



New Employment Skills For Unemployed Youth

Youth Exchange Project

-Business Ideas and Success Stories-



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I. INTRODUCTION

“New Self Employment Skills For Unemployed Youth” is a youth Exchange project funded by Erasmus+ Programme. Under this project two youth exchanges were implemented with 36 young people from 6 different countries (Ireland, Turkey, Macedonia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Italy). The first Exchange was in Adana, Turkey between 16-22 September 2018 and the second Exchange was in Dublin, Ireland between 20-25 October 2018. The project aimed to empower entrepreneurial and employment skills of young people from rural and urban areas.

In the first exchange in Adana/Turkey, the participants explored the concept of unemployment, employment, self-employment and entrepreneurship; learnt the conditions of young people today especially the youth with fewer opportunities in rural and urban areas. They explored difficulties and opportunities to get self-employed, exchanged ideas, best practices and tools related to effective youth work with unemployed young people to raise their self-employability and entrepreneurial spirit. At the end of exchange we guided participants to do research and observation in their local communities after they return in order to find useful insights and opportunities for value creation, entrepreneurship and self-employment.

During the second exchange in Dublin/Ireland, we summed up our first exchange and research that participants did in their local communities. We had workshops for detailed business planning, design thinking, marketing, financial planning, action planning and etc. in order to equip the participants with enough basic knowledge to be able to get self-employed which should be profitable and sustainable. We also had workshops about project management in order to enable them to develop effective youth projects. They collected



ideas, learning and experiences and made interviews with successful entrepreneurs from their local communities during the research stage and turned them into concrete business ideas. We promoted Erasmus + Programme and encouraged young people to be involved in it. We developed concrete business ideas and entrepreneurial initiatives, developed and published an online booklet of business ideas and success stories and shared it.

This youth exchange project aims to create a space where participants experience personal empowerment and learn how to make an effective transition from unemployment to self-employment and in turn help others in their community do the same through effective youth work and involvement in entrepreneurial activities and youth projects under Erasmus+ Programme. Through project activities, participants found opportunity to improve their entrepreneurial spirit and skills. Participants have knowledge to empower others in their communities through exchange of ideas, stories, attitudes, techniques and tools that promote entrepreneurship. We created this online booklet to use as a tool to support and encourage young people to be entrepreneurs.

Adana, Turkey



Dublin, Ireland



II. THE BOOKLET

This booklet aims to improve the knowledge of young people about self-employment, entrepreneurship and to give them inspiring ideas for starting their own businesses.

This booklet created by participating organizations, participants and group leaders of project all together. During the exchanges non formal learning methods and principles, field work, group discussions, interactive presentations, participant lead workshops, team work, etc.were used. All the programme was supporting active participation of participants.

Main target group of the booklet is young people in general and young people with fewer opportunities in rural and urban areas in particular. You can find self-employment ideas, success stories of entrepreneurs and interviews with successful entrepreneurs below.





III. BUSINESS IDEAS

1. S.A.N.A (Future of Electric Cars)

Problem:

- Have you ever thought of buying an electric car?
- Was it too expensive for your budget?
- You need small and simple city car which support is cheap as possible?
- You take care about the environment?
- You prefer not to pay parking fees and car taxes?
- If your answer is YES just keep reading!

Solution:

If you are looking for something that can solve all your problems. S.A.N.A. is your decision. S.A.N.A. is the future on car industry because we offer you really cheap electric vehicle which are also made for urban conditions (small city car) so you can drive and park it easier. Furthermore you are free of any taxes. Our profit will be based on huge amount of sales not on high prices.

Marketing:

Our responsibility is to be as clear and honest as we can in our advertisement. We rely on people's opinion about us that's why we'll do our best to spread the information about our company among people in the best way. We will familiarize the society about the advantages of this invention, using social media and organising different informal events which will help us to be established in the market.

Competition:



In daily basis, people are used to use a normal car to pay for it and to spend particular time traveling to work, school or somewhere else. In the global market there are countless of companies offering their services, promoting all the innovation and improvements but we are here with a completely different mission-to simplified everything. We are stick to the idea to create a vehicle, comfortable to be used in urban environment with low fees and practical dimensions.

Financial Highlights:

As far as we are concerned, we believe the best for our customers is not to pay a lot in their daily drive and to live eco-friendly to keep the environment in peace. Having an electrical car, people will no more obligated to pay for gas or petrol. Our cars are way cheaper for using and our customers can spare they're money for something more important, keeping our natural heritage in the same way.

2. Stock Market Managing Company

- Stock market is the new and trendy business to invest nowadays.
- It has a lot of options to invest, lots of different stocks, lots of different techniques, but it is knife-edge situation since it has its own benefits and disadvantages.
- The benefits are that you can make money working at home in your own pc, schedule your own “working hours” and it is attractive (if you are into that)
- The disadvantages are that you can also lost money very quickly by investing in wrong stocks and you can fail fast and give up on the business itself.

Needs: You need a lot of patience and being forward to this kind of business. You



have to work hard especially in the first phase of the business. You also need to have basic pc skills, basic knowledge of the market you are trading and act fast.

- It is a saying that “you have to risk it, to get the biscuit”, this is 100% true in trading business.

So the idea is to gather a team of stock experts and open a “Stock and trades manager/advisor” company that especially will help newbies to get in to the first phase of the business and build a stronger income for them and decreasing the risks to fail.

We can manage to contact and help the costumers by using online tools, skype contacting, remote control access(with Team Viewer) etc.

3. BecomingADigital Nomad Through Dropshipping

Definition: *Digital nomads* people who are location independent and use technology to perform their job.

What is dropshipping: Dropshipping is a retail fulfilment method where a store doesn't keep the products it sells in stock. Instead, when a store sells a product, it purchases the item from a third party and has it shipped directly to the customer. As a result, the merchant never sees or handles the product.

The biggest difference between dropshipping and the standard retail model is that the selling merchant doesn't stock or own inventory. Instead, the merchant purchases inventory as needed from a third party – usually a wholesaler or manufacturer – to fulfil orders.



Why is it so easy and brilliant:

- You can start it without any capital investment, with 0 EUR.
- You can be your own boss and make your schedule.
- You only need your laptop and internet connection.
- You can work from anywhere. It can be a chilling café in your hometown or a beautiful beach at the Caribbeans.

But important to keep up your motivation, creativity be open to learn and take care of your business, improve it and BELIEVE, YOU CAN DO IT!

How to start: At this point I can only share my personal experiences and way how I did. You can choose... You can choose any platform for selling (Ebay, Amazon, your website) and your suppliers (Aliexpress, Walmart, individual websites)

- 1) Set up a PayPal account an American shipping address and American phone number (easy and free to get it from the web after a simple registration).
- 2) Setup an Ebay/Amazon account. Skype uploaded with balance can be useful if you need to call the customer service sometimes.



- 3) Find products. Ask yourself, what is your interests (are you familiar with technical equipments, clothes, accessories, what is your profile?)
- 4) Choose good products with good customer reviews and huge sold volumes.
- 5) Use your creativity, your personality (write descriptions, make nice montage photos), tools and upload your merchandise on selling platforms. Don't forget to increase the price with your profit!
- 6) Do it more! More products=more chance for selling!
- 7) Keep update your products and store. Improve it, develop it. Look after time-by-time. Delete dead-products, refresh your inventory with new items!
- 8) Manage your customer messages and feedbacks.
- 9) Every time, if you will sell something – even though it's small money in the beginning- , it will be your only your proud and happiness. Keep this fire burning!

4. PC Service and Repair 24/7

- PC service and repair 24/7 will provide computer and technical consulting (repairs, training, networking and upgrade service) to local small businesses as well as home PC users. The company will focus on marketing, responsiveness, quality, and creating and retaining customer relations.
- PC service and repair 24/7 will at first be serving customers in the local Sofia area at any time of the day and night. In the third month of our plan, we intend to move into a leased office space and hire a second technician. As sales increase, we will hire additional personnel.



The Market: The very nature of the computing industry, with its extraordinary rate of technological development, creates a constant need for businesses skilled in updating and advising customers on computer-related issues. In town, the majority of potential customers are dissatisfied with existing options, creating an attractive niche for an innovative start-up. Small business PC users will provide the majority of our business revenue.

Our target market will focus on the capital Sofia and the surrounding areas. Market research indicates there is an abundance of business for a small company such as PC service and repair.

Start-up Funding and Financials: To get PC Repair started we plan to use own means of investment and minimize any loans, and get started through doing work and completing tasks.

Objectives:

1. To provide the best service available to the community at an affordable price.
2. To generate substantial market share so that PC service and repair is a common name.

Mission: Our goal is to set the standard for on-site computer solutions through fast, on-site service and response. Our customers always will receive one-on-one personal attention at a very affordable price. Our customers will receive the highest quality of customer service available. Our employees will receive extensive training, a great place to work, fair pay and benefits, and incentives to use their own good judgement to solve customers' problems.

Keys to Success:

- Establishing a brand identity and generating brand recognition through marketing.



- Responsiveness: being an on-call computer paramedic with fast response time.
- Quality: getting the job done right the first time, offering 100% guarantee.
- Relationships: developing loyal repeat customers--retainers.

Market Segmentation: The existing computer service market is so extensive that categorizing it is rather difficult. We have broken our potential market down into two groups based on their needs: Home PC users and small business clients.

Home PC User: Our home PC user market includes non-tech-savvy residents of the local area (15 km radius), generally between the ages of 20 and 70, with at least one home computer. We are not expecting income from users below 20, who tend to be more comfortable with technology and willing to attempt repairs and upgrades on their own, without seeking professional assistance. Such home users generally own a computer to do email, play games, write letters, scan and print photos, and occasionally to do bookkeeping or taxes. Home PC users with more sophisticated applications generally have enough tech savvy, from tech experience at work, to do their own repairs and upgrades. Their hardware needs will include the computer itself, monitors, keyboards, mouse, printer, and scanner.

Small Business Users: Small business users will provide the majority of our business revenue. The small business market will be defined as customers within a 15 km radius, with 2 or more computers or a network which they use for business purposes at least 25% of the time. It may also be more extensive, incorporating inventory tracking, POS systems, customer databases, online product/service delivery, or product development. The more intensive their computer usage for business, the more critical it is to them that their technology work well and reliably, and that quality repairs and support are available in a



crisis. Their hardware needs will include the same items as home users, plus servers, backup systems, data storage, and wireless networking.

Services:

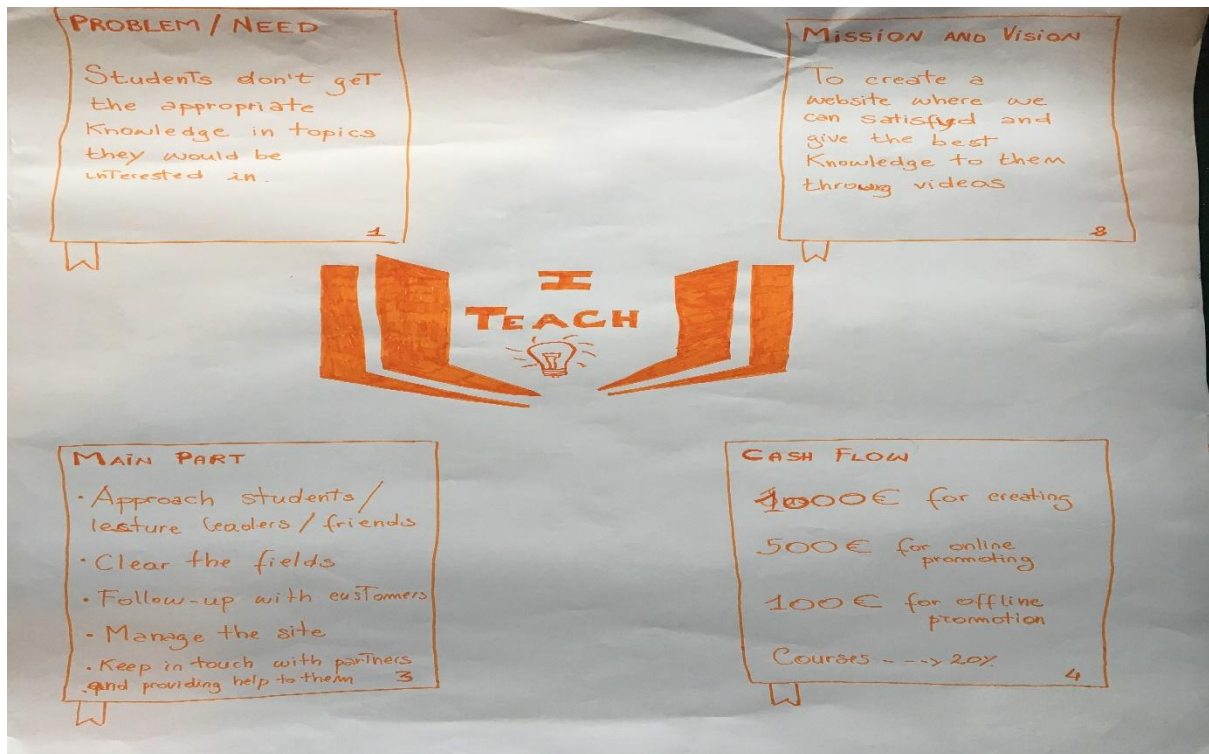
- PC Repair will offer computer repairs, training, networking and upgrade service to clients in two major categories: home PC users and small business users. As PC Repair and the client demands grow, we will offer software development to our business clients.
- We will also offer extended maintenance contracts, so that business clients can deal with technical support and repair needs as a single line-item expense, rather than having to plan for unexpected crashes and problems with a rainy-day fund they may never use.
- From the very first day, we will offer on-site repair and consulting services, so that our clients don't need to take time out of their busy days to haul a computer in to our workshop. We will also offer free pick-up and delivery of PCs needing repair.
- We will offer limited software support (installation and compatibility issues), and focus on hardware and networking support - this is a vital distinction, since software is evolving much more rapidly than hardware, and our clients will have such diverse software needs that we couldn't possibly keep up with all of them.

5. I TEACH

Our project is focusing on the problems of our society. First of all our main focus is to give jobs and teaching opportunities for beginning teachers or really clever students or some experts in some fields who wants to practice their teaching skills or gain some extra money from other sources. With this website we will satisfy a really huge need, for example there

are people who are interested in other fields, for example if you study medicine and you are interested in photo editing you can go here and get knowledge about photo editing. Our mission is to create website where you can find many courses and people whom you can approach and discuss in details about the subject. The vision is providing a knowledge to the people and implementing that knowledge in reality.

The main part of the project is first of all approaching to students, teachers and friends to participate in the platform. We will ask for membership for each course, we will get 20 % of each course fee and this is how we will finance ourselves. At the beginning we will have courses for basic subjects such as mathematics, English etc. and after we will start having courses from many different fields and interests.



6. VANTASTIC

At the moment there are very few food trucks at the market and once they are there they don't provide healthy organic food. Our mission is to combine quality food and low

prizes, so to sell high quality food and make our customer loyal and to buy from us every day. The vision is to have more vans in different places. Our financial predictions are: we will need 50 000 euros for initial investment and will have net profit of 6.100 euros per month. Using our logo we will create unique branding with different items and also our vans will be branded which will contribute to bigger visibility and increased profit.

Key partners:	Key activ.:	Value proposi.:	Cost. relationsh.:	Cost segments:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bio food ^{*drinks} producers Schools Unis Media Events organizers Vege organizat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> moving & selling food to make ppl happy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy food for vege ppl. and not only. (need not problem of healthy food) Bio beer and sweets (cheap of bio alcohol) Mobile van, so you don't need to go every day to the same point. (need of expiring) Easy to know where it is because of the app. (need of information) Good quality for good price 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> friendly, fast, cheap and qualitative service bio and fresh food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vege people healthy living ppl hungry ppl fast living ppl Schools and students

Key resources:

- Van
- driver + chief + food supplier
- Money

Channels:

- Social media
- App
- Newspaper, radio, TV & magazines
- Food show.

Cost structure:

- cost of assets - 15.000 €
- cost of food producing - 5000 €
- cost for advertising - 100 €
- cost for license - 50 €
- cost for fuel - 50 €/day
- labour cost - at the beginning we won't need any, because we will work at it. But let's say 30 €/10h
- Logistic costs - 500 €

1st m.	2nd m - 12th
15.000	1.500
20.000	2.400
100	2000
1000	
1.500	
500	
2.400	
7.40.500	23.900€
+ 3.500 in sale cash.	
50.000	
30.000 €	
23.900	
6.100 €	
in 3m. before our market.	

Revenue streams:

- By selling food

name:

VANTASTIC

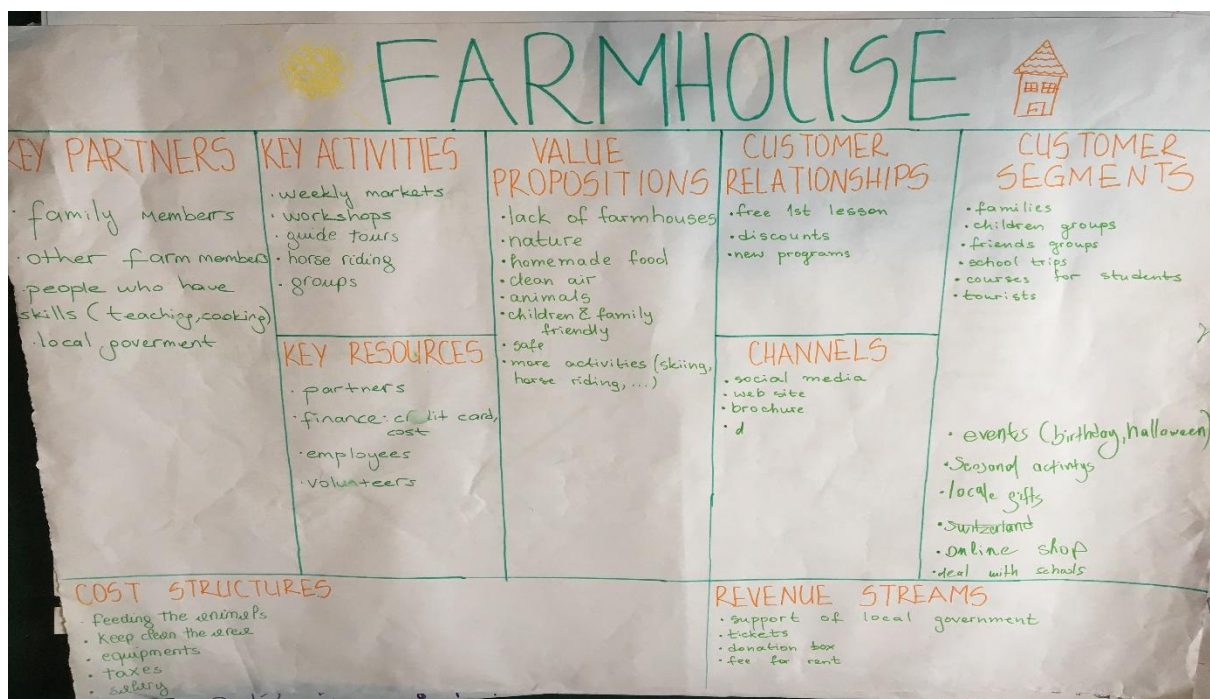
7. FARM HOUSE

Where you can find some cats and maybe mouse, but inner peace, calmness and peace also exists. The environment may be simple, but in simplicity you'll find excellence.

Our mission and vision: We want to show you how much fun it can be, how to seed plant and harvest or keep apple. We want to show you that a different life is possible. This is too pressure to live in fast city, take your time live closer with your family and kids in the nature.

We are all affected with the fast life in the city and we think that sometimes we have to escape from the big city and go to the small villages which can offer us peace.

Main activities: We are weekly market which has local food, which means you can buy fresh food and cook it there. Guided tours, renting a bike, riding a horse or having a picnic in the area. Workshops: cooking class, do it for yourself workshops and children activities.



8. CHEAP HOUSES

The weather is changeable and the building materials for houses are expensive. So for people looking to either grow crops or even manage live stock this can really cause problems. So our vision is to help people produce fresh products independently of the weather. Our

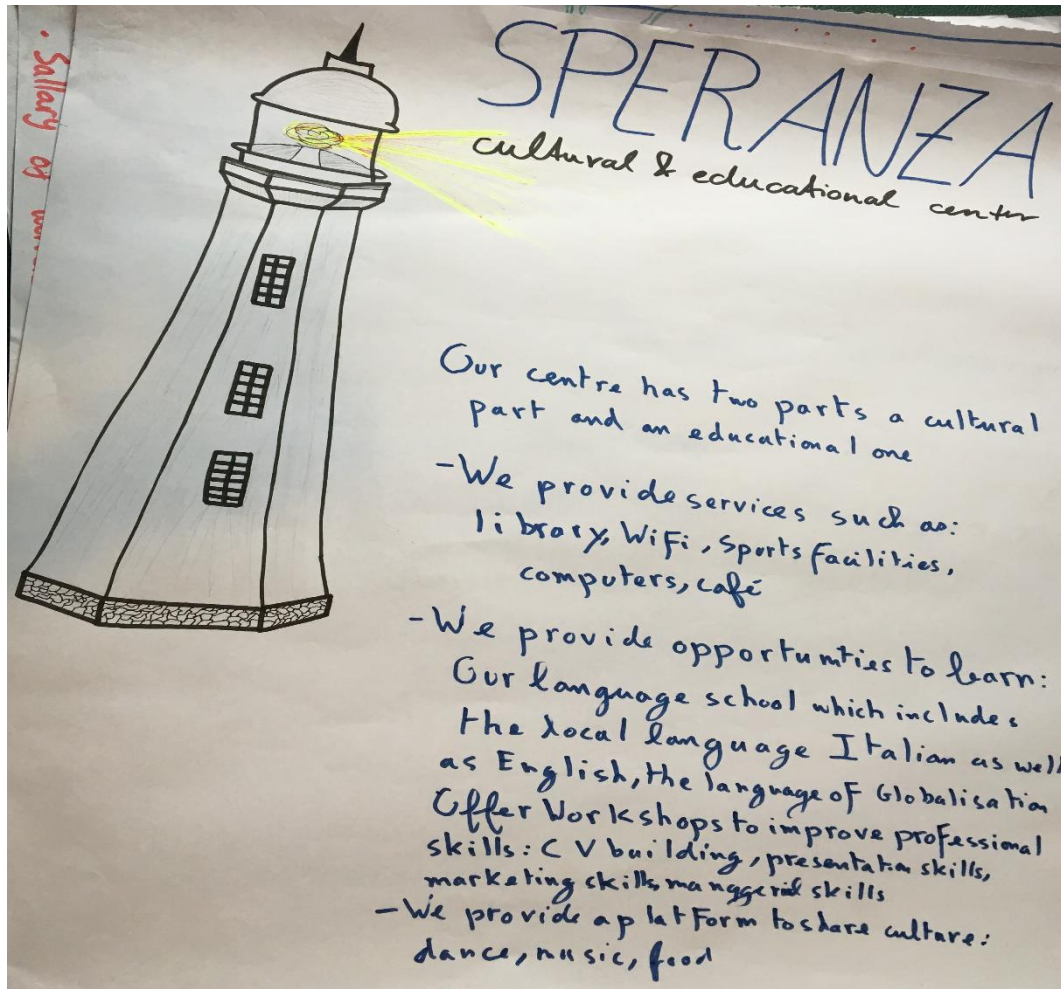


offer is producing cheap family houses which will also have alternative storage for the farmers to store crops. Our marketing strategy is to make online research and find out which people can use our houses (like farmers, gardeners) and directly make an offer to them via email and phone. We will also participate in agricultural and gardening schools and expos where the people will find out more about us. We will make partnerships with agricultural and gardening shops which will offer our product to their customers and in return get some percentage for each sale. Also we will use online social media for promotion.

9. SPERANZA

The immigrants with skills have lack of opportunities abroad and the social and political stigma is associating with migrants. Our mission is to provide tools that will enable immigrants to develop and share their professional expertise with the local community and economy, as well as to integrate them into the local community. Our vision is mentally beneficial exchange of ideas, skills and expertise between local community and immigrants to create opportunities for immigrants to improve their perception of immigrants and create a foster respect as well to ultimately integrate immigrants into social and economic life. Our centre will have 2 sectors, cultural and educational. First of all we will provide services that will be available for all members that include: Library, toys facility, Wi-Fi and Cafe. Than we will have language school, starting with 2 languages (Italian and English). Part of our educational sector will be offering different workshops to immigrants (management, how to improve your CV. And to connect the both parts of society (immigrants and local community) with our cultural sector we will provide opportunities to share the cultures in terms of food, traditions. The financing will be based on our general membership which will

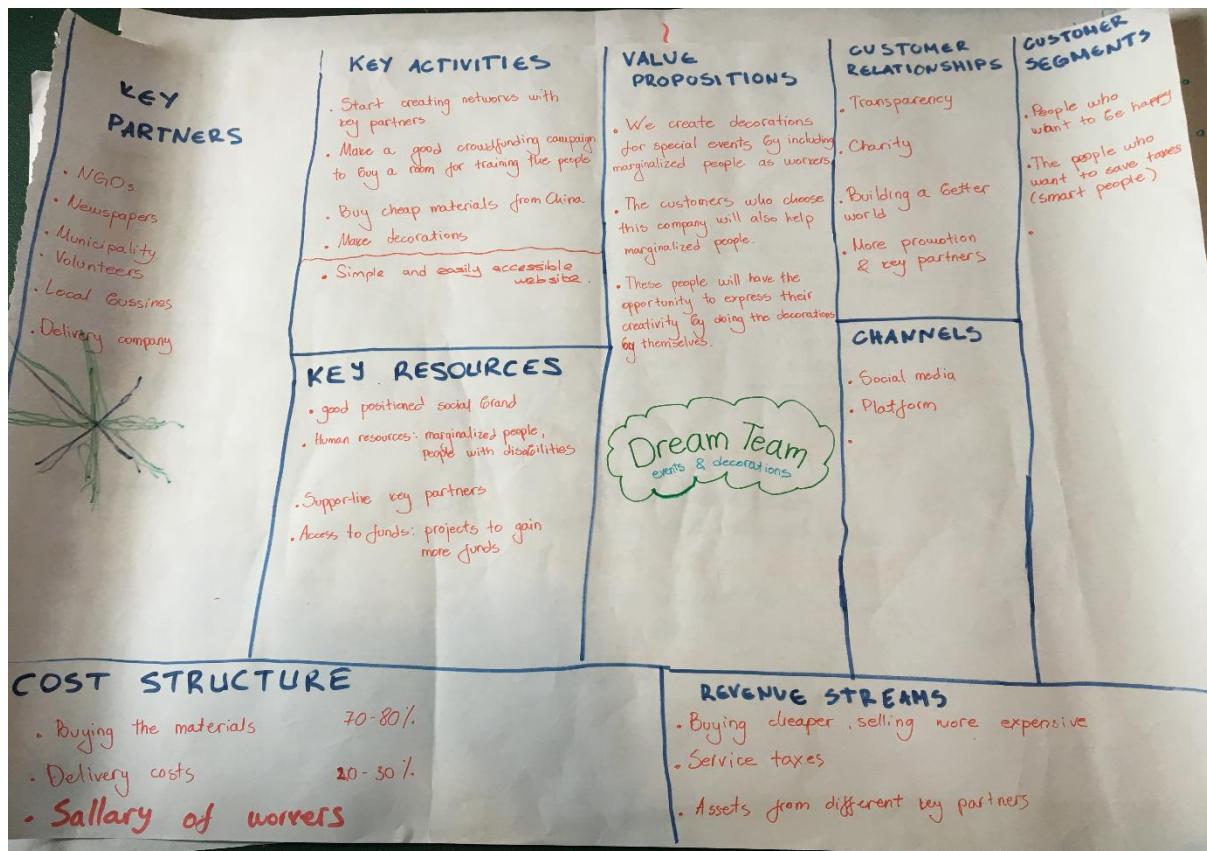
be 15 euros per month and each member will be able to use the computers, library and sport facility. The language courses will cost 5 euros.



10. DREAM TEAM EVENTS AND DECORATIONS

Our company is making a lot of events and really nice decorations for your parties. At the same time is employing really good and experienced people with some disabilities who are excluded from the job market and with this business they can get employment and have a chance to work from home. Our strategy is buying cheap materials and selling them with double prize as final decoration products. We will create partnerships with NGO's,

municipalities and friends. We will use crowd founding campaign to collect 20 000 euros for making a training room but mostly for a place where people with disabilities can come to discuss about different issues, we will give them different trainings and also we will rent the room to businesses and organisations.



IV. SUCCESS STORIES

1. Liqueur Store

This business takes place in Thessaloniki, Greece. It started 20-25 years ago when they opened their doors. The whole process from dreaming about the liqueur store till the opening took for 2-3 years. My friend's father came up with the idea and because he was working many years as an employee in a wine-tavern he knew what to do and how to do, so



he talked with his brother – who also had some experiences in production business - and they decided to open it. It took a long time because in Greece it's not so hard to open a business but to keep it up in a long term is really challenging, so they watched every detail. They invested their saved money to the business and they opened two buildings, these buildings were separated. One of them provided the supply to famous bars, cafés, pubs and clubs. The other place was a regular shop with a manager and a shop assistant, so they sold their products to individuals. They separated because of many reasons. The brand was the same but for example the big amount of supply is differently handled, – of course – than those ones that they sold to each. Also the taxation is different. In big amount you need to provide from A point to B point – their contracts include this partnership – so they delivered the big amount of products etc. Same idea, separated business: for one is B2B marketing, for the other one is B2C, same vision to achieve with different objects, on different paths.

The wave: 2008-2009 was the big financial crisis in the US. It was visible it will arrive to Europe, to everywhere. It did in 2010-2011 and took till 2012, – from the perspective of the store – it was a really tough period. Most of the bars, cafes and clubs could not pay them back. They tried their best, the owners of the clubs sold other properties to make it at least somehow better, but it still wasn't enough. Once they got a flat in the centre, but they also needed the money, so they sold it. It was a challenging period for sure... they lost many customers – because as we know in a crisis the basic things will be on the focus and not the luxurious products like a bottle of wine during a Sunday lunch – and they couldn't keep them. Before the crisis there was no problem with the concurrency but it changed and many of them turned from them to the others. Right now, the situation is better they could keep the loyal customer but they have decided to make a new face of the place, so they are changing many things and they are also moving to the centre.



Current changing: The old place that still supplies to the bars etc. is exist and working really well because the 60-70% of the income is coming from this part, while the other one was slowly developing after the crisis, so they came up with a refreshing, renewing idea. They moved to the centre and they also changed a bit of the face of the business of this shop, because it's not just a shop anymore, it's a place where you can sit down and taste many of the excellent Greek wines and other alcoholic drinks – of course they kept the old, regular “selling to the individuals” face, but right now they started to keep attention of the increasing tourism. They have connections with hotels also, who will recommend them for Greek wine tasting and for similar small activities related to wine. The new place will have a manager and 2 shop assistants and, also one student worker (with flexible working hours). The opening hours will be: 9:00-22:00/23:00. There will be around 24-28 places to sit down and, also the design is kind of modern that includes the feeling of a ruinous wealthy place, interesting in a really nice way how it expresses the mood of the place, it's really unique.

One more interesting changing fact is that their suppliers changed, before the crisis there was just one, a big one and they could supply them with everything. Right now, and since the crisis it changed, they have 5-6 smaller – still big but smaller – suppliers, more like local companies. They can deliver all the orders of the cafés, bars and clubs immediately because they buy a big amount before the orders. These orders depend on the period of the year of course – during the summer its more, than for example in October. They also improved their marketing to the direct customers.

Recommendations:

- Invest time to your local customers, make your customers loyal! Visit events, organize events together, keep up good human/partner relations with them.



- Make a great plan and then plan again and again and again, select from your opportunities, brainstorm a lot, ask the people around you.
- Don't forget to specialize! Don't be average make something unique, catchy for the customers, because they are the first.
- Make a good - and as exact as it's possible – market research for the future success.
- Focus to the present and the future but follow up with the past!
- Make long time plans because it will be the solution to run it well!
- Hire people who have the same vision as you planned to the company, it will be easier to work with them.

2. Walltopia AD

Walltopia AD is a Bulgarian climbing wall manufacturer. It was founded in 1998 by Ivaylo Penchev and Metin Musov. Originally exclusively a climbing wall and other artificial rock surfaces manufacturer, the company has since branched out into adventure park construction and management. Walltopia is currently the largest manufacturer of artificial climbing walls in the world by volume.

Founding and international growth (1998-2010): Walltopia was founded in 1998 by Ivaylo Penchev and Metin Musov. Prior to the establishment of the company, the two were climbers, both from Veliko Tarnovo. The company began as a manufacturer of climbing walls, immediately taking on projects outside of Bulgaria due to low local demand. They opened their first foreign office in late 2006 in the United Kingdom. In 2006, they introduced mobile climbing walls and in 2007 they branched out to develop artificial rock surfaces not exclusively for climbing, but also for cosmetic purposes. They opened



their United States office in early 2008, which has since become their largest foreign office by revenue. Since then, the company has opened foreign offices in multiple other major markets.

Branching out and strategic acquisitions (2010-Present):

In 2010, Walltopia opened a manufacturing plant in Letnitsa, and in 2012 expanded it to grow its production capacity. In 2012, the company branched out of traditional climbing walls and introduced amusement climbing walls aimed at children and climbing beginners, under the brand Fun Walls, and rope courses, under the brand Ropetopia. They began operating adventure parks with these products under the brand Funtopia in 2013. In 2014, the company began construction of its new headquarters in Sofia Tech Park, becoming the first, currently only, private investor to build in the park.

Walltopia introduced Harmonized Walls and e-walls in mid-2015. Later that year, the company accepted investments from two equity funds, Bulgarian private equity fund BlackPeak Capital and Chinese equity fund China-CEE. This facilitated their purchase of Salt Lake City-based climbing gym chain Momentum. Additionally, they opened a manufacturing facility for their newly introduced climbing mat production, under the brand Climbmat, and an R&D facility for adventure park-related products near Sofia in the Bozhurishte economic zone.

In 2016, the company added obstacle courses to its portfolio of adventure park products under the brand Ninja Course. In December of that year, the company moved into their new office building. In April of 2017, Walltopia opened its flagship gym inside its new office building under the name Walltopa Climbing & Fitness.

3. NorbiUpdate



Norbi update is focusing more on what to eat and how to choose the ingredients and products we eat in a conscious way. While Alakreform which means reform of the shape is about aerobic and trainings.

A few years ago a couple (Norbi and Réka) started these businesses. Both are their own ideas and they complement each other. Their main goal is promoting healthy lifestyle. It was only their passion or lifestyle and for today thousands of people follow them. Since then there are training-CDs, roadshows, holidays and camps with their food and their trainings (in Bali, Cyprus etc.). Moreover, we can order daily update menus, and they created a web shop with their brand etc.

They have 3 children, and they educate them to take care of health. Although, Norbi had a serious illness, Reka didn't stop to lead the businesses and since then they became very professional and rich.

How to finance it: They made many effort in order to develop their idea like it is now. We neither know how they started it nor how much money they had at the beginning. They were young with a great idea. Probably the parents helped to obtain the capital in order to start with it. Since then they have a lot of incomes so it is not a challenge anymore.

Needs:

- Enthusiastic people, who want to lose weight and become more fit



- Partners, supporters (eg. Mizo is a Hungarian dairy product maker company and it markets their Update products as well)
- Supporters (eg. they always promote different brands on their site because they support their business)
- invitation to cities to held trainings
- expert employees

Difficulties:

- Not a family-centric job -> too much travelling
- Expensive food is not affordable to everyone
- Good basics, but it is hard to develop all the time
- Keep the good quality
- Be better than the other bloggers and trainers

4. SfruttaZero

Sfrutta Zero means “zero exploitation”. This project was born three years ago by three association of Southern Italy (Diritti a Sud, Solidaria and OsservatorioMigranti Basilicata/Fuori dal Ghetto). They met on the path of social commitment to help and support those who are put aside by the society, in a common struggle for the achievement and respect of the fundamental rights of the human being.



During the summer they produced and distributed tomato sauce. The protagonists of this project are peasants, young professionals, migrants, precarious, unemployed and students. They started collecting eight thousand euros by crowdfunding.

They produce tomato sauce by using the necessary equipment and according to the sanitation standards. Afterwards they bottle the tomato sauce exclusively in recycled glass bottles. This summer they produced 25 thousand bottles of tomato sauce. This is a revolutionary way to make tomato sauce because tomato, also called “red gold”, is the



symbol of the illegal hiring and exploitation in Southern Italy's regions like Puglia and Basilicata. "SfruttaZero" wants tomato to be collected and processed outside the traditional market principles that put profit beside people.

They want to build an alternative production chain to demonstrate the possibility to practice a fair-trade economy without masters and based on a respectable salary for everyone who work to make SfruttaZero reality. Moreover this is a way to employ for unemployed young people and also migrants, that often arrive in Southern Italy to collect tomato (but also oranges etc.) and end up in the network of the mafia caporali.

5. Helikon Bookstores

Today there are 27 bookstores with this name all around the country, 2 mobile bookshops, a internet bookstore, a literary site, magazine and radio. For good communication helps specialized software, built for years. Today, the program is tailored to all the specifics of modern book business. A computer network connects bookstores and registers online every sale. The company founded the first e-book shop in Bulgaria and has one of the first registered domains for online marketing. Helikon magazine is published once a month, with a circulation of 40,000 copies. For the 16th consecutive time, the literary site Lira.bg presents the prize for new Bulgarian fiction.

Beginning: Before starting his own business, DanchoDimitrov (CEO of Helikon bookstores) worked as "Head of International Relations and Protocol" in an industrial enterprise. "When the laying off started, I decided that it is time to look for another job. There was no prospect in this workplace" he says.



“I have no connections with the old structures of the state distribution of books and I am saying this because most of the people who started their own business in this branch at that time have previously worked for the former state publishers. My friends from the “Dolphin” press were looking for someone who can sell their books. They have handed out books across the country to many traders, but there were no payments. Then I decided to help them and soon I discovered that I have commercial skills. Later I thought that I must try to develop my own business in this branch.”

Back in the beginning of the 90s, the future CEO of Helikon started hiring stands in Sozopol, Primorsko and Tsarevo and selling books there.” I told the merchant from whom I took the books that I can’t pay for them now, but I will bring him the money next week. And it happened exactly like this because by the end of the next week I had already sold the books.” Then he started travelling 2-3 times a week to Sofia in order to keep the stands well-stocked. At that time, books unrealised during totalitarian times began to come out in Bulgaria and people were eagerly waiting for them. “The trade rebate was 18%, but I would sell 1000 copies of one title per week. Now the rebate is 35%, but the circulation of one book is 1000 pieces for the whole country.”

After finding and renting a suitable place for a bookstore, DanchoDimitrov attracted his wife and two sons to the business too. He says that he always rents the places for the bookstores in the liveliest places in the cities.” If we wanted to buy the buildings, we would have only 2-3 stores and lock our money in these places, but we’re not a real estate company.” That is why every time the profits allow, they choose to open a new bookshop. “Running a business is like riding a bicycle – if you stop pushing the pedals, you fall. So I like to say that we are opening new stores because we want to survive, not because we are greedy.”



Difficulties:

- One of the problems in this branch, as elsewhere, is how difficult it is to find the right people. “The love of books is not enough to sell them successfully. The key is to have good communication with the customers and to be discreet, because the bookstore is a place where people go to read, not to speak.” Says DanchoDimitrov.
- Other difficulty that they have to face daily is the lack of a book law in Bulgaria. “We are the last link in the chain and if we do not ‘collect’ the money form the clients and give them to the publishers and they to the editors, translators and authors, all efforts will be in vain. It is difficult to write a book, difficult to publish it, but most difficult is to sell it. We need this law, because it regulates by who, how and to whom can be a book sold.”

V. INTERVIEWS

1. 180 Degrees



180Degrees
CONSULTING



180 DC was founded in April 2017. 180 DC Sofia is the Bulgarian branch of 180 Degrees Consulting. They are committed to providing high-quality and extremely affordable consulting services to non-profits and social enterprises in Bulgaria to help them improve and live up to their potential. 180 DC Sofia is a non-profit organization established by very motivated and socially sensitive young people. They do it for no pay check, but to get an experience in the branch and to make a positive impact on the society. 180 DC Sofia is one of the 30 under 30 winners of Forbes Bulgaria. Its founder, Dobrin Vitanov, managed to give me an interview and share with us his successful story.

1) How and when the idea about 180 Degrees was born?

My journey at 180 Degrees Consulting began at the Austrian branch in Vienna, while I was doing my master's degree there. One day during my 3-month engagement as a junior consultant on an exciting project for a local social enterprise connecting refugees and employers in Austria I went to the web site to check out some information. My eyes turned to the map on the main page with all the branches worldwide and couldn't help but notice that there were 180 DC branches in Turkey and Romania but there was none in Bulgaria. Then, the idea was born that, as I was planning to return back to Bulgaria in few months, I will do anything I could to found a branch in Sofia. I saw a great potential in my home country for developing such a socially conscious project.



2) What was your plan in order to realize it? Which were the steps you took?

Luckily, I managed to attract four other friends to the cause and together we managed to establish the Bulgarian branch of 180 Degrees Consulting four months later after a tough selection process. We went through a 4-stage application procedure – all the way from filling out an online form through having individual and group Skype interviews with global 180 DC executives to preparing a branch business plan. Eventually, our business plan was approved and we received the 180 DC license early in April 2017.

3) As we know, it's very difficult to finance an idea, especially in Bulgaria, how did you manage that?

As a non-profit, our business model is designed in such a way that our operating expenses are kept to minimum, which allowed us to run the organization almost a year without any sources of revenues (as our first client projects were done pro bono). We rely heavily on partnerships such as the one with Sofia University, which enables us to carry out our internal events at the university premises for free without having to pay any office rents.

After our first two successful consulting projects we managed to build a reputation among our potential clients – non-profits and social enterprises, and our services started being highly demanded. Thus, we started charging our clients small and very affordable fees for the work we have been performing for them. Gradually, we also managed to attract three socially responsible corporate sponsors that support us financially. This has allowed us to upscale our marketing activities and increase our spending.

4) Is there any institution, organization or person that helped you for the realization of your project?



Yes, my four friends who I am also happy to call co-founders of 180 Degrees Consulting Sofia. As an institution it is mainly the Sofia University, where we organize our events.

5) What difficulties you had on your way to the achieving of your goals?

We mostly struggled and continue to struggle to some extent with attracting sufficient number of student consultants willing to work pro bono and valuing the indirect benefits they could make out of their participation in such volunteer consulting organization. The demand for our services exceeds the supply of workforce.

6) Was it difficult to find the right team to work with? Tell us more about the people who consist your company?

The most important thing about building the right team is to truly know your people, what they are good at and where they can add value. Being able to trust them is also not less important. When I built the initial founding team I relied only on people I have known and worked with for years. As we continue to work together for 180 DC even now one-and-a-half year later, I dare to say that this turned out to be the right strategy. Later on, a prerequisite for all new additions to our executive team was to have gone first through the junior consultant job so that we could see how they work and what they are good at. Thus, we could offer them the board position they would fit in the most.

7) What are the future aims of 180 Degrees?

Top priority for us is to increase our reach and number of consultants, respectively consulting project. In other words, we strive towards achieving a critical mass. Then, the aim for us is to become a sustainable organization that does not rely on one or two persons but exhibits high levels of continuity.

8) Which is the best tip you can give to future self-employed young people?



Start your own thing not just for the sake of making lots of money or feeling like an entrepreneur, but only if you are truly passionate about what you are doing. With no love and passion, with no dedication and sleepless nights of you thinking about what and how you can do better, there can be no success. It is simple as that.

9) Do you think that is easier to be an employee than a self-employed, and if yes why did you decide the last one?

It is definitely easier and also definitely more boring. That's why I chose and keep up to my path.

10) Tell us something inspirational?

I've said it already, you either do something with passion and dedication or you should not even bother starting it.

2. Svetoslav Dimitrov



This story is about a free-lancer copywriter, who is an adventurer, traveller, chief, polyglot and many other things. His name is Svetoslav Dimitrov from Bulgaria.

1) Please introduce yourself and what you're doing with a few words.

Hi! My name is Svetoslav Dimitrov. I am a Brand Story and Sales Page Copywriter. In brief, I write words that make people money.

2) How did you decide to become a freelancer? What was your plan in order to realise it? Which were the steps you took?

That's a long story, so I'll give you the short version. I went to China and really loved it. So, I decided that I'll create a travel blog to write about my experience and impressions. In the meantime, I started looking for freelance jobs in content writing and copywriting. I used Facebook groups to find clients. After a few good ones, I didn't even need to market myself as they recommended me to others.

3) As we know, it's very difficult to finance an idea, especially in Bulgaria, how did you manage that?

I had my own savings and I had the support of my family, too.

- 4) Is there any institution, organization, or person that helped you for the realization of your project?

Neither an institution nor an organization helped me. But a lot of people have helped me, including one of my best friends who's a front-end developer. He helped me set up my both of my websites – <https://svetdimitrov.com> and <https://copywritingtitan.com/>.

- 5) What difficulties you had on your way to achieving your goals?

When I started out, I was mainly looking for clients in Bulgaria. One of the hurdles in the freelance writing world in our country is the extremely low prices other people charge. This has set the lever so low many businesses have a wrong impression of the real prices. Nowadays, I mainly work with clients from abroad.

- 6) What are the pros and cons of working alone and do you miss the team work in a corporation?

I love working from the comfort of my home (or anywhere else). I enjoy not having a boss. That said, many people struggle when they try to become freelancers as it requires heroic amounts of self-discipline. I don't miss working in teams because most of my job needs a lot of concentration. However, I work in small teams on various other digital marketing projects.

- 7) What are your professional future aims?

Besides making millions and impacting tens of thousands of people, another future aim of mine is to generate enough passive income on a monthly basis, which will allow me to traverse the world as much as I want.

- 8) Which is the best tip or trick you can give to future self-employed young people?



Arm yourself with a tonne of patience. Nothing happens overnight, and those who believe so should be beaten with a pink stick. Also, spend a good percentage of your time working on your mindset. The abundance mindset is crucial for growth.

9) Do you think that is easier to be an employee than a self-employed, and if yes, why did you decide the last one?

Both have their ups and downs. Some people say being an employee is easier because it's more "secure". The truth is, you never know what cuts the company you're working for can introduce and being self-employed could be a real struggle until you establish your name, build up your portfolio, and earn enough to be comfortable with. I've struggled in the beginning, but it's the feeling of being completely free that makes me persist.

10) Tell us something inspirational.

Don't let small minds convince you that your dreams are too big. And don't waste your time with people who choose to be miserable and complain all the time. They lost their ability to be happy and may ruin yours, too. Be your best self and don't be afraid to express your opinion even if it might hurt some people.

3. Grouper

Heading the leading e-commerce company in Macedonia that launched when





less than 1% of the population was buying online and transformed the e-commerce industry in the country. Many challenges and obstacles were on the way: lack of habit for online buying, small share of payment cards in circulation, safety concerns and lack of trust in buying online, lack of skills and adoption of new trends among merchants and non-existent supply from other e-commerce companies. The well-structured marketing strategy and its implementation; and the hard work and dedication were crucial for Grouper's tremendous success in chaining the e-commerce market, the mindset of hundreds of merchants and the habits of over 200K young and elder users that embraced online shopping as an everyday routine.

1) How did you get the idea for this and how did you finance the idea?

So when I was in my last year of college there was a competition about a business plan and the prize was 5000 euro. After I finished the university I decided that I will open my business. I started Grouper with two partners. First of all we made market analysis and then we started to implement the business plan. It was hard at the beginning but with hard work we made it and Grouper is 7 years on the market as first e-commerce company.

2) How were you able to contribute to the culture shift to inspire Macedonians to use online shopping platforms?

So how were we able to contribute to the culture shift and inspire Macedonians to buy online, but also very importantly how were we able to engage the companies to make their first sale through the Grouper deals. So first of all for the end users the discounts were a great incentive. So we told them that the benefits we're offering you is not that you're going to save time, in times of economic recession and crisis, it was very important that we offered savings. So we said you're going to save money while you're exploring different places in town or when booking your travel holidays etc. So we had to educate the market and we had to spend



thousands of phone calls and emails replying to "What is the CVC code?", "How are you supposed to buy online with a payment. Card?", "How are you going to get a payment card?", "Or how to download the app?", "or what a browser is?", "Or how to clear your cash in the browser?". And in terms of the companies, we had to provide some kind of training in terms of how important marketing is and how important the online presence of the companies is so that we have both sides on board, because our role as intermediaries. So we had to have the best deals with very good discounts for the end users which were going to be presented in the best way with a very good marketing strategy that will reach the right target audience and of course bring the desired clients to the merchants.

3) How have you managed to ensure that this growth was sustainable and healthy?

By constant learning, constantly innovating, constantly adapting to the market, being a very fast learner. By making some good decisions, by putting the right people in the right positions to make the right decisions. We have a very good team and I'm very happy that we have true values, that we have a very good culture and I believe that every challenge we overcame and every barrier, and there were a lot of challenges on the way the path was not easy at all...But I am happy that every challenge we overcame made us stronger, and made us more knowledgeable. So I'm grateful for all the struggles... we knew what we were diving in once we started, we knew the stage of development of the industry... And today I can say that we are proud and happy that we did this.

4. Lean Enterprise Institute Hungary



An interview with a successful small business owner, who started his first company in 2005 and since then he started 2 more.

1) Explain to your grandmother how your company works.

We are helping companies how to be more efficient by developing their people, processes and systems and we also coach their managers to be better leaders. The methodology we use was developed by Toyota and it is now called lean. By this Toyota became the most profitable car manufacturer of the world, now selling the most number of cars in a year.

2) What is unique about your business?

We are part of an international network of organizations from 31 countries all around the world. The knowledgebase of these organizations are originated from Toyota and several ex-Toyota leaders are part of these organizations who were working for Toyota for over decades. We are continuously trained and supported by these people. This differentiates us from other lean consulting companies.

3) What inspired you to launch your business? / How did you come up with your business idea?

Before I have launched my own business I was working for a multinational company where I was trained and coached to use lean thinking and practice. I was sent to other plants of our organization in the US, Mexico and Germany where I have gained deep experience



applying the lean principles. After a while I decided to launch my own lean consulting company to profit my experience.

- 4) What has been your biggest challenge as a business owner and how have you met that challenge?

To survive the first two years when the business was taking much more money than it generated. The secret of meeting this challenge was work, work and even more work and the faith that it will pay back one day.

- 5) What's the most exciting thing on the horizon for you/your Company?

One of our activities is that we are translating then publishing the world wide known lean books in Hungarian. By this we have to create the Hungarian vocabulary / terminology of our profession which was not existing before. We also teach lean in the biggest universities of Hungary to develop the new generation in this field.

- 6) How many employees do you employ?

All together I employ 10 people

- 7) Can you please tell me about your big conference? How many participants are attending on?

We are organizing an international lean conference every year with over 200 participants. We do not want to make a bigger event year by year but want to deliver more value to the participants so we can fill the seats faster every year. This way we will be able to start raising the participation fee.

- 8) How do you advertise your business?

We use Facebook and LinkedIn plus our mailing list which is growing year by year. We also use Google Adwords every once in a while. Our goal is to create, maintain and grow a professional network where the word of mouth always brings new clients.



9) What's the most valuable lesson you've learned in starting and running your own business?

You also have to spend time working on your business instead in your business. The more time you can spend with this the bigger your business will be. One of most common pitfalls is that someone who is a good professional starts their own business and stays on the professional level instead of moving to the entrepreneur level. By this they will always be the barrier of their own business.

10) What is the goal of your Company?

20% revenue growth year by year.

11) If you had 1 piece to advice to somebody just starting out, what would it be?

Never give up! No matter what you do, if you are outstanding in your field and you also do it long enough success will come!



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