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## Episode #4 - How one green company could beat the odds with a magical pencil and double each year - with Michael Stausholm of Sproutworld, Denmark

### KEY TAKEAWAY\*

- Green tech bubble (for solar) peaked in 2012 → 40 solar companies went bankrupt; reasons often cited: not right timing for launch, no right team, engineering aspect not right, or distribution → however Sprout World got it right
- Their main product: plantable pencil (patented) → sends a message about sustainability
- Their mission = giving products a new life
- Beginnings:
  - Idea generated by three students from MIT → kickstarter campaign
  - Founded Sprout Europe in 2013 → sell and distribute in Europe
  - In late 2014 Michael bought IP from the students
  - Within first 2 months sold 70,000 pencils
  - Finance: positive cash-flow due to customers paying upfront (no bank loans!) → possible because it's a unique, feel good story
- Today: literally no competitors on the market; b2b model
- Their real product: selling stories, inspiring ones, promoting companies' green agenda
- Customization (writing the buyer's message, logo on it) done by Sprout World
- 1.5 yrs after starting the company = angel investor brought in for faster growth
- Performance: doubled turn-over every year for 3 years in a row
- Hiring criteria: chemistry needed, passionate about sustainability
- Sales & Marketing: growing due to inbound inquiries (due to press coverage)

\* excludes the "ultrafast round"