



Mats Postema has graduated from the Behaviour Change Master in 2013. He is a behavioural change expert and co-owner of “Changing Ways”, a behaviour change company that is situated in Nijmegen and aims to change behaviour for a better and more sustainable world.

Mats has given B-Change an interview and talked about his vision for behaviour change, founding your own company, what to look out for as a future professional in the field.



Rabea: ***“Hi Mats, thank you again for doing this interview with me.”***

Mats: “Yes, of course.”

R: ***“I would like to start by asking whether you did anything else after graduating before founding your own company.”***

M: “No.”

R: ***“You went straight to it?”***

M: “I did, yes. I was always very motivated to start my own company. Also, behavioural change was then, and I think it still is, a very new and open area. I talked with some friends, and we decided to found a company. In the beginning we tried to see if we could find another job on the side so we could have a steady income, but it turned out that we didn’t really need that. So, this is the only thing I ever did.”

R: ***“So you were pretty successful right from the start.”***

M: “Well, I wouldn’t say successful but there was enough money coming in for us to support it, so that was nice. I was lucky that I wrote my thesis at the KNVB (the Dutch Soccer Association) and they were really interested in what I did. They actually asked me ‘Hey Mats, do you know any companies that do what you do because we would like to hire them’ and I was like ‘Well, maybe I know one.’”

R: ***“What was your vision for it when you started it in the beginning?”***

M: “In the beginning it was, and it still is, to make a positive impact. Because there is room for improvement in the world. And I think behaviour has a lot, if not everything, to do with it. I think if you change behaviour, you can change the world.”

R: “How do you view the future of behaviour change in the coming years?”

M: “I think it will be more of a field on its own. Whenever you do a big project you involve a lot of experts, and one of them will be a behavioural change expert.”

R: “So, if understand you correctly your whole goal is to leave the world better than you found it.”

M: “Yes, that’s true.”

R: “What do you think we [students] can expect from the field in the coming years after graduating?”

M: “I think some people might find a job as behavioural scientists in their internship company, but most won’t because there just aren’t as many yet. Most will find a job similar to it which might be in HR or MVO (CSR) and then apply their knowledge there. I think the great quest for the graduates is to make sure whatever company they work for realises that behaviour change is valuable and that ‘behaviour change officer’ will become a real title and a function.”

R: “Do you think as a behaviour change graduate you might be able to create a position for yourself?”

M: “Yeah, you have to create your own field. I think it is really up to you guys to make people realize how valuable behaviour change experts are.”

R: “Let’s circle back to your company: What were the first steps when you founded your company? How do you found a company?”

M: “It’s actually a lot easier than most people think: You go to the chamber of commerce and they ask you for the name of your company – and that’s it, five minutes later you have a company. Now of course that is only a company on paper, we really took our time thinking about all kinds of things: our vision, what we will call our company, what we will our products and what will it cost, etc.”

R: “And how do you approach new clients?”

M: “The important thing is that you should try and network with the people you want to work with. Especially when you have just graduated there are a lot of people – especially older people with steady jobs – who will tell you ‘Oh that’s interesting, I’d like a chat with you.’ But that’s it, they just like to chat and there is nothing else they want so you really need to try to separate the wheat from the chaff. Try to have meaningful conversations that lead to your goals.”

R: “Can you give us a tip on how to stand out as a behavioural change professional in the field?”

M: “Just be yourself. Find something / someone / a company that suits you and be yourself from day one. In the end it’s much easier to find something that suits you than to try and do something that you *think* you need to do because you need the money or whatever. Also, I think something that every graduate should try and learn: Just let it go. There are going to be stressful times. Behavioural science has lots of global problems to fix. If you keep thinking

about it, there is so much to do, it's stressful. You have to learn to switch off after work and just let it go."

R: "How much money did you ask of your clients in the beginning? I think people would want to know what is realistic and what isn't."

M: "I think as an employee you can just google what other people with a similar function make. The one tip I can give is: never undersell, especially in the beginning. You see a lot of people that think "oh we will go really cheap and then they'll hire me/my company, and we can go from there", but then the anchoring point is absolutely wrong, and people will abuse you for it. You're worth what you're worth, so ask at least that and never any less."

R: "What are other pitfalls that we should avoid when working in behaviour change?"

M: "Try to have a vision for yourself before you start working. I always hold onto my vision of wanting to create a better world and wanting to make impact with behaviour change. You should think about your purpose and stick to that."

R: "And if you found your own company, what is something to avoid? Is there anything you wish you would have known beforehand?"

M: "Make the difficult decisions in the beginning, not in the end. Make sure to have good written and signed contract with your business partners and agree on how to evaluate your relationship."

R: "Is there anything left you would like to say?"

M: "Obviously – congratulations! And remember that you are the experts now – the ones that know the most. The day you graduate you are the one with the most up-to-date knowledge in this field. Be sure to see yourselves this way. You might be "new", but you are not new to the field of behavioural change. Present yourself as the expert and make sure that everyone knows that you are, and then you'll be fine."

If you have any further questions, you can contact Mats via: Mats@changingways.nl or via his company's Linked-In Page: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/changing-ways-gedragverandering/>