

SCAN

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VIKTORIA TOLSTOY – UNTRAINED BUT TALENTED
LARGE SCANDINAVIAN EDUCATION SPECIAL
INDUSTRIAL DESIGN – FOR THE LOVE OF PRODUCTS
LIFE IS A RACE FOR FREDDY NORDSTRÖM

PROMOTING BRAND SCANDINAVIA ISSUE 58 NOVEMBER 2013



Krabat – proud to be different

When Tom-Arne Solhaug's son was born with cerebral palsy, the new father was immediately confronted with the reality of trying to find good assistive tools for his boy. Frustrated with the limited amount of products on the market, he teamed up with friend and business partner Fredrik Brodtkorb to change the industry. Today, their company has taken its first steps on the international market.

By Julie Lindén | Photos: Krabat AS

"Our ambition is to become the best in the world within our field. It's important to emphasise that we're not talking size here, but reputation and innovation. We've worked incredibly hard to make this happen, and we hope that sometime in the future the parents and guardians of children with disabilities will think primarily of Krabat when choosing means of aid for them," says Brodtkorb, engineer and co-founder of Krabat AS.

The competence to change a life

The company, which has received honours such as the Red Dot Design Award and the Rehacare award for Best Design, works widely with a line of professionals to ensure that the needs of every child are met. Engineers and technicians develop tools in close collaboration with industrial design-

ers, while physiotherapists and ergotherapists work with children in order to optimise their use of the tools. All in all the company boasts the competence needed to create truly life-changing equipment.

Within its skillset, Krabat emphasises a good combination of design and function as vital. Instead of producing another



chunky and difficult wheelchair too heavy to be used in a flexible manner, Brodtkorb says, Krabat wants to develop products based on innovative and realistic thinking – today's wheelchair must blend functionality, flexibility and a well-considered design that makes the product cool rather than stigmatising.

"Very few do this today," Brodtkorb says. "We offer an aesthetically fun design that adds something to the product, while providing functions that we have yet to see elsewhere on the market. It can be a unique sitting position in a chair, or a dynamic rising function to our crawling product, allowing children to get up by themselves while crawling," says Brodtkorb.

Removing the stigma

The company aims to remove the stigmatic effect associated with many other assistive tools on the market. The recipe for success focuses on erasing limits caused by the disability and bringing the individual skillset to life. "The minimum requirement is of course that the product



"We asked ourselves what happens to a disabled child when the other children go swimming in the summer. And what about the children learning to crawl on their own? We saw many opportunities to alter the way these rites of learning affect the lives of children with physical challenges. We found niches nobody was tending to, and we have come radically closer to giving these children a 24-hour day similar to that of a friend without a disability," Brodtkorb says.

A global venture

Last year, Krabat struck a deal with global assistive tools developer Ottobock, pulling the world market close enough to touch. In August this year the first products were launched for distribution in America. "Launching through Ottobock in America is a major opportunity, and a way for us to grow. Still, it's important for us to grow slowly and organically. We are very pleased that Ottobock saw the uniqueness of the Krabat products and wanted to make them available for even more families," Brodtkorb says.

With many a project in their portfolio and even more in the pipeline, what does Brodtkorb make of the journey Krabat AS has experienced? "The greatest satisfaction you can feel is when you travel around to countries like Germany or Italy, and meet families who have struggled to find suitable tools for their children for a long time. They've found a Krabat product that has changed the way they live, making every day easier for their child. That feeling goes unmatched," Brodtkorb says.

works well in the everyday life of the child. Beyond that we believe that a pleasing look helps greatly, as it makes the product cool with the other kids, a factor that cannot be underestimated when the child is still young. If these two factors are in place, the child will automatically make progress."

"We call this 'hidden training'," Brodtkorb explains. "When the product is easy to use it will be used that much more, leading the child to train his or her physical

skills without being aware of it. Moving with the tool becomes a pleasurable experience."

Filling the gaps

To Krabat it was important to fill holes in the market, helping disabled children live as freely as possible all hours of the day. Solhaug and Brodtkorb saw the need for products helping children in situations outside the ordinary day schedule, and quickly made plans for tools enabling a life with even fewer limits.



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