

BUURTZORGT

CASE STUDY

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– Nico Moleman



Source: BuurtzorgT

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PRIORITIZING PATIENT CARE OVER PROFITS

BuurtzorgT is a fast-growing provider of mental healthcare services in the Netherlands. The company focuses on patients with complex psychiatric and social issues. The services are delivered by local teams of health care professionals that are embedded in their neighborhood who put the patient central and seek to provide efficient, qualitative care. In 2020, BuurtzorgT transitioned to steward-ownership to reflect its transformative approach to health care and psychiatric care in particular.

KEY FACTS

Location: Almere, Netherlands

Founded: 2014

Turnover: 40 Mio. € (2024)

Employees: > 450

In steward-ownership since: 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Founded by Nico Moleman and Jos de Blok in 2014, BuurtzorgT started with the idea to find new ways of

helping people battling mental illnesses. Their approach, following the success of the revolutionary Dutch care provider Buurtzorg, was to set up a fully self-steering organization in which small self-managed teams provide care and therapy to patients in their homes.

Growing 40% per year across the first ten years, BuurtzorgT's innovative model has turned into a true success story, with over 72 teams spread all over the Netherlands.

However, as the organization soared, a new challenge emerged: how to secure the necessary external growth capital without losing the very essence of what makes BuurtzorgT so unique. The founders wanted to find a way to mirror the values and the self-steering nature of the organization in the ownership and financing structure – and found a solution in steward-ownership.

Collaborating with Purpose Evergreen Capital, BuurtzorgT secured patient and aligned capital without compromising its mission. The transition involved creating an ownership structure with steward shares, economic shares, and a Golden Share to protect the principles of steward-ownership. The investment process was built on trust and mutual respect, resulting in a model that preserves the soul of BuurtzorgT while ensuring its independence and long-term stability.

The story of BuurtzorgT demonstrates the potential of steward-ownership in healthcare, providing a fitting model to prioritize patient care over profit.

REVOLUTIONIZING THE MENTAL HEALTH SECTOR

The evening of May 20th 2020 came with an unexpectedly mild summer breeze in an otherwise fully locked down Europe. It was also the most significant moment for the young pioneer in mental health care, BuurtzorgT. The company's founders, Nico Moleman and Jos de Blok, had decided to transform their company's ownership model – and on this day, this decision would be finalized.

Negotiations and contracting usually happening in stuffy conference rooms were now taking place in an online meeting stretching late into the night. And when the notary finalized the papers just before the clock struck twelve, the decision was irreversible: BuurtzorgT had now transitioned to steward-ownership, adopting an ownership structure that mirrors the organization's set-up based on self-steering teams and mutual trust.

Rewind eight years when it all started with just an idea. Nico Moleman had observed the rise of Dutch healthcare pioneer Buurtzorg, revolutionizing the home care system in the Netherlands by enabling patients to receive holistic care in their own homes. Employing over 15.000 nurses and health professionals that work independently and self-managed in small teams, Buurtzorg rose to worldwide fame. With a background in psychiatric care, Nico wondered if a similar concept could work for the mental health care sector, specifically for filling a gap in mental health care.

"The idea was to bring psychiatric care into the homes of people" Nico recalls. "Normally, in the mental health sector, there are two options. You can either treat people in outpatient care, meaning they come to a building, have treatments there and go home afterwards. The second option is that you admit people to a hospital. Option one is used for mild problems and option two for severe ones. But there is no option in between. Getting admitted is always a very heavy burden for people that must undergo it. So I thought that if we treat people at home we might be able to prevent admissions."



Jos de Blok and Nico Moleman, co-founders

Nico reached out to Jos de Blok, the founder of Buurtzorg, who caught onto the idea after a few initial meetings. It clicked both personally and professionally. What united the two founders was a shared positive view on humanity, with both of them trusting in the good intentions of humans. And so they decided to undertake the experiment: combining the principles of a decentralized, self-managed organization with a systemic, therapeutic approach to mental healthcare. For the co-founders, it was key that the organization would be run by self-steering, local teams that can freely decide what is best for the patient.

In the early founding days, a lot of pioneering work was carried out without a clear direction being set. "We did not make a plan," Nico recalls, "we simply started." The co-founders set off to build an organization based on their values: simplicity rules over complexity, trust replaces control. This, they believed, would also open the space for comradeship and connection between employees instead of the alienation and isolation which they had often observed in large organizations. And thus, the inspiring journey began.

SELF-STEERING IN PRACTICE

Today, the pioneering ideas of the founders are successfully put into practice. At the heart of the organization are its regional teams – tight-knit groups

of 7-8 professionals, a blend of psychiatrists, social-psychiatric nurses, therapists, and other mental health experts, each contributing their respective expertise. Rooted in their local neighborhoods, the teams are enabled to provide rapid, direct care right in patients' homes. Patients are not shuffled between different staff members like numbers on a chart. They are instead treated by several practitioners from one team. This avoids 1-to-1 dependency relationships and enables learning among the practitioners.

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I do not want to keep a professional distance, but create professional proximity.

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What sets BuurtzorgT apart from conventional health care organizations is that all teams choose their own treatment plan together with the patients. They identify which therapy and form will help the patient – be it a talk while walking out in nature or the use of a musical instrument during the session. The organizational set-up gives the caretakers full freedom. "If you think of something, you can immediately carry it out yourself," one caretaker reports. In addition, the patient's entire support system is integrated into the therapy. The involvement of friends and family in the immediate environment of the patient who can contribute to recovery is essential for a lasting effect of the treatment.

One risk of a recovery-oriented, more-than-disease-centered view of care can be that it may lack clear direction. To counter, Nico and Jos crystallized the essence of what they deemed essential, together with their employees, and channeled them into the "Kaderboekje", a treatment framework giving clear guidelines on how the teams are interacting with the patients. One important framework, for example, is that the teams never talk about but always with the patient.

Everyone at BuurtzorgT is aware that with more freedom comes more responsibility. In a non-hierarchical organization, it is impossible to shift responsibility onto others, so solutions have to be found within the teams. Teams are responsible for every aspect of their work, from vacation planning to crisis interventions. This also means that each team member has to take over tasks that are not necessarily in their expertise, such as planning consultations with cooperation partners or writing a job description for a new team member. The distribution of roles within the team prevents individuals from being assigned tasks entirely unsuited to their skills. Additionally, all teams are responsible for their own financial performance. A regional expert coach can be called in for help, to support teams with challenges they cannot overcome alone. This set-up also means that the organization has very low overhead costs. The central team is very light and low-cost, consisting only of 10 people offering services to the teams such as invoicing, HR, Quality, Team Coaching, IT and Finance.

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You will never experience a reorganization in BuurtzorgT, because they are thought of by managers. And we do not have managers. Our organization is self-led, the teams are taking their own decisions and following their own way. Change happens from within.

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– Nico Moleman, co-founder and steward

The organizational setup of BuurtzorgT as well as its approach to mental healthcare has proven highly effective in several ways. The company does not have to maintain expensive treatment facilities often used in

mental health care. Surveys show that the care provided scores very high on quality indicators. Moreover, patients benefit from faster treatment and significantly reduced waiting times compared to conventional mental health care services as the self-managed teams can react more flexibly. And the organizational model is highly scalable. BuurtzorgT is a real magnet for new employees, with waitlists for interested new employees. And this shows: Employee satisfaction scores are setting a record for healthcare organizations in the Netherlands¹.

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We can treat patients much faster. In other organizations, the waiting times are one year on average. Starting treatment after such a long time means you are 0:3 behind.

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BUURTZORGT THUIS IN DE PSYCHIATRIE



Source: <https://buurtzorgt.nl/buurtzorgt-boek/>

JOURNEY TO STEWARD-OWNERSHIP

In 2019, five years after its foundation, the organization had grown to 180 employees in 34 teams. The concept was very well established and successful, the organizational set-up stable and scalable. BuurtzorgT had become a blueprint for a more humane, effective future in mental health treatment.

However, the two founders had two major challenges they needed to overcome: Companies in the mental healthcare sector in the Netherlands were only allowed to invoice the work done for a patient either at the end of the calendar year or when the treatment was completed. This regulatory requirement meant that BuurtzorgT had to pre-finance all the work delivered.

In addition, both Jos and Nico were getting closer to retirement age and started to look into succession planning and management-buy-out options for their company that would not require them to sell the entire business and endanger its special setup and values.

In 2019, the company urgently needed an external capital injection to finance the growth spur. Nico and Jos were faced with a dilemma. "Taking on capital from investors would have been the easy solution, they were all casting their nets at us," Nico recalls. "But we did not want to sell our soul". Both founders had seen over and over again how, especially in the healthcare sector, organizations started to change after investors had been taken on.

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In conventional investments, the whole relationship is based on control, with excel sheets and targets clouding the vision of the entrepreneurs and the organization's turning more and more into formalized, soulless entities, losing their strength and soul.

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– Nico Moleman

^[1] BuurtzorgT – Thuis in de psychiatrie, Authors: Nico Moleman, Jos de Blok & Joost Bijlsma

Through a mutual acquaintance, the co-founders got in touch with the Purpose Foundation and Purpose Evergreen Capital and learned about steward-ownership. It clicked right away, working perfectly with their vision for the company and its self-managed setup. So Nico Moleman and Jos de Blok decided to transition their company into steward-ownership and take on investment structured accordingly.

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– Nico Moleman



Source: BuurtzorgT

As ownership model, steward-ownership upholds two core principles:



(1) Self-governance – the company's steering wheel, or the voting rights, rests with people who are directly connected to the company. This means that voting rights cannot be sold speculatively or inherited automatically; instead, they are passed on to trustees who are responsible for upholding the company purpose.



(2) Purpose orientation – the value of the company and its profits cannot be personalized by the shareholders, but rather serve the long-term development of the company. Profits are therefore not an end in themselves, but a means to an end and are invested in the company and its purpose or used for charitable purposes.

[Purpose Evergreen Capital](#) is an investment vehicle that provides patient, value-aligned capital to small and medium-sized enterprises in steward-ownership or transitioning to steward-ownership. With their vision to enable businesses to remain independent and true to their values, they presented the perfect investment partner for BuurtzorgT.

In the fall of 2019, the teams met face-to-face, laying the foundation for a collaboration and deciding to start the official due diligence process. But finding the right ownership structure and taking on aligned capital usually takes longer in steward-ownership than it does in conventional investment processes. It is often an emotional process that involves questioning one's motivation and having difficult but necessary conversations within the founding team. Additionally, as the investment relationship is founded on trust and mutual understanding, it was crucial to allow for an extended getting-to-know phase between the

founders and the investment team. This phase consisted of several in person meetings, video calls with different stakeholders and site visits.

With the onset of the COVID-19 lockdown, the entire negotiation process shifted online. Despite the challenges, the experience became a deeply human-centered and constructive journey. Rather than being bogged down by control, the process was built on mutual trust and fairness. The resulting agreements were not just paperwork; they were crafted with the principles of conscious contracting, embodying a shared commitment to collaboration and mutual respect.

This successful and trust-based collaboration process has both parties looking back at the investment process with joy.

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It was really a special process because of the high level of trust and mutual understanding we fostered in the beginning. We decided to not work with two lawyers, one from each side, to avoid interests being played off against each other. Instead, we decided to work with Maurits Bos, a lawyer we both trusted. He understood his task to make the interests of both sides transparent, thus creating an understanding of each other's position. While there were specific points that required real negotiation, the overall process was co-creative, allowing the parties to jointly find the 'golden middle' that reflects a fair and beneficial outcome for everyone.

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– Daniel von Moltke, steward-owner
Purpose Evergreen Capital

Conscious Contracting

Traditional contracts are often lengthy and contain language and clauses which are best understood by traditional lawyers. These contracts often focus on what can go wrong and how to prevent wrongdoing by the partners by including penalty clauses. Conscious contracts are vision based, mindful and relationship-focused contracts, transforming the way in which contracts come into being, how contracts are adhered to by the contract partners and how differences or changed circumstances are addressed by the partners. For instance, BuurtzorgT and PEC describe in the drawn up statutes that if differences prevailed, "they each commit to dedicate their efforts towards bringing themselves back into agreement as quickly as possible by talking together honestly, openly, in good faith, and with a commitment to finding a way forward."

Building a steward-owned governance allowed BuurtzorgT to attract the much needed external capital injection while ensuring independence and thus 'maintaining the soul' of the organization.

SETTING UP AN ALIGNED STEWARD-OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE

Maintaining the Entrepreneurial Spirit: The Golden Share Model

The BuurtzorgT team wanted to find an ownership structure that instilled the principles of steward-ownership and was fitting for the culture and situation of the company. While one option was to create a foundation and transition the company to foundation ownership, the founders decided against that as they wanted to avoid complexity. They were concerned that a complex foundational structure with separate boards might dampen the entrepreneurial spirit.

The founders therefore opted to use a Golden Share model, changing the statutes of their B.V. to reflect steward-ownership, with the Swiss Purpose Foundation as a veto-shareholder.

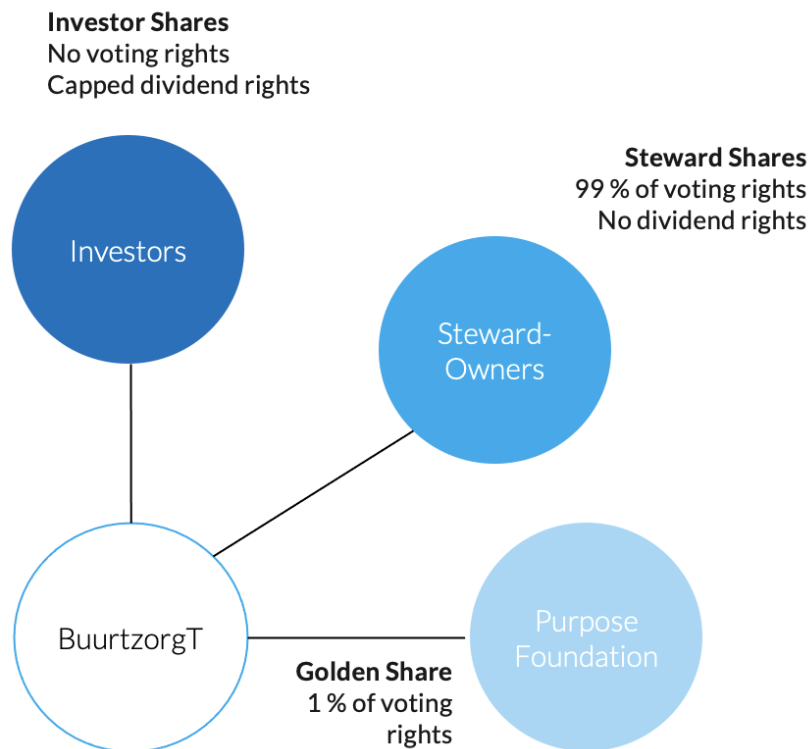
The Golden Share model builds on the structure of foundation-ownership by setting up different classes of shares to separate economic rights and voting rights in the articles of association of a corporation. The principles of steward-ownership (purpose-orientation and self-determination) are written into the statutes of the company and can only be changed with 100% of the voting rights. A guardian entity holding a minimal percentage of the voting rights as a Golden Share safeguards the principles of steward-ownership in the long run.

To reflect the different types and roles of shareholders in the organization while maintaining a lean set-up, three share classes were structured:

- **Steward Shares:** These shares come with the vast majority of voting rights. They are owned by the stewards and give them official control over the company. The stewards set the course of BuurtzorgT and monitor the self-management structure. They can appoint and dismiss the statutory directors, approve the budget and

financial statements, determine where profits go, and most importantly, they guard the soul of BuurtzorgT. There is no dividend right attached to these shares. In the case of BuurtzorgT, shareholders of the steward shares are bound to act within the Steward Principles that are written in a separate framework guidebook. The Dutch word the organization chose for this share class – zeggenschapsaandelen – is more literally translated to shares-that-have-something-to-say.

- **Investor Shares:** The investor shares do not include any voting rights but certain economic profit rights. They are set up as preferred redeemable shares and are issued to investors providing growth capital with preferred dividend rights and the intention to be fully repaid over time.
- **One Golden Share,** with 1% of the voting rights held by the Purpose foundation, securing the principles of steward-ownership as they are codified in the company’s article of association.



Source: Own Illustration

Founder Compensation

In conventional startups, founders are typically reimbursed for the risk they are taking and to compensate low compensation in the early starting days, this through dividends or proceeds from share sales during subsequent financing rounds or an exit. For companies transitioning to steward-ownership, the founders have to go another way. Finding a fitting compensation for founders is often achieved through reflective processes and always dependent on the contributions that the founders made to the company. The transferring generation (the current owners) will not have opportunities to profit from the company in the future, either through its value or ongoing profit distributions.

The transaction at BuurtzorgT was structured by having the founders reinvest their initial compensation amount as a subordinated loan. This approach reflected the founders continuing commitment during the transition process and further bolstered the company's equity. The subordinated loans can only be paid back under strict conditions safeguarding the financial health of the company.

Mirroring Self-Steering in the Governance

As the transition process progressed, the co-founders were facing the question on how to design a system for selecting new stewards. Given that BuurtzorgT operates as a fully self-steering organization, the stewards hold a unique position. Rather than acting as traditional managers involved in the knitty-gritty details of operations, they serve as guardians of the organization's core values. They therefore play a key role in shaping its leadership and direction.

Retirement was in the foreseeable future for both founders, and they wanted to mirror the organizational self-management ethos. Finding the optimal solution presented itself to be too time-intensive during the negotiation process and the initial ownership transformation. However, the founders were determined to make this issue a top priority in the coming months.

To ensure a clear path forward, they specified in the company articles that a succession process aligned with the Steward Principles was to be agreed within a certain time period after the transition to guide the future selection of stewards.

In 2023, three years after the initial notary meeting, a new selection process for stewards was established. To ensure a smooth succession and transmit their knowledge and mindset to the next generation of stewards, Nico and Jos were committed to remaining in their roles until a new board of stewards was established. To facilitate this transition, they co-authored a book² that encapsulates the organization's core values and guiding principle, providing a lasting resource for future stewards.

The vision is to have a total of seven stewards while the founders are still involved. Once the founders step down, the number of stewards will be adjusted to between five and six for the long term.

For appointing new stewards, the following process was stipulated:

- Stewards must come from within the organization and be active members.
- 76% of the organization's employees are women, the stewards must mirror this gender representation.
- Local teams are spread throughout the country, so stewards should be chosen from different teams / regions.
- The distribution of professions (remember, caretakers work hand in hand with social workers and psychiatrists) that can be found in each BuurtzorgT team should also be visible in the steward board.

Each prospective steward undergoes a six-month probationary period. This allows all stewards to decide if the newcomer fits in and if they can work well together and to experience the dynamic within the board. "In other health care organizations, there is little trust in the leadership because they often leave the

^[2] BuurtzorgT – Thuis in de psychiatrie, Authors: Nico Moleman, Jos de Blok & Joost Bijlsma



Source: BuurtzorgT

organization after a few years," current steward Bas van Riet Paap points out. "In contrast, stewards at BuurtzorgT are elected for three years and can be re-elected for another three years."

Being a steward is not a full-time job at BuurtzorgT. To make sure that stewards are able to allocate sufficient time, they continue to receive their regular salary while serving BuurtzorgT as stewards for a certain number of hours – currently around 6-8 hours per week, allowing them to continue to fulfill their normal role within their team as well.

There are two ways that stewards can be appointed, provided they fit the criteria:

- **Direct Appointment:** At the time of the transition, Nico and Jos established that they could each appoint one steward that would take over their steward share. Nico chose his colleague Marjan van Herrewaarden, a psychiatrist by background who had been with BuurtzorgT from the beginning, while Jos selected Bas van Riet Paap, CFO at the time and subsequently now CEO and steward-owner³.
- **Organizational Vote:** The stewards wanted to find a selection method that would align with the self-steering nature of the organization. And they did. In the fall of 2023, the steward election process was put in place with a clear goal: to find qualified and motivated team members who have the steward-ownership mind-set and abilities. Any employee could put their name forward or nominate a colleague, after which all employees were asked to

vote. This steward election would take place again after six months until a total of three to four elected stewards were chosen.

This process is not set in stone but can evolve in line with the experience gained. The current steward set-up is spending a lot of effort on finding out how to work best as a sounding board for the organization.

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It is very valuable to have a say and be able to give the organization a form.

The moment when we were at the notary and I made a symbolic payment of 1 cent to receive my steward share in return was really special. It really marked the highlight of my time with BuurtzorgT so far.

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– Marjan van Herrewaarden,
steward-owner of BuurtzorgT

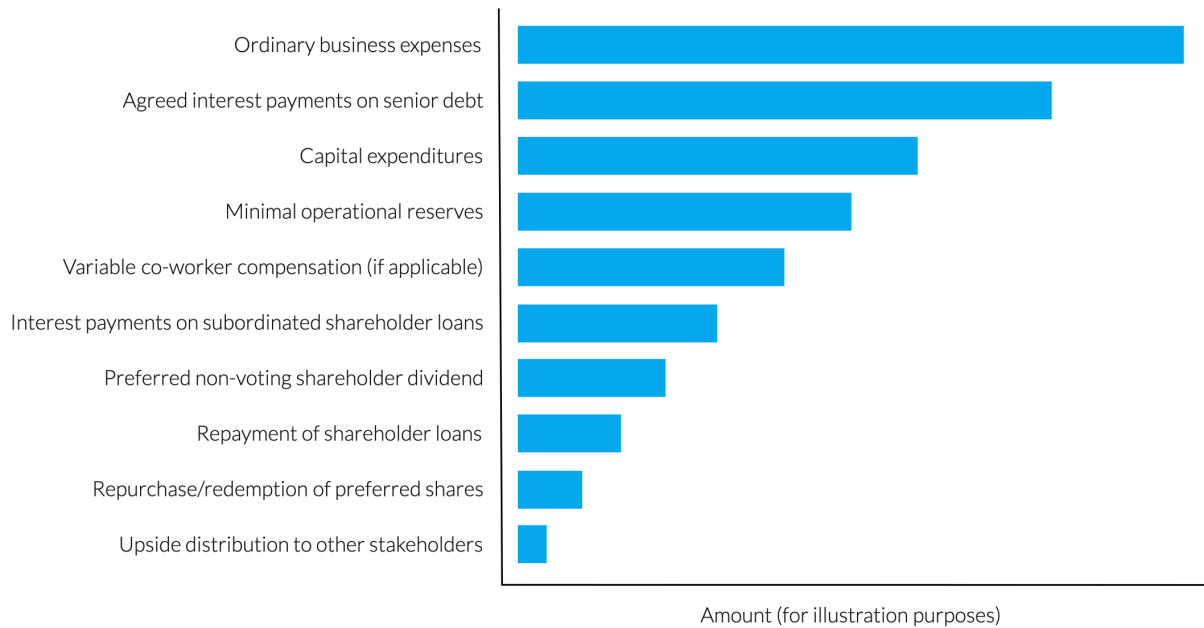
Financing Structure: Redeeming the Ownership Shares

As part of their new steward-ownership structure, BuurtzorgT included investors as shareholders of investor shares of the company. Because the investor shares are redeemable, BuurtzorgT retains the option to repurchase them. Unlike traditional private equity, where the buyback price can skyrocket based on external valuations, these shares have a predefined yearly dividend and a capped redemption price, equal to their initial nominal value.

The redemption timeline is not set in stone but rather depends on the company's actual cash flow situation. To navigate the payback process, a waterfall scheme was collaboratively designed. Such a scheme is commonly used to prioritize payments while ensuring that essential obligations like operating expenses and debt repayments are met before distributing excess cash to other stakeholders.

^[3] The decision that Bas would be both steward-owner and CEO at the same time was taken on purpose to make sure that managerial decisions were always taken with the organization's vision in mind. It is foreseen that this is maintained in the future, with the steward board choosing a CEO from their circle.

Waterfall Chart: Financial Prioritization Flow



The waterfall illustrates how priorities are weighed based on the company's evolving needs.

The Role of Investors

Investors often play a crucial role as partners for entrepreneurs, going far beyond mere financial support. In addition to providing capital, they offer valuable expertise and access to relevant networks, which are instrumental in helping entrepreneurs grow and scale their businesses. Given the non-voting nature of the shares that [Purpose Evergreen Capital](#) is holding in BuurtzorgT, the influence through voting power that investors are able to exert over the company in conventional investments does not apply. The partners needed to actively shape their relationship and the rights for investors in a role-based process rather than relying on conventional formats.

In practice, Purpose Evergreen Capital received comprehensive information rights, which include detailed reporting, updates on multi-year financial forecasts, and key metrics related to ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) and impact.

The only situation in which PEC must provide its validation is when BuurtzorgT would consider bringing in new investors who could potentially dilute the financial position of PEC, or change its position in the foreseen redemption process. This arrangement ensures that the PEC team remains well-informed and can safeguard its interests while respecting BuurtzorgT's operational autonomy.

"I find the collaboration more inspirational than controlling", Nico states. Exchange between the PEC team and BuurtzorgT occurs on a half-year basis or if a certain question arises. For instance in the design of the steward succession process, the PEC team was consulted for their feedback and insights. "Through the extended steward-ownership transformation and investment process, we really got to know the team and their respective qualities," PEC steward Daniel recounts. "So we were able to develop a trust that now helps us nurture our working relationship."

COMMUNICATING STEWARD-OWNERSHIP TO EMPLOYEES

One major challenge many steward-owned organizations face is effectively communicating the concept of steward-ownership to employees and explaining its implications. BuurtzorgT was very cautious about this in the months after the transition to make sure they got it right.

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It takes time for employees to fully understand what steward-ownership entails. Making it tangible is challenging, especially since most employees are accustomed to traditional hierarchical structures in organizations. This is particularly true in (mental) healthcare. It is difficult to envision just how different things are at BuurtzorgT.

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– Nico Moleman, steward and founder

To make the benefits of this ownership model more tangible, concrete projects and examples are essential. The publication of the aforementioned book and establishing the framework guideline (Kaderboekje) together with employees helped convey the core principles. Another key moment for co-worker engagement was the steward election process. In addition, the current stewards are also planning to extend the training on steward-ownership that takes place during the onboarding days when new employees gather in person.

The awareness and understanding of steward-ownership within the organization develops only over time. "Now, four years after the transition, people are beginning to grasp what it means and that we have a very special ownership structure." says Nico "It simply

takes time for them to fully understand their new reality. We accept that this is a process that takes longer; people have to get used to the freedom".

In the first ten years, BuurtzorgT experienced very high growth, with a year-over-year increase of 40%. Recently, this growth rate has slowed to around 10-15% as the organization has become significantly larger. However, the deceleration is intentional, as the rapid expansion initially placed a strain on the organization. A core focus is now on maintaining the company's unique culture across all levels, not just within individual teams, ensuring that the core values with steward-ownership as a foundation are preserved as the organization continues to evolve.

During the negotiations that took place online because of the COVID-19 lockdown, a small model lighthouse was always visible on Nico's desk. This lighthouse became a symbol for the collaboration and was eventually printed on the front page of the official transition documents. BuurtzorgT has, in many ways, become such a guiding light for steward-ownership in the Netherlands, particularly in the healthcare sector. The company's story is illuminating the path and setting an example for others to follow in creating purpose-driven and value-aligned organizations.



The PEC and BuurtzorgT teams, hiking to a lighthouse together in the spring of 2024.

STEWARD-OWNERSHIP IN THE HEALTH SYSTEM

In a field plagued by bureaucracy and burnout, BuurtzorgT stands out. The vision the organization was built on challenges the status quo in healthcare – and so does its ownership model. So, what lessons can the broader field of healthcare learn from BuurtzorgT's example about the potential benefits of rethinking ownership?

Ownership structures in which shareholders can both extract profits and realize large pay-outs can create misaligned incentives in healthcare⁴. Medical decisions may be influenced by the financial interests of shareholders, leading to a situation where patients might not receive the best possible treatment, but rather the most profitable one, thus driving up profits. This strategy, employed by some of the best-known healthcare providers around the world, aims to maximize shareholder value not only through ongoing operations but also through sale of the company⁵. To achieve a higher exit price, profits must increase, often at the expense of patient care. This can result in cost-cutting measures that compromise the quality of treatment – something that is repeatedly seen in centrally owned medical care centers or sales of hospital chains.

Recent studies underscore these concerns. For instance, a December 2023 study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that hospital-acquired conditions, meaning new health issues patients encounter during their hospital stay, increased by over 25% after hospitals were acquired by private equity investors⁶. Similarly, a 2022 study by the IGES Institute revealed that investor-owned medical practices billed 10.4% more on average than individual doctor-owned practices⁷. These findings suggest that ownership structures significantly impact healthcare costs and outcomes, with a potential shift in focus from patient well-being to financial gain. This is detrimental to patients, healthcare employees and society.



Source: BuurtzorgT

"Many organizations today face internal tensions, translating into dissatisfied people," Jos de Blok observes, "but especially in mental health care, forming connections and fostering relationships with patients and colleagues is essential. It requires deep mutual trust, open communication, and viewing patients holistically – as individuals embedded in their communities, not merely as diagnoses. It's the front-line professionals, not distant managers, who truly understand patient needs." Establishing an organizational deep design that furthers trust and allows for a patient-oriented approach is therefore especially vital in mental health care.

Fundamentally challenging the deep design of organizations, steward-ownership is capable to provide the framework for that. It can provide a fitting foundation for individuals and organizations that are looking to return to a system where patient-centered actions and excellent medical care are prioritized over short-term profits.

And that is the case with BuurtzorgT. The entire value of the organization as well as any profits serve the purpose of the organization (capital lock). If profits are made, they are reinvested, used to cover capital costs or donated to charitable causes. The vast majority of voting rights, and thus control over the company, are

^[4] Hoffmann, 2023, Mehr Marktwirtschaft für das Gesundheitswesen <https://background.tagesspiegel.de/gesundheit/mehr-marktwirtschaft-fuer-das-gesundheitswesen>

^[5] Gerguri, 2023, Das MVZ mit gebundenem Vermögen, <https://background.tagesspiegel.de/gesundheit/das-mvz-mit-gebundene...>

^[6] https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2813379?utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=content-share&utm_content=article_engagement&utm_medium=social&utm_term=122723

^[7] https://www.iges.com/kunden/gesundheit/forschungsergebnisse/2022/mvz-in-bayern/index_ger.html

connected to the organization, such as psychiatrists, social workers or other medical personnel. Their close connection to the company and its mission, combined with the capital lock, means they make decisions with a strong focus on the purpose of the organization and the well-being of all involved stakeholders, including patients and co-workers.

As studies show, steward-ownership can lead to higher employee satisfaction and engagement⁸, reducing turnover rates and creating a more stable and motivated workforce⁹. And as the example of BuurtzorgT demonstrates, it can serve as a magnet to

attract new employees. While BuurtzorgT also needs to be financially healthy, high-quality patient care and the wellbeing of employees are not a means to the end of maximizing shareholder values but are the actual goal of the company. And steward-ownership is the perfect fitting ownership structure for this.

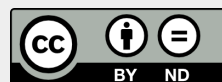
Steward-ownership represents a model that has the ability to alleviate some of the structural diseases which the healthcare sector has caught over the past decades. And it can help health care professionals to refocus on what they actually want: to help patients get better.

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© 2024 Purpose Stiftung gemeinnützige GmbH
Adrian Hensen (acting as Managing Director)
Süderstraße 73, 20097 Hamburg
Phone: +49 (0)40 65587898
e-mail: hallo@purpose.ag

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The content of this case study does not constitute or replace legal advice. The information herein is intended only to inform and inspire further practical legal research on steward-ownership. The legal considerations referred to throughout this case study may not be relevant for all existing or prospective steward-owned entities. They also do not exhaust the range of considerations legal practitioners must address when advising on steward-ownership. Anyone seeking to implement principles of steward-ownership into their business's legal corporate structure should seek legal advice and consult a lawyer in their relevant jurisdiction.

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^[8] Børsting, C. and Thomsen, S. (2017): "Foundation Ownership, Reputation and Labour", in Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 33 (2), 2017, p. 317-338

^[9] Gerguri, Kuhn, J. and Thomsen, S. (2014): "The Demography of Danish Foundation-owned Companies." (working paper), in The Research Project on Industrial Foundations. Available at <http://www.tifp.dk/>