



Louwman Group aims to be a leader in mobility.

How has Louwman structured its Finance function to contribute effectively to this goal?

KPMG helps Royal Louwman Group
Client story



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Louwman Group, a family business with over 100 years of history in the mobility sector, envisions itself as a leader in mobility. However, this ambition extends beyond mobility itself: the company also aspires to lead in the internal finance function. In 2019, the company set a clear goal: transforming the finance department from a supporting function to a strategic partner actively contributing to business decision-making.

“We wanted Finance to have a seat at the table for every decision-making process, with data-driven insights and forward-thinking at the core,” says Robin Schluter, Financial Director of Louwman Group.

This vision gave rise to the program ‘Leading in Finance,’ built on three pillars: People & Professionalization, Business Navigation & Impact, and Accounting & Processes. The goal was to transform Finance from a bookkeeping-oriented function into a true business partner.



Michael Badal

Director Finance & Business Services, KPMG



Robin Schluter

Financial Director, Louwman Group

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Why KPMG?

The greatest challenges lay within the pillar Accounting & Processes, mainly due to the decentralized structure of the finance organization.

“Historically, Louwman has had a strong focus on local entrepreneurship,” Schluter explains. “This meant that all the companies within our group had their own processes and systems, resulting in limited uniformity.”

Louwman also dealt with a diverse range of business activities, from bicycles and cars to wheelchairs and even a museum. “This diversity made implementing standardized practices particularly challenging,” Schluter continues. Furthermore, the accounting teams were highly decentralized, making it difficult to shift toward centralization and digitization.

KPMG was brought in for its in-depth expertise and proven track record. “KPMG presented us with highly compelling, user-friendly, and applicable models,” Schluter says. “That appealed to us because we could get started right away.” KPMG’s previous successes with similar companies and Louwman’s positive experiences with KPMG as an auditor also played a key role in the decision.

The approach

The first step in the program was a comprehensive baseline measurement conducted by KPMG to understand the current state of processes, systems, and people. Michael Badal, Director of Finance & Business Services at KPMG, explains: “This baseline measurement was crucial for determining the roadmap. It allowed us to see where Louwman stood and create a clear plan for where they wanted to go.”

A primary focus of the program was creating a unified financial language across the organization. “With so many different business models and systems, it was essential for everyone to speak the same language,” Schluter says. “KPMG helped us develop a standard financial data model, which was a significant step forward for unifying the organization.”

An outside-in approach, benchmarking against best practices of leading companies in the Dutch market, provided valuable insights. “We learned a lot from how other companies structured their finance functions, and we could apply those lessons directly at Louwman,” Schluter adds.



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Key tools from KPMG

KPMG introduced several crucial tools and models that were instrumental in the program's success. Schluter highlights three key elements:

1. Operating Model from the KPMG Powered Toolkit

"We used the Operating Model, a well-structured and practically applicable model to determine our current state and desired destination," Schluter says. "It helped us develop a clear roadmap, which we followed step by step to achieve our goals. This model is still used regularly to monitor our progress and remind our people of the direction we're heading."

The Operating Model was deployed for a self-assessment involving all finance directors and key finance staff within Louwman. This assessment clarified the current position and outlined the steps needed to transform the finance organization.

2. Standard financial data model

Developing a standard financial data model was another critical part of the transformation. "Creating a unified financial language in an organization with such diverse business models was no easy task," Schluter explains. "KPMG played an essential role as an independent party, facilitating consensus among various departments. It required some pushing and pulling, but with their help, we developed a model that is now widely adopted within the group."

3. Digital accounting manual

Finally, KPMG implemented a digital accounting manual for Louwman—a modern, user-friendly way to share accounting procedures and processes within the organization. "Using SharePoint, which was already in place, we could easily implement and customize the accounting manual for Louwman," Schluter says. "This was a practical solution that greatly helped us create consistency in our practices."

These tools provided the structure and resources needed to make the transformation a success. "It was an intensive process, but with KPMG's support, we made significant strides," Schluter concludes.

Key insights

The collaboration with KPMG delivered not only operational improvements but also valuable insights into the importance of incremental change. “One of the most important lessons we learned is that small, incremental improvements often achieve more than a single large transformation,” Schluter says. “Regularly reiterating the objectives and celebrating successes is essential to maintaining employee engagement and motivation.”

Badal adds, “By continuously communicating the benefits of the transformation and its positive impact on the organization, we were able to build strong collaboration between departments. This was critical to the project’s success.”

Results

The results of the collaboration between Louwman and KPMG are clear. There is now a unified financial language across the organization. “This was one of the biggest achievements of the project,” Schluter says. “It has enabled us to further standardize and improve efficiency within the organization.”

Significant steps have also been made in people and professionalization. A finance traineeship was established, offering young professionals the chance to gain experience within the organization. Additionally, diversity in leadership has become a key focus, and Finance business navigators are now firmly embedded in decision-making processes within the business units.

The collaboration

Both parties consider the partnership with KPMG highly successful. “KPMG not only demonstrated their expertise but also took the time to thoroughly analyze the situation before proposing solutions,” Schluter says. “Then, together, we rolled up our sleeves and got to work. The journey we’ve taken, from decentralized practices to a shared financial standard, one financial language, and consistent processes is remarkable. And the fact that the Finance function now has a seat at the table for critical decisions, rather than merely assessing them after the fact, is a major leap.”

Badal adds, “What I personally found most inspiring about this project was the journey we took with Louwman’s employees. We started with representatives from various divisions, each with its own business models, systems, and practices. But ultimately, after months of work sessions, we became one group and achieved a shared result for the entire Louwman Group.”

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