

Basalte

Simplicity + quality = success

Klaas Arnout's business installing high-end home automation systems had a problem. Customers didn't understand the complex products on offer, so he decided to create a simple, elegant solution that people would want in their homes. We spoke to Klaas Arnout about Basalte's success in transforming home automation controls into objects of desire.

Klaas Arnout: My old business has transformed into Basalte, a fast-growing company of 12 staff and hiring more. Our vision is to offer a complete Basalte user experience but that will take time to achieve. To make sales now, our systems are compatible with the global standard in home automation, KNX, allowing integration into existing technology.



Klaas Arnout

Our philosophy is to create comfort. Basalte began as an experiment to develop an intuitive control for what can be a complicated environment - the high-end automated home. We started with a light switch and now build a range of products, including an almost invisible motion detector and a multi-room audio system.

Basalte is a manufacturing business. What issues does that raise?

We manufacture here in Belgium and we work to very high standards; we're an ISO9001 company. Because we make everything that we sell, and quality is so important to us, creating a scalable business model brings lots of pressures. Additional sales mean we need more capacity to manufacture, to inspect and to deliver.

To help ease these challenges, we chose a low volume, high value model. Our product is almost twice the price of our most expensive competitor. Breaking into the market meant participating in lots of design awards, which won us credibility. We're a profitable business, growing steadily without external private equity. Lots of investment goes into sales. We have created a loyal customer base in over 40 countries and we offer extensive support to distributors and integrators. Our focus is strong long-term relationships.

Does being a Fast50 Rising Star help Basalte?

We've won plenty of design awards but this is our first business award. It's helping create trust and credibility with partners and it confirms that ours is a company to be taken seriously.

What's the role of innovation at Basalte?

Innovation is at the heart of our culture. We keep asking ourselves: 'Can we do it better?' The satisfaction comes not from revenue or growth, but from creating something completely different. Everyone in our business has a part to play in generating new ideas. This creative environment is maintained by our staff having lots of autonomy while also being flexible in what they do. The team are multi-skilled multi-taskers, always looking to add value and keep the customer happy. It's not boring to work at Basalte!

Through everything, it's important to stay loyal to our vision. We listen to the market, because ultimately they decide whether our ideas will work. What spurs the Basalte team on each day is that we want to keep making fantastic new products and be able keep saying: 'Wow, this is unique!'