

GREENROPE: THE POWER OF ONE

DYNAMIC CRM & MARKETING MADE POSSIBLE

Lars Helgeson is the CEO and founder of GreenRope, the world's first and only Business Operating System. GreenRope simplifies and consolidates a company's sales, marketing, and operations. Founded in 2011, GreenRope provides technology solutions to more than 3,000 companies worldwide.

Lars started GreenRope to solve the biggest challenge entrepreneurs face: controlling information. "Most people start a business and it's really hard to be both good at what you want to do...and manage the things it takes to run your business. That includes marketing, sales, customer service and all the different projects that you work on to grow your business," he explained.

You start a business. You find a website designer, or do it yourself. Now your website is up, but you have to figure out how to make sure it's up-to-date and that it's on a platform that allows you to update your content. You also want to see who's visiting the site and have a form so you can capture your visitors' information. Then you need to determine how to use that information. You need a system that lets you send out e-mail newsletters. And wouldn't it be great to have an automated way to follow up with people?

"Business owners get overwhelmed because they think they have to buy six, eight, ten different pieces of software to do what they need to do to keep their business running," says Lars.

"When you look at the breadth of what GreenRope does," he adds, "it's about understanding the lead from the very beginning - when they notice you: whether you're doing pay per click ads, print, trying to track people coming to your website, all the way until you

have a phone conversation with them, fill out a form, maybe they open a support case, a trouble ticket, maybe they request more information, or they want your video - all of that can be managed in a single place. It's all about simplifying the way a business runs," he told me.

"We like to start new clients off with CRM, because customer relationship management really is the heart of your business. Then, we usually talk to them about email marketing. Most companies send a newsletter out once a month or so. GreenRope replaces your mass email service and more," says Lars.

You can manage your existing website within GreenRope. They can put their tracking code on any existing website. Or you can manage your website with their content management system, or they can rebuild your website, improve it, or make any other changes you want.

The cost is based on the number of contacts - not per user. If you hire someone to do your marketing or build your emails or if you hire multiple sales people, your fees won't go up. They don't charge for sending email, or for up to 50,000 page views per month. The cost increases incrementally when you add contacts.

The typical CRM company charges about \$100 US per month per user. "Where I think you can get really burned as you start to grow is when you hire three sales people and maybe a marketing person. Now, what used to cost you \$100-150 US a month is a thousand a month just for the CRM and nothing else," adds Lars.

LESSONS LEARNED

Lars is a veteran of two very successful start-ups. I asked him what lessons he'd like to share with us:

- I love this quote from Abraham Lincoln who said, "If you give me six hours to chop down a tree, I will spend the first four sharpening my axe." It really sheds light on how important it is to prepare for the way you're going to run your business.

"People tell entrepreneurs to take time to work on your business not just in your business. You have to understand your process. How you create what you do and describe it in the sense of a system, like a flow chart. How do you say where, and who's doing what and when?"

"You want to understand how you segment your market. Do you care about separating people based on maybe what they buy or what they're interested in or where they are? What do you really care about?" If you can take the time to measure your process-flow, measure your data requirements - really define them, it's so much easier to implement software. Take some time no matter where you are in the process and think about what information you are storing? What processes are running in your business?"
- "Next, try to avoid taking on external funding. Sometimes that's easier said than done. When I started my very first business, I worked maybe 100 hours a week for three years. And for those three years I had the luxury of being single, I'm still single - there's probably a connection. I could take the time to dedicate myself to working on my business while still having another job programming software for a couple of other companies. I could make enough money to eat: macaroni & cheese and pop rocks, and invest the rest of my time to building this business and designing the software for what I wanted to do. Avoiding that external funding meant that I had control over the direction that I wanted to take my business. But that's not always do-able. Running a business or starting a business is a sacrifice," Lars asserts.



- "I also learned something about partnerships. I had a partner who was not as dedicated to the business as I was. I had to build the technology, I had to manage the people, and I didn't have a lot of support. I ended up splitting from him and starting GreenRope in 2011. Recently, I was able to buy out his interest in the company we started together. I took over those clients and brought them into the GreenRope fold. It created a lot of efficiency, and our clients are much happier."

WHAT MOTIVATES LARS?

"My personal hero is Elon Musk. He is the archetypal entrepreneur. He accepts risk. He accepts the concept of fear. He accepts that the entrepreneur doesn't always have all the answers. But he is a courageous man. He takes on industries where people said there is no way you'll be able to make this work. He makes it work. I like to read articles and watch videos of his interviews. He speaks about entrepreneurship and overcoming the kinds of challenges that I think we all face. And of course, TEDtalks, I love to watch TEDtalks."



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is a speaker, writer and CEO and lead trainer at Odyssey Mentoring & Leadership with 30+ years of experience in mentoring. You learn more at www.OdysseyMentoring.com or follow her on Twitter @OdysseyMentor