



Danish robot maker Blue Workforce files for bankruptcy

By Eugene Demaitre | April 3, 2019



Blue Workforce A/S, whose Ragnar robot was designed to work alongside people, has filed for bankruptcy, according to *Finans*, a Danish newspaper. The company had been selling products and had global offices, but it failed to get sufficient financing.

Aalborg, Denmark-based **Blue Workforce** had 30 employees and offices in the U.S., China, and Switzerland, **reported *Finans***. It had received DKK 30.3 million (\$4.57 million U.S.) from investors including a Chinese partner and Danish funds, and its products were selling.

"It really hurts. The funding round was intended to secure new working capital, but there was no support in the owner's circle," said Preben Hjørnet, CEO of Blue Workforce. "Since we had no money for wages, we had to go bankrupt."

Hjørnet founded the company in 2012. Ragnar was designed to be affordable for small and midsize enterprises and has been used in pick-and-place operations, mostly in food processing.



The company had **signed a distribution agreement** for its delta robots with Robot Nordic in February.

Blue Workforce at FoodTech2018



Blue Workforce down, but not out

Blue Workforce's bankruptcy is the latest in a string of high-profile shutdowns, including those of collaborative robot maker **Rethink Robotics**, social robot startup **Jibo**, and tethered drone provider **Aria Insights** (formerly CyPhy Works). They are reminders that the **robotics industry** is competitive and that finding a commercially successful mix of technologies and markets is still very challenging. Collaborative robots, or cobots, **are growing in number**, but they're a relatively small share of industrial automation.

At the same time, such failures demonstrate the innovative, experimental, and entrepreneurial spirit of the company founders, who often **learn from their experiences** and go on to build other automation businesses.

"I hope that the company will succeed in a new construction," said Hjørnet. After all, the **demand for robots** like Ragnar is still growing. The global market for food robots will experience a compound annual growth rate of 12.7% from 2019 to 2025, reaching \$3.1 billion, **predicts Research and Markets**.



After Rethink's closure, most of its former employees were snapped up by other Boston-area robotics companies, including former competitors **such as Universal Robots A/S**. This redistribution of technical talent, **always in short supply**, can help grow the industry. The former employees of Blue Workforce might bring their expertise to companies around the **robotics hub in Odense, Denmark**.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Eugene Demaitre is senior editor at The Robot Report. Prior to working at WTWH Media, he was an editor at BNA (now part of Bloomberg), Computerworld, TechTarget, and Robotics Business Review. Demaitre has participated in robotics webcasts and conferences worldwide. He has a master's from the George Washington University and lives in the Boston area.



Comments