

Interview Shortlisted Company – European Small and Mid-Cap Awards 2017

Name of the company
ABEO
Why did you decide to go public?
<p>ABEO aims to become one of the leaders on each continent by consolidating the market and developing the Group in “sportainment” (sport and entertainment).</p> <p>ABEO ‘s target is to reach €300m in revenue by 2020, driven by organic growth and targeted acquisitions in order to complement the brand portfolio, conquer new markets more effectively and consolidate the most mature markets.</p> <p>The objective of the fund raising was to contribute to the financing of this plan, over and above the cash flow released by the Group.</p>
What has been the reaction from investors, customers, employees, etc following going public?
<p>The interest displayed by French and international investors proved the merits of our unique positioning on the sports and leisure equipment market, and reflected the trust placed in our growth strategy.</p> <p>ABEO’s reputation as listed company on Euronext has been received well by our customers and business partners, as this gives more credibility and trustworthiness towards the company.</p> <p>Some employees have now company’s shares which strengthens the entrepreneurial attitude through the organisation.</p>
What have been the benefits to your company?
<p>The funds raised gave us the financial means to step up our international expansion. Since the IPO, in line with our 2020 strategic plan, ABEO made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the acquisition of a 60% majority stake in Erhard Sport together with the company's management team. Via a recognised domestic brand, this transaction gives ABEO access to Germany's entire sports equipment market, in which ABEO has hitherto held a limited foothold. - the acquisition of Sportsafe UK, a specialist in sports equipment maintenance. This enables ABEO to extend the scope of its UK operations and shore up its services business.
What were the main challenges in taking your company public?
<p>Going public and offering stock in an initial public offering represents a milestone for most privately-owned companies.</p>
What experience would you want to share with companies that are thinking of going public?
<p>IPO itself is time consuming and a lot of work but it is not difficult and we are very proud in the end to have succeeded. It gives transparency and visibility to company’s activities, which is very important in international business.</p>
What do you believe are the top qualities of your company?
<p>It is a human-sized company, with strong human values. ABEO has been run by an experienced entrepreneurial team of family managers. The Group has expanded both via organic growth, primarily due to the presence of its leading brands in international competitions, which have won it high recognition, as well as via external growth. The Group has made 14 acquisitions since 2002, which have enabled to develop the climbing and sports businesses and expand its original locker room business.</p>

Where do you see yourselves in 5 years?

ABEO has become a natural focal point of consolidation in a highly fragmented market made up of specialised local operators, ABEO is planning a new phase of accelerated growth while improving its operating profitability. To successfully implement its plans, ABEO will pursue its development model combining organic growth with targeted acquisitions, based on three strategic priorities: international expansion, capitalising on the brands, and increasing the Group's presence in "sportainment" (sports and entertainment) and services.

Have you had any assistance from the European Union, e.g. funding projects, etc.

ABEO had no direct assistance from EU.

If you had 3 wishes come true: What should the EU do to encourage more SMEs to go public and to provide ongoing support for listed companies?

Create an EU label for listed companies present (through subsidiaries) in a minimum of 3 different countries of the EU.

Subsidise the EU listed SME companies that massively export overseas.

Help EU listed SME companies to fight against counterfeit (accelerating legal cases, creating an European level for legal proceedings).