



# THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF BEDDELEEM

Over the course of 75 years, Beddeleem has gradually grown from a one-person company to a team of about 200 employees and a flexible workforce of 350 people, steadily refining its products and services to match market demands. Acknowledging the organisation's forward-thinking and pioneering approach, Beddeleem was recognised as a Best Managed Company for the third year in a row. For the latest edition of Beddeleem's Inspiration Guide, CEOs Koen De Block and Jochen Daneels share their thoughts about the current market and upcoming trends, as well as the past, present, and future of the company.

## FROM A MODEST PLASTERING COMPANY TO A HOUSEHOLD NAME IN WORKSPACE INTERIORS

"Beddeleem originally started out in 1950 as a plastering company, specialised in waterproof cellars and ornamental moulding," Koen explains. "But the company only experienced true growth once it started installing suspended ceiling systems, adopted from the USA. Plasterboard walls followed soon after, which then evolved into the increasingly popular partition walls."

"In 1989, we asked ourselves the following question: shouldn't this be a modular and relocatable system?" Koen inquires. "Why aren't we developing our own partitions? And what about windows and doors? We wanted a system that was easy to assemble and disassemble, while steadily growing and integrating our own production throughout the process."

But that wasn't the last of it for Beddeleem: "We had ceilings, we had partitions – what else do you need in an office?" Koen asks. "Although times have changed, back then, you required a lot of storage space. Which led to us making cabinets – ones that also worked as partitions. After cabinets, freestanding furniture followed, and that's when we realised, we essentially had a one-stop shop on our hands. In addition to our products, we then started offering a total fit-out service, including the coordination of more technical elements in specific projects, such as electricity and HVAC systems, flooring, painting, and more in offices, educational, healthcare, sport and governmental environments."

## EMBRACING THE ONE-STOP SHOP MODEL

Jochen further elaborates on the one-stop shop model: "By adopting this model, we are able to unburden clients and provide a great diversity in products and services – something that's greatly appreciated. Through a dedicated project manager, clients benefit from the flexibility of working directly with Beddeleem for custom requests. Our vertical integration also means we have specialists in all areas: fire resistance, acoustics, sustainability..."

"This translates to our manufacturing process," Koen says. "By investing in the right machinery and the right departments, along with our automation and digitalisation projects, all our knowledge remains in-house in our production site in Belgium. Our capacity is significant, and we are recognised as a Class 8 (category D, ed.) contractor in Belgium, which is the highest class available and most capable of taking on complex, large-scale projects."





**“CONVIVIALITY AND A CENTRAL SOCIALISATION AREA ARE A BIG THING IN WORKSPACES NOWADAYS.”**

“The post-COVID return-to-office policy has made people desire a homey, cosy atmosphere in an office,” Jochen adds. “Our production in square metres has gone down per project, but the quality of items has gone up. Luxury aesthetics and acoustics are more in demand.”

Jochen underlines the importance of employer branding when it comes to office design: “An office should be a place people willingly want to visit. When designing an office space, architects should always respect and understand the culture of a company – you can’t change a company’s culture by updating the interior, but you can enhance it.”

**THE CULTURE AT BEDDELEEM**

But how is Beddeleem’s culture ingrained within the company? Jochen and Koen explain their approach as a Best Managed Company and the company’s attitude towards digitalisation, structure, and sustainability.

“We’re not walking around with a manual on how to be a Best Managed Company,” Jochen jokes. “But the title has held us accountable and has brought structure to how we evaluate and report within Beddeleem.”

Within the company, there’s always been a drive to optimise ways of working, oftentimes as an early adopter. Koen recalls, “We’ve been ISO-certified with ISO 9001 since 1999. Although this certification mainly focuses on quality, the true value lies in the organisational model behind it – formalising quality checks and implementing the company’s know-how in an automated system.”

The digitalisation of Beddeleem happened in a similar manner, according to Koen: “I’ve seen the company evolve over time from a paper-based system to a digital one. We were a pioneer in paperless warehouse management, and all our projects are fully documented within this system, including every last nut and bolt. We’re always looking to optimise these systems and grow alongside the times.”

**“WE PROVIDE FULL CUSTOMISATION AND SPECIFIC CUSTOMER REQUESTS.”**

“For those reasons, we can quickly accommodate upcoming trends and follow market evolutions, allowing us to provide full customisation and specific customer requests,” Koen explains. “And we’re talking about more than just colours: customers can choose their level of acoustics, fire resistance, type of materials... Just ask and Beddeleem will deliver on it.”

Jochen expands with an example: “The past few years, we’ve experienced an increase in requests for improved acoustics and curved partitions. Thanks to our extensive R&D team, we’ve been able to finetune such specific requests.”

**REPRESENTING YOUR WORKSPACE CULTURE THROUGH DESIGN**

The current market and workspace interior trends have also influenced how Beddeleem tackles projects: “The direction of today’s market is a little unclear for now. Clients have become more risk-adverse and won’t start building without guaranteed tenants. On the other hand, there’s a major focus on energy-efficient renovations in older buildings to match European sustainability norms and building codes,” Jochen observes. “These renovations present interesting opportunities for our products: our JB COOL climate ceilings are a great example of how clients can easily reduce energy consumption and costs.”

“We’ve seen many evolutions in how people tackle workspaces throughout the years. We’ve gone from open spaces to closed offices, to New Ways of Working, and finally to Activity-Based Working – fewer people grouped together, and rooms available for dedicated activities such as meetings, informal chats, and concentration zones,” Koen mentions. “Conviviality and a central socialisation area are a big thing in offices nowadays. The trick is mapping out your different divisions and observing the interactions between them and placing them in a logical way to benefit productivity. That’s when – and where – an architect can work their magic.”



## A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH

“As for sustainability,” Koen continues, “we achieved our ISO 14001 certification back in 2011 – which was unheard of at the time for a fit-out company.”

Jochen dives deeper into the subject: “There are many aspects to sustainability, but we’ve approached it from different angles within Beddeleem. We were the first company in the world to achieve the Cradle to Cradle Certified® Silver label for our partitions in 2016 – which has been renewed and upgraded in the meantime. Beddeleem has been producing and installing circular partitions for over 35 years, long before the emergence of a circular economy, reassembling and reusing them repeatedly within the same buildings and for the same clients. In the last five years, we started receiving more requests for second-hand partitions. As a result, in 2021, we started the Beddeleem Circular project to assess the quality of our materials for reuse, making our used products available across projects and clients through our REuse range.”



## “WE HAVE SEVERAL GOALS WE WANT TO ACHIEVE BY 2030.”

“This is only a recent development, but our other sustainability initiatives have been around for much longer,” Jochen remarks. “We have several goals we want to achieve by 2030, stipulated by our Taking Climate Action label. As a company, you need to take responsibility for the planet, and we are always looking to improve. We have 4.200 solar panels for our manufacturing, and our employees are equipped with electric vehicles – including an electric truck as our latest addition. Our new building will run on electricity and will be equipped with heating pumps. These investments cost time and money, but over time, you reap the rewards.”

“Along with our sustainability officer, we also have a dedicated employee on our R&D team to focus on this topic,” Koen adds, “and sustainability remains a significant motivator for our entire ten-person R&D team. We’re currently researching the acoustic and fire-resistant properties of our rockwool insulation, and we’ve replaced suppliers that are still using harmful substances in their products. We’ve also determined that recycled aluminium is more feasible, cheaper, and sustainable to use, and is now present in our products by up to 70%. Again, these things cost time, money, and effort, but being able to offer a more sustainable alternative will benefit our company in the long run.”

## LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Along with the company’s sustainability goals, Beddeleem is also looking towards the future from a business perspective. Having recently opened a new office in Switzerland, Koen and Jochen talk about future growth.

“We completed a few projects with local distributors in Switzerland in the past, and set up a joint venture with our Swiss partners in 2024. We’re still very focused on our home markets, but the opportunity to work together with someone who is very attuned to the local market and who believes in our

products was too interesting to pass up,” Jochen explains. “If a similar opportunity were to arise in another country, we’re open to exploring it.”

“With so much potential in our home markets, we’re not actively looking for further international expansion,” Koen clarifies. “Our strategy is currently very opportunistic. We’ve been lucky to experience stable growth that matches our capacity and market demand. Exponential growth wouldn’t be healthy or sustainable. We just want to keep going in the same way we’ve always done.”

