

## **Case study: Prowise Healthcare Ltd**

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Prowise Healthcare sells own-brand vitamins and supplements direct to customers in the UK and around the world, fulfilling both B2C and wholesale orders through its website. All its products are made to exacting GMP and BRC standards, using high-quality ingredients.

Prowise was founded in 2015 by Managing Director Rikesh Kothari and his wife, and has grown since then to employ eight people today. The firm first took an interest in Help to Grow when it began to consider some new strategic directions. ‘We were quite happy with where we were, but we wanted to learn something more,’ says Rikesh. ‘There’s so much going on at the moment, and we wanted to adopt some new elements of strategy into our business.’

Prowise’s Help to Grow learning journey included strategic growth, positioning within the ecosystem, developing people as an asset and technology as an accelerator.

### **Discovering the programme**

Rikesh, who holds an MBA from Cardiff University, explains why Help to Grow appealed to him and his colleagues. ‘Brunel was just around the corner from us, and it had a strong reputation – plus the project was backed by the government,’ he says. ‘We looked at some other courses, but they only focused on one or two specific topics. With Help to Grow, we had the whole overview: strategic innovation, digital adoption, internationalisation, mission, values... so many things. As a growing business, we fit the target profile perfectly. The more we discussed it, the more I thought, “This is a really good course.”’

A big part of the appeal was working with a mentor to get feedback and new ideas. ‘Whenever we implement something as a business, we don’t have anybody to tell us when we’re heading in the right direction, or point out different things we could do,’ says Rikesh.

### **Growth ambitions**

Prowise is entering a new phase of growth, targeting international sales and aiming to get its products listed on more retail outlets and online stores, so the business needs to develop its skills. ‘However much you know, it’s never enough, because things are

always changing,’ observes Rikesh. ‘When we started out, all we had was an idea. Every couple of years, our goals change. We really want to expand and grow, and we need some guidance to help us move forward. I was really impressed by the Help to Grow case study on Gymshark– how they achieved their growth year on year.’

A key priority for Rikesh is to change Prowise’s culture, and to achieve success without depending too much on family connections. ‘I don’t want to do business like a traditional family firm,’ he says. ‘For example, I would be happy for outside investors to get involved.’

### **Building the brand**

Another priority for Prowise is developing its brand identity, which was supported by the Help to Grow branding module. ‘Working with the Help to Grow mentor, we talked about our company, the challenges we face and what we wanted to achieve,’ explains Rikesh. ‘We talked about the whole brand image, and how we can improve it – not just by selling products, but by building trust.’

As part of the effort to boost business-to-consumer sales, which currently represent 20% of turnover, the firm developed new marketing personas for customers of different ages. ‘Say we have a 45-year-old customer,’ says Rikesh. ‘Maybe he wants to live a healthy lifestyle, but he doesn’t know how. How can we reach him?’

To target health-conscious 20-somethings, the firm engaged four social media influencers to explain the product’s journey from sourcing raw ingredients in India to home delivery, and to highlight the products’ natural origin.

### **Digital development**

Since Prowise only sells online, the company uses digital channels to earn trust and build stronger relationships with its customers. ‘We added Trustpilot so customers can add reviews, and we now have a score of 4.6/5,’ says Rikesh. ‘We offer WhatsApp on the website, so if customers want to submit an order or ask a question, they can just message instead of emailing. Easy communication is one of those little things that matter a lot.’

As a result of the changes made to the website, the company has been able to attract more site visitors and increase online sales by 25%.

### **Transforming operations**

To unlock international markets, Prowise needed to focus on online sales, improve internal operations and reappraise the supply chain between the UK and the manufacturing base in India. Working closely with Help to Grow facilitators, Prowise adopted the internal resource management system from Monday.com to track resources and improve its internal processes.

‘Changing operations isn’t easy because staff are used to things being a certain way,’ admits Rikesh. ‘But Help to Grow has shown us that we have to do things in a more structured way.’

### **Becoming more sustainable**

Module 5 of Help to Grow covers running a more socially responsible business. For Prowise, that means living up to its brand image by providing environmentally friendly packaging for its products. The company is also considering donating 1% of its turnover to charity.

Prowise’s product packaging is currently 95% recyclable, with the elusive final 5% represented by printing inks. ‘We’re talking to manufacturers how we can push that up to 100%,’ says Rikesh. ‘There’s a cost involved, but maybe next year we can start introducing new packaging lines that will get us there by 2024.’

For Rikesh, another key Help to Grow topics was vision mission and values. ‘I never thought about vision, mission and values much before, but I was completely blown away by this module,’ he says. ‘I realised that it’s about who we are. We’re talking about human wellbeing through our brand, but if that doesn’t connect to sustainability, or we’re not giving anything back, then there’s no point. It really helped me understand what the long-term vision is for our company. Are we selling to everybody, or to a niche? What do we stand for?’

Change is a long-term process, but the most important thing is to take the first step. ‘You can’t just implement these things immediately,’ confirms Rikesh. ‘You have to make some difficult calls – but if you don’t make them, there will come a time when your words aren’t backed up by your products. And if you don’t have a vision, you don’t know which way you should be going.’

### **Incentives to buy**

Based on the Help to Grow module covering strategic growth, Prowise has embarked on a range of online initiatives to gain customers and boost sales.

'It's expensive for us acquire a new customer by advertising on Google, Facebook or Instagram,' explains Rikesh. 'But once they know us, we can take care of them for a very long time, because they have to keep using our products consistently to see the benefit. So we've added "subscribe and save" offers to keep people coming back, and a "refer a friend" scheme where they can earn a cash reward. Things don't happen straight away, but we are hoping that in three or four months we can attract maybe 30% more customers to our website by offering these incentives.'

### **Staff management**

None of this could happen without a dedicated team, and the Help to Grow module on Employee engagement has helped Rikesh to spot areas where Prowise can improve. 'We've starting using the Asana work management platform to improve communication within the team, because we have three full-time staff working in India,' says Rikesh. 'As a company, we always focus on keeping our staff happy. We offer them flexible hours, because we know that personal life and family life are important too. If our team members have a good balance outside work, they can focus better on the company too.'

Regular communication helps to keep everyone on the same page. 'We have a meeting every Friday to discuss what we need to do to move forward,' explains Rikesh. 'It's a space for whoever has problems, improvements or challenges to share. There's a lot more brainstorming going on now, and it's all focused on the vision and mission of the company.'

Now, Prowise is looking to recruit social-media interns, nutrition specialists and commercial staff. Through its membership of Help to Grow's alumni support network, the firm is aiming to hire Brunel graduates for its future positions. 'We're looking to appoint someone with export management experience who can help us expand internationally,' reveals Rikesh. 'We also need a corporate manager who can help us source ingredients directly, which will help us with our sustainability goals.'

### **Looking to the future**

Following the Help to Grow programme, Prowise is looking forward to healthy expansion in the future. 'We forecast growth of at least 20% over the next few years,' says Rikesh. 'I would strongly recommend the Help to Grow programme. It's all about gaining practical knowledge and putting it into practice and overcoming the challenges you face. Every business has something they can learn.'