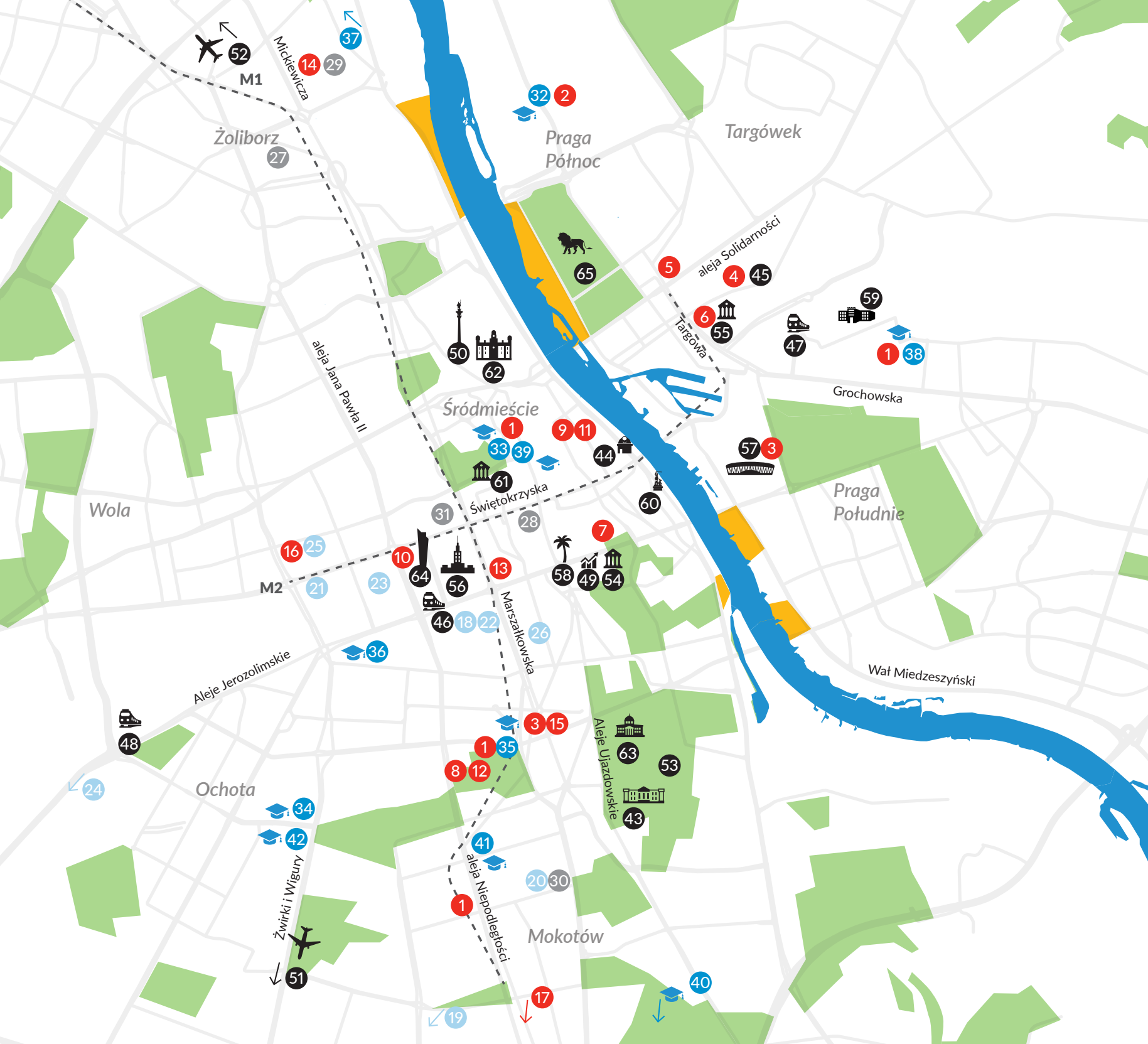




WARSAW
THE CITY OF STARTUPS



Map of Warsaw's startup ecosystem

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Together, we create Warsaw

'Cities have one crucial resource – their people. Human cleverness, desires, motivations, imaginations and creativity are replacing location, natural resources and market access as urban resources. The creativity of those who live in and run cities will determine future success' – these words of a British urban planner, Charles Landry, included in his book *The Creative City*, perfectly match Warsaw. Infrastructure, everyday dynamism, openness, creative resourcefulness and ingenuity of its residents define Warsaw as the city that is friendly towards everyone who would like to learn, live, and run their business here.

It is our great satisfaction to publish the first edition of this guide to the startup ecosystem of Warsaw as it splendidly depicts the diversity and dynamics of the scene created by the entrepreneurs of the capital of Poland. *Warsaw – the City of Startups* is an inspiring journey through the capital that is full of active institutions, organisations and ambitious projects. It is also an insight into the city of enthusiastic startupper who speak about their experiences, successes and disappointments. We would like this guide to keep up with our city – we would like this guide to develop, show new places and opportunities, talk about successes shared by the city and its people.

I hope that this publication will be a useful compendium, and will inspire you to act and develop your bold ventures in business, and to discover the potential of our city.

Michał Olszewski

The Deputy Mayor of Warsaw



Get started in Warsaw!

No other place in the world is like Warsaw. Here, in the former distillery, Google has organised its startup space, and the once-dominant 60-year-old landmark of social realism in Warsaw, the Palace of Culture and Science, will soon be overshadowed by the tallest skyscraper in the European Union. It is also here that impressive transformations take place: the National Stadium, the venue of Euro 2012 opening game, has replaced a former open-air market. Another spectacular example is a Michelin-star restaurant which is located in what formerly was a public toilet. This is the Warsaw of today – with its brilliant ingenuity, brave solutions and out-of-the box thinking. The city itself is growing like a dynamic startup. Warsaw's excellent macroeconomic indicators, modern transportation infrastructure, thriving universities and, most of all, the capital's unique character have all contributed to the dynamic development of the city's startup ecosystem, which aspires to be the avant-garde of such initiatives in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

What is a startup?

According to a definition by Startup Poland Foundation, a startup is a business that meets at least one of the following criteria: it operates in the field of digital economy with data processing or related technologies as one of the key elements of its business model, and secondly, it creates new technological solutions in IT/ICT.



About a third of all Polish startups are established in Warsaw, and a quarter of the capital's startups are active in the following industries: analytics, advertising technology or FinTech.

What do investors appreciate about Poland?

- The country's stable economic growth and investment security since 1992
- The largest domestic market of all CEE countries
- The most attractive investment destination of all CEE countries, Europe's fifth most attractive investment destination (according to EY, 2016)
- Member of the European Union
- Lower labour costs than in the countries of Western Europe
- Low tax rates: CIT at 19% and 15% for small and new businesses (Ministry of Finance, 2017)
- Educated workforce: the 11th place in the OECD's global International Education Ranking (OECD, 2014)
- Third position in the ranking of the best startup locations (SeedStars/Forbes, 2015)
- 24th country in the World Bank's Doing Business ranking (2015)
- Average Internet speed at 10.6 Mb/s (Akamai, 2015)

What do investors appreciate about Warsaw?

- Poland's key political, economic, and cultural centre
- Highest degree of pro-market and pro-development attitudes in Poland (PwC, 2015)
- Open to businesses: the 4th most business friendly city in Europe (European Cities and Regions, 2016/2017)
- Transport hub: two airports, over 120 destinations
- Europe's fastest-developing region in terms of NUTS 2 (Eurostat, 2014)
- The highest number of universities of all Polish cities: 77 universities and 250,000 students
- 150 research institutions
- Steady and continuing development of municipal investment: PLN 16 billion to be invested in the years 2016-2022
- 115 co-working offices (coworkexpert)
- 6th position in the global Investment Intensity Index (JLL, 2014)
- The largest number of business events in Poland – 25,000 per year (Warsaw Convention Bureau)

Warsaw, a city with an atmosphere

On David Bowie's 1977 album, *Low*, there was a dark and distressing track: *Warsaw*. It matched the Warsaw of 1977, a grey and sad city somewhere behind the Iron Curtain. Today, 40 years on, Warsaw is so much unlike that bleak city from the 1970s. Poland's capital has transformed into a thriving European metropolis with colourful streetlights and bustling restaurants serving flavours from all corners of the world to customers conversing in multiple languages. Along Vistula, the city has developed many attractions such as public beaches, bicycle paths, boulevards, the Multimedia Fountain Park, the Copernicus Science Centre, and the National Stadium. In spring, seasonal clubs and cafés pop up on both banks of the river and become Warsaw's party and night-life hot spot for the warm season.

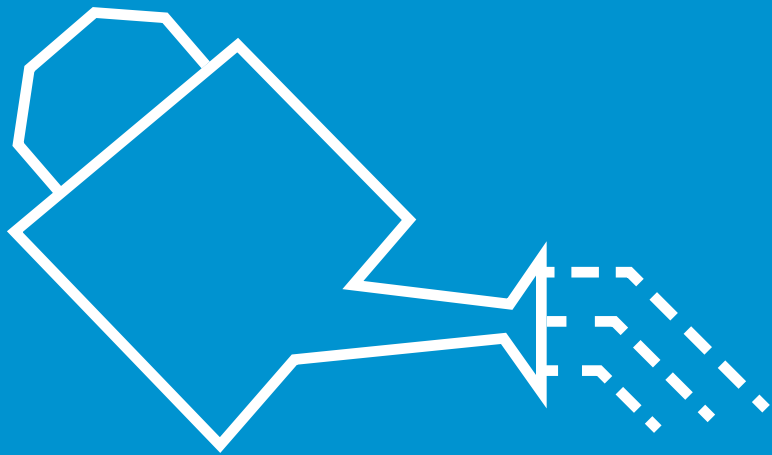
The once-infamous Praga district situated on the right bank of the Vistula is now home to Google's Warsaw Campus. The district also houses the Centre of Creativity Targowa and one of the capital's Business Links. The Nowa Praga Creativity Centre – another municipal investment for artists and designers, is under construction. The city also boasts

its own Soho resembling London's Shoreditch thanks to the originality and flair of its people, well reflected by the area's impressive murals. One of them is situated in the pretty district of Żoliborz and shows David Bowie, an artist of great intuition who included the *Warsaw* album in his famous Berlin trilogy. Warsaw's atmosphere today is often compared to that of the contemporary Berlin – although Warsaw most definitely has its unique flavour.



...Poland's capital has transformed into a thriving European metropolis with colourful streetlights and bustling restaurants...





What's Warsaw doing for startups?

Warsaw was one of the first cities in Poland to recognise the need to invest in startups. Consequently, the city created its first incubators which were soon appreciated by entrepreneurs: the Centre of Entrepreneurship Smolna, and the Centre of Creativity Targowa. Warsaw has also initiated Poland's first city accelerator scheme funded by the local government. The city is also consistent in its implementation of entrepreneurship support policies which encompass training courses and workshops at preferential rates, space rental for companies and organisation of numerous events targeted at the startup industry. A comprehensive export activity support scheme for SMEs from the Warsaw agglomeration known as Grow with Greater Warsaw has been launched in 2016. By joining the capital's startup community #TechWawa, companies can actively benefit from all forms of municipal support for innovative entrepreneurs.



CENTRUM
KREATYWNOŚCI
TARGOWA



Centre of Creativity Targowa

The Centre of Creativity Targowa is situated at the heart of Warsaw's Praga district, in a renovated and charming tenement house built in 1867 (formerly a property of the Minter family). Now the Centre is a venue open to artists and entrepreneurs from the creative industry. The incubator hosts 33 workshops and offers more than 3,000 sqm of space, including conference rooms, exhibition and event space as well as a municipal reading room. The Centre of Creativity Targowa supports startups from the creative industry by offering preferential rent rates, training courses, information

and advisory services, and more. In the coming years, in the Centre's vicinity at Targowa 80 and Inżynierska 3, a sister institution will be launched under the name Centre of Creativity Nowa Praga. The new centre's leading idea will be 'Do It Yourself'. It will offer access to workshop space for artists and a lab equipped with prototyping tools, as well as crafts workshops with professional upholstery, woodworking and metal cutting tools. The new facility will also offer access to conference and exhibition space, micro-offices, an open space area, a rehearsal room and hostel accommodation.

Targowa 56
03-733 Warsaw
tel.: 22 465 90 66 (67)
repcja@ck56.pl

[firma.um.warszawa.pl/projekty/
centrum-kreatywnosci-targowa-56](http://firma.um.warszawa.pl/projekty/centrum-kreatywnosci-targowa-56)

facebook.com/KreatywnaWarszawa

Centre of Entrepreneurship Smolna

The Centre of Entrepreneurship Smolna is an entrepreneurship incubator and a co-working space managed by the City of Warsaw. It is located in a quiet and centrally-located park, a few steps from a city railway station. The Centre's activity focuses on training and consulting services, financial and legal services as well as accounting and management services for those planning to start their own business, or for existing businesses. At the Centre you can attend lectures, networking events and training courses

in communication skills. The Centre offers attractive rates for the rental of its office space composed of 40 open space workstations, four office rooms and three conference rooms. There is also a consultancy centre where you can register your business activity. Moreover, the Centre also runs its website for entrepreneurs, firma.um.warszawa.pl, and uses it to publish up-to-date information on training, conferences, networking events, funding opportunities, tenders and projects in progress.

Smolna 4
00-375 Warsaw
tel.: 22 443 07 56
centrum.przedsiębiorczosci@um.warszawa.pl

firma.um.warszawa.pl

[facebook.com/CentrumPrzedsiębiorczości
Smolna](https://facebook.com/CentrumPrzedsiębiorczościSmolna)



CENTRUM
PRZEDSIĘBIORCZOŚCI
SMOLNA



Grow with Greater Warsaw

Grow with Greater Warsaw is an export support programme coordinated by the City of Warsaw in the years 2016-2020, which aims to enable the internationalisation of SMEs and startups from the agglomeration, to be implemented in 2016-2022. As part of the plan, companies will have an opportunity to seek expert advice and training in how to access foreign markets. They will also be able to learn how to present their offer at international fairs, and how to take part in foreign economic missions and establish international contacts at B2B events or conferences.

The scheme will also support the marketing activities of products and services offered abroad by Warsaw's SMEs. Grow with Greater Warsaw will help entrepreneurs from the agglomeration develop their international position. The activities under the umbrella of Grow with Greater Warsaw are part of the WOF Expo programme for the economic promotion of the Warsaw Functional Area, and are co-financed from the European Regional Development Fund, Operational Programme for Mazowieckie Region for the years 2014-2020.

Smolna 4
00-375 Warsaw
tel.: 22 443 07 91
info@gwggw.com.pl

gwggw.com.pl

Zodiak Pavilion

Soon, in the middle of 2018, the group of Warsaw's institutions for entrepreneurs will be joined by the Warsaw Centre of Economic Promotion located in Zodiak Pavilion. The Centre will create a space for public debates on the architectural, planning and economic future of Warsaw. The first floor of this two-storey building, designed in the 1960s by renowned architects Jan Bogusławski and Bohdan Gniiewiewski, will be occupied by the City's Office for Economic

Development. The Office will invite entrepreneurs and civil society organisations to implement joint projects. Together, they will create an interactive showroom, an economic show-piece of Warsaw and the metropolitan region. The building's ground floor space will host exhibitions of architectural and city planning designs developed by the Warsaw Branch of the Association of Polish Architects (OW SARP). On warm days, the square located next to the building

will be the venue of events broadcast online. If there is a need for more privacy, Zodiak's café and bookshop will be the perfect place for a meeting. Zodiak's redevelopment is synchronised with the renovation of a line of buildings in central Warsaw referred to as Ściana Wschodnia (the eastern flank of Marszałkowska).



Visualisation Gowin & Siuta

Municipal accelerator schemes



Be Creative in Warsaw

Be Creative in Warsaw was the first municipal foreign & domestic support programme for the most promising creative industries. It was launched in 2016 in collaboration with AIP Seed Capital (Academic Entrepreneurship Incubators). Over five months of the initiative's duration, 50 entrepreneurs representing fashion, design and computer games industries took part in professional mentoring sessions, networking events and training courses in business competencies as well as startup development strategy modelling and elaboration. The main prize of PLN 20,000, an acceleration package and membership in AIP Business Link community was awarded to Niebagatela, manufacturer of hand-crafted wooden eyewear.

becreativeinwarsaw.pl



Startup Hub Warsaw

Startup Hub Warsaw is an acceleration programme implemented in 2016 and commissioned by the Municipal Office of the City of Warsaw. Its aim is to develop ICT, the Internet of Things and life science industries in the city. Approximately 500 projects from around the globe applied to join the programme, and as many as 60 applicants qualified to its first stage. They were able to participate in workshops, business consultancy sessions and investor acquisition training. The City also funded the main prize of PLN 30,000 for the best startup. The programme's operator was Startup Hub Poland Foundation. It was the first acceleration programme directed, among others, to foreign companies which wish to run their business from Warsaw.

startuphub.pl/warsaw



WAW.AC

WAW.AC was the first municipal acceleration programme carried out by the Office of the City of Warsaw. The course was attended by 40 participants, half of whom qualified to the next stage, i.e. individual coaching workshops. The programme's finale was the Demo Day, a startup presentation fest. One of the project teams participating in WAW.AC, with Professor Magdalena Król as its leader, received an EU grant worth EUR 1.4 million for research on combating cancer. The programme's operator was Med INN Foundation for the Development of Innovation. WAW.AC has also run further editions of the programme, implemented as the Foundation's independent endeavours.

waw.ac

Projects implemented by the City of Warsaw

photo JimB40
Robert Janiszewski



#Academy_Smolna

#Academy_Smolna is a series of professional business workshops, mentoring sessions and individual consultancy sessions for budding entrepreneurs. The sessions are delivered by experts and experienced practitioners. Their goal is to create an initial business model, teach the lean startup method, and develop the matching business & sales strategy.

#Net_Smolna

The Centre of Entrepreneurship Smolnap organises networking events which offer a great opportunity to develop business contacts, identify challenges and barriers to growth, find a common position of the startup business community to be used in the contacts with the local administration.

#Open_Smolna

#Open_Smolna offers inspiring talks for entrepreneurs delivered by renowned experts and leaders of the startup community. The events are aimed at developing the skills and competencies necessary for effective company owners. #Open_Smolna has so far invited prominent speakers including Artur Kurasiński, Paweł Tkaczyk and Michał Sadowski.

Creative Mikser

Creative Mikser is a series of events for the creative industries, co-organised by the Municipal Office of Warsaw and the British Council since 2011, accompanied by inspiring presentations and heated debates. The events offer a great opportunity to meet outstanding personalities and establish business contacts. They are organised in venues associated with the creative industry and their open form creates a favourable atmosphere for an unrestrained exchange of ideas.

#Spin_Smolna

#Spin_Smolna offers workshops on finding and confirming the key values of the product or service with a view to develop an effective communication formula to match the clients, business partners, co-workers and investors. The programme's final event is the Pitch Day, an opportunity for the startups to present to a wider audience.

Information Point at the Centre of Entrepreneurship Smolna

The info Point at Centre of Entrepreneurship Smolna is where you can register a company promptly and with friendly assistance. You can also access expert guidance on the issues related to starting one's own business, and on how to acquire funding for the development of your business. The Info Point is located in room 015.



Visit supporting organisations in Warsaw!

Warsaw's startup ecosystem would not be as impressive as it is if it were not for its well-organised community which is supported by an extensive infrastructure formed by business incubators, cooperation centres or Poland's largest network of coworking offices. These supporting organisations, apart from offering their infrastructural support, assist entrepreneurs by providing them with access to training, knowledge, investors, mentors, and networks of valuable contacts. Their role is important but, what seems to be the most important factor is the energy and drive of the city's young entrepreneurs and NGO activists who join forces to support innovative businesses in Poland.

AIP Warsaw

The Academic Business Incubators (AIP) are Poland's largest startup community offering the complete infrastructure to run one's business, including co-working office space in 11 locations across Warsaw. Moreover, the AIP organises networking events to facilitate business contacts and enables young entrepreneurs to start their companies with a sub-account, without the necessity to register or pay social security contributions. At the end of 2016 there were 610 startups registered at Warsaw's AIP.



aipwarszawa.pl

Business Link

Business Link is an ecosystem for entrepreneurs and a workplace driven by values. It offers modern office space, co-working, conference rooms and a wide array of supplementary services. Business Link's users acquire access to a network of contacts including investors and business celebrities. The network currently spans 10 cities in Poland; Warsaw's Business Links are located in two prime spots, i.e. the National Stadium and the Zebra Tower (Mokotowska 1).



blpoland.com

Campus Warsaw

Campus Warsaw is Google's first office space of the kind in CEE countries. It offers its entrepreneurs support in the development of their skills through networking, events, training courses and workshops.



campus.co/warsaw

Centre of Creativity Targowa

The Centre of Creativity Targowa supports startups from the creative sector by offering workshop and conference space for rent. It also implements other activities aimed at the development of entrepreneurship (read more on p. 12).



firma.um.warszawa.pl/projekty/
centrum-kreatywnosci-targowa-56

Centre of Entrepreneurship Smolna

The Centre of Entrepreneurship Smolna provides training, consulting, financial, legal, accounting and management services for startups. It also offers co-working space for rent. (read more on p. 13).



firma.um.warszawa.pl

CZiITT

Warsaw University of Technology's Innovation Incubator is an infrastructural and expert support entity for entrepreneurs and technological companies. Its services and assistance are directed predominantly to the persons or project teams who wish to validate their business concepts or products throughout a 1-monthlong pre-incubation programme or a 6-monthlong acceleration programme for startups and young tech businesses seeking support and development opportunities.



czyitt.pw.edu.pl

DELab UW

Warsaw University's Digital Economy Lab invites young companies such as startups, micro-businesses, foundations and projects to join its Activity Zone for the endeavours which aim to foster different forms of collaboration with the academia concurrently with their core business activity. The Lab also conducts research on the application of new technologies in economy and society. Consequently, effective collaboration and knowledge-sharing are the Lab's key values.



delab.uw.edu.pl

Kampus+

Kampus+ is an initiative undertaken to tap into the capacity of the academic, technological and business communities in Warsaw and the entire region of Mazowsze. The initiative will result in the creation of Europe's largest Living Lab. Equipped with its innovative R&D centres, the Living Lab will offer a space for testing and implementation of smart living technologies.



kampusplus.pl

Reaktor

ReaktorWarsaw is a non-profit organisation established in 2011 for startups by startups. It offers coworking space and is famous for its monthly startup event, the OpenReaktor as well as the events with mentors called the Reaktor Open Office Hours. The organisation also runs its acceleration scheme, ReaktorX.



reaktorwarsaw.com

Startup Hub Poland

The Startup Hub Poland Foundation (SHP) is a non-profit organisation whose goal is to internationalise Polish startups. Among its other activities, the Foundation's Warsaw branch manages a business incubation programme. It offers access to office and laboratory space, legal & operational support, mentoring and assistance in business development and acquisition of funding.



startuphub.pl

Startup Poland

The Startup Poland Foundation represents the community of innovative entrepreneurs and is the voice of Polish startups. Its aim is to develop the awareness of startup's capacity among decision makers, politicians and representatives of local authorities. In its activities, the Foundation focuses on identifying and eliminating the barriers to the development of innovative companies in Poland. It also supports legislative efforts which lead to the development of the ecosystem for startups.



startuppoland.org

The Heart Warsaw

The Heart Warsaw is a European centre for cooperation between corporations and startups, created by D-RAFT, Ghelamco and MasterCard and located on 38th floor of the Warsaw Spire, the capital's tallest office building. The Heart's ScaleUp initiative and thematic programmes support the region's leading companies in the development of their businesses and global expansion.



theheart.tech

Youth Business Poland

Youth Business Poland (YBP) is an accredited member of Prince Charles' Youth Business International (YBI), a foundation supporting entrepreneurs and new jobs in 46 countries. YBP's programme in Poland is managed by the Inkubator Technologiczny Foundation, a group of 100 mentors, i.e. experienced business practitioners who have helped 600 companies get off to a start since 2008. YBP offers support in mentoring, acceleration, training, consulting, and acquisition of funds.



ybp.org.pl



Networking in Warsaw

The calendar of events for startups in Warsaw offers a rich mixture of international and local conferences, specialist training and workshops, hackathons, and networking events. There is plenty to choose from, and almost every day is an opportunity to take part in an event to suit your requirements. In this guide we present a selection of regular events which have earned a recognition within the startup community. You will find up-to-date information on the current events on the following web pages: startuppoland.org/wydarzenia and crossweb.pl.



Aula Polska

Aula Polska develops the community and ecosystem for innovative companies and business endeavours. Its mission is implemented through practice and exchange of experience. Aula's events are attended by owners of young businesses, seasoned entrepreneurs, experts, and representatives of the media.

organised by: Artur Kurasiński
event frequency: 2/month
number of participants: 150-200
aulapolska.pl

Bitspiration

Bitspiration Festival is a platform for Central and Eastern European entrepreneurs, startappers and key opinion leaders from the world of business and new technologies. In the next edition the Festival's educational mission will be extended to include marketing strategies and sales strategies for entrepreneurs.

organised by: PROIDEA sp. z o.o.
event frequency: 1/year
number of participants: 1,200
bitspiration.com

Carrots Meetup

Geek Girls Carrots is a community of women who love new technologies. Established in 2011 in Warsaw, its aim is to increase the participation of women in IT industry. The community's members, popularly referred to as the Carrots, have implemented social initiatives for women in over 30 cities and 14 countries worldwide.

organised by: Geek Girls Carrots
event frequency: 1/month
number of participants: 50-100
geekgirlscarrots.org

Confitura

Confitura is one of Poland's largest Java conferences. Since 2007, the event has been an international platform for the exchange of knowledge and experience among software developers.

organised by: Brain Change Continental
event frequency: 1/year
number of participants: ~1,400
confitura.pl

Conferences for Women Entrepreneurs

The conferences organised by the Network of Women Entrepreneurs are directed to businesswomen and are each devoted to a different, up-to-date challenge from the domain of business and professional development. The conference speeches offer new knowledge but also an opportunity to develop one's network, start collaborative projects or get inspired.

organised by: Fundacja Przedsiębiorczości Kobiet
event frequency: 2/year (spring, autumn)
number of participants: 500
siecprzedsiębiorczychkobiet.pl/
konferencje

Innovative Economy Congress

The Innovative Economy Congress is a platform for all stakeholders who benefit from innovation-friendly activities in Poland. Its mission is to offer solutions for the development of knowledge-based economy.

organised by: the National Chamber of Commerce
event frequency: 1/year
number of participants: 800+
kongresig.pl



Let's Start Up!

Let's Start Up! is joint initiative of students of Warsaw School of Economics, University of Warsaw and Warsaw University of Technology who are interested in working for or starting a tech company. The events organised as part of Let's Start Up! are an opportunity to present a business, analyse its challenges and meet prospective investors.

organised by: Student Business Circle at the Warsaw School of Economics
event frequency: 1/year
number of participants: 1,000
lsuwarsaw.pl



The Young & Innovative. Young Entrepreneurs Forum

The Young & Innovative – Young Entrepreneurs Forum is a place where young and dynamic entrepreneurs have an opportunity to express their views on the legal, financial, economic and social environment in which they operate.

organised by: Polish Chamber of Commerce
event frequency: 1/year
number of participants: 300
minnovazione.pl



NXTWAW

NXTWAW is a community which intends to change Warsaw by implementing new projects and initiatives. It encourages the exchange of ideas and tapping into the potential of the local community in order to translate innovative concepts into activities which change the local environment.

organised by: Drew Stachnik
event frequency: 1/month – always on the last Wednesday of each month
number of participants: 200
nxtwaw.com



OpenReaktor

OpenReaktor aims to facilitate networking, knowledge- and experience-sharing and integration of Warsaw's startup scene in an informal atmosphere, with pizza and beer to accompany the discussions.

organised by: ReaktorWarsaw
event frequency: 1/month
number of participants: 100–120
reaktorwarsaw.com



Pixel Heaven

Pixel Heaven is Poland's largest event for Polish independent video games studios. The event is made up of PIXEL.EXPO, an exhibition space, PIXEL.CONNECT conference, and PIXEL.AWARDS.

organised by: PIXEL monthly magazine
event frequency: 1/year
number of participants: 8,000
pixelheavenfest.com



Scalar Conference

The main goal of the Scalar Conference is to popularise the Scala language among developers by presenting Scala implementations and case studies. The event also offers practical workshops and live coding sessions.

organised by: SoftwareMill
event frequency: 1/year
number of participants: 500
scalar-conf.com

Startup Coffee by flame.



Startup Coffee

Startup Coffee organises meetings for young entrepreneurs who are embarking on the path of innovative business. The regular monthly events present useful techniques and methods for startup development such as customer development, lean startup, or agile management.

organised by: flame
event frequency: 1/month
number of participants: 5-15
meetup.com/startupcoffeebyflame



Startup Grind

Startup Grind is a community which unites, teaches and inspires entrepreneurs. It was established in 2010 in San Francisco, and operates in 200 cities across 85 countries. Startup Grind events present interviews with experienced entrepreneurs and creates a global networking opportunity for Polish startups.

organised by: Anna Walkowska
event frequency: once every two months
number of participants: 80-120
startupgrind.com/warsaw



Startup Weekend/SWWAW

Startup Weekend Warsaw is an international hackathon format linked to Techstars accelerator. During the 54-hour-long event, the participant's task is to prepare and validate business concepts. The assumption is for every team to guide their idea to the stage of prototyping/MVP (minimum viable product).

organised by: CoreTeam – Magda Borowik, Konrad Latkowski, Jarosław Piotrowski, Bartek Staryga
event frequency: 1-2/year
number of participants: 100 participants, 20 mentors and jurors
swwaw.com



Global Entrepreneurship Week

The Global Entrepreneurship Week is an international project which has been in operation since 2008. Present in 160 countries worldwide, it promotes conscious development, pro-active attitudes and innovative business undertakings. The event offers free training courses, workshops, debates and contests to help the participants acquire knowledge on how to establish one's own business, build a network of contacts, develop a startup.

organised by: The Global Entrepreneurship Week Foundation
event frequency: 1/year, always in the 3rd week of November
number of participants: ~100,000
tydzienprzedsiebiorczosci.pl



Technologie Relacje Wiedza

Technologie Relacje Wiedza (Technology, Relations, Knowledge) is a series of meetings aimed at facilitating the exchange of experience and disseminating best practice for the implementation of innovative projects.

organised by: BT Progress
event frequency: 1/month
number of participants: 100
technologie-relacje-wiedza.pl



Wolves Summit










The goal of the Summit is to help startups find sources of funding and contacts with the world of business through networking events and one-on-one meetings. Apart from organising the conferences, the Wolves Summit helps startups set up their marketing and sales funnels and use videos as a marketing tool.

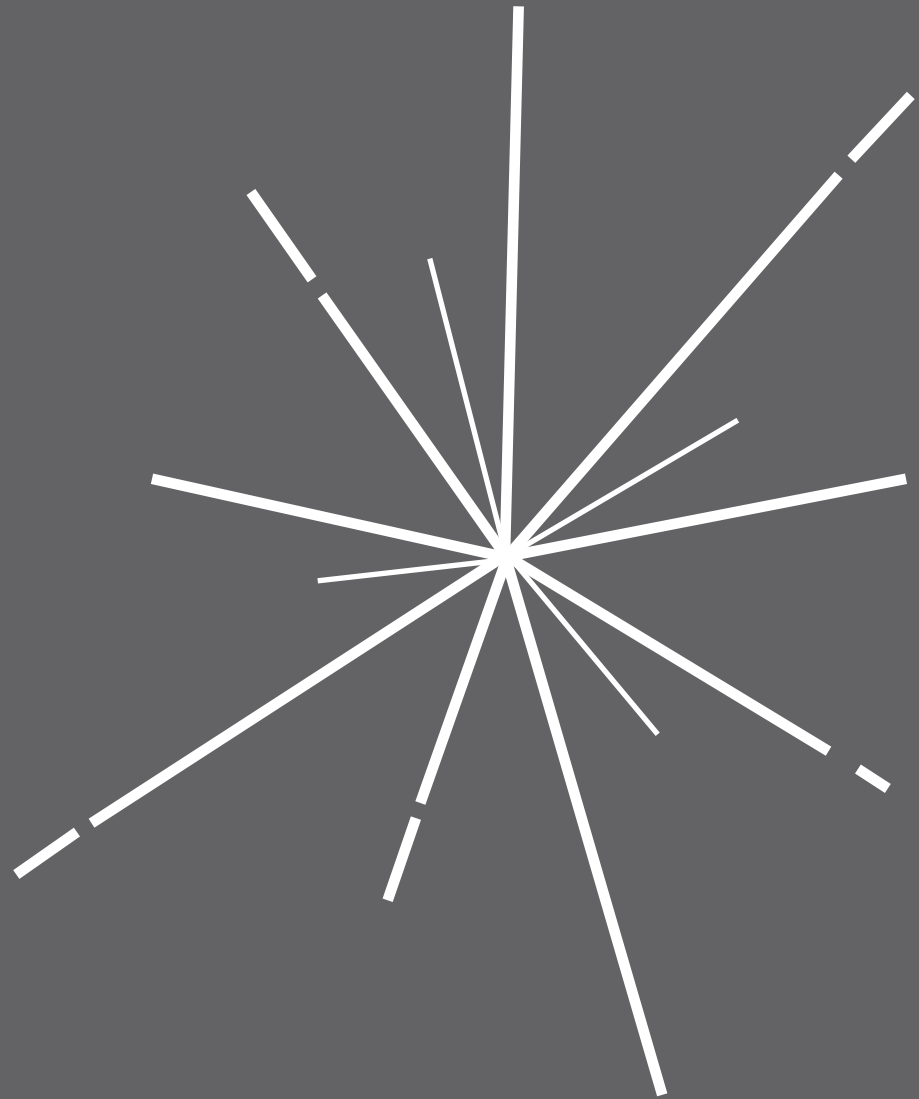
organised by: Fundacja Wolves Den Foundation
event frequency: 2/year (April/October)
number of participants: 2,000
wolvessummit.com



Get funding for your startup in Warsaw!














Most Polish startups finance their activity from their own funds. The most frequently used external sources of funding include EU grants, venture capital funds and business angels. Funding acquisition through crowdfunding platforms such as findfunds.pl, wspolnicy.pl or crowdangels.pl is also becoming popular. Capital for startups is also offered by large entities such as the National Economy Bank (BGK), the Mazovian Credit Guarantee Fund, the Mazovian Loan Fund or the National Contact Point for Financial Instruments of the EU Programmes. There are also other state institutions which provide funding for innovative endeavours: the National Centre for Research (NCBR) and Development and the Polish Investment and Trade Agency (PAIIZ). It's worthwhile checking the most up-to-date information on the websites of these institutions. In this guide we present a catalogue of venture capital funds which operate in Warsaw.

| |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |
|-----------------------------|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------------------------|
| No. of investments | 26 | 12 since 2013 | 34 since 2012 | 13 since 2012 | 5 | 15 | 1500 in 57 countries since 1991 | 14 | 15 since 2013 | No. of investments |
| stage of development | concept, prototype, preliminary business plan | early growth, growth, expansion | startup, initial phase, development | seed or later stages | concept, prototype, preliminary business plan, ready product | startups with traction | all | VC or early stage | seed, late seed, expansion | stage of development |
| investment level | PLN 800,000 | PLN 12 million | PLN 0.5–12 million | PLN 1–3 million | PLN 1 million | PLN 1 million + | USD 0.25–250 million | USD 3 million | PLN 2 million | investment level |
| additional services | patent, finance, strategic, investment, tax, and legal advisory services | expert support in management of the business | communication, technologies, the media, the Internet, entertainment | know-how of Internet business practitioners | patent, finance, strategic, investment advisory services | expert support for sales, marketing, finance, operations and HR | technical analyses, transaction handling, marketing support | know-how, expert support in management of the business and finance operations | access to know-how of the partners | additional services |
| Internet address | ainot.pl | evf.com.pl/pl | gpventures.pl | hedgehogfund.pl | infini.pl | inovo.vc | intelcapital.com | mci.eu | protos.vc | Internet address |



Accelerate in Warsaw!

An accelerator is a device which accelerates particles to nearly light speed. However, the term is also used in the context of startup support, as business accelerators are also meant to give a budding enterprise momentum. Every year a number of acceleration programmes are initiated in Warsaw by supporting institutions, entities active within the startup community or by investment funds, corporations, and public administration bodies. New initiatives are cropping up all the time so in order to have a full picture you have to stay up-to-date.

| |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |
|--|--|--|---|--|---|--|---|---|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| development stage of accepted startups | interested entrepreneurs, seed | research, MVP, active prototype | MVP | seed | MVP | pre-seed, non-equity accelerator, prototype necessary | existing solutions consistent with Orange's strategy | idea stage, possibly also MVP | companies at the stage of preparation for formal registration | TRL1-TRL7 | no criteria | scale-up phase | MVP-pre-seed | development stage of accepted startups |
| programmes/schemes | Company with no social security burdens at AIP, AIP coworking | preacceleration scheme for researchers | IMPACT, IMPACT_Poland, IMPACT Growth, Cycle | GammaRebe Is in collaboration with Poczta Polska, Start-up Next Warsaw | programmes for insurancetech, FinTech industries | MIT Enterprise Forum Poland | Orange Fab | ReaktorX | Business in Women's Hands | BridgeAlfa Incubator 2015, Startup Hub Warsaw Accelerator | Connector, Startup Poland Global | Think Big | 5-month-long acceleration programme | programmes/schemes |
| number of supported startups | 470 | 20 | 100 | 10-20 | 41 | 25 | 6 | 5-10 | 50 | 8 | 199 | no data | 30-50 | number of supported startups |
| services | networking, workshops, investments, partnership scheme, advisory and consulting, pitching, legal personality, voluntary social security contribution, legal advice and accounting services, on-line services | access to business management know-how, meetings with representatives of the startup ecosystem, corporations and business support institutions; workshops, individual sessions | EUR 100,000 equity free, 6-monthlong acceleration programme (up to 250 hours of mentoring), possibility of securing further rounds of funding | Free access to Amazon AWS, Google and Microsoft cloud services, PayPal's Blueprint programme, and more. Expert support, financial support, workshops | individual mentor, workshops, one-on-one sessions, access to knowledge and experts from 500Startups and Techstars, tools of the programme's partners, analysts of SpeedUp Group Fund, possibility to acquire support from portfolio companies | PLN 200k for business support, PLN 50k for expert services and consulting. MIT Enterprise Forum Poland is non-equity (it does not expect shares) | workshops, mentoring, coaching, participation in conferences and partner's events, access to VC funds and business angels, scale-up opportunities | networking events, workshops, mentoring sessions | training: workshops and individual consulting, mentoring, networking (incl. networking sessions with female startupers, inspiration and Be the Change networking events in a wider group of stakeholders) | seed investment, mentor and BA support, access to a broad network of contacts, assistance in acquisition of funds for the next round of investment. We help discover the commercialisation potential of technological projects | industry events, participation in fairs, conferences, discussion panels, access to an investor database | winner will have an opportunity to grow their business at UPC's side, main prize; EUR 10,000 | mentoring, networking, acquisition of funding, workshops | services |
| Internet address | aipwarszawa.pl | alfa.ac | fundingbox.com | hardgamma.com | hugething.vc | mitefpoland.org | orangefab.pl | reaktorx.com | siecpredsiemkobiet.pl/programy | startuphub.pl | startuppoland.org | thinkbig.upc.pl | waw.ac | Internet address |



Get to know Warsaw's startups!

The international success stories of companies such as Audioteka, Filmaster, Ifinity or Showroom prove that Warsaw is the hub of the region's innovative business. *The Witcher*, produced by Warsaw-based CD PROJEKT, is the third most-awarded computer game of all times. The number of Warsaw-based startups which are able to compete like equals with the largest global players is growing every year. You can read about some of them below.

Booksy

What problem has Booksy tackled?

Booksy delivers a solution for quick and easy appointment booking for customers of health & beauty businesses. We also help beauty salons manage all aspects of their activity, e.g. sales, warehouse, marketing activities, employee remuneration, etc. Booksy users make their appointments on average 20–30% more frequently than those who use traditional communication channels. The businesses save time which they can later use to develop lasting customer relations.

How did you know there was demand for your product?

We tested Booksy for six months with 50 hairdressers who helped us fine-tune the system and create the matching business model.

How did you find your first customers?

We found them online, through PPC channels.

What stage of development are you at now?

We're currently closing round 1 at 4 million dollars. We'll soon be scaling the business up on our key markets, i.e. the US, the UK, Brazil, and Poland. We'll also look out for opportunities to expand to other markets. Currently, 25k appointments are made through Booksy every day. Our goal is to reach the level of one million appointments within 2 years.



Stefan Batory, CEO

What were the biggest mistakes you've made and what lessons have you learnt as a result?

We were too quick to enter some markets. The organisation was not yet ready for up-scaling. Consequently, not all of our business processes worked well. Now I know it is sometimes a good idea to wait for some time.

What are the key experiences from your startup launch?

Three years ago, when I was researching the market with Konrad Howard, nobody believed in our idea. We knew our project had that 'something' in it so we decided to fund the first stage on our own, and that is how we got our MVP. It was well worth it. Without that decision and the further traction we wouldn't have acquired funding later. If you're certain about the value of your idea, it makes sense to bet everything on this one horse.

What's your advice for budding entrepreneurs?

I think they need to focus on building a product and finding a group of customers first. It's a good idea to try to do without investor support for as long as possible.

What makes Warsaw stand out on the startup scene and is Warsaw's originality the reason why you decided to launch your startup here?

I don't know any other startup scenes really so I can't make any comparisons.

industry: SaaS
headcount: ~70
established in: 2015
acquired funding: USD 4 million
biz.booksy.net

Curious Element



Jakub Terczyński,
CEO

costs while increasing the safety or simply introducing the fun element.

How did you know there was demand for your product?

Already at the initial phases of the projects all our implementations are preceded by consultations with the end users.

How did you find your first clients?

We owe it all to networking and face-to-face contacts. Over the first year of the startup's operation we took part in approximately 20 events. Business fairs turned out to be really helpful – we showed our product together with a business partner who showed their complementary product.

What were the biggest mistakes you've made and what lessons have you learnt as a result?

Our largest mistakes were too extensive planning, too lenient team management and mismatched recruitment, but thanks to our mistakes we've learned a lot. Most of all, we've grown sensitive to the features of the persons who add little value to the project. We've also learned to manage processes within a startup in a more mature way.

What are the key experiences from your startup launch?

The most important experience was to open to others and shift away from

thinking that you can meet all your objectives on your own.

What's your advice for budding entrepreneurs?

They should be relentless, they should be looking for better solutions all the time, they must not be afraid of change and they should be flexible. Experts always have plenty of critical comments for each project but you must remember that the project is your vision and you need to be sensible in filtering the feedback you get. Stick to your vision and mission at all times.

What makes Warsaw stand out on the startup scene and is Warsaw's originality the reason why you decided to launch your startup here?

We took part in the Be Creative in Warsaw project for 50 leading startups from the fashion, design and computer games industries. We met many young, talented and passionate people there. The event was valuable for us because it enabled us to build a network of interesting contacts and learn some tools to guide us through the critical moment in the startup's operation. The Warsaw competition stood out because of the attitude of the contestants: there was no aggressive rivalry, we supported and inspired one another instead.

industry: IT, multimedia, VR
headcount: 4
established in: 2015
curioselement.com

DocPlanner



I understood that doing simple things is often the most disruptive positive factor for the company's activity.

What problem has DocPlanner tackled?

ZnanyLekarz.pl was initially a platform for gathering information about doctors and doctor reviews. Currently, our sites are available in 30 countries. Apart from the initial functionality they facilitate making appointments with the selected specialist. We have 18 million users each month. We help doctors with private practices acquire more patients and manage their appointment calendars. We also offer a convenient system for appointment management for health centres.

How did you know there was demand for your product?

I was looking for a good doctor myself at one point in time. Nobody was able to recommend the best specialist available. Then I realised that the market was not transparent. I was trying to come up with a solution, a way to change the state of things. I knew that Internet

users looked for reviews of doctors on-line. However, there was no single site where they could find information about a specialist, read patient reviews, and make an appointment at the same time. ZnanyLekarz.pl site was already in operation at the time. I recognised its potential and decided to invest in it. As the system developed and as our contacts with the medical profession grew I realised that the way doctors organise their work did not match the modern standards. Many doctors were still using paper print calendars to manage their schedules. We decided to help them and automate the everyday tasks for more efficient practice or health centre management.

How did you find your first customers?

Through direct sales. These weren't the easiest of times. We were not yet popular at the time, and doctors are extremely busy and demanding customers.

However, we were able to reach them and convince them to cooperate with us.

What stage of development are you at now?

The entire DocPlanner group currently employs 260 persons. 25,000 doctors pay for our services. We have offices in Warsaw, Barcelona, Rome, and Istanbul. We lead the market in Poland, Spain, Turkey, Italy, Brazil, and in Mexico.

What were the biggest mistakes you've made and what lessons have you learnt as a result?

Looking back I have to admit that my biggest mistake was my insufficient ability to say 'no' to some new ideas which we simply didn't have the time for. Consequently, we suffered a few defeats by losing the vital tasks from sight. I also understood that it is impossible to build a sales team in a foreign

country without someone from the location, someone knowledgeable about the local reality.

What are the key experiences from your startup launch?

Most of all, it was a unique opportunity to see for myself how much product simplicity matters if you want it to be implemented and serve the society. Sometimes it's enough to work a bit longer on the textual content of the site, button visibility – simple things really, but ones that enable you to achieve better results. I also understood that doing simple things is often the most disruptive thing for the company.

What's your advice for budding entrepreneurs?

I have a few tips to offer. They're equally important. Most of all: do not complicate, make it simpler. Try to do one thing but do it very well. Say 'no' to all

ideas which are redundant on your path to small-scale success. Talk with your customers. Test. Analyse the numbers and figures. And, last but not least: talk with the persons who have followed a similar path.

What makes Warsaw stand out on the startup scene and is Warsaw's originality the reason why you decided to launch your startup here?

Compared against other cities in Poland, Warsaw is big. It may sound obvious but it is really important as it is easier to find excellent professionals here or expats with fluency in foreign languages. Warsaw is also Poland's largest business hub.

industry: Internet portal, Healthcare
headcount: 250
established in: 2012
acquired funding: USD 34 million
docplanner.com; znanylekarz.pl

Mariusz Gralewski, CEO



DreamJay

Łukasz Młodyszewski,
CEO



What problem has DreamJay tackled?

We spend, or at least should spend, 33% of our lives sleeping. We don't know very well what is happening when we are asleep, or how make the best use of the time. DreamJay wants to change it by introducing augmented sleep for the first time. Thanks to our methodology based on scientific research we create products which will enable us to use human sleep in order to improve the health and well-being of millions of people around the world. Our first product is an application, Nightly, for persons suffering from nightmares. This problem affects 600 million people worldwide. Our methodology was created during clinical trials. So far the app has been tested on over 140 persons suffering from nightmares, often traumarelated nightmares, or PTSD-related nightmares. How does Nightly work? Before you fall asleep you pick and watch a two-minute-long relaxation video. At night, the app produces sounds which influence sleep quality at the right moments. This enables you to get rid of your nightmares and you wake up more feeling more relaxed. Nightly is the first augmented sleep product but in the pipeline we have further products to support therapies, increase the patient's motivation or to detect sleep disorders.

How did you find your first customers?

The first app testers for Nightly were

recruited through personal profiles on social media. They were followed by others thanks to recommendations of those who wanted to get rid of their nightmares. We've also attracted many users thanks to interviews and presentations at conferences.

What stage of development are you at now?

We've finished testing on a limited number of users. Nightly will shortly be available in AppStore, in the first quarter of 2017.

What was your main drive when you launched a startup?

After a few years of work for venture capital funds I wanted to set up my own business. Then Michał, the startup's co-founder, convinced me to work on sleep improvement.

What were the biggest mistakes you've made and what lessons have you learnt as a result?

Investors wanted to give us more money than we actually needed. We didn't accept these excessive amounts. Looking back – I think we should have taken the money.

What makes Warsaw stand out on the startup scene and is Warsaw's originality the reason why you decided to launch your startup here?



Our first product is Nightly, an application for persons suffering from nightmares. a target group of around 600 million people worldwide.

Comparing with the Silicon Valley, Poland's capital is cheaper for business and for research. The competition to attract the best specialist is also not so fierce here. Consequently, Warsaw has created good conditions for the development of disruptive products without the necessity of attracting huge funding.

industry: digital health, med-tech, wellness
headcount: 11
established in: 2014
dreamjay.com



GetLine

Kacper Wikieł, CEO



What problem has GetLine tackled?

GetLine facilitates access to capital for those who take loans and enables those willing to invest to get an attractive return on investment while offering an opportunity to fund an original business model.

How did you find your first clients?

The project was launched at Startup Weekend Fintech 2014 in Warsaw where I was able to acquire the first group of 150 users within 24 hours.

What stage of development are you at now?

We're upscaling our solution. So far it has been working well within

a narrow niche. Now it is of key importance for us to introduce profitability and upscale the operations.

What was your main drive when you launched a startup?

The main drive was our willingness to do it.

What were the biggest mistakes you've made and what lessons have you learnt as a result?

The trickiest thing was the conviction that I need to have a ready product to be able to talk with customers. Today I know it is exactly the other way around.

What makes Warsaw stand out on the startup scene and why did you choose Warsaw as the place to launch your startup?

Warsaw stands out thanks to organisations such as Reaktor or Campus Warsaw. The city also offers an opportunity to recruit your employees and co-workers quickly.

industry: FinTech
headcount: 11
established in: 2016
acquired funding: PLN 100,000
getline.in

Growbots



Łukasz Deka,
CPO & co-founder

What problem has Growbots tackled?

One of the greatest challenges faced by almost every company is how to acquire clients and build an easily up-scalable sales system. In most cases the process is preceded by a tedious, manual and time-consuming search for contacts with prospective clients and customers. The next step is usually to present the offer and start active sales. Growbots has built a tool for B2B companies which can automate and simplify the process of client contacting and acquisition. We have an up-to-date, precise and diverse database and a system for e-mail communication based on machine learning. We're also developing Artificial Intelligence for sales because we want products to automatically find their customers. Our tool is currently able to save the precious time of entrepreneurs and salespersons. With the solution, instead of focusing on manual and repetitive activities, companies can now use their human

resources where they are truly needed. Growbots, by connecting suppliers with receivers, also facilitates the validation of business concepts and elaboration of customer profiles.

How did you know there was demand for your product?

In fact we verified the existence of demand for our product long before the product itself was developed. When Grzegorz Pietruszyński and I were running a lead acquisition agency working with US clients we noticed that there was a market niche that nobody had filled. That niche was the lack of an automation tool for all the sales activities that are necessary but also very time-consuming – I mean finding prospects and developing contacts with them. That is how we created the first specification of our tool.

How did you find your first clients?

We focused on the US market from the very beginning. We realised that it was a difficult market, particularly for a small and unknown Polish business. We approached the challenge very carefully, and with a clear method. We realised that in order to acquire clients on such a large and foreign market we needed to become credible. We decided to develop the required trust and our sales experts image by publishing our guest feature posts on the industry's widely recognised blogs. Grzegorz was able to present his knowledge and

experience on two sites: sixteenventures.com and kissmetrics.com. I must add here that our post on Kissmetrics was among the portal's top three most shared posts. After the publication we promoted both articles through cold mailing i.e. by contacting the renowned SaaS experts. These activities attracted our first clients who visited the Growbots website.

What stage of development are you at now?

We're at an important and exciting stage now. We're trying to secure round A funding, we're growing extremely fast at over 20% monthly, and hugely talented people are joining our team. We want to keep investing in our dynamic growth. Currently our focus is on extending our San Francisco team of 7 people: apart from salespersons we would like our San Francisco staff to include marketing and customer success teams. In Poland, we're developing very strong product competencies and our plan is to double the size of our team within the next 12 months. Although we are already in a position to generate profits, we still prefer to remain close to the break-even point, which is why we can keep investing in the company. We most definitely won't welcome any stagnation in our business.

What were the biggest mistakes you've made and what lessons have you learnt as a result?

It was our clear mistake to announce our success prematurely. There was a time

when we thought we had reached the peak: we'd released our software and a few companies wanted to buy the product. On top of that we were also convinced we'd found an investor. In an unexpected turn of fortune, the investor resigned and the prospective clients never paid for the product. Our team at the time was 20 people strong, and we had less than one hundred dollars on our bank account. But luck was soon back with us. The day after we sent an email to our employees telling them we'd be late with their remuneration, suddenly an investor approached us. However, the whole situation was an important course in humility. We learned to always take the pulse of the company and control the spending. Now we know that finding an investor is never a trivial task, and a client is truly a client only when they've paid for the product.

What are the key experiences from your startup launch?

Most definitely – our participation in 500 Startups accelerator. It was there that we felt the incredible atmosphere created by 35 companies working together in one open space office. There were more than 100 entrepreneurs and mentors at our arm's reach, ready to exchange experience with us. Most of them had already done businesses worth millions. Only the accelerator was able to ensure such an environment. I'd also add our stay in San Francisco and the opportunity to feel the entrepreneurial spirit of the Silicon

Valley. Startups there are very helpful and eager to share their experiences. And everything is transparent – you can easily have an open conversation even with your competitors. Every time we visit our San Francisco office, the open-mindedness of Americans and the spirit of the Silicon Valley inspire us to act; we always come back with heads full of ideas.

What's your advice for budding entrepreneurs?

When it was Amazon's first day as a listed company, CEO Jeff Bezos wrote to the company's shareholders 'it's always day one'. That is the quote which always inspires me to act. Never rest on your laurels. Even if you reach the peak, it means day one on a new trail. It's just like in the mountains. When you've managed to climb a mountain, you are able to see the next one that you hadn't seen before. So you set off to climb that mountain too, and behind it there sure is another one. Managing a startup is a never-ending story. There's never a moment where you wave your flag at the top and say 'we've done it!'. You must all the time be venturing beyond your comfort zone, trying to achieve more.

industry: SaaS
headcount: 65
established in: 2014
acquired funding: USD 1.7 million
growbots.com



Łukasz Kołtowski, CEO & founding partner
Piotr Bajtała, COO & founding partner



What problem has HealthUp tackled?

Our focus is on spirometry. We have developed MySpiroo, a system which helps patients with asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) control their breathing problems. It can also be used to assess the breathing capacity of athletes.

How did you know there was demand for your product?

Our friends from the medical industry, expert advisers and doctors told us about this business need. It was later confirmed in the reports from international health organisations and, most of all, in the

positive assessment of our investor and supervisory board who have very extensive experience in bioscience products.

How did you find your first clients?

We are currently still negotiating with clinics, doctors, health organisations and pharmaceutical companies.

What stage of development are you at now?

We meet all the spirometry standards (ATS/ERS). We have also implemented ISO 13485. Our medical device has acquired the CE label, too. This means we are now officially a manufacturer of medical devices.

What were the biggest mistakes you've made and what lessons have you learnt as a result?

So far the selection of external suppliers has been a challenge. We are currently implementing key tasks internally, and we are running audits of our key suppliers.

What are the key experiences from the launch of your startup?

The three most important aspects are the development of business relations, patent protection and budget.

What's your advice for budding entrepreneurs?

Every idea is worth taking a look at.

It has to be developed, tested, and implemented. You should not fear making decisions and sticking to the choices you've made. Don't look back and ponder whether you may have done something differently.

What makes Warsaw stand out on the startup scene and is Warsaw's originality the reason why you decided to launch your startup here?

I don't like the term 'startup', and neither am I fond of the term 'the startup scene'. I prefer notions such as entrepreneur, industry, company. It's about your approach. You need a serious approach to business and its development. Nowadays everybody

wants to establish a startup but the question is 'what's next?' Going back to the main question, in Warsaw we value the Centre of Entrepreneurship Smolna highly. It is a great place to create a business, located in the middle of a park in Warsaw's Powiśle district. Smolna offers very favourable conditions for business development. That is why our seat is there, too. We recommend Smolna.

industry: health & medical devices
headcount: 8
established in: 2014
acquired funding: USD 1.1 million
myspiroo.com



Every idea is worth taking a look at. It has to be developed, tested, and implemented. You should not fear making decisions and sticking to the choices you've made.

What problem has Ifinity tackled?

Our navigation and geolocation services facilitate digital contextualisation (e.g. in mobile apps) of space as well as particular objects. The most valuable solution we are proud of is navigation with contextual information, developed in mind with blind persons and persons with sight impairment living in Warsaw. It is the first implementation of its kind globally; the solution offers information about public infrastructure. Thanks to our solution Bloomberg Philanthropies Foundation awarded Warsaw with a special prize in the Mayors Challenge.

How did you know there was demand for your product?

From the very beginning of our business the key goal was to validate the concept and the technology based on real-life

implementations which can solve a tangible problem existing in outdoor space. That is why we focused on cities because it is there that usability counts and the scale is big enough. We were able to find a common ground with representatives of the City of Warsaw, which has resulted in many joint projects. It has also naturally led to the development of our competencies and knowledge of the real needs of urban population.

How did you find your first clients?

We contacted them directly and showed them tangible benefits. As we were dealing with a new technology, this was not an easy task. That is why we developed a special pilot programme for mitigating the client's decision-making risk barrier. When we attracted our first

business partners, further acquisitions were easier. Particularly thanks to the media interest that our activities have caused.

What stage of development are you at now?

We are currently delivering positioning technologies for a few large integrators that we cooperate with. At the same time, we are also working on BEACONING, a European educational platform which is being created as part of the EU's Horizon 2020 programme. This project is particularly important for us due to its size and scale. There are 10 partners from across Europe on the project, and its budget amounts to EUR 7 million. We are the only project partner from Poland. We'll be working on this project for three years, which will offer a great opportunity to develop our products and competencies in the smart city domain. Moreover, we're constantly seeking optimal alignment of our technology with market needs, a priority for the coming years.

What were the biggest mistakes you've made and what lessons have you learnt as a result?

We were too optimistic in terms of market adaptation. New technologies need time. It is sometimes impossible to convince our clients to accept what seems obvious for us. Since the very



Adam Jesionkiewicz, CEO

The most valuable solution we are proud of is navigation with contextual information, developed for blind persons and persons with sight impairment living in Warsaw. It is the first implementation of its kind globally; the solution offers information about public infrastructure.

beginning you need to look for pure business value, not technological value.

What are the key experiences from the launch of your startup?

The most precious knowledge you learn throughout the process of innovative business development is the awareness of what's not working. You have to be very agile and ready to shift your priorities. The conclusion is that you shouldn't upscale your business too fast; the bigger a young company is, the less flexible it becomes.

What's your advice for budding entrepreneurs?

When you're developing your startup in Poland you shouldn't count on a series of investment rounds. At the seed stage you have to acquire enough funding to last you until your completely self-sufficient; this means that the commercialisation of your idea will be a must. Of

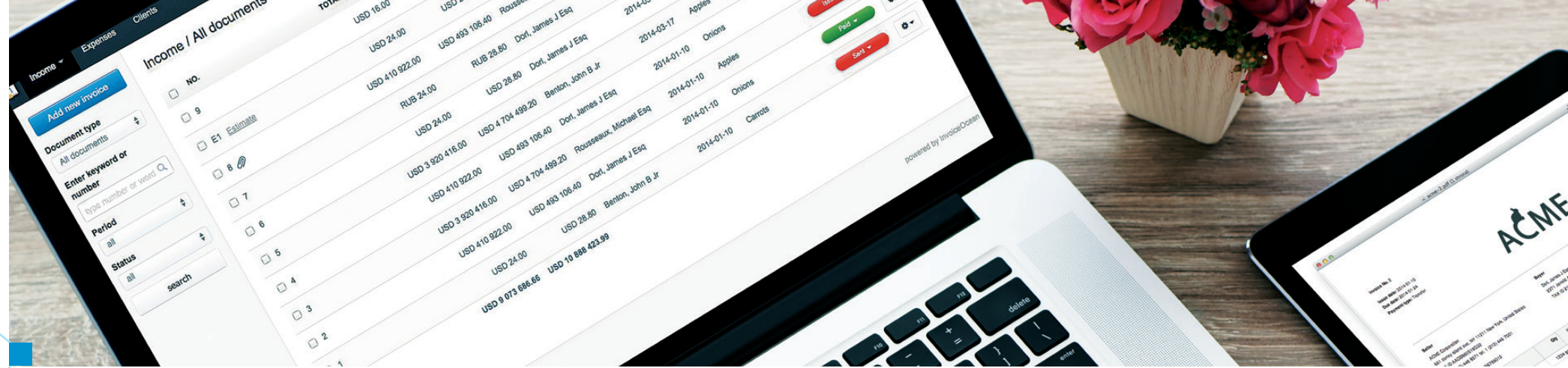
course, in many cases commercialisation is not possible, particularly if solutions similar to yours are not yet present on the market. I'm not convinced if it is a good idea nowadays to launch projects in Poland which require building a market from scratch. That's what you need to be aware of.

What makes Warsaw stand out on the startup scene and is Warsaw's originality the reason why you decided to launch your startup here?

I was surprised to see the openness to new innovative projects here. Until recently the general idea was that when a large organisation such as a city cooperates with very young businesses, it looks strange if not suspicious. I think that Ifinity has been able to blaze a trail for startups which are brave enough to cooperate with public institutions. Of course the credit goes not only to our company, but mostly to those qualified

and brave, risk-taking officials from the municipal office. I've been observing a quality and mentality shift in the public administration, a good sign for the future.

industry: Internet of Things/smart cities
 headcount: 12-60 (depending on the projects in progress)
 established in: 2014
 acquired funding: >PLN 4 m
getifinity.com



Marcin Stefaniak, CEO & CTO



What problem has Invoice Ocean tackled?

InvoiceOcean is an invoicing system. It facilitates invoice archiving and e-mailing. It also generates ongoing reports on the company's finances. An additional functionality of the system is to issue invoices in different languages and currencies, a helpful feature for businesses operating on foreign markets.

How did you know there was demand for your product?

We were running a software development company and we needed a simple invoicing tool – one that could, firstly, show the current balance, and secondly, work without the intervention of a professional accountant. That's how we built a system for our own company, but we also assumed that there were plenty of other businesses with similar needs.

How did you find your first customers?

When the initial version of the system was ready, we launched the fakturownia.pl website and we opened it for customers who were able to

register their accounts. We purchased AdWords campaigns and it soon turned out that there were some interested users who were actually using the system and who were ready to pay for the service. As you can see we were able to confirm very quickly that our tool was useful and that we could sell it on-line.

What stage of development are you at now?

We operate in Poland (as fakturownia.pl), on English-speaking markets (invoiceocean.com), and in France (vosfactures.fr). Each month our customers use the system to issue more than 500,000 invoices. We're currently focusing on the development of the system and its alignment with the requirements of new markets.

What were the biggest mistakes you've made and what lessons have you learnt as a result?

Before we launched InvoiceOcean, I managed a software business delivering tailored software according to client's specifications. In that business we always wanted to develop something new by ourselves, but the on-going projects were always the priority. They delivered profits and let us maintain

the business. I worked in that mode for a few years and every day I was growing more and more dissatisfied with what I was doing. Eventually I decided to cut myself off the ongoing projects and devote all my time to product development. Although we struggled financially at the beginning, the work was exciting and fun again. It was a very good decision and a proof that you should do what you enjoy doing. I only regret I hadn't made that decision a few years earlier.

What are the key experiences from the launch of your startup?

The moments after the system went live and we sent a release to the press were simply unforgettable. It was exciting to wait for the first reactions of our customers.

What's your advice for budding entrepreneurs?

As a practitioner I know that translating your concept into a profitable business will most likely take more time and money than you initially thought. That is

why, as mentioned before, you need to pick the industry and the type of work that you like. What I haven't mentioned before and what matters a lot is to surround yourself with a group of people with whom you can cooperate smoothly.

What makes Warsaw stand out on the startup scene and is Warsaw's originality the reason why you decided to launch your startup here?

In my opinion, Warsaw is a great city to start and manage your business. Firstly, it offers access to a large talent pool of people who will help you develop and promote the product. Secondly, Warsaw is a friendly work environment with many networking events. Reaktor is the initiative I identify with the most – that is where our office was for 3 years, and that's where we met many great people.

industry: FinTech
 headcount: 20
 established in: 2010
 fakturownia.pl, invoiceocean.com, vosfactures.fr



...translating your concept into a profitable business will most likely take more time and money than you initially thought.

LiveCall

Maciej Dulski, founder & COO



What problem has LiveCall tackled?

LiveCall offers a way to support verbal customer care. We help our clients better convert the website traffic, leading to an increased number of sales calls.

How did you know there was demand for your product?

Even before we built the prototype we had contacted almost 100 companies and told them about the key features of our concept. They reacted with great interest.

How did you find your first clients?

Our first clients were the companies we knew well and liked, which is why we were able to have honest and concrete conversations about their expectations and methods of product optimisation.

What stage of development are you at now?

Thanks to our clients who decided

to pay for the service we now are convinced that the solution helps them attract new customers. Currently we're focusing on up-scaling the business and reaching the widest possible group of prospects.

What were the biggest mistakes you've made and what lessons have you learnt as a result?

I attached too much importance to technology. The methods we wanted to use to automate some processes were overly complicated. It turned out that our clients expected a far easier solution.

What are the key experiences from the launch of your startup?

An unforgettable experience was when the first client registered without any support, started the account and began to pay the subscription.

What's your advice for budding entrepreneurs?

The best solutions are often the simplest ones. It is enough to focus on the challenge and think about what it is exactly that customers need.

What makes Warsaw stand out on the startup scene and why is it in Warsaw that you decided to launch your startup?

Most of all, I appreciate the events where you can meet other startupper. These meetings enabled us to establish LiveCall and then attract customers.

industry: SaaS
headcount: 5
established in: 2015
acquired funding: USD 50,000
livecall.io



Migam

Przemek Kuśmirek, CEO



What problem has Migam tackled?

Migam is our response to the communication problems faced by the Deaf. As a sign of respect for the community, please write the word with a capital D: Deaf. Our app enables them to communicate using any device, e.g. a computer or a smartphone. Thanks to the inclusive nature of the solution we provide equal access to products and services for the Deaf.

How did you know there was demand for your product?

I employed some deaf persons and I soon understood the idea was good. Moreover, hearing loss or impairment affects hundreds of thousands of Poles and over 72 million people worldwide.

How did you find your first customers?

I would tell everybody I met about the project and I would convince them to become our client.

What stage of development are you at now?

We're up-scaling our solution.

What were the biggest mistakes you've made and what lessons have you learnt as a result?

The biggest challenge was to select the right team and define the right business model. And the lesson learned is simple: it's all about not repeating the mistakes you've made before.

What are the key experiences from the launch of your startup?

You have to be extremely resilient, and you have to persevere despite the odds. I've never worked as hard as I'm working now, and I've never been more satisfied with what I'm doing.

What's your advice for budding entrepreneurs?

Learn from those who are smarter

than you and tell everyone about your project.

What makes Warsaw stand out on the startup scene and is Warsaw's originality the reason why you decided to launch your startup here?

I like Aula and Reaktor a lot. Besides, most of Polish B2B clients are located in Warsaw.

industry: services
headcount: approximately 30
established in: 2011/2012
acquired funding: >PLN 3 m
migam.org



Sara Berent,
project coordinator



What problem has NEO-Ecology tackled?

NEO-Ecology was initially a research project that turned into a business. Over two years of laboratory research we developed combinations of essential oils which are a cheap alternative to toxic pesticides and plant protection formulas. Our technology is exclusively based

on natural, environmentally friendly components and has antibacterial and fungicidal properties. It has proven its effectiveness against microorganisms from the EU's quarantine pathogen list. It can be used in agriculture, storage, transportation and as a disinfectant. We are also intent on reaching individual customers through a line of household and portable products. Our objective is to arouse environmental awareness in our customers, too. Currently, in a joint project with the Advanced Technologies Foundation, we are preparing an educational campaign concerning molecular science, including food chemistry. The initiative is directed to secondary school students.

How did you know there was demand for your product?

NEO-Ecology is a biotechnology project based on many years of lab research and intended to meet the needs of farmers

and food producers. From the very start we focused our efforts on the most resilient and resistant pests in order to help replace the existing highly toxic methods and products with environmentally friendly ones.

Who are your clients and what stage of development are you at now?

The first group of clients are pesticide and food safety product manufacturers. We have already contacted the research institutes and laboratories of a number of companies. We are now working on another R&D round recommended by the corporations and their representatives. This round will define a further commercialisation path. We also cooperate with Polish organic farms. We're focusing on the development of our market entry strategy and we're looking for suitable business partners who could also help as carry out large-scale industrial testing. The cooperation we

plan with farming, transport and storage industries will be based on a license model covering the particular segment and application. We would also like to promote our own product, the Shelf Life Extender, a solution for retailers to facilitate longer storage of fresh fruit and vegetables by ensuring protection from rot, pests and infections.

What were the biggest mistakes you've made and what lessons have you learnt as a result?

I'm only 20 now, so when I was establishing the startup and developing the projects I came across many potential pitfalls. Luckily, so far we've been able to avoid major problems or complications. We have a great team of people with passion, vision, and enthusiasm who are also able to make a detailed plan of further actions. The only actual problem we've experienced was an intellectual property issue. Fortunately,

the problem was tackled by appropriate contractual provisions but it taught me to be cautious and made me aware of how important it is to safeguard – when money is at stake, you can come across all sorts of behaviours.

What's your advice for budding entrepreneurs?

Choose sensibly what you want to focus on and become an expert in the field. Believe in yourself, grow, make contacts, learn to recognise the potential in people, and create an ambitious, talented team. Inspire it with your enthusiasm, remember to carefully plan next steps, and work hard.

What makes Warsaw stand out on the startup scene and is Warsaw's originality the reason why you decided to launch your startup here?

I come from Tri-City and I'm here because PwC, NEO-Ecology's mentor since

December, convinced me to move. We spent almost the entire August participating in Startup Hub Poland's acceleration programme. I learnt a lot there and the knowledge has tremendously helped the project develop. Warsaw is a great ecosystem for startup development. It offers a multitude of promotion, collaboration and funding opportunities. It's here that business gets done, and it's here that innovations and novelties are sought and found.

industry: farming, food production, food storage
headcount: 4
established in: 2016
neo-ecology.com

Niebagatela



Łukasz Marzecki,
founder



What problem has Niebagatela tackled?

Well, it's hard to call it a problem. I created the first wooden eyewear workshop in Poland. I've combined fashion and nature and added quality to the mix to get the output: Niebagatela.

How did you know there was demand for your product?

I didn't know it in fact, I simply liked my own idea very much.

What stage of development are you at now?

I'm perfecting the product all the time in order to achieve world-class quality and use the innovative technological solution to the maximum.

What were the biggest mistakes you've made and what lessons have you learnt as a result?

There have been some mistakes for sure but it's difficult to remember them as I'm focusing on the implementation of the business idea. I was stubborn enough to make frames on my own, I came up with my own technology and everything that may seem tedious or difficult from today's perspective doesn't matter – because when I've completed the project we'll be proud of a great and original product from Poland. I'm not in it for the money, or at least money is not the key motivation. If I wanted to earn money quickly, I would've imported eyewear from China. Instead, I want to create something grand on my own.

What are the key experiences from the launch of your startup?

In business you mustn't trust anyone apart from your family. That is the painful truth.



I was stubborn enough to make glass frames on my own, I came up with my own technology and everything that may seem tedious or difficult from today's perspective doesn't matter – because when I've completed the project we'll be proud of a great and original product from Poland.

What's your advice for budding entrepreneurs?

Never give up! It may sound commonplace, but few people realise what I've been through to get the product of this quality.

What makes Warsaw stand out on the startup scene and is Warsaw's originality the reason why

you decided to launch your startup here? Warsaw is wonderfully evolving, you can see it at each corner, every single day.

industry: fashion and health
headcount: 1
established in: 2013
acquired funding: PLN 20,000
the prize in Be Creative in Warsaw competition, the remaining part of the investment was self-funded
niebagatela.pl



Prowly

Joanna Drabent, CEO



...at a certain stage of development, no job is more important for the CEO than effective recruitment and onboarding. That is because people are behind every success, regardless of the product you're offering.

What problem has Prowly tackled?

We've created Prowly in order to make the lives of marketing and PR specialists easier. The main objective of our application is to facilitate and streamline communications: from writing press releases to the development of Internet newsrooms. The most useful part of Prowly is its analytical module which supplies reader response data after content is released and posted on the platform. This functionality enables the user to know who opened and read a particular content, and skipped it, either consciously or unconsciously.

How did you know there was demand for your product?

We started to think about Prowly in 2013 when I was looking for a tool to let me improve the effectiveness of my

PR agency. Sebastian Przyborowski and I then prepared a business case and we acquired the first part of funding for the project's development, PLN 230,000. The feedback we got after the launch of the app's beta version was very positive: the first clients were paying their subscription already in the first month of our operation. Within three years we have been able to attract a few hundred clients. The results have enabled us to secure USD 1.1 million of funding, a key boost before entering foreign markets.

How did you find your first customers?

We were lucky enough to attract the first clients soon after the launch of the beta version. For imagebuilding purposes we wanted to attract large, global brands at the very beginning. The breakthrough was when Spotify decided to use our

services and become the first company in Poland to have its own brand journal.

What stage of development are you at now?

We're still at the beginning of our journey and there's a lot of work ahead of us. However, we already have extensive experience and knowledge which we're accumulating all the time in order to translate it into our business objectives. We've learned about the expectations and demands of the market. We know our target. We've developed our team and processes in particular domains. We're continuing to grow, we have our objectives in every area of activity and, most importantly, we're starting to see the pathways to reach these objectives.

What were the biggest mistakes you've made and what lessons have you learnt as a result?

Our failed launch in the US has taught me that at a certain stage of development, no job is more important for the CEO than effective recruitment and onboarding. That is because people are behind every success, regardless of the product you're offering. It is then, when we failed, that I learned how to delegate responsibility which is simply unavoidable when the company is growing at a fast rate.

What are the key experiences from the launch of your startup?

It may sound trivial but startup development requires hard work and perseverance. A large majority of startups are launched as a side

business - after all you need to make ends meet before your startup gets off the ground and becomes profitable. So you end up juggling two jobs, working twenty hours per day or longer. It makes sense to prepare well for this effort.

What's your advice for budding entrepreneurs?

Create a prototype as soon as possible and confront it with market demands and expectations. Don't devote too much time to 'fine-tune' the product. Use the knowledge and opinions of your clients: they'll be the end users, after all.

What makes Warsaw stand out on the startup scene and why did you choose Warsaw as the place to launch your startup?

Warsaw is a bright spot on the global

startup map. It gets mentioned more and more often during conversations we have abroad, also as a very likely location for the launch of another unicorn in this part of Europe. The multitude of initiatives such as D-RAFT Demo Days or VC Speed Dating helps young entrepreneurs not only make contacts with businesses but also acquire their first pitching experience. Such events send wind into the sails of Polish startups, particularly when it comes to building our position abroad.

industry: public relations, content marketing, brand journalism
headcount: 18
established in: 2013
acquired funding: USD 1.1 m
prowly.com

Quotiss

Marcin Zarzecki,
CEO & founder



Our biggest mistake was the assumption that a good product and a good concept are the most important factors. Of course they are the crucial foundation, the sine qua non condition, but their weight in the overall success is 10% at most.

What problem has Quotiss tackled?

Quotiss offers logistics software. The turnover of shipping container companies is two times bigger than Poland's GDP and amounts to around USD 1 trillion. As in every other business, logistics companies have to produce quotes on their services, and the industry's invariably leading tool is Excel and manually written e-mails, often containing mistakes. We have created a unique algorithm based on the Pareto principle to make the process of transport price estimation a hundred times faster, with one hundred per cent accuracy. This is not marketing gibberish – our solution is working and I hope we'll be able to revolutionise this huge yet very traditional industry.

How did you know there was demand for your product?

I worked in logistics for over 10 years in Poland, Russia, Belgium, Holland but

also in India and Kenya, and I wrote thousands of quotes and offers myself. Based on that experience we've created Quotiss. I sent the prototype to 80 users in 10 countries who confirmed the algorithm's usefulness.

How did you find your first clients?

Our Polish and foreign clients come from the network I have been developing for 13 years now. I'm also aided by my business partner who also worked in the industry for 10 years and has experience from many markets.

What stage of development are you at now?

Quotiss was launched in February 2016, and the app hit the market in October. It only took a month before we received four letters of intent. Currently we're at the stage of implementation at four client sites. This fills us with pride as B2B sales process is typically

very time-consuming. Additionally, our implementations change the commercial operations of our clients, which often poses a practical challenge. I am also happy about the fact that none of the meetings we've had so far was a failure. The clients who have not yet decided to go for implementation are still interested in cooperation. They're waiting for the product to extend and become mature.

What were the biggest mistakes you've made and what lessons have you learnt as a result?

Our biggest mistake was the assumption that a good product and a good concept are the most important factors. Of course they are the crucial foundation, the sine qua non condition, but their weight in the overall success is 10% at most. The key factors are marketing, sales, simple and effective communications. Without them, success is impossible.

What are the key experiences from the launch of your startup?

The key positive experience was the immense amount of helpful support of the startup environment. It was very refreshing to experience that after giving up corporate life where the advice you hear most often is not to stand out. Here, breaking the stereotypes, positive energy and the atmosphere of 'fingers crossed' and cooperation are visible at all times. Sometimes, however, the optimism was overblown – I met many people who thought they had a brilliant idea but didn't have a clue about the market or the path to product commercialisation.

What's your advice for budding entrepreneurs?

Focus on communications, build your network, stand out, get out there, meet your clients, don't be stuck in your basement and don't code too much at the beginning. Make sure you

build the prototype first and gauge the market's reaction.

What makes Warsaw stand out on the startup scene and is Warsaw's originality the reason why you decided to launch your startup here?

I don't know what makes Warsaw stand out from other startup environments as the Warsaw startup scene is the only one I know. Having said that, I appreciate a lot what Warsaw is doing for young entrepreneurs. For example, the city supported us to take part in a highly useful training course organised by Innovation Nest. It enabled us to be successful at Kongres 590 where Quotiss won 2nd place in the prestigious Battle of Startups. And I learned about the Battle at a different event organised at Reaktor where one of the speakers encouraged us to take part. I also appreciate the fact that Warsaw is home to Campus Warsaw – and that is where I met an

excellent developer and our IT partner. Our cooperation has been working out very well. I'd like to use this opportunity to thank all of those who gave us a helping hand when we needed it – I hope we'll be able to reciprocate at some point.

industry: SaaS, SaaS, logistics software
headcount: 3
established in: 2016
acquired funding: external funding was not sought; PLN 35,000 came from the Battle of Startups; the remaining investment was self-funded
quotiss.com

SHOWROOM.PL

Michał Juda & Jasiak Stasz,
co-founders



What problem has Showroom tackled?

Firstly, Showroom helps young independent designers and brands reach their customers. Secondly, it facilitates quick, safe and easy shopping for clothes and accessories.

How did you know there was demand for your product?

In its early days Showroom was a Facebook app which facilitated sales through the fanpage. That is how we learned about the needs of designers. We found the right solution and we launched showroom.pl.

How did you find your first customers?

At fashion events attended by designers.

What stage of development are you at now?

We're the biggest platform of the kind in this part of Europe. We're currently developing our German and English language versions.

What were the biggest mistakes you've made and what lessons have you learnt as a result?

There was a point in time when we were too confident about our market position. We started a shopping club project which had no chances of survival. Fortunately, we killed the idea soon enough. It taught us to analyse the market more accurately and admit that we've made a mistake in front of our team and investors.

What are the key experiences from the launch of your startup?

We soon discovered that it is of key importance to listen to the users and meet their needs as well as building a tightly-knit team.

What is your advice for budding entrepreneurs?

Make sure you think it through really well: are you ready to accept failure and its consequences?

What makes Warsaw stand out on the startup scene and is Warsaw's originality the reason why you decided to launch your startup here?

This city has a well-developed startup community and offers a large number of regular events where we can exchange our experiences.

industry: fashion/e-commerce
headcount: 40 (in Warsaw)
+ 10 (in Berlin)
established in: 2012
showroom.pl

#TechWawa



Telemedi.co



Paweł Sieczkiewicz, co-founder

What problem has Telemedico tackled?

The problem of access to doctors. Our solution facilitates quick consultations with medical professionals.

How did you find your first customers?

Through AdWords (B2C) and networking (B2B).

What stage of development are you at now?

We're constantly improving our product. We are also running implementations across Poland. Additionally, we're looking for new clients both domestically and abroad.

#TechWawa

What was your main drive when you launched a startup?

I wanted to build something big. I was inspired by the success stories of my friends. I am a developer so I wanted to make use of my knowledge.

What were the biggest mistakes you've made and what lessons have you learnt as a result?

I was too lenient for the product for too long, I didn't exercise process quality control, and I too often believed that others had done their job just because they said so.

What makes Warsaw stand out on the startup scene and is Warsaw's

originality the reason why you decided to launch your startup here?

There are very many B2B clients in Warsaw. It's a great place to carry out your first implementations. The capital is also easy to reach from other countries, and its people are well-educated and speak good English.

industry: tele-medical services
headcount: 7
established in: 2013
acquired funding: ~ PLN 1 million
lekarzonline.telemedi.co



Wandlee



Igor Sawczuk, CEO

What problem has Wandlee tackled?

We develop Artificial Intelligence algorithms for chatbots, i.e. software that resembles virtual assistants. The difference is that our solution not only delivers information but is also able to solve some problems. The task of our products is to have a natural conversation with customers and ensure top quality service, 24/7. We currently have a few services on offer, directed to different businesses and communication channels. I see great opportunities in Facebook-based solutions where our chatbots are able to take orders, confirm deadlines, manage marketing actions – and they're capable of much more.

How did you know there was demand for your product?

The demand has been verified by the market: we've been able to attract many clients who use our services.

How did you find your first clients?

The first group of people interested in our solution turned up already at the stage of minimum viable product (MVP).

What stage of development are you at now?

We're at the phase of up-scaling.

What were the biggest mistakes you've made and what lessons have you learnt as a result?

My biggest mistake was that I didn't include in some of our contracts the provision enabling me to officially brag about these projects.

What are the key experiences from your startup launch?

I understood that the trust among the company's founders is crucial.

What's your advice for budding entrepreneurs?

First you need to build a team, then an MVP, and then look for clients and investors.

What makes Warsaw stand out on the startup scene and is Warsaw's originality

the reason why you decided to launch your startup here?

Warsaw offers a wide array of events for startups. It is also the seat of many companies and their boards, which makes it easier to contact people and manage your business.

industry: artificial intelligence
headcount: 6
established in: 2016
acquired funding: seed stage
wandlee.com



...the trust among the company's founders is crucial...

Warsaw Dog

What problem has Warsaw Dog tackled?

Dogs are more and more often seen in public spaces. It occurred to us that they should be more visible, striking and colourful. Bigger dogs often provoke fear. We would like to change that association by accessorising them, adding a splash of colour. We are dog owners ourselves. We found it important to create a modern brand that follows the latest trends in fashion and design and that we would be happy to have on our T-shirts, too. Obviously, the looks isn't not the only aspect that matters, the practicality is equally important for us. We adore walking our dogs and we are fully aware of how fast all the dog harnesses and leashes get muddy and dirty. This is why we use a fabric that dries fast, doesn't absorb water, is machine washable and with colours that don't wash away easily.

How did you know there was a place on the market for your product?

I have been the author of the blog 'Warsaw Dog' for the last 6 years. Just like my readers, I am a happy owner of a cute pup and I live in a big city.

You can say I have been into the pet business for years. Before I launched my business, I posted a questionnaire, a short market survey on my blog. It was answered by 500 people within 8 hours. Both the level of interest and the answers to my questions proved that there indeed was demand on the market for a new product.

How did you find your first customers?

The blog's readers were our first customers. Their friends and neighbours followed as the word of mouth is extremely important among dog-owners. Clients often call us and ask about accessories, admitting they had seen them on their neighbour's dog and saying they'd already decided to make a purchase but simply needed some help with choosing the right size.

What development stage are you at right now?

For the first year, our one-bedroom apartment was the hub of our business, our home, our warehouse, our sewing room and office. Recently, we have moved the command centre to a small workshop. We are planning to grow and



we are entering the western markets. In the meantime, we've expanded our offer by adding textile products for dog-owners.

What were your biggest mistakes and what lessons have you learnt from them?

We put our logo on the buckles. Unfortunately, we chose the wrong printing method for the first series of our products. The inscription disappeared in no time. At first, we didn't know how to deal with sharp edges of the fabric either. During a walk, my dog pulled the leash which badly chaffed my hand. Now, before we launch a new product, we test it in a number of ways and we are ready to make continuous improvements.

What are the most important experiences related to launching your startup?

It's easy to become a workaholic when you launch a startup (laughter).



Zofia Kwiatkowska,
founder



My startup has taught me that relaxation is just as important as my job.

Suddenly, all the things unrelated to developing your business seem trivial. Learning to compartmentalize and set boundaries between my personal and professional life was a real challenge. Even now, 2 years on, I catch myself thinking about Warsaw Dog while doing house chores, which is a path to professional burnout. My startup has taught me that relaxation is just as important as my job.

What would be your advice for budding entrepreneurs?

Clearly designate your working hours and time off work. Do not quit your hobbies. Remember, you are yourself first and entrepreneur second.

What do you think sets Warsaw apart on the startup scene? Why did you decide to launch your business here?

I really appreciate the institutions in Warsaw whose sole and only purpose is

to support young entrepreneurs. When I was setting up my business, I relied on the government program Wsparcie w starcie (Startup Support) that offered preferential loans. It's highly likely I would not have received the support if it hadn't been for the help of the Employers' Association of Warsaw and the Masovia Region who assisted me in drafting my business plan. I take part in classes for the entrepreneurs organised by the Centre of Entrepreneurship Smolna and Youth Business Poland. The fact that all trainings are free of charge and take place in the capital means that the support I need in developing my business is easily and readily available.

industry: accessories for dogs
headcount: 2
established in: 2015
warsawdog.com



Bettina Zawłocka,
CEO

For a startup, it is crucial to test various business models at various development stages. The objective is to find the most effective one.

What problem has Wise Stories tackled?

At Wise Stories, we consider all issues from multiple perspectives. However, the issue we find most urgent at present is related to the use of new technologies by young children. It worries us that computer games and applications lead to increased aggression levels in children. I often see parents become genuinely worried when they see their children playing video games or using a tablet. However, the question isn't, whether or not we should allow children to use the technology, but rather how to put the child's interest in new technologies into good use. Wise Stories is so much more than great fun for the kids. It allows parents to put their anxieties to rest. The storylines of games and educational tales that we develop talk about everyday problems: from a visit to a dentist, through getting motivated to learn to read and count,

to being afraid of the dark. Wise Stories support the development of good habits in children so that the time spent with the new technologies becomes productive. When working on a new product, we strive for this product to be of real value to modern families.

How did you know there was a place on the market for your product?

We started with a market study on a group of 50 people, all of them parents, resorting to the traditional focus group interview formula. The results of a study on such a small group may, however, be misleading. Our next step was to use a pilot landing page. The conversion levels it achieved turned out to be quite satisfactory. It must be kept in mind, however, that even positive market feedback does not necessarily translate into a startup's success as multiple factors typically come into play.

How did you find your first clients?

At the stage of validation of the concept, obviously.

What development stage are you at right now?

As for our product, we have improved it by incorporating VR and relying on its growing potential. At present, we are developing a new VR demo version of Wise Stories. It should be ready within a few weeks. We are also working to attract funding to further develop our business. We are considering a launch of a crowdfunding campaign. or finding a private foreign capital investor.

What were your biggest mistakes and what lessons have you learnt from them?

It is a very good question. First of all, I learnt that sometimes it does pay off to commit an error, even if it's very difficult to accept that you were wrong. My

biggest mistake so far was getting really attached to some aspects of the business model. For a startup, it is crucial to test various business models at various development stages. The objective is to find the most effective one.

What are the most important experiences related to launching your startup?

The first pitch decks, definitely. They were extremely stressful but every one of them increased our awareness of risks and opportunities that our business faces. The questions raised by mentors and by the audience usually carry a weight with them and I am truly grateful for the opportunities offered by the Polish startup scene, including the opportunity to engage with more experienced peers.

What would be your advice for budding entrepreneurs?

Every member of the startup scene has their own opinions and observations

proportionate to what they know, to the competencies they hold and to the startup development stage. When launching a startup, you have to be mentally prepared for a highly interesting experience. For me, the awareness that I am not alone on this journey, that I have people around me, is of utmost importance. Your team is absolutely crucial.

What do you think sets Warsaw apart on the startup scene? Why did you decide to launch your business here?

The unique character of Warsaw lies with the city's rich offer of startup-related events, training and accelerator programs. I appreciate the undertakings organised by Campus Warsaw, Reaktor, Startup Academy, BussinessLink and Orange Fab.

industry: mobile, gaming, virtual reality
headcount: 7
established in: 2016
wisestories.us



Introduce yourself to us!

Influencers have grown out of Warsaw's startup ecosystem. Currently, as Internet celebrities and role models for young audiences, the influencers are making use of the possibilities offered by social media to exert tangible influence on the shape of the ecosystem – they are its promoters and ambassadors who set the trends and directions for development.

Aula Polska | BanFi Group
DailyArt | Dentsu Aegis Network
Dni Wolnej Sztuki | Geek Girls
Carrots | KSYcorp.com | Lubię to
Manubia | Metamuzeum | Moiseum
MUSE | Polski Fundusz Rozwoju
Speaking Carrots | Startup Poland
SWWAW | Wellfitting



Yuri Drabent

Yuri is a Polish social media pioneer and the founder of one of the first social media marketing agencies in Poland.

How did your startup adventure begin?

When Facebook became popular, my friend suggested that I start my own business instead of simply running his parents' company Facebook profile. Another friend, a future business partner, came to me with the same idea. I agreed, and in 2010 we launched Lubię to. Good advice, good timing, and off it went.

How did you get to where you are today?

We spent four years working round the clock, day and night, developing Lubię to. We wanted to ride the tide because we discovered a niche that turned out to be a true goldmine. In 2014 we sold the company to Dentsu Aegis Network where we stayed with for the next 2.5 years.

What do you think of the Warsaw startup ecosystem?

Honestly, I am not an active

participant. This startup hype we are witnessing at present, well, I am not a big fan of it. I stick to doing my own thing. It is the effects of my work that should speak for me, not my networking skills.

How has the Warsaw ecosystem evolved over time?

I do not feel competent enough to be voicing any opinions on this matter, for the reasons we have already discussed.

What are the main differences between the Warsaw startup ecosystem and the ones abroad?

People are nicer to one another abroad. They're more willing to help one another and share knowledge and ideas than here.

Who helped you the most when you took your first steps in business?

My business partner, Maciek Bielicki. I helped him in exactly the same way, too.

What advice would you give to young entrepreneurs?

Sometimes I have the honour to speak publicly about the story of Lubię to. On such occasions, I try to provide my young audiences with some sound business advice. Those who are interested can also watch me online, including my speech at the Reaktor. The speech was funny and wise, it's a good idea to watch it.

What is the best way to contact you?
Use Facebook.

Personal branding vs. company branding – which is more important? Has your recognition as an influencer helped you in the process of developing Lubię to?

Yes, it was of great help to us. However, it depends on the market segment you operate in. In my opinion, in the case of serious B2B tools, company branding is more important than personal branding. Nevertheless, we must keep in mind that personal branding is a two-edged sword. People will remember you better but once you've become public property it is more difficult to simply leave and move on to the next project.

Eliza is Innovation Development Director at Polish Development Fund where she coordinates a government programme for innovation development, Start In Poland. Eliza is the former president of the Startup Poland Foundation which strives, among others, to create better development conditions for entrepreneurs working with new technologies.



How did your startup adventure begin?

I've always been interested in technology. That's why I started working for an international PR agency which provides services mainly to the IT industry in Munich. I worked with brands like Mozilla Firefox, Huawei and Logitech. Then I went to Spain for three years and there, during my hours off work, with a Spanish friend of mine we developed our own startup idea. We took part in the Startup Weekend in Valencia and we won. Then we engaged in an accelerator program.

How did you get to where you are today?

Our life at present is a combination of decisions made in the past with the consequences of these decisions. I've always been interested in three things: politics, technology, and communication. My friend showed me a job listing for the position of president with the Startup Poland foundation where these three areas interact. I submitted my application. I presented my development strategy concept based on my professional experience and I was selected from among 400 candidates. I was the right person in the right place, and at the right time. I poured so much passion

into my work for the foundation. I can proudly say that when I was leaving that job in September 2016, I left the foundation in the hands of a very professional team. Now, as Innovation Development Director at the Polish Development Fund, I take care of the Polish startup ecosystem, too, but I have more tools at my disposal.

What do you think of Warsaw's startup ecosystem?

It is the largest in Poland. The results of the last study by Startup Poland show that 27% of startups in Poland are born here. I quite like the fact that Praga district is becoming the new Tech City, even if there still is a long way to go before we get to where London is now.

How has the ecosystem in Warsaw evolved over time?

Startups have entered the mainstream culture. Even my grandma has called me up recently to tell me she heard about 'those startup companies you deal with' in the evening news. Some people, of course, will undervalue startups, smirk ironically and say it's just a hyped-up fad. However, promoting technology

related entrepreneurship may really yield positive results. If only we can inspire people in Poland to fulfill their dreams and to actively chase them by creating their own businesses, it will be a wonderful achievement.

What are the main differences between the Warsaw startup ecosystem and the ones abroad?

We are not open to people and businesses from abroad. I hardly ever meet foreigners at various events here. As I spent a number of years abroad myself, I know that working in a multicultural environment can broaden your horizons, teach tolerance and humility. It is my dream to see more of international startups from Poland.

How can you help budding entrepreneurs?

The Polish Development Fund is a group of financial institutions and advisory service providers for entrepreneurs, local authorities and individual clients. We invest in sustainable social and economic development of Poland. At present, we offer four funds directed at innovative SMEs at different stages of

development: from pre-seed, through seed and early stages to development and expansion stages. Depending on the development stage of a given project, the available financing ranges from PLN 200,000 to as much as PLN 20 million. In January 2017 we are launching recruitment for financing agents.

What is the best way to contact you?

Just email me. I am also happy to invite people to my office for 20-30 minutes of a face-to-face chat.

What do you think is the greatest achievement of the Startup Poland foundation you used to manage?

Maybe the fact that startups no longer stay hidden in the shadows, like something amateurish to be ashamed of but that they have professionalised and entered the mainstream instead? I am really happy we managed to raise the awareness and establish this industry's position in the eyes of the decision-makers. As a result, we have witnessed the creation of some practical support tools for young entrepreneurs. The next years are going to be really interesting for the startup industry. I just hope that a high

number of initiatives will also translate into high quality of the projects.

Why did you decide to join the Polish Development Fund?

Thanks to this transfer I can continue to support technology-related entrepreneurship but I have more tools now and, therefore, a larger impact. I do not care if I sound bombastic but I truly believe that myself, this modest person here, is changing her country for the better in some aspects. There is an army of such idealistic but business-oriented people in the Polish Development Fund. We really want to see the implementation of projects that are important for this country. We will be helping them turn into reality, shaping them from a practical perspective. I will do whatever it takes to see us succeed.

Julia Krysztofiak-Szopa

Julia is President of the Startup Poland Foundation. She formerly worked as programme director for Blackbox. vc., a California-based startup accelerator. An entrepreneur, owner of the global brand Wellfitting, she has been in the startup industry since 2008. She gained most of her experience in the Silicon Valley and Switzerland. Her educational background is philosophy.



How did your startup adventure begin?

I started attending meetings in Aula Polska in 2008. There I met Tomek Koliński who, at the time, was developing szuku.pl, the first people search engine in Poland. I and my husband joined his team – I was the front-end developer and my husband was the back-end developer. That's how it all started.

How did you get to where you are today?

At present, I am the president of the Startup Poland Foundation which aims at creating favourable development conditions for the Polish startup ecosystem by means of promoting the industry and useful legal solutions. How did I get to where I am now? I spent five years in California and Switzerland. When I came back to Poland in April 2016, I started to work with startups within institutions surrounding the business environment and at an accelerator. I quickly realised we have the unique opportunity to implement the best practices from more mature ecosystems. It is mostly the Silicon Valley that I have in mind. My mission is to develop the Polish ecosystem.

What do you think of Warsaw's startup ecosystem?

It has grown significantly over the last five years. When I was leaving Poland in 2012, the only meetings were the ones organised by Aula Polska. Nowadays, there are so many of them that you can attend a different startup-related event almost daily. Warsaw is unique on the national scale in due to its dynamics. It is in this city that you can meet the largest number of experienced people who are really worth listening to. In other words, the ecosystem is thriving.

What are the main differences between the Warsaw startup ecosystem and the ones abroad?

Warsaw's startup ecosystem might be doing great but it is still smaller than the ones in Berlin or in London. It is not only the size that is different but also the venture capital maturity, particularly if we compare the Polish ecosystem to Palo Alto or San Francisco. One of the reasons is that investors have more limited amount of financial resources at their disposal. Consequently, they are more apprehensive of taking risks. It is of course a sweeping generalisation but

it is true to say that Warsaw startups have a lower 'wow!' factor than what we see in the Silicon Valley, Berlin or London. However, they offer competitive prices and high quality of services and products to match their foreign counterparts.

Who helped you the most when you took your first steps on the business front?

Piotr Wilam helped me greatly in Poland. He is a terrific mentor. Also, my beloved sister with whom I opened my first business. She is the best business partner in the whole world. In the US, in terms of personal development, I was supported by Fadi Bishara, the founder of Blackbox.vc accelerator.

What would be your advice for budding entrepreneurs?

First and foremost, the goals you set for yourself must be ambitious. When I was living in the Silicon Valley, I realised that those highly successful people there are no different from us. I thought that people like Mark Zuckerberg were born with a silver spoon in their mouths. But that's not true. You simply have to

get involved and committed, and you need to try a lot of different things. One of them is sure to deliver. This is the attitude I would like to see and promote in Poland. As far as the foundation goes, we can support young entrepreneurs by organising networking events, workshops and mentoring programs. We are trying to improve the communication which should translate into a better knowledge transfer within the ecosystem. We also assist in situations that require representing the industry before public administration, including issues related to the simplification of the legal system.

What is the best way to contact you?

By dropping me an email:
julia@startuppoland.org

You worked in the Silicon Valley, in Switzerland and in Poland. What do you think are the similarities and differences between these three startup ecosystems?

Let me start with the differences. There is one startup per 15,000 residents in Poland. In Palo Alto – one per 500. In Poland we need one whole town for one startup to be created, while in the Silicon Valley there are thousands of them in one small town. The other major difference is pricing. In Poland, services offered by startups are cheaper. There are fewer businesses of this type.

It translates into lower density, which results in fewer interactions and an imperfect knowledge transfer within the ecosystem. People coming from abroad have an advantage due to the business skills deficit in Poland. This advantage may let them grow dynamically. As far as similarities go, I would say networking functions in a very similar way, or maybe even better than in Switzerland, where startups are often launched at universities. It must be stressed that the Swiss academic circles have developed a strong cooperation with young entrepreneurs. We don't have that here. Maybe this is why networking is better in Warsaw than in Zurich?

What can the Polish startups do to compete on foreign markets?

There is this anecdote: a Jew comes to see his rabbi and says 'Rabbi, my teacher, my apartment is so small. So crowded. My mother-in-law lives with us, there are the kids, and even the goat. What do I do to get some more money?'. And the rabbi answers: 'You know what, you should buy a lottery ticket'. When it comes to startups, a lottery ticket and good luck will of course be helpful (laughter). However, it is more important to have global ambitions. Startups should plan for entering foreign markets from the very beginning, and then they should just do it. We learn solely from experience. If a Polish startup is focused

only on their Polish investors and the local market, it stands no chance to compete on the global stage. It is the mentality that must evolve. Startups must see themselves as global actors, as businesses that operate and function in the globalised world.

You've been President of the Startup Poland Foundation since October 2016. What are the objectives you plan to reach in the next few years?

My long-term goal is to develop tools to exert effective pressure and convince our public administration to establish an entrepreneur-friendly legal framework. To meet this objective, a further integration within the industry and an expansion of our contact network are required to let our voice be heard further and wider. We must also identify and monitor all challenges faced by startup companies. This knowledge will help us strengthen our position as a credible partner. We want to implement projects that do not focus solely on Poland but on the whole region where similar problems occur. This will boost our position, which will result in increasing our impact. Moreover, educational projects at schools that suffer a shortage of teachers who know a thing or two about entrepreneurship are also high on our list of priorities. We have a lot to offer in this respect.

Artur Kurasiński

Artur is President of MUSE's Management Board and an entrepreneur focused on supporting technology-related projects, also through investment. A mentor, a blogger and an active industry expert. Artur is also a co-founder of the meetings in Aula Polska and Aulery prizes. Father of two daughters, a futsal fan and an RPG player.

How did your startup adventure begin?

I have been interested in the interface between technology, design and business for as long as I can remember. In 1999 a group of my friends and I developed an MP3 search engine and then a music portal that, at the time, was one of Poland's first and largest. It was then that I fell in love with developing my own technology and Internet-oriented businesses. We found an investor pretty quickly, which provided us with an opportunity to develop a better portal and ... a wave of 'dotcom' bankruptcies hit Poland. Literally overnight, our business partners stopped believing in what we were doing and we were left with no advertising contracts. So, the beginnings of my life-long fascination with the internet and startups were not easy.

How did you get to where you are at present?

I've gone a long way. I have always known I want to develop my own businesses and work on my own terms. I never accepted employment offers from consulting companies or advertising agencies. I never thought that they could provide for my development. In



2007, together with a few people, we started to actively support the education of Polish startups and we created Aula Polska. Then new opportunities materialised, and I developed a few businesses and a dozen of various projects. Most of them died but I learnt a lot. At present, I divide my daily work to combine the development of my businesses with educational activities such as discussion panels, competitions and managing Aula.

What do you think of Warsaw's startup ecosystem?

It's unique. It has an enormous potential due to its location. At the same time it is internally divided and not too eager to cooperate internally. When compared to Cracow which, in my opinion, is a beacon of integration and cooperation within the industry, the Warsaw startup ecosystem seems less ambitious. I suppose that what Warsaw

or Cracow are competing on a subject, they may in fact be slicing a small cake instead of trying to bake a larger pie together. Due to low financing, Polish startups are not very competitive when seen from a broader European perspective. A company from Berlin, in its pre-seed development stage, may receive as much as EUR 1 to 3 million in funding, while in Poland it's PLN 1 million at most. That is why we shouldn't waste our energy on splitting hair and building artificial walls. Instead, we should focus on changing the status quo and improving the conditions for all Polish companies.

How has the Warsaw ecosystem evolved over time?

A lot of talented and driven young people have entered the scene. Łukasz Haluch, Mariusz Gralewski and Jakub Krzych – they are a living proof that you can dream global when operating in Poland. Their mastery of advanced technologies and ambitions are incredible. Many of them leave Poland as soon as they pass the preliminary validation phase to seek financing in the Silicon Valley or in Asia.

What are in your opinion main differences between the Warsaw startup ecosystem and the ones you know from abroad?

First of all, the scale, the amount of investment available and the lack of experience of the Polish venture capital. Unfortunately, we need at least a decade to change this state of things in Poland.

Who helped you the most when you took your first steps on the business front?

The business meetings organized by Michał Feber and then Aula Polska community helped me greatly. I could always count on them to provide me with a piece of advice or a small favour. I like the fact that a lot of us who remember the early days of the Warsaw startup scene still stick together.

How can you help budding entrepreneurs?

I will always happily tell you how not to do things and help you identify a number of problems that can kill a startup. I do not have much experience in up-scaling foreign businesses or exits (I have only done it twice) but I can advise you on how to develop a startup, build your brand and a network, how to hire people and search for financing.

What is the best way to contact you?

You will find me on FB practically any time. You can also drop me an email to artur@revolver.pl.

You have been developing startups and you've been an active industry member since the turn of the centuries. How has the situation in Warsaw changed over time?

The city authorities have finally realised that startups are not a closed, entrenched clique but genuine businesses generating real income and paying their taxes. Such businesses must be supported. The Smolna accelerator is in operation and the Municipal Office supports many startup events. This is a good sign.

Is it easier to establish a global business in Warsaw these days?

Yes. There are more people who will gladly share their experiences and show you the right development path.

Konrad Latkowski

Konrad 'ksy' Latkowski fell in love with the Internet during their first date facilitated by a modem in 1999. He has been active in PR, communications and broadly understood marketing since 2004. Between 2010 and 2013 he worked with Marek Małachowski on developing the Manubia system. He spent two and a half years cooperating on and developing BanFi Group, where he learnt to provide 'traditional services'. At present, he works at KSYcorp.com. After hours, Konrad co-organises Startup Weekend Warsaw. He's also a co-founder of the Startup Poland Foundation.



Flaker and Adam Zygodlewicz whom I helped organise Democamp or Shopcamp, which put me in contact with a lot of interesting people.

How did you get to where you are at present?

I've always liked doing the cool stuff. If I were to name my major competencies, I would say I am competent in PR and building and launching brands. It is the early days that I get the kick out of: strategy development, analysing what needs to be done, whom to do it with, implementing all that. Every new project is, to a degree, accidental. It is a combined result of meetings with various people whom I used to work with on one thing and then, two or three years later, we meet again to do something different.

How did your startup adventure begin?

It depends on how you want to look at it. You can say it all started in 2010 with Manubia, the sales monitoring system on Allegro. However, 3 years earlier I had taken an active part in a different technology-related project that I was not a shareholder in. From a different perspective, the breakthrough came with

What do you think of the Warsaw startup ecosystem?

It is difficult to be a fair judge of an ecosystem you yourself are a part of. But looking from a meta perspective, TechWawa is a sum total of the problems and opportunities that exist nationwide. There is still too little being taught about entrepreneurship in Polish schools. A lot

of experienced, knowledgeable people have come to Warsaw and there are so many events and meetings that it is really difficult to say what is truly worth your time. Not to mention how difficult it is to squeeze all that into your calendar. At the end of day, the success of any given ecosystem can be measured with the projects that it produces. More and more large and global companies and businesses are created in Warsaw.

How has the Warsaw ecosystem evolved over time?

These days it is much easier to start a business, thanks to all the information on how to do it that is available online, such as books or movies. There are more and more resources for prospective entrepreneurs. On the other hand, it is much more difficult for a beginner to decide whom to talk to. More experienced businessmen aren't always active community members and some sources of information are, let's say, accidental.

What are in your opinion main differences between the Warsaw startup ecosystem and the ones you know from abroad?

Recognisability. Talents. Legal regulations. Investors. There are still too few successful enterprises that are widely recognisable and associated with Warsaw. We are still experiencing brain drain instead of draining others. Our laws, the fact that they are ambiguous and change so often, it doesn't build trust. Local investors have less money than foreign ones so they often avoid costly and risky projects.

Who helped you the most when you took your first steps on the business front?

A lot of people. Probably it was Marek Małachowski, my business partner from Manubia, who helped me the most. It was not his first business. When we differed in our views, he often knew from experience how selecting a specific option might end. All things considered, however, I think it was all the discussions I had that helped me most. Before and after the launch, I had a lot of conversations with the people whom I didn't even know at the time. Nowadays, I sometimes hang out with some of them on Friday nights to talk and discuss some interesting topics.

How can you help budding entrepreneurs?

There is no simple answer to this question. Sometimes I can put you in touch with someone else, sometimes I'll have a conversation about your strategy or idea. Some other time, I will bluntly say 'Drop it, don't waste your time because..'

What is the best way to contact you?

Via email or in person, for example during an OpenReactor event. I really don't like talking on the phone, mine is on silent mode most of the time.

For years you have been organizing Startup Weekend Warsaw with the ambition of making it possible to start a business within 52 hours. Why do you keep organising the event?

Let me start by explaining that SWWAW is organised by a team of four: Magda Borowik, Bartek Staryga, Jarek Piotrowski and I. It's important since I would never be able to do it without them. We asked ourselves the 'why' question the first 3-4 times. We heard the answer directly from the participants. They helped us understand the role that Startup Weekend plays within the ecosystem. In short - we

provide the community with some fresh blood. We help to validate ideas under time pressure. We teach people to prepare for discussions with mentors and help them use the opportunity such meetings offer to the fullest. Finally, we prove that the BMC template can in fact be used for every business idea, before you start 'looking for an investor for this new project.' On the other hand, we try to educate the corporations so that they can cooperate with startups. And we provide them with opportunities to do so.

What do you think of the Warsaw ecosystem from five years ago - from the time when you organised the first Startup Weekend Warsaw? How does it compare to where it is today?

The community members are better prepared these days. We no longer hear 'oh, we have no competitors' or 'our services are addressed at everybody' that much. Unfortunately, 'we will be earning money on advertising' is still alive and kicking. I am also happy to see that more and more people within the community already have at least a few years of professional experience. It was mostly young people, including students, who dominated before.

Kamila Sidor

Kamila is a social entrepreneur, a public speaker, and a co-creator of the global community Geek Girls Carrots where she coaches public speaking skills in Speaking Carrots.



How did your startup adventure begin?

In 2007, I came to Aula Polska for the first time and got fascinated with the topic and all the creative people I met.

How did you get to be where you are at present?

I am here thanks to my stamina. I spent a few years working for half the average national salary, sometimes 12 hours a day. I met a bunch of helpful people, I've been lucky, too.

What do you think of Warsaw's startup ecosystem?

It's developing really fast. Not much was going on seven years ago. At present, there is a number of communities, events, conferences and accelerator programs. All we lack is a few spectacular success stories and some smart money.

How has the Warsaw ecosystem evolved over time?

Startup School and Aula Polska used to be the only organisations serious about building startups. Today, there are so many of them I can no longer keep track, despite trying my best.

What are, in your opinion, the main differences between the Warsaw startup ecosystem and the ones you know from abroad?

The Warsaw ecosystem is young, it has no access to smart money and appropriate financing. We are still learning what entrepreneurship is about in this beautiful country, especially the startup aspect of it. We are, I'd say, two generations behind the Silicon Valley.

Who helped you the most when you took your first steps on the business front?

Tomek Kolinko, who has been into startups since his childhood. He's able to accurately predict trends in technology.

How can you help budding entrepreneurs?

I am a mentor on two programs for female entrepreneurs.

What is the best way to contact you?

Come have a chat with me when you see me at an event, during a conference or a party.

You have developed a Warsaw-based, successful international organisation

who supports women entrepreneurs. What would be your advice for people launching their businesses or creating their own organisations in Warsaw but planning to expand globally?

Geek Girls Carrots supports the women whose drive and intention is to work in technology, not necessarily as an entrepreneur only. As for the advice – your gender is irrelevant. Build your own network of contacts. Stick to your idea. Surround yourself with the people who support you. Then learn, draw conclusions from your failures, and take risks.

You have been recognised as one of the most creative people within the Polish business circles, you have met presidents, received a number of awards for your work. Does it help? Does it boost the development of your organisation?

It definitely does. We needed PR around our activities in Poland and abroad. Plus, during the events we continue to build our contact network. It's always better to attend them than not to.

Zuza is the founder of Moiseum and the author of the Free Art Day, Meta-muzeum, TechnoAtMuseo and DailyArt app ideas. In 2014, she was listed among the '50 most creative people in business' by 'Brief' magazine. She received the Young Creative Entrepreneur Award in Culture category.

Zuza Stańska



How did your startup adventure begin?

By accident. I was a volunteer at Warsaw Startup Weekend in 2011. Then, I got hired as a community manager by a venture capital fund. At some point, I came up with my own business idea and it worked out well.

How did you get to be where you are at present?

It has all been slightly accidental.

What do you think of the Warsaw startup ecosystem?

It's growing by the year, new people and companies keep coming. It's all really good.

How has the Warsaw ecosystem evolved over time?

It has grown significantly.

What are in your opinion the main differences between the Warsaw startup ecosystem and the ones you know from abroad?

Things move at a slower pace here, the people are less open and do not talk to one another as much.

Who helped you the most when you took your first steps in the industry?

At first I was totally on my own, then I got a lot of support from more experienced friends from within the industry. Konrad Latkowski, mostly.

How can you help budding entrepreneurs?

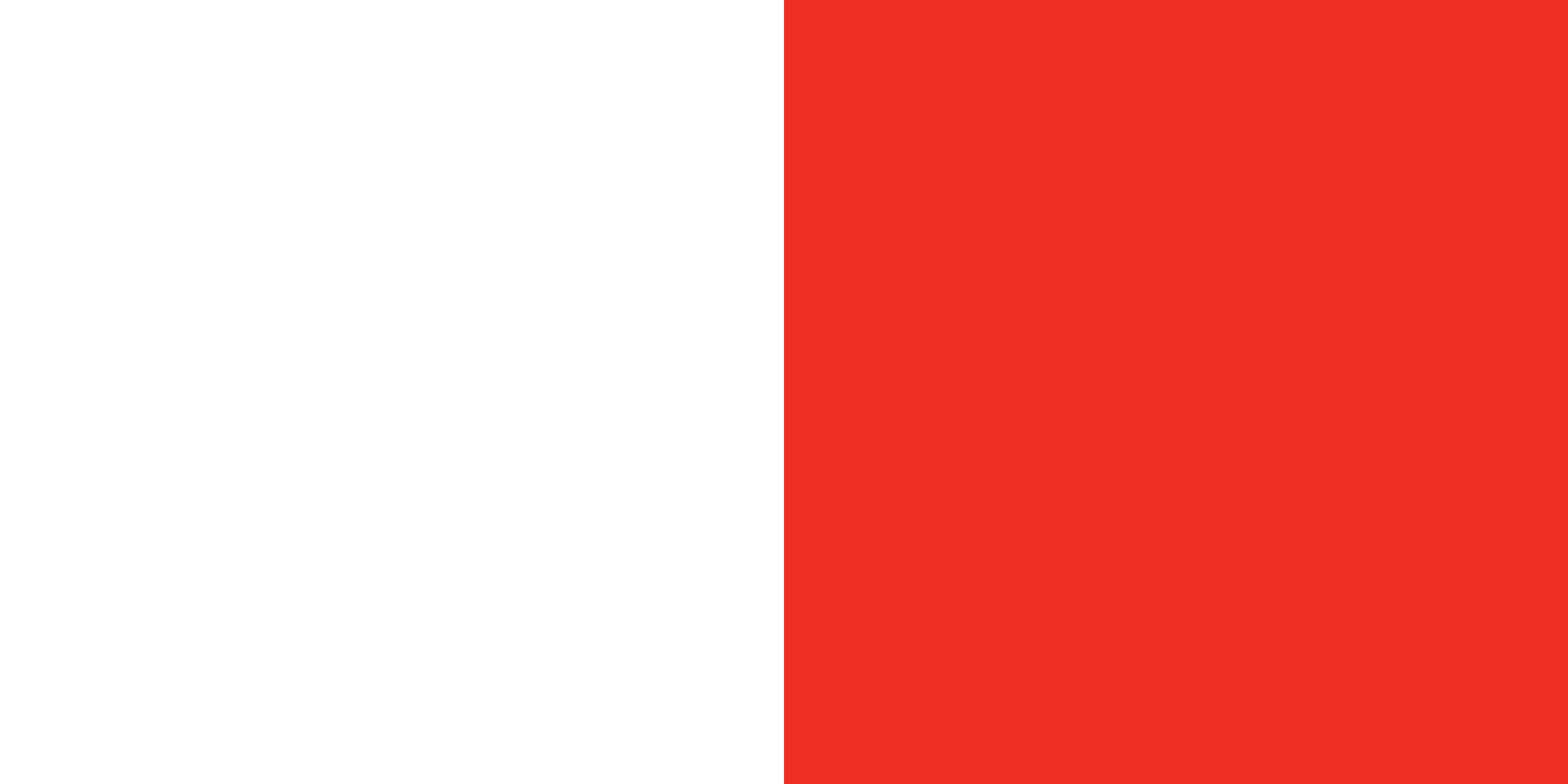
I can direct them to the people who will be of help for them.

What is the best way to contact you?

Via email or on FB.

Your projects are a living proof that even things as remote from technological innovation as art can profit from the less-than-obvious marriage of art and technology. How have you managed to pull it off?

That was what I wanted to do so I went ahead and did it. You've developed a startup even though you lack technical skills. You do know how to code. How did you manage to find the right people to fill this gap? It's enough to have the money. Importantly, I knew coders, they were my colleagues from the same industry.



Warsaw – the City of Startups is a guide to the city’s technological startup ecosystem, currently expanding at an incredible pace. Global rankings of startupfriendly cities reflect Warsaw’s growing importance on the scene: Poland’s capital city has been consistently and swiftly climbing the list of the industry’s hot spots. This impressive progress has been possible due to a number of factors including the international success stories of Warsaw-based entrepreneurs, the dynamism of the local organisations which promote startups actively, and the lasting commitment of the local authorities to improve the quality of life in the city while turning Warsaw into a startup-friendly environment. This guide presents the opportunities Warsaw offers to anyone with an innovative business idea, and to those who are already at the implementation stage. It also presents the stories of talented young people whose passion, ideas, stamina, dilemmas, failures and successes are reflected in the featured interviews. Warsaw – the City of Startups will help you navigate the lush startup ecosystem of the city and draw inspiration from its richness.

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