INTERVIEW

Meet Kronsteg

by Mohini Benzler



"... just do it and see for yourself what you get from that experience."

KRONSTEG

Ricardo Thiele is the founder and CEO of the digital workplace agency Kronsteg. In this interview, he explains why he decided to start his own business and which obstacles he had to overcome at the beginning. He also gives us an outlook on future work and the importance of digitalization. If you are a student, you will perhaps also find it interesting to hear his advice.

Please tell us something about your academic background and your current job.

I first started my career with a three-year apprenticeship as a wholesale- and foreign trade salesman with a focus on retail. This apprenticeship was done at a medium-sized steel wholesaler. After finishing my apprenticeship, I started my higher education as a dual student of Business Administration where I specialized in medium-sized international businesses. I did the practical part of my studies at an international company as a General Management Trainee. For the first nine months I worked in Germany. After that, I moved to England for 2 1/2 years. Last but not least, I spent 6 months in Asia all in the same company.

I did my full-time master's degree at the University of Leipzig while living in the UK. I used to travel between the UK to Leipzig on a monthly basis. The combination of theory and practice not only supported my professional experience, but my career also got an early boost as well. My time as a trainee in General Management, helped me in my current position as "Founder and CEO" of Kronsteg. Mainly, because I got to know each department and got a wide array of insights during this position.

When and why did you decide to start your own company?

Starting Kronsteg wasn't something I planned beforehand, it happened rather by chance. We knew we wanted to share our knowledge of the *Digital Workplace* which is why we started Kronsteg with a blog. After that, we surprisingly started getting first inquiries from companies and quickly realized we had hit a nerve.

At some point, these inquiries started becoming lucrative enough that we decided to take a leap of faith into self-employment. My advice to anyone thinking of taking that same leap is: just do it and see for yourself what you get from that experience. This experience is yours and nobody can take that away from you.

Were there any obstacles in the beginning and if so, how did you deal with them?

Definitely. It felt like we had to deal with a hundred different types of obstacles daily and sometimes it still feels like that. We first became aware of these obstacles when founding our Agency, moving on to finding the right office, accounting, registering new employees, choosing the right CRM-System, and so on.

If your company grows you will certainly face new challenges on the way. Finding a well-fitted solution is important, you either find it yourself or you delegate the task to a smart and capable team.

"*E-Learning* is going to be the next topic of discussion in companies..."

What services does your company offer?

Kronsteg helps companies to digitize their internal communication and collaboration. We approach this challenge mainly by launching modern intranets and Microsoft 365. What sets us apart is that we are neither a typical IT-service provider nor a sole support system. We are all-rounders who support companies by starting with a general analysis as a basis for our individual change measures afterwards.

Why are digital workspaces becoming increasingly important in today's world and what are the advantages of them?

As long as the number of employees surpasses 20 and a company has more than one location, the importance of digital communication and collaboration will increase. The purpose of this communication isn't for the sake of one, but for the mutual work on documents, projects or knowledge articles—no matter where or on which device. If anyone wants to know more about this, I recommend reading our Handelsblatt-article "Wieso progressive Unternehmen auf den Digital Workplace setzen".

Are there further topics that will become increasingly important in the future?

Everyone lives in their own bubble, which is why I can only answer this through my own limited view: *Digital Workplace* is a hyped topic currently which will probably stay for the next 5 years. *E-Learning*, in my opinion, is going to be the next topic of discussion in companies for the next 4–10 years. This is because it is expected that knowledge is transferred as fast and sustainable as possible to new employees. This is exactly why I have founded, next to Kronsteg, another Agency: *Koleido*. Looking even further into the future, I am looking forward to virtual reality and voice assistance in companies. However it is probably going to take a while before that happens.

"It requires absolute will to lead your idea to success."

What do you think is important when it comes to starting your own business?

A pragmatic approach and an "I-do-mentality" are crucial, because if you are going to wait for the right time, you will wait forever. There is never a right time. It is equally important to have joy in taking on new tasks and the will to succeed against many adversities. It requires absolute will to lead your idea to success.

Do you have any advice for our current bachelor and master students?

You have so many options, try out as much as you can, see what makes you the happiest and pursue that, because that's when you get the best results! And maybe one more piece of advice, which I get all the time: never stop learning and use every opportunity for further education.



Handelsblatt article

Kronsteg website