching for investments in IT and telecommunications and even in the air cargo industry worldwide and finally decided to get involved in the education business. The reason for that was very clear: it is a highly ethical business, and I was also searching for a 'people business.' Integrata at that time was established in the training business, and we encountered exactly what we had discovered in the due diligence phase. We found a market with a highly fragmented environment. There are more than 10,000 competitors in that market, and because of its size, Integrata was a dominant player—one of the key companies in that segment in Germany. I realised that it would be easy with my consulting know-how to help

companies to save money on their investment in education and training. There was an opportunity to step into a business which I could drive as a key player, where there was room for improvement. With a new strategy and the Cegos Group as a strategic partner, we were able to build up a sustainable business model."

Ingmar had extensive experience in management and when he came to Integrata, this helped him in implementing this sustainable business model. Having previously worked in IT and telecommunications, he came to Integrata with experience, fresh ideas, and a plan to redevelop the company. "Growth in the standard training branch of Integrata was very good up to 2001, thanks to heavy IT investments. From 2001 to 2007, there was a period in which there was a decrease in business with declining profits, and so in 2009 we needed to move the company in a different >



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direction. We did that through clear positioning as a full-service provider. This resulted in a revenue growth of 25 per cent, which also afforded us a healthy profitability. But the training business is often very susceptible to recessions. We needed to formulate a strategy with which we would create an anti-cyclical business which thrived on the outsourcing of services around the training business. Outsourcing decisions are mostly taken during a crisis. In summary, the message was that we needed to broaden the offering of the company; in fact, we needed to position the company on two pillars which would not be equally vulnerable during such a crisis.”

It was a good strategy but also had its challenges for Ingmar and Integrata. Not long after becoming CEO, Ingmar was faced with a number of difficult tasks: changing the company’s strategy, providing new impulses by recruiting new members of management, and

cutting costs. “The first challenge I had was redefining the strategy to position us as a full-service training provider also offering consultancy and services in the training business,” Ingmar says. “From my point of view, there are really only two alternatives: you can either position yourself in a niche or you have to be a full-service provider. Anything in between is a poor compromise.

“Certainly, it was also a challenge to manage the organisation because new staff were needed in management and cost allocation had to be optimised without limiting the development of innovations, because this is very important for the company. What I did was to cultivate a spirit of entrepreneurship in the new management team, and this was quite a key success factor. Building up the sales capabilities in the company, and having sales people who are able to listen and understand customers’ needs were very important and helped us to

have the best sales team in the training business in Germany.”

Ingmar also believes that having highly motivated and committed staff makes a huge difference to a company and its success. Being a company that specialises in training and qualifications, Integrata, of course, also has a large training and development program for its own staff. “We have the Integrata qualification program; we call it IQ 2020. We always have an education or training program running alongside our strategy, which helps people to adopt and implement the strategy in their particular area of work. In addition, being a 100-per-cent full-service provider, it is quite easy for us to consult our customers individually as we are not bound to selling certain products. We have a wide range of products and services, and with an excellent understanding of the customers’ needs and our offerings, we will always find the right match.”



Ingmar has also placed a strong emphasis on internal communication with his management team and his staff. He communicates openly with everyone in the company and strongly believes in the concepts of fairness and respect. “Having a highly motivated team with profound knowledge is very important in the education business. I personally try to set a good example; I communicate directly, openly, and clearly. The results of this commitment are respect, fairness, and reliability. We encourage people to act very independently and responsibly. We integrate them into the vision, mission and brand value creation, and we show them our appreciation for the contribution which they make to the company’s values as members of the Integrata team.”

This honesty and respect, Ingmar says, is also applied to Integrata’s relationships with suppliers. It is these principles and the reputation Integrata has in the industry with suppliers that have resulted in long-term, profitable relationships for the company. The company also seeks constant feedback from suppliers and clients to ensure its success. “Suppliers and partners are very important to us; our relationship with them is about respect, fairness, and reliability. This has led to the very positive situation that we have had participants learning with us and

training companies working with us for over 20 years, and we receive very comprehensive feedback from our quality system, which confirms this satisfaction. We have around 80,000 evaluations every year, and this gives a good overview of the quality we provide. To ensure this high level of quality, we have regular meetings with trainers, newsletters and train-the-trainer courses. For us, it is important to choose the right course content for the customer, to select the right trainer for the job, and to find the right combination of training methods for the learner. Depending on the customer, the requirements may, of course, be quite different.”

Ingmar believes that Integrata is one of the best in the German training sector. What sets his company apart, he says, is its unique position in the market. Integrata provides a wide range of services in different sectors which, to this extent, no other company does, making it an attractive choice for customers. “We have the highest quality and reliability in the industry. The relationship to our training and strategic partners is based on a deep mutual trust, and some of them have been working with us for over two decades. We are positioned in the field of technical education which is, in principle, the whole IT business, as well as in the personnel development business. Most of the competitors only



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concentrate on one of these two fields. We are not just an established training company; we also offer consulting services and help with the entire management and administration for big training programs. Besides that, what is not typical for training companies, is the fact that we are positioned internationally, which means we have several global learning programs with our shareholder Cegos Group in the areas of personnel development and IT. I could go on with even more details about our training methods like e-learning, web sessions, classroom training, and so on. There are many reasons why we have been more successful than our competitors—and with 10,000 competitors you always need a reason to be better.” ●



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