CASE STUDY // LEAGUE NETWORK

Assisting America’s youth sports with Zenefits

In April 2016, after 15 years of volunteering to run her town’s large youth sports organization, serial entrepreneur and soccer mom Anne-Sophie Whitehead launched League Network to raise funds for and teach best practices to tournament, league, and club organizers in the $19 billion US youth sports market.

In the process, along with the company’s CEO (Anne-Sophie’s husband, Jay) she selected Zenefits to power their fast-growth company—thumbing her nose at the PEO HR outsourcing model that Jay had helped invent in a prior business role.

The Opportunity

To ensure more than 33 million young athletes get access to 30 team sports—ranging from rugby, to volleyball, to football, to soccer, to cheer, dance and quidditch—for-profit and non-profit youth and amateur sports organizations fund raise over $3 billion to supplement fees paid by players’ families. League Network built an online system, FundMyTeam.com, to make fundraising easier, faster and more certain for organizations (sometimes run by volunteers) to meet their annual budgets of $100,000 to $1,000,000 or more. Since launch, thousands of youth sport organization leaders have subscribed to League Network media, attended its TLC Sport Summit events, and raised money on FundMyTeam.com. To meet mounting demand, this investor-backed startup needed a plan to accelerate from 2 to 100 staff members in the next few years.
The Challenge
“We had two people, plus a lot of contractors to start. We knew we didn’t want to—not would we have the bandwidth to—manage benefits and payroll ourselves,” said Anne-Sophie. “We wanted to outsource it.”

Interestingly, this team knew a whole lot about their HR outsourcing options. Having co-founded two HR outsourcers, TriNet, and EmployeeService.com; founded HRO Magazine; worked for Ultimate Software; and been clients of Paychex, ADP and others, they knew both the potential—and the perils—of making your company a co-employment organization: taking on responsibility or another businesses people and programs like payroll, hiring and taxes. “As one of the inventors of the PEO Professional Employer Organization) model, I know that with changes in health insurance and compliance, it is easier to go with a technology solution without the cost and complex structure of a PEO,” said Jay. “Zenefits was the first with more unique ways to manage it all, making it very appealing to us.”

Choosing the Modern Solution
“Zenefits had three things that were crucial to us: it was all online, it gave us the ability to pay independent contractors, and had HR advisors available to help us navigate the compliance roadblocks to growth,” said Anne-Sophie.

The small business chose to invest in the Zenefits People Platform with payroll and benefits support as well as subscription to the unlimited advice through the Ultimate Advisor service. League Network knew they needed technology plus expertise they didn’t have to help support its own growth, and that of its customers.

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Anne-Sophie Whitehead, CEO

“Building for the Future
Part of their plan is less benefits and payroll work, and reduced business compliance risk, thanks to Zenefits. They also see Zenefits aiding their ability to grow through the platform’s breadth of additional functionality, and its seamless integrations with third party solutions.

“Adding Expensify for expense management and Guideline for 401K management was easy as pie with Zenefits,” said Anne-Sophie. “It has given me the confidence, as we grow, that I won’t need to do a lot of homework researching additional apps: I know if it looks fine and Zenefits has already vetted it, I’m good.”

In their pursuit of their trademarked mission, “Better Leagues, Better Lives,” League Network is happy to use innovative solutions like Zenefits to help them build a fast, agile business that is starting to collect its own trophies, like the Red Herring 100 North America and Top 50 Most Innovative in Sports. Their future growth is an open field.