

# Work needs passion

written by Julia Weinzettl - [www.taskfarm.com](http://www.taskfarm.com)

**Alexander Mann/ Founder the thinkKing**

**TF: What is 'the thinkKing' about?**

The thinkKing is a company that designs furniture made of cardboard. I want to offer an alternative to conventional furniture and make people think. The brand stands for 'thinking' – 'to think' but also for „the thin king“. Thin – because the material I'm using is thin, but you can still build kingdoms with it. I started with this project in 2012 because I couldn't afford the furniture I wanted to have for my new apartment. So I decided to build my own furniture. The only material I had in my apartment was cardboard, so I built my furniture with this material. Meanwhile I started my own business, I'm in an accelerator program here in Carinthia and have already developed different kinds of furniture, such as seats, shelves or racks.

**TF: How do you think our work will look like within the next 10 years, considering that you design furniture – which is usually something people use when working?**

My working life is completely different from others because I cannot stand knowing how the next day will look like. I am not able to work on a 9 to 5 schedule. What I am doing now is not really work for me. I have an office but I never know when I am going there because I just get up whenever I want to, I have breakfast, read the newspaper and then go to meetings or to my office, whatever is necessary. And sometimes I am working for 14 hours a day but as I said in the beginning it is not really work to me it's more like a hobby and it's just fun to do. So very often I'm not aware of the time passing by. It's like when you give a huge box of Lego pieces to children – they would play forever.

## **TF: What are the opportunities of our time?**

Opportunities – There are so many. For example: Money is everywhere. You just have to pick it up from the street. You have to be passionate about what you do. Because that's the only way how you can sell yourself. I studied business economics and I had a focus on sales and distribution management. I tried to work in sales but I am not the right person for it, I thought. But now that I'm selling a product that I developed on my own and I'm very passionate about, people keep telling me I'm the perfect sales person. So I think work needs passion, if you work on something you really love and are good in it your working perception and abilities will change eventually.

## **TF: What are the challenges?**

Challenges – Lack of money – as always. Money is not very important for me. How to earn most money is not my main focus. My focus is how to bring joy to other people with this great product. Money is not in the first place- and because of that I always have a lack of money. That's probably the biggest challenge. But I managed it. So for example I produced the first 1.500 cardboard seats 3 weeks ago and of course you need the money to start the production line. I went to the bank and asked for a certain amount of money, but told them I don't have any guarantee. I don't have a car, I don't have a house, I don't have any income and I'm not willing to pay more than 3% interest rate. And I got it. There are challenges, but if you know how the system is working you'll find a solution. There is always a way to succeed but you have to ask for it. That's what I learned from Dreamacademia : "Everything is possible, you only have to ask for it!" Very often people don't ask because they think to know the answer already. But if you muster the courage to ask for it, you'll be amazed how easy it sometimes could be. So just ask. Anyone.

## **TF: What basics should we get back to?**

I don't have a TV. I have a shitty car, it's 24 years old and it's falling apart already, but it still gets me from A to B. I love to cook and to know where my food is coming from. To go back to basics also means for me to go shopping to the farmer. That as well was the philosophy for my furniture: I wanted to make a 100% made in Austria product. My first focus is on Carinthia where I come from, but I also buy parts from all over Austria. The seats are produced in Feldkirchen in Carinthia. The sample manuals are printed in Klagenfurt. The package is from Tyrol because there was no company in Carinthia that offered that service. I got much cheaper offers from Serbia and Croatia but for me it is very important to support the region where I'm coming from. And I know that people will acknowledge this even if the price is higher, but they know it's coming from their region. When I enter the German market I want a production line based somewhere in Germany to keep the transportation route as short as possible. I believe that that's the trend. To go back to the basics, back to the origin.

**TF: What is your vision?**

One vision is to be successful with my start-up that I can start supporting other start-ups to fulfill their dreams. My other vision is to bring Carinthia forward. I came back to Carinthia after eight years because I wanted to build my company here where I'm coming from. I want to support the region but as well to develop a start up community here and I'm working on that. Next to that I want to build a trilateral start up system together with Slovenia, Northern Italy and Carinthia to make a connection and look at us as one region, one community.

[www.thethinking.eu](http://www.thethinking.eu)

Alexander Mann is speaker at TEDxPannonia, Aug. 8th, 2015

save your tickets: [www.tedxpannonia.com](http://www.tedxpannonia.com)

and he also is:

– Initiator of TEDxKlagenfurt – CoFounder der StartupWeekend Klagenfurt – CoFounder von Change the Box, eines Klagenfurter ThinkTanks – Founder of the year 2014 beim Central European Startup Award (CESA) – Local representative con AustrianStartups in Kärnten