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## **An Interview with Yellow Couch, Filip Hrkal, Chief Vision Officer-CEE Region**

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Dr. Mendenall chose to interview Yellow Couch due to their business traits: innovation, a change-balance model, ethical leadership, and consistency in product. Yellow Couch is an online Human Resources business that provides clients with employee recruitment and development services in Central East Europe. Filip Hrkal and Vaclav Coubal started the company in 2006.

1. What was your most recent set of innovations to become the online self-sufficient company that you are now?

### **Product Innovation**

Add the best technology and the best assessments to increase awareness and explanation of human potential. This is for businesses and potential as well as current employees. “Everyone was asking how can you test on mobile phone. Stay with what you do.” The answer was “We see this trend coming.” Now, Yellow Couch is focused on virtual and augmented reality. 60% of the assessments now run in Eastern and Central Europe are on smartphone over the computer. Therefore, Mr. Hrkal sees that these tests will soon be done in alternate realities.

### **Business Innovations**

Yellow Couch became a “pure online company over a 3-year period.” State-of-the-art technology was essential with stable Internet connection. They had to avoid cloud collection to



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protect data so Yellow Couch as has their own secure servers. This also allows employees to access the necessary materials to work from a distance.

Yellow Couch developed the method for recruitment of employees because different characteristics were needed such as flexibility and ability to work independently.

2. How do you keep the team dynamic so everyone is traveling toward the same goal?

### **Keeping Talented Employees**

There is a clear set up of responsibilities. Leadership promotes meeting in-person once every 14 days for social time, when possible, so that online meetings can focus on projects, new ideas, and issues. Yellow Couch can be very flexible because of their size and being quick decision-makers. For example, an informal idea forming document was shared in the common online space to promote suggestions and discussion prior to the quarterly goal-setting meeting. This provides brainstorming time that gives autonomy to employees to share their thoughts. With this think time, the meeting can begin part way through the discussion, be focused, and within a shorter time limit because the discussion had already been started.

### **Flex Schedules**

Yellow Couch uses flex scheduling with part-time employees of specialized talents. The employee is paid to be available instead of at an hourly or daily rate. This allows colleagues to work on their own business endeavors, but also work for Yellow Couch when needed. Flex scheduling also works for those on [parental leave](#). Full-time employees have standard scheduling



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for certain functions and meetings, but also have some flexibility to complete other responsibilities.

3. What are some obstacles that are no longer in the way now that you are an on-line company?

The obstacle was the office. The time that it took to commute to the office for each employee is now spent on personal life. This allows for a focus on personal health and wellbeing. The need for an office was a psychological obstacle. It was made easier to adjust to online only with COVID though we had started the process before. Customers want online assessment instead of assessment being done in an office because more work is being done online.

Mr. Hrkal's closing thoughts:

**Balance in Function**

In the past 3-4 years, Yellow Couch has streamlined what was offered to clients based on time and investment analysis. They narrowed their portfolio to reduce the energy spent on items that were not viable from an economic point of view. This allows for focused energy in other areas. The company also has zero debts to allow for financial freedom to choose projects, clients, and without the added pressure of financial need. The clients seem satisfied because the employees are not in a rush. There is a balance. This also allows a focus on "health and well-being for us, our employees, and our clients and their employees to promote good work-life balance and mental status" Mr. Hrkal stresses that this is an essential focus of business leaders for the next few years.