



## Backache? Never a welcome visitor!

**Steinbeis supports a startup company from Stuttgart as it walks the road to self-employment**

Backache can severely cramp your lifestyle and wreak havoc on simple everyday tasks, as anyone who's literally been flat on their back will tell you. Most back problems are caused by shortened abdominal muscles, usually due to lack of exercise. Help is on hand from the *bauchkröte*® ("belly turtle"), an exercise aid made out of foam. The cushion is being marketed by Florian Schweer. The entrepreneur from Stuttgart was assisted on the road to self-employment by the Steinbeis Consulting Center for Business Startups, spearheaded by consultant Udo Schmid who, with his client, successfully developed a marketing, sales and acquisition strategy.

The *bauchkröte*® can be used at home or at the workplace as part of a company health care program. Exercise involves carefully stretching the stomach muscles using the bodyweight of the exercise aid. The aim is not to address the symptoms, but rather the original cause of back problems.

Florian Schweer was so won over by the efficacy of the foam turtle that he jumped at the opportunity to go out and sell it. He set up his own limited company, FSBV, and entered the realms of self-employment. To make sure nothing went wrong with this not insignificant undertaking,

he brought in professional support from the Steinbeis Consulting Center for Business Startups. As he limbered up for the startup phase, consultant Udo Schmid exposed Florian Schweer to the importance of selling, highlighting the problems encountered and how to solve issues by presenting professionally and in a way that matches the target group. How can I differentiate myself from less professional salespeople, and how do I sell to companies? Or in other words: What distinguishes a sustainable and lasting sales organization?

Udo Schmid and Florian Schweer started by analyzing the target group for *bauchkröte*®. Which groups of people suffer the greatest losses as a result of backache? Which activities are most likely to result in backache, and where are these people? Based on these questions, a concept was drafted which revolved around the idea of not just marketing the exercise aid by itself. Instead, users should be motivated to use and keep using the aid, and company clients should be convinced that they are making a long-term investment in the health of their staff. An analysis of the number of working days lost due to back conditions and the associated costs showed that for the company, the payback period on a "belly turtle" would be relatively short as fewer working days would be lost. Fewer back problems, less absenteeism and higher work performance. And the impact a company makes by showing that it values its people by responding to their individual requirements should not be underestimated. The concept also encapsulated communication aspects of selling and the important role that instruments like social media could play. Udo Schmid and Florian Schweer also placed emphasis on ensuring that all parts needed to make the *bauchkröte*® were sourced from local suppliers.

The young entrepreneur is also not short of ideas and visions for the future. Using his limited company as a springboard, he would like to develop and launch other products with health benefits on the market. He is already drafting plans for a computer workplace with a training apparatus to aid the recovery of joint and muscle injuries in the feet and legs. Naturally, he is turning again to the expertise and advice of the specialists at the Stuttgart-based Steinbeis Consulting Center.



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