

The Role of Uncertainty Avoidance and Success Targets in Berlin's Startups

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### *Abstract*

This research explores the relationship between culturally-rooted uncertainty avoidance and success targets in Berlin-based technology-oriented startups. Using uncertainty avoidance defined by Hofstede, two groups of founders from nations on opposing extremes of Hofstede's spectrum are compared based on how they view success in their startups. 10 founders comprise each comparison group, and empirical, qualitative information is gathered through semi-structured interviews with each founder. Findings show a strong relationship linking Low UAI founders with technical educational fields and more modest success targets, while High UAI founders are more likely to study functional fields and have more ambitious, industry-changing success targets.

Key Words: Primary, Qualitative Comparisons, Economic Sociology, Cultural Frameworks (Hofstede), Human Capital, Comparative Entrepreneurship

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Founder Interview Question List

**List of Used Short Forms**

- UA: Uncertainty Avoidance
- UAI: Uncertainty Avoidance Index
- LME: Liberal Market Economy
- CME: Coordinated Market Economy
- LME: Liberal Market Economy
- CME: Coordinated Market Econ

## **1.0 Introduction**

### *1.1 General Introduction*

In the dramatically-shifting global business environment, technology startups are widely touted as the new pace-setters for innovation. Despite being comparatively small, nimble, and very risky enterprises, startups tend to offer investors opportunities for serious capital appreciation, but that comes with widely expected failure. Therefore, it's important to understand as many aspects about the direction, functionality, and underlying factors affecting these companies, as a handful will become the large enterprises with the ground-breaking technologies that will shape our future.

Each economic period of expansion can be seen as based on certain leading industries, practices, or technologies. In the past, railroads, retailers, and websites have provided serious, many times speculative, returns to both investors and entrepreneurs. The current age of growth has accompanied the development of a new type of company, the startup. Despite its newfound fame in modern business circles, the concept of a "startup" is not explicitly defined. Those involved qualm over the minutiae of the point where a venture transcends the startup label. Employee number, length of operation, revenue size, founder involvement, and culture are all touted as being indications of a company's label (Robehmed, 2013). The delineation between what is and what is not a startup is certainly up for discussion. However, in subsequent references to "startups," this paper loosely defines such enterprises as rapidly-growing companies, typically less than five years old, with heavy founder involvement that are conducting highly-innovative practices. By maintaining this strict classification of startups in the following research, findings can more easily be attributed to a specific group of early-stage companies that have the possibility to shape future behaviors, products, or services stemming from their innovations.

Naturally, the new development of such enterprises, coupled with the boom-or-bust nature of these ventures, creates a tantalizing scenario for venture capitalists and entrepreneurs alike. The space is new, technologically advanced and exciting, but this also leaves those involved with limited examples and best practices on which to base their actions. At the moment, the vast majority of startup best practices,

tips, and advice stem from the one-off successes of massive, period-defining companies like Microsoft, Google, and Facebook. Such a system results in a diverse population of entrepreneurs around the world in different industries working to emulate American special cases. Therefore, more adaptive startup research should be championed to offer entrepreneurs in the global context the ability to recognize how their unique characteristics and attributes may affect their enterprises.

Being one of the largest economies in the world and the largest in Europe, Germany, operates under a coordinated market economy model. Amongst other things, this involves stable, long-term employment for workers, taking into account a wider group of stakeholders in business decisions, and prioritizing long-term over short-term growth (Hall & Soskice, 2001). With that being stated, it is not a given that such a system would give rise to such a robust startup ecosystem, but it certainly has. Berlin's startup scene is overwhelmingly more international than the rest of Germany's with 42% of startup employees being non-Germans (Kollmann, et al., 2016). Therefore, the city's growing startup ecosystem is not as heavily dependent upon traditional German business norms as legacy industries in other parts of the country. Not only does this result in a unique labor and operational environment both inside and outside of ventures' walls, but it elevates the need for intercultural understanding and management. Having already raised €1.1 billion in outside capital in 2016 and planning on raising another €1.3 billion in 2017, these companies occupy an influential vantage point for the economy of the "poor, but sexy" capital of Germany (Kollmann, et al., 2016).

Berlin, continental Europe's startup powerhouse and ground-zero, is a dynamic, international city with new businesses being founded daily that have the potential to reshape work and play. At the crossroads of multiculturalism, entrepreneurship that is very much in vogue, and large amounts of outside funding, the startup scene of Berlin offers all of those involved and adjacent great opportunities. On the contrary, with such variability in founders' backgrounds, missions, ideas, and experiences, it's difficult, if not impossible, to develop a type of methodology to predict the course each enterprise will take. Every venture is unique, and every founder is one-of-a-kind. However, each possess certain traits that may or may not affect influential professional choices.

## *1.2 Why Top-Down Culture*

As will be explained in greater detail in subsequent sections, there are different definitions conjured by the word culture. For one, culture can be that which binds a wider group of people together in society, and another form of culture is the way that people act and do things in an organization. While the vast majority of this research is focusing on national culture, the more societally-inclusive version, it's important to initially recognize why studying the leaders of organizations is important, which focuses on the creation of a company's organizational culture. First looking at organizational culture then the impact that leaders' national cultures have on it, the weight that leaders carry in a company will be highlighted. From small to large companies, internal culture is important and becoming more important as the world changes. Ultimately, understanding the importance of leaders in the shaping of such a valuable organizational characteristic can help all stakeholders make more well-informed decisions in their own involvement.

Initially looking at the concept of organizational culture, Warrick (2017) defines culture as “the [predominant] beliefs, values, attitudes, behaviors, and practices, that are characteristics of a group of people.” Surprisingly, this definition nicely frames both the concept of internal organizational culture and the concept of external national culture. Remaining focused on organizational culture, every organization has a culture and functions in accordance with a mix of unspoken, written, ingrained, and defined rules and norms. As Western economies shift to service and knowledge sectors, organizational culture is becoming one of the most important organizational traits to maintain. Particularly for skilled labor, culture is a priority, as it is both the cause and result of organizational practices (Warrick, 2017). Those conducting knowledge and skill-intensive tasks heavily rely on their colleagues and are, generally, more mobile than unskilled workers. Therefore, creation of a beneficial organizational culture is crucial to maintaining the happiness of those workers and reaping the benefits of their highest levels of productivity. On a more general scale, organizational culture also has a major effect on the success of an organization. Affecting performance of the company, morale and productivity of employees, and the ability to attract



and retain talent, firm leaders in the modern economy must work to foster the development of this nebulous, invisible influence or risk facing serious consequences (Warrick, 2017).

In the quest to understand and be able to better prepare for, possibly even control for, tenuous factors such as organizational culture, research such as the following can provide those from founders to new hires important insights. To better understand how organizational culture, this invisible force affecting productivity, talent retention, and performance, is formed, one should look to the those at the helm. From the moment a company is founded, culture is created (Brown, 2017). Granted, not all companies are founded with organizational culture at the forefront of founders' minds, but that actually works to create a culture within itself. Looking at companies like Uber and Facebook, product was the one and only priority for the founding teams. As a result, the subsequent company cultures arose from being byproducts of each founder's personality and operating style (Brown, 2017). In an interview with Ken Kunkleman, a Managing Director of Human Capital at Deloitte Consulting, Ken greatly stressed the role that founders and leaders play in the formation of organizational cultures. Three specific founding characteristics, the simplicity of the founder's vision, whether or not a founder brings his or her true self to the company, and the founder's core expertise, strongly shape how leaders influence the wider culture of their firms (Kunkleman, 2019). Such an impact is even more prevalent in small firms, such as the startups at the core of this research.

Startups, whether in decline or rapid ascension, are constantly in a state of flux. Financials are changing, markets are emerging, products come and go, and employees pass through. However, the lasting impact of a startup's founder is something that becomes almost enshrined in legend. Smaller companies can outgrow their people very quickly, which can lead to high turnover, but those with the most impressive (positive or negative) founders are left with a near-permanent imprint of his/her legacy in the organizational culture (Kunkleman, 2019). Founders become almost that of folklore at startups. Having a much closer "finger to the pulse," startup and small firm founders are frequently spoken of on a first name basis and cultivate an identity as a friend and familiar person (Kunkleman, 2019). This commonality not only further imbeds the founder's cultural preferences into that of the organization, but

it creates an air of omnipresence, as the concept and conversations of the founder and around even when he or she is not. As Ken stated, “the leader becomes this lifeline and a legacy,” and the leader-led culture continues to affect employees’ duties as time progresses and employees are replaced by those who may have never even met the leader (Kunkleman, 2019). For example, certain startups become immensely successful. These are the stuff of dreams for small-time founders and market-watchers alike, and many have a legendary leader at the helm. Kunkleman (2019) pointed out that many times these successful leaders move on and are then pressured to come back due to this built up persona and cultural imprint on the company. Examples include Howard Schultz at Starbucks and Steve Jobs at Apple. Despite only being one person, founders and pivotal leaders of companies, especially those in the startup stage, can have oversized effects on the success of their businesses. Therefore, understanding the cultural pre-programming of these founders and how it influences the directions they desire to take their companies can provide deep insights into the future operations of businesses. According to Brown (2017), culture is created from the purpose of the organization. When addressing the goal and core “why” of the business, the foundation on which operations and organizational culture will grow is built, and these influential founders hold the key to understanding the why behind such happenings.

### *1.3 Description of Research Question*

Working to provide both entrepreneurs and financiers a more transferable model through which they can view early-stage startups, this research focuses on evaluating how founders’ culturally-based uncertainty avoidance (UA) affects their views of success. How does a founder’s cultural orientation on Hofstede’s Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) affect the idea of success for his/her technology startup in Berlin? Due to the deductive nature of this research, I hypothesize that groups diametrically opposed on Hofstede’s Uncertainty Avoidance Index would exhibit different levels of ambition in the entrepreneurial process, which is exemplified by their articulated ideas of success. In other words, the group hailing from national cultures with a high average score on the UAI would set more attainable success targets, allowing them to more definitively plan to reach them, while entrepreneurs from low UAI cultures would have more ambitious, uncertain concepts of success with more vague ways of meeting them.

#### *1.4 Theories Employed*

Theoretically, there is a large canon of research concerning entrepreneurship and culture separately. This specific project takes aspects of well-known theories in the area to test how they potentially work together to form a more holistic picture of the entrepreneurial space. Such a task involves bringing in aspects of managerial sciences and cultural management, helping to illuminate the overlapping commonalities of each. The following theories form both the basis for the beginning of such a project and the theoretical underpinnings of the project's potential contributions to the academic discourse.

Initially looking at the position of a startup founder, I employ the reasoning behind Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory and the wider discussion of immigrant entrepreneurship. Hofstede asserts that each individual's cultural background leaves lasting impacts on how he views the world and conducts himself in a professional context (Hofstede, 2001). As entrepreneurship is an incredibly risky endeavor, this work focuses on Hofstede's articulated scale of "uncertainty avoidance," or a culture's tendency to prefer more stability over ambiguity. Using a measure that encapsulates the cultural tendency to favor a certain style of professional pursuit over another, naturally, comes with limitations. I recognize that such limitations have been widely explored in literature and academic discourse. For more information on the potential shortcomings of such a theory, please see the subsequent limitations section. However, with limitations included, analyzing entrepreneurs on such a scale is still both useful and valid. Granted, there will always be differences between individuals regardless of the group selected, but if there were no measurable similarities between co-ethnics in business actions, then how could one even argue that national culture exists? Hofstede's revised national averages for uncertainty avoidance scores around the world create arguably the most widely-known scale for cultural comparison.

Shifting from the comparison to a more holistic view of the entrepreneurial space, there is strong support amongst those in entrepreneurship academia that focuses on the unique skillset and propensity that immigrant groups have when it comes to entrepreneurship. Despite there not being one "coined" theory that encapsulates the arguments of this realm, this study specifically focuses on the entrepreneurial

ventures of foreigners, as they all encounter unique challenges that they must overcome. On a basic level, all people are endowed with a natural mix of social and cultural tools and attributes, and those from different cultures can have different tools to use. Coupled with playing the role of the “outsider” in adopted locations, immigrants, equipped with different social and cultural tools than the native-born populace, have an advantage when it comes to entrepreneurship (Hoselitz, 1960). Looking at groups of immigrants as a whole, immigrant entrepreneurs can have profound effects on social, economic, and demographic landscapes of their adopted cities. By utilizing their cultural and social skillsets, they regularly introduce new products and business techniques to their adopted economies, which comes with larger, sometimes informal, effects on their adopted locations that native-born entrepreneurs do not create (Kloosterman, et al., 1999). Therefore, immigrant entrepreneurs regularly do have an oversized impact on their place of settlement. Finally, looking at the personal level of immigrant entrepreneurship, these people encounter personal struggles that native entrepreneurs simply do not. Many immigrant entrepreneurs work to construct their identities in their new, adopted homelands based on both personal and professional experiences. Attempting to balance freedom and belonging in these societies, immigrant founders may even be pushed to entrepreneurship as a way to gain agency over their lives in a foreign environment (Glinka & Brzozowska, 2015). Taking these different concepts of immigrant entrepreneurship into account, this study mainly focuses on foreign founders because their efforts have mainly been discussed in terms of more traditional forms of entrepreneurship in the past. Not only do most studies focus on non-technology/startup related entrepreneurship for immigrants, but they also focus on more traditional forms of migration, such as large groups that have the abilities to create enclaves in their adopted nations. Despite not having a solidified, articulated, singular theory to encompass the concepts surrounding immigrant entrepreneurship, the wider study of the field impacts the subsequent focus of this work.

With these two groups of entrepreneurs opposed on the uncertainty avoidance scale, the project would have the greatest relevance by measuring this cultural factor’s effect on an important aspect of entrepreneurship: goal setting. Focusing on the most important goal of a venture, the idea of success, each

entrepreneur is able to articulate his or her long-term goal, which is the ultimate driving force behind both the founding of the company and how day-to-day operations are conducted. Looking at Locke's Goal Setting Theory of Motivation, having a well-articulated, executable goal in mind has profound effects on productivity and on employee engagement (Locke, 1968). Goal setting is a task undertaken on a daily basis by entrepreneurs and managers alike. By being able to effectively set targets for achievement and how to reach said targets, Locke (1968) asserts that such enterprises typically achieve greater outcomes and have more highly-engaged employees. Therefore, being able to better understand how culturally-derived uncertainty avoidance affects the goal of success in startups can pave the way for future study on how this cultural characteristic affects aspects like success and employee engagement.

### *1.5 Additions to Theories*

This project adds a new dynamic to Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory by isolating a specific cultural dimension and measuring its effect on a specific business decision. In Hofstede's research and subsequent replicated studies, researchers have measured the cultural dimensions of groups of people who are either bound together by national origin or organizational employment. For example, Hofstede's original theory came from the research of workers at IBM around the world, and later replication studies sought to support or disprove Hofstede's findings by focusing study on a group of people from one specific background. In this study, I am not isolating interview groups based on shared national origins (e.g. Greek entrepreneurs compared to American entrepreneurs), nor are the differences of people in the same company be tested (e.g. workers in IBM Japan compared to IBM Australia). By selecting interviewees who come from varied national background and companies, they should, theoretically, have only their cultural uncertainty avoidance orientations in common. Doing so will add to Hofstede's theory by testing if an economically influential act like the success vision in entrepreneurship is affected by the uncertainty avoidance of a culture, or if it must be affected by something else, like personal experience, background, interests, etc. In summary, Hofstede's theory asserts that people from the same national cultures have a similar level of uncertainty avoidance, which affects a variety of facets

in business. This research shows if groups of people who, in theory, only align on their scores of culturally-derived uncertainty avoidance actually reflect similar views of success in their startup ventures.

The wider field of immigrant entrepreneurship will be affected by this research, as the included interviewees are both on the “margins” of society by being immigrants and their human capital may or may not be affected by their cultural-predisposed uncertainty avoidance levels. Taking into account the unique propensity that immigrants have towards entrepreneurship, the focus of this project updates the literature by looking at immigrant entrepreneurs in non-traditional situations, such as startups, as compared to more traditional businesses, and as free-choice migrants instead of part of a larger migration trend. As this project only interviews foreign entrepreneurs, finding that one cultural orientation of uncertainty avoidance over another leads someone to set more ambitious or more measured goals could suggest that immigrants from a certain cultural background may perform this business function in a different way than others. This would add nuance to ideas such as Hoselitz’s by raising the point that within immigrant communities, some may be even more well-positioned than others at the onset of the entrepreneurial process due to the culturally-endowed properties.

Goal setting is widely seen as an important factor in the planning and execution of initiatives, especially in smaller, more nimble enterprises. This research adds to Locke’s Goal Setting Theory of Motivation by enhancing it through a cultural dimension to the planning process in startups. Most entrepreneurs are aware of the idea of goal-setting, and the vast majority of ventures are founded because of one large goal driving the whole enterprise (i.e. the idea of success). However, the current research that evaluates how certain founders may set goals in different ways due to innate factors like cultural origin is slim. By evaluating how certain groups of people tend to set their ultimate goals in a startup, investors, founders, and employees can make more informed decisions when being involved in such ventures, as the idea of success can sway the way that founders and teams are motivated and executing on their plans.

The main theoretical grounding of this work is in looking at how these aforementioned theories work together in modern, international entrepreneurship. Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions have been applied to a variety of different organizations in the past, notably to IBM during his initial

experimentation, but few have tried to see how this pertains to startup activity. Hoselitz's theory, on the other hand, directly addresses both entrepreneurial activity and cultural attributes, but it lacks sustenance when it comes to specific actions founders take that can be tied to their cultural upbringings. It takes a broad view at why immigrants found ventures and establishes the idea that all people are endowed with individual cultural and professional capital, but it doesn't provide explanations on many specific examples. Locke's Goal-Setting theory, similarly, takes a general view at entrepreneurial undertakings and how founders and employees can find success in such ventures, but it lacks the cultural specificity by not addressing what underlying cultural attributes may affect founders' ultimate goal-setting (i.e. vision of success). In summary, Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions provide the cultural grounding for the following discussion, but they lack the entrepreneurial specificity. Hoselitz's Theory of Entrepreneurship incorporates the cultural capital of founders into the beginning stages of a business venture, but it does not address specific actions that are affected by specific cultural predispositions. Finally, Locke's Goal-Setting Theory shines light on a specific, founder-led action that can be very influential in the execution of startup activity, but it lacks evaluation through a culturally-defined lens, which Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions offer. Therefore, the mixture of theories employed in this project form a circular relationship based on what each one provides and lacks.

### *1.6 Research Implications*

Expounding upon the canon of literature related to founders' cultures and subsequent effects on business will be particularly relevant by focusing on the startup environment. Unlike many related studies that are centered around multinational corporations or more traditional forms of entrepreneurship, the startup landscape creates a unique economic environment that can create various routes towards massive capital appreciation or depreciation. Such uncertainty in outcomes and high amounts of capital risk make any insight into the behavior of founders extremely valuable to all stakeholders in the startup realm. Specifically, this research is relevant to founders, startup employees, and investing venture capitalists.

### *1.6.1 Implications for Founders*

When founding a startup, whether one is a seasoned veteran or a first-time founder, it's difficult to be able know exactly how to go about creating products, revenue streams, development timelines, organizational structures, a team, and the list goes on. As a result, there are a variety of tools, seminars, online tutorials, and entrepreneurs who are willing and eager to share experiences and advice with new founders during this time of tumultuous creation. When so many different and important aspects are at play simultaneously, a founder's internal processing is pushed to the limit, which is one reason why startup founding and entrepreneurship in general is such a demanding career choice. While working to understand and anticipate how the external environment will react and adapt to one's business venture, a founder must also be able to anticipate and understand how he or she will react to challenges along the way. A founder must know his or herself to be able to properly utilize strengths and protect for weaknesses.

Culture, a set of predisposed values and ways of doing things that is innate in all humans, can be one of a founder's most influential driving factors behind how he or she treats employees, sees opportunities, operates in ambiguity, and forms an organization. To best adapt one's culture, especially a foreign culture, to an increasingly international business environment, all insights into cultural tendencies help founders better understand themselves and best adjust for strengths, weaknesses, and differences. By bringing cultural understanding to the forefront of their thinking, business founders are better tooled to consider how to relate to stakeholders who may be different from themselves. In a globally interconnected business world, recognizing differences in time to adjust for them can be the difference between success and a frustrating, expensive failure.

### *1.6.2 Implications for Employees*

Millennial workers and consumers may, if news cycles are to judge, perpetually be the subject of ire of older generations in the modern economy. Unlike those of previous times, millennials, the largest generational group in today's workplace, place greater value on the meaning of work, enjoyment at the workplace, collaboration, flat hierarchies, and not feeling like a "cog in the machine," as the saying goes.



Thus, startup founders and managers alike must be able to properly account for these employment preferences and requirements to be able to acquire high-quality talent, build a collaborative environment, minimize turnover, and maintain productivity in an industry that is known for rapid, dramatic changes. Culture is a large part of this recipe for success.

To better understand how a small, new startup may go about their development and expansion, in whatever facet that may be, and to better understand one's own preferences for development, illuminating cultural similarities and differences is key. Addressing the risk of in-office or inter-team misalignment, understanding of one's own cultural predispositions and those of one's employer and close co-workers can help an employee better understand and assess how the two visions for success can work together. Looking at an employee's personal development and satisfaction, feeling as if one is working with like-minded people to accomplish a shared goal can dramatically influence satisfaction and feelings of fulfillment. Addressing cultural factors that may predispose employees to view success and the road to it in a certain way can give them helpful tools to make a more informed decision in employment opportunities with common goals. Due to the fact that a startup is an organization that can have its success or failure affected by the actions of a singular employee, being able to have as much insight into the group dynamics and shared vision of a startup team can have serious implications on the overall success of the venture.

### *1.6.3 Implications for Venture Capitalists*

Venture capital comes in a variety of different forms that are relevant to this research. For the majority of startups, initial funding is raised through a process known as "Family and Friends," which is the way pre-product and pre-launch companies acquire funds from those they know closely. With development of the business, venture capital is the next step in a young, rapidly-growing company's road of development. Venture capitalists can be angel investors, wealthy individuals, and firms that specialize in the practice, but all are centered around deployment of a comparatively small pool of capital to high-risk assets, like pre-launch apps and companies with prototyped products. Naturally, such high-risk is rewarded with incredibly high rewards in capital appreciation of a select few of these investments. Being

able to discern which early, scrappy startup projects will reap exponential benefits is the premise off which the venture capital industry is created.

Specifically, in the earliest stages of startups, venture capitalists are provided almost no metrics to measure potential and current operations for many investment targets. This makes evaluation through traditional quantitative analysis and economic modeling near impossible. Therefore, venture capitalists must rely on their evaluations of subjective measures, such as team dynamics, personal competencies, vision, story, and just personal connection. Such subjective measures dictating potentially massive capital transformation create a need for deeper insights into how early stage entrepreneurs work, how they view business landscapes, and how they function within said environments. Being able to understand how specific groups of entrepreneurs will act in international contexts in relation to how they view long-term goals and how to accomplish them would give venture capitalists a useful measure to evaluate teams. Expanding an investor's understanding of founders' mindsets and cultural predispositions can give greater insights into expected return on capital by recognizing that culture of teams can change certain ways success is viewed and how it is achieved. Developing such insights can also be useful for investors' abilities to decide what kind of funding a venture requires and what kind of pace of growth should be expected, due to a team's predisposition to viewing success in a more grandiose or more tempered way.

## **2.0 Review of Literature**

In the world of business enterprises, any variable that may or may not affect outcomes of ventures will be explored and researched. If there is a chance to gain greater insight into one's ability to make money in an investment or entrepreneurial venture, there's a good chance that it will be researched, and culture certainly falls into that category.

Culture can be defined, in the managerial sense, in two distinct ways. First, culture of the organization, or internal culture, can be seen as the set of rules, beliefs, norms, actions taken, and code of conduct that is acceptable and fostered within the organization. For example, Zappos, the American online shoe store, is widely celebrated for its unique, upbeat, fun culture in which employees are encouraged to enjoy work and be themselves (Zappos LLC, 2019). This type of culture can be created

intentionally or as a byproduct of individual actors, and internal organizational culture frequently weighs heavily on employees' decisions to join or leave a company. The second form of culture is that of external, or national, culture. National culture can be understood as the set of rules, beliefs, norms, actions taken, code of conduct, stories told, and way of viewing the world instilled in members of a group from a specific country or region. For example, when people travel and revel at the different cultures and beliefs of people around the world in exotic locations, that is national culture. This is the most important type of culture for the subsequent study, and it's safe to assume that the following references to "culture," unless explicitly expressed otherwise, refer to this concept of national culture.

These two forms of culture can and frequently do interact and clash. Naturally, each person founding an enterprise, leading a company, or managing a team is endowed with a personal culture from his or her national or regional origin, which in turn affects the organizational culture, which has knock-on effects seen in the team's way of operation. Typically, this is not an overt issue noticed by organizational compatriots because collaborative teams have, until the new age of globalization, widely been constructed out of co-nationals. By having teams of people from the same or similar cultures in knowledge industries, communication is easier, norms are more easily established, and subtleties flow more naturally. However, this is just simply not the way today's hyper-connected, technology driven world is moving, especially in the modern, born-global startup. Startups, such as those dominating Berlin's economic landscape, are frequently founded, run, populated, and invested in by people of different national origins, many of whom aren't German. Such a situation is advantageous in allowing companies to find and source the most relevant talent for jobs regardless of origin, but it can complicate exchanges, as those ascribing to different national cultures can frequently see a business environment and entrepreneurial venture in a different way.

By no stretch is this the first assertion of such an occurrence, and a review of the available literature on the topic is necessary to better frame the subsequent discussions. As stated, this specific work concerns a culture's uncertainty avoidance effects on the idea of success in Berlin's startups.

Consequently, the review of literature observes publications on culture's link to entrepreneurship, uncertainty avoidance's link to entrepreneurship, and how founders affect the ventures they establish.

### *2.1 Culture's Link to Entrepreneurship*

One of the most commonly-known thinkers on culture's impact on management is Geert Hofstede. As mentioned above, his theory on Cultural Dimensions frames this research, but it has also been subject to wide scrutiny and repeated replications in new contexts. Hofstede, as a result, is not the only researcher interested in exploring the connections between one's national culture and how it affects business decisions, and many have extended this to specifically focus on the business subjection of entrepreneurship.

One of the initial tests of this theory came from an independent validation study utilizing a Rokeach survey. Bond, working with Hofstede, (1984) understood that studying and understanding culture is also important for the fields of sociology, politics, and economics, as it explores how synergies between people develop. In their quantitative analysis of two cross-cultural research studies by different teams, strong correlations were found to support the cultural norms outlined in Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (Hofstede & Bond, 1984). Not only did this work serve as support for Hofstede's theory, but it brought the value of culture on business to the forefront of research.

Studying how cultural imprints on those involved in the wider sphere of business activities has rapidly expanded since the advent of Hofstede's initial theory, and the discourse now also includes exploration into how culture impacts entrepreneurship. Taking a look at the underlying catalyst for entrepreneurship, both in startup foundation and in in-company entrepreneurial activity, the overall innovation within a cultural group is important. In Shane's "Cultural Influences on National Rates of Innovation" study, the research team examined a group of 33 countries to see how their individual cultural indicators, as outlined by Hofstede, correlated to the levels of innovation in the countries (1993). Controlling for external factors like income level and education, the research found that national innovation rates were positively correlated with individualism and negatively correlated with uncertainty

avoidance and power distance (Shane, 1993). As any entrepreneur can attest to, innovation is the essential ingredient in the success of a new venture, and it's vital to recognize what may affect innovation.

Despite there being research to support ties between entrepreneurship and national culture, the academic community is far from universal agreement on the subject. In a large overview article, Hayton, George, and Zahra (2002) discuss the advantages and disadvantages involved in ascribing to Hofstede's theory. In summary, there have been a variety of different studies conducted exploring various degrees of how national culture affects entrepreneurship and business practices in general with varied results. Despite this, they believe that national culture does in fact affect one's entrepreneurial activities and actions, and Hofstede's research is a useful overview of how different nations' cultures can affect different aspects of entrepreneurship (Hayton, et al., 2002). With a factor as difficult to measure and as imprecise as culture, it's no surprise that the academic community has trouble finding a definitive response to exactly *how* culture affects entrepreneurship, but research points in the direction that it *does* have an effect.

For more clarity on the diversity of findings, the aforementioned study by Shane (1993) found data supporting Hofstede's cultural distinctions' effects on entrepreneurial activity, while Hunt and Levie (2006) could not definitively support the theory. Examining entrepreneurial levels of people in cultures with a diversity of scores on Hofstede's scales, no correlation was found between cultural disposition and entrepreneurial activity. In further research, they did find evidence supporting the idea that one's level of uncertainty avoidance can have a greater effect on an individual's willingness to invest in entrepreneurial activities (Hunt & Levie, 2006). Such a study, combined with various findings outlined above, points towards an idea with which most researchers would agree; that culture affects entrepreneurship, but it does not always affect the level of its happening, per se. Instead, what is affected is the way in which entrepreneurial ventures and business ventures in general take shape and grow.

## *2.2 Uncertainty Avoidance's Link to Entrepreneurship*

Things as nebulous, yet omnipresent, as culture and entrepreneurship are difficult to definitively outline in a concise, all-encompassing manner. Thus, breaking up these concepts into their individual

components and pieces makes testing and academic exploration more concrete and measurable.

Harkening back to Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions, the component of national culture focused on in the rest of this work, uncertainty avoidance, has been debated in academic discourse by various scholars. It is important to understand how the specific aspect of uncertainty avoidance has been shown to be connected to entrepreneurship, as it gives greater weight to the reasoning behind further exploration of this influential cultural component.

Initially looking at how uncertainty avoidance can affect business, there have been various studies conducted linking uncertainty avoidance of one's national origin to business-pertinent decisions. In a recent study examining proprietary data from a large multinational, uncertainty avoidance displayed its ability to influence decisions when it comes to rewards. This study found that employees from countries with higher uncertainty avoidance levels exercised their stock options earlier than those from low uncertainty avoidance countries (Bova & Vance, 2019). Despite being in a traditional employment capacity, uncertainty avoidance still caused workers to shield themselves from potential risks. Shifting to entrepreneurship, Baughn and Neupert (2003) discuss how entrepreneurship around the globe can be more closely tied to some cultural aspects than others. In their research, the team examined entrepreneurs in their home countries, which are more concentrated cultural ecosystems of people with more similar cultural attributes, and findings supported the influence of uncertainty avoidance. The team assert that uncertainty avoidance was actually one of the two measured cultural dimensions that helped predict the financial, legal, and regulatory structures of a nation, which heavily affect entrepreneurial activity and practices (Baughn & Neupert, 2003). Such findings bring into question whether a culture's uncertainty avoidance level affects institutional structures or if such structures affect the uncertainty avoidance of a population.

Furthering the relevance of uncertainty avoidance's link to entrepreneurial activity, Barr and Glynn (2004) studied the ties between a professional's cultural disposition to uncertainty avoidance and one's controllability in strategic issues, which is crucial to the success of small, nimble startups. The researchers found a strong correlation between one's uncertainty avoidance and specific issues, such as

labeling of strategic issues, and uncertainty avoidance was actually the only measured cultural dimension that showed effects on decision-making (Barr & Glynn, 2004). Work such as that conducted by Barr and Glynn exhibit how uncertainty avoidance as a cultural dimension has noticeable effects on the way businesspeople view their environments, and the team calls for more research on how specific cultural dimensions affect strategic issues.

Shifting to the macro-economic viewpoint, Hancıoğlu, Ülkühan and Yıldırım (2014) utilized a correlational regression analysis to examine the relationship between a nation's uncertainty avoidance level and total entrepreneurial activity. Such a study is unique in that it is not looking at individual entrepreneurs and their actions, but it analyzes the wider economic impact of the "total entrepreneurial activity," which is a combination of economic development and entrepreneurship in a country (Hancıoğlu, et al., 2014). Once again ascribing to Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, the team of researchers found a moderate level of support for the hypothesis that uncertainty avoidance results in higher levels of entrepreneurial activity in a nation (Hancıoğlu, et al., 2014).

Continuing to look at the external environment of nations, Wennekers, van Stel, and Noorderhaven (2007) conducted a quantitative analysis study to examine the correlation between uncertainty avoidance and business ownership in OECD nations. Contrary to many other findings, the team's results found that nations with high uncertainty avoidance also contained many large corporations, which pushes those who may personally look for autonomy towards self-employment more than would take place in a nation with Low UA (Wennekers, et al., 2007). This may appear as counterintuitive, as most find that people who are more comfortable with risk would be more inclined to be entrepreneurs, but it is important to recognize that Wennekers, et al. (2007) were primarily looking at macroeconomics. Countries trending towards higher uncertainty avoidance are those with large, established corporations employing many in secure environments, which could create a subsection of the population looking to create their own autonomous route towards employment. Therefore, uncertainty avoidance must be understood in the context of national cultures, as Hofstede outlines, and in the context of individuals' personal actions. As outlined in the research of McGrath, MacMillan, and Scheinberg (1992), there is a

strong link between entrepreneurship and individuals' respective low uncertainty avoidance scores. By evaluating participants on a person-by-person basis, diversity existing within economies is highlighted while simultaneously strengthening the relationship between uncertainty avoidance and entrepreneurship (McGrath, et al., 1992).

Complications can also fester due to differences in the gender of a study's participants, once again emphasizing the importance to outlining differences from person-to-person. Idris's (2011) work focuses on expanding the available canon of literature concerning differences between groups of female-specific entrepreneurs. By measuring innovation, which is "critical to growth," this work looks at how uncertainty avoidance affects the entrepreneurial behavior of Malay and Chinese women entrepreneurs in Malaysia. Results reconfirm that uncertainty avoidance is a significant determinant of innovativeness, but it also suggest that female entrepreneurs may not necessarily conform to the values traditionally expected of them and can differ from male entrepreneurs of the same culture (Idris, 2011). The paper also discusses the idea of the "immigrant mentality" of the Chinese in Malaysia, which one can argue contributes to their lower uncertainty avoidance, but the Chinese may also have been in the country long enough and in large enough numbers to be returning to their traditional ways of higher uncertainty avoidance (Idris, 2011). Gender differences in small, qualitative studies must be understood, as must the concept of immigrant mentality in foreign entrepreneurs.

Uncertainty avoidance doesn't solely affect the innovation and entrepreneurship in an environment in the sphere of creation, but research exists that suggests that entrepreneurship and innovation might be stifled by a public that is resistant to trying new innovations. Laukkanen (2015) found evidence suggesting that a culture's uncertainty avoidance level had a strong effect on its members' resistance to innovation in the field of mobile banking. Granted, this is a single industry that can be seen as more sensitive than others, but the findings hint at the idea that those from high uncertainty avoidance cultures might be more tempered in their approaches, aspirations, and entrepreneurial, as they are indoctrinated with social norms discouraging radical changes and chance-taking (Laukkanen, 2015).



### *2.3 Founder Effects on Companies*

Cultural effects on entrepreneurs is a well-studied, as seen above, phenomenon in modern academic discourse, but a sole entrepreneur and person is not of immense importance to the economy and society as a whole. On the contrary, the enterprise founded and run by the entrepreneur can have an oversized impact on the surrounding society. Therefore, it is important to recognize the influential roles that founders and leaders of enterprises play in the day-to-day functions of said ventures.

Initially, the actual founding event of the company is one of the most influential happenings in its incorporated life. Kedmenec and Strašek (2017) conducted a correlational analysis study of more than 40 nations to see how national culture of founders can leave an imprint on the type of enterprise founded, specifically social ventures. After controlling for levels of economic development in said nations, the researchers found evidence supporting a wide variety of ways that cultural attributes, as defined by Hofstede's theory, can affect how people view entrepreneurship, which affects the founding purpose of the firm (Kedmenec & Strašek, 2017). However, this is only the most modern iteration of previously-published work on the subject. Scheinberg and MacMillan (1988) explored the constants of entrepreneurial reasons across cultures. Measuring on a scale of six diverse dimensions, they found that founders from different cultures have different drivers for founding ventures (Scheinberg & MacMillan, 1988). Building on these results, a subsequent investigation found evidence supporting the idea that there are significant differences for starting entrepreneurial ventures that systematically vary across cultures (Shane, et al., 1991). From the onset, the culture of the originator of a business can affect the all-important "why" behind the company's founding, effectively altering its course of development in perpetuity.

Shifting to the operational impact of founder cultures on entrepreneurial ventures, the innovative path taken by the company following founding is the elusive "secret sauce" many startup leaders seek, also known as execution. Tiessen (1997) investigated the differences between individualist and collectivist cultures in how entrepreneurial ventures pursued innovation. This study found evidence suggesting that ventures steeped in individualist cultures have a tendency to succeed via large break-

through innovations, while those in collectivist cultures steadily implement and improve upon ideas (Tiessen, 1997). Cultural dimensions set at the origination of a company can have a large effect on how entrepreneurial activities are carried out, and better understanding this can give insight into predictive actions investors, workers, and founders can take during the entrepreneurial process.

In a unique example of inter-country comparisons, Davidsson (1995) conducted a study involving 2,200 individuals across 6 culturally different regions of Sweden. Despite staying within one nation's borders (a comparatively homogeneous country, at that), the research found that cultural differences were statistically significant in changing the scores that participants received on an entrepreneurial values index (Davidsson, 1995). The results support the concept that the culture of a founder changes his or her entrepreneurial values, such as intentions of the venture, which can ultimately affect the direction and choices made within the company.

Following the founding event and countless strategic decisions taken by founders of ventures, many companies morph and change into versions far different than their origins. Exploring the long-lasting effects of founders' cultural influences on a firm, Nelson (2003) looked at fundamental operations at the date of companies' IPOs. This study found that the cultural influence of a founder-CEO left a notable mark on the overall governance of the firm, which ultimately affected the market's reaction to a company's IPO (Nelson, 2003). Such a finding highlights the fact that understanding how cultural attributes can affect founders' actions is very influential. If one can better frame the long-term goals of a company by bringing founder culture/influence into focus, one can better understand the enterprise as a whole.

#### *2.4 Addition to Literature*

After reviewing the available literature, my work with the connection between cultural uncertainty avoidance and the concept of success in startups adds to the available canon of literature by addressing a unique sample group and a specific aspect of entrepreneurship. Most literature examined evaluates entrepreneurs in their home environments or by comparing different countries as a whole, but my project looks at foreign transplants in the Berlin environment who differ based on home culture. Also,

most literature simply stops the evaluation of entrepreneurship at the idea of founding a company or searching for innovation. By specifically looking at how the idea of success changes between my two sample groups, my project is unique in displaying how this specific aspect of culture can have profound effects on the beginning direction and goals of a startup, which can have strong effects on the direction of the company in perpetuity. (Hofstede, 2001)

### **3.0 Methodology**

As is the case when speaking with those deeply-immersed in their professional or academic fields, jargon and vocabulary foreign to the layman abounds. With the diverse landscape of the entrepreneurial scene, it would be impossible to provide a comprehensive review and outline of terms used, but this specific research primarily relies on the understanding of a few key concepts.

Fundamentally, this research revolves around the concepts of a *startup* and *uncertainty avoidance*.

Starting with the group of entrepreneurs interviewed, these are specifically limited to founders of startups, which differentiates them from more traditional types of entrepreneurial ventures, but this is not a set-in-stone definition. Therefore, a working definition and explanation will be proposed for the purpose of this research. Secondly, uncertainty avoidance is the ingrained cultural operating system at the core of this study, but this is not a term frequently utilized in daily discourse. Therefore, an explanation of uncertainty avoidance and the wider theory's possible shortcomings will provide a better understanding of how such cultural differences can manifest in people.

#### *3.1 What is a Startup?*

Omnipresent, yet rarely defined, startup companies take center stage at events from economic development conferences to finance boardrooms, and landing on one definition for the remainder of this work is important for clarity.

In the European Union, the digital single market of the continent consists of a variety of startup "hubs" jostling for dominance of Europe's innovative, young, entrepreneurial scene. Including locations like Berlin, London, Dublin, Lisbon, and Poland, startups have roared to the forefront of the minds of investors and job-seekers alike. According to the European Startup Monitor, these drivers of innovation

are, by some counts, accounting for up to 50% of all new jobs created in Europe (Kollmann, et al., 2016). A work, co-produced by KPMG and the University of Duisburg-Essen, defines startups as those who are younger than 10 years old, feature highly innovative technologies and/or business models, and strive for significant employee and/or sales growth (Kollmann, et al., 2016). Heavily concentrated in the digital economy, startups have an average age of 2.4 years old, widely plan on internationalization, and are influential economic drivers that create wealth through new products, services, and jobs (Kollmann, et al., 2016). Startups, as one may guess, are also economic constructs unique to this specific time in business development. Granted, startups, in a form, have always existed. From the first financiers for maritime travel to peer-to-peer fintech enterprises, each company has been small, innovative, and bent on rapid expansion. However, today's startup culture and ecosystem must be differentiated from more "conventional" small companies. Kollmann, et al. (2016) suggests that traditional SMEs do not promote the same level of innovation when it comes to their products, services, and business models that startups do, as they are primarily built to provide a livelihood for founders, while today's startups are made for great wealth generation. Startups, unlike legacy small businesses and ventures, for the sake of this research, are focused on radical growth and radical innovation.

Looking at the corporate viewpoint, BBVA, a large, multinational financial corporation, characterizes startups as unique because of their constant, defining search for innovation, which characterizes the entire venture (Cañete, 2018). Similar to the above definition, a startup can be seen as an emerging company, typically with a core technological component to it, focused on high growth potential (Cañete, 2018). While many legacy business ventures require large influxes of capital to begin operations, such as manufacturing or natural resource extraction, startups' financing is a unique trait as well. Such ventures are usually small, nimble, and colloquially known for operating out of dorms, coffee shops, and garages. Therefore, initial development costs are far lower than those of legacy businesses, and funding levels follow suit (Cañete, 2018). Having lower funding requirements has created a whole new financial market around such enterprises. Depending on the level of development of the product, team, and market, startups rely on a variety of funding sources, including family, friends, business angels, venture capital,

and private equity (Cañete, 2018). Within the startup world, the source of funding typically indicates the level of maturity of the business, but there are also definitive signs that a startup has superseded the “startup” label and become a new, yet traditional, business. Marks of a startup’s “graduation” from its title include, going public, being seen as an inspiration and lodestar for other companies, employees no longer needing to work longer-than-average days, when employee leave doesn’t affect the overall company, and when it is no longer an independent entity (Cañete, 2018). In my personal startup experience, the common thinking was that a company is no longer a startup when a singular employee’s efforts cannot affect the success of the venture as a whole.

Despite various, confusing, and sometimes contradictory definitions and distinctions, startups are not leaving the public discourse in the near future, and they may very well be the ones shaping what is seen as a “traditional” company for decades to come. Therefore, this research defines startups as those ventures bent on extreme growth, harnessing innovation in product, services, or business model, having a high risk of failure, preferably under 5 years old, and in which one employee could still affect the success or failure of the company as a whole.

### *3.2 What is Uncertainty Avoidance?*

Uncertainty avoidance may initially appear as a self-explanatory characteristic of human behavior, but it is not restricted to personalized preferences. Understanding the wider implications of such a way of thinking on the economics of groups and areas is important to the following research. Culturally-rooted uncertainty avoidance, the type focused on in this scholarship, is not identical to one’s waning preferences to be ambitious or conservative on a daily basis. Instead, cultural-rooted uncertainty avoidance is an average across all members of a national, in this case, group and focuses on how their norms, customs, and society have indoctrinated them to view the world around them.

Basically, uncertainty avoidance is a society’s level of tolerance for all that is ambiguous and uncertain (Wennekers, et al., 2007). When thinking about how the individual is acted upon by his or her environment, uncertainty avoidance can be seen as a relationship with control (Osoba, 2009). To clarify those with a weaker locus of control, or those who don’t feel the same desire for autonomy and drive to

shape their own surroundings, would ascribe to a higher uncertainty avoidance, theoretically pushing the individual towards aligned economic choices (Osoba, 2009). For example, societies exist around the world on both extremes of the uncertainty avoidance spectrum. Nations with high uncertainty avoidance can find unfamiliarity and ambiguity in personal and professional situations frightening, pushing them to try to optimize the tradeoffs between high levels of stability and low levels of risk (Hancioğlu, et al., 2014). On the other hand, nations with low uncertainty avoidance scores operate with a different view on the tradeoffs necessary in life. To members of the societies ascribing to this extreme of the spectrum, new concepts and situations are less frightening, and thus minimizing the need to balance stability and risk.

On a societal level, these differences can frequently be seen in how laws and regulations are constructed. In high uncertainty avoidance areas, a large number of legislations, regulations, and laws are frequently enacted to lower societal uncertainty and control happenings, while those with low uncertainty avoidance dislike intensive regulations, as rules are seen as only beneficial when required (Hancioğlu, et al., 2014). Fundamentally, do societal rules protect or restrict in the minds of the populace? (Stupar & Branković, 2012). Growing up and working in such environments naturally leaves impressions on professionals from those types of ecosystems.

For the sake of this research, the effects that uncertainty avoidance has on the business happenings and actions taken are important to understand. In the above literature review, the connection between one's culture and one's business decisions has been clearly established. Now looking at culturally-rooted uncertainty avoidance, defined as tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty, distinctions between high and low uncertainty avoidance cultures can be seen in corporate/organizational functioning as well (Stupar & Branković, 2012). Specifically looking at entrepreneurship, many of those from high uncertainty avoidance countries tend to take over existing businesses that already have products, market share, and an organization, while those from low uncertainty avoidance cultures tend to start a new firm that must develop all of its assets (Block & Walter, 2012). Of course, this is not true for all instances by any stretch of the imagination, but such differences in business actions help to highlight the ways that these entrepreneurs evaluate the world differently and exploit opportunities in different ways.

### *3.3 Outline of Procedures*

The methodology utilized in this study has different steps to build continuity in my interviewed group of entrepreneurs. To begin, I focus on contacting foreign-born, for-profit technology startup founders under the age of 40 who have started their venture in Berlin. By limiting my interviewees to this specific group, there is greater control for differences that can result from large age differences, advantageous stemming from living in one's home environment, and focusing on alternate reasons for entrepreneurship (e.g. social entrepreneurship and non-profit work). The methodology is as follows in order of execution:

Searching for a group of 20 technology startup founders (preferably within 3 years since founding) in Berlin who come from countries characterized as having high or low uncertainty avoidance, per Hofstede's theory, involves widespread communication. Primarily, these entrepreneurs are contacted on LinkedIn, via connections to previously interviewed entrepreneurs, and found at events like pitch competitions and accelerators. Specifically looking to interview a group of 10 entrepreneurs from high UA countries and 10 from low UA countries, I focus on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentile of the available 66 countries to each extreme of Hofstede's UAI (rounding up to 7 nations in each group). Entrepreneurs for each group interviewed were deemed valid if they were born and/or spent their formative years in one of the following nations shown in Table 1:

Table 1: UAI Scores of Selected Countries for Comparison

High Uncertainty Avoidance		Low Uncertainty Avoidance	
Greece	100	Singapore	8
Portugal	99	Jamaica	13
Guatemala	99	Denmark	23
Uruguay	99	Sweden	29
Belgium	94	Hong Kong	29
El Salvador	94	United Kingdom	35
Poland	93	Ireland	35

(Hofstede Insights, 2018)

Once contact was made, I conducted a brief, qualitative interview with each of the entrepreneurs to establish how each views success in his or her entrepreneurial venture. Interviews were conducted at locations chosen by participants, which frequently included offices or cafes, lasted 30-40 minutes, were recorded, and were comprised of a variety of questions. To foster a relaxed, cordial discourse, the ordering of questions was formulated to relax interviewees, which resulted in some unscripted questions being asked to continue the interviewer-interviewee exchange. Scripted questions can be seen in the appendix section of this work.

Following interviews, transcripts were made of recordings and notes from the 20 interviews were compiled. From this information, I conducted a qualitative comparison of how those from countries of high UA view success and how those from countries of low UA view success.

### *3.4 General Limitations*

Prior to the presentation of research on this topic, it's important to recognize and illuminate the short-comings that affect this academic pursuit. Unfortunately, limitations of a variety of sizes and shapes plague even the highest level of research initiatives, but this does not render their findings and processes invalid or useless. Therefore, I would like to illuminate the short-comings of this paper's research



methodologies by primarily focusing on the theories employed, issues that accompany qualitative research more broadly, and specific limitations stemming from this paper's sample of interviewees.

### *3.4.1 Limitations of Employed Theories*

Theories are the result of multiple repetitions and rounds of discourse of academic texts, thoughts, and findings. Therefore, contrary to how the word "theory" is used in colloquial speech, there are academic groundings and ample evidence to support such findings, but that does not guarantee their validity and transferability to any and all scenarios. In this specific piece of research, theories concerning culture and entrepreneurship form the justification for measuring Uncertainty Avoidance and for selecting foreign entrepreneurs. By virtue of focusing on human subjects, theories can rapidly become antiquated on a cultural and societal level.

Culturally, a group of people are not constant. Culture is, roughly speaking, a loosely-structured set of communal beliefs held by a group of people who share commonalities like heritage, geography, religion, language, and/or background. All of these classifications can change. Heritage changes as groups encounter each other, political geography changes with the rise and fall of nations (not to mention physical geographical changes from climate change), religion adapts with new theological study and adaptation to the mores of the time, languages grow with immigration and technology, and background changes with generational development and morphing. As culture is not constant, how can a cultural theory be constant? When dealing with human subjects, as this research does, most theories are, unfortunately, focused on the cultural mores of preceding generations, as that is when established studies were conducted. This does not completely invalidate modern utilization of previous cultural guidelines, however. Such measures still provide useful clues into groups' ways of thinking and a framework for classifying groups to compare.

Societally, there is no doubt that Berlin at the time of this writing is far different from the Berlin of 100, 50, 25, or even 10 years prior. Such a city has seen a journey in the past century that is more eventful than most locations have experienced since inception. Due to such a history, society in this city is drastically changing with immigration and development in a way that emphasizes a more "worldly" or

“European-centric” culture, as opposed to German culture. Of course, the city is still markedly German, not to mention the nation’s capital, but many entrepreneurs and European immigrants can move to this city and even found companies without learning more than “ein Pils, bitte.” Berlin’s startups and their founders find investors, advisors, employees, and customers from various nations, speaking English or their native languages, and this is a unique societal structure that is not reflected in the cultural theories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Granted, it would be far more effective for this specific evaluation to be able to not distinguish founders on their culturally-predisposed uncertainty avoidance levels, but to instead administer individual tests to assess founders’ individual UA level. However, due to the limited amount of time and resources available to conduct this specific study, this wish was deemed superfluous.

#### *3.4.2 Limitations of Qualitative Research*

To the great dismay of social sciences students and those of more qualitative disciplines, the method of analysis commonly employed, interviews and case studies, do not offer researchers as clear of findings and conclusions as those gifted to the more quantitative disciplines. Specifically, with this piece of research, there are two primary short-comings that should be recognized prior to the reporting of findings, and they affect both the data’s input and output.

Focusing on the input of the data, which come in the form of semi-structured interviews I conducted with startup founders, independent validation is both difficult and impractical. During research-gathering interviews, one has few alternatives to accepting what an interviewee says. With self-reported data, in this study specifically, entrepreneurs may be tempted to hide specific, unflattering aspects of their companies or development, while they may also be tempted to highlight or even over-embellish aspects of their journeys that portray them in a more favorable light. Aside from checking basic facts, such as educational achievements, on professional-networking sites, there are few ways to validate claims made in interviews. Granted, one can always investigate further by speaking with colleagues, previous educational institutions, or contemporaries in the space, but this level of validation would be unreasonable for this research and its implications.

Shifting to the output of the data, qualitative data also presents the unique limitation of being subjected to my own personal interpretation. By relying on the interviews, coding, and subsequent analysis all conducted by myself, one must recognize that my personal biases may come through in such evaluation. Despite overt attempts to remain impartial in research, the evaluation and analysis of qualitative data must pass through the natural, inherent biases of the researcher analyzing such data.

### 3.4.3 Limitations of the Sample

Finally, one of the main limitations imposed on research such as this stems from the study's structural shortcomings. Due to the scope of such a project being limited to 20 interviewees, each group comprising of 10, it would be foolish to assume that such a small number of participants can be seen as representative of the entirety of their nationalities or the wider cultural attributes as a whole. In addition to the quantity of the participants in this study, these individuals also all happened to be contactable online, responsive, free to talk, and willing to talk. After reaching out to over 120 founders in the city, this group of 20 certainly is unique in their willingness to speak with a stranger and share intimate details of their professional pursuits.

In qualitative and quantitative research alike, it is important to find a varied, diverse, yet representative group of data points to study. Due to issues contacting and locating eligible, willing founders in the city, this group of interviewees only hailed from roughly  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the eligible countries in the study. As previously mentioned, there are 14 total nations comprising the "high" and "low" UA groups, yet the interviewed entrepreneurs came from only the countries of Greece, Poland, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Denmark. Therefore, the resulting data is European-heavy, which is to be expected from a study conducted in an area within a 2-hour flight to all of these nations.

Not only were the nations included not diverse enough to have a stronger case of isolating the common uncertainty avoidance level amongst respondents, but the gender and industry diversity is restrictive as well. Despite there being a large number of accomplished female entrepreneurs in today's modern world, I was only able to obtain interviews with 2 female entrepreneurs, making the sample overwhelmingly male. Finally, the group of interviewees were exclusively working in technology-related

fields. Therefore, findings from such research may not be able to be extrapolated to different, yet common, fields of entrepreneurship like artisan goods or social entrepreneurship.

Despite there being limitations in the group of founders assembled for this research, this author believes that the findings are still significant. Granted, they cannot be projected onto a massive population of diverse entrepreneurs around the world, but such responses by a group in same city, working in the same industry, struggling with similar obstacles, and, theoretically, contrasting in one cultural measurement is still significant. Findings stemming from the evaluation of such a group can display to the wider academic field that further study of the link between culture and success targets in startups can be fruitful.

### *3.5 Limitations of Hofstede*

Prior to presentation of the findings in this scholarship, it is important to recognize the shortcomings that may arise from utilizing a cultural average scale, such as Hofstede's. The fundamental issue in relying on such a score on a person-by-person basis is the fact that Hofstede's theory is developed to serve as an average amongst a large, varied population of professionals in a nation or region. Thus, researchers employing these dimensions on a more individualized level run the risk of falling prey to the ecological fallacy, which is the concept that individuals may (and often do) not exactly fit into the generalized, cultural stereotyping of ideas and practices that many researchers have developed. Such a phenomenon may arise in response to a variety of different catalysts, and it is certainly not unique to the specific niche of cultural management. In a sense, the problem in comparability might be the result of utilizing the one instrument designed and tested for a certain cultural context in the context of different, foreign cultures and comparing them (Triandis, 1972). Triandis (1972) outlines such an instrumental fallacy as the problem between emic, or the concept of understanding a culture from the inside, and etic, or usage of universal categories, research methods. Despite this, there is inherent value in being able to compare groups of people based on the averaged characteristics of origin groups. This is the reason that the majority of comparative studies involving entrepreneurship and culture today employ Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (Hancıoğlu, et al., 2014).

There is also an academic discussion that Hofstede, contrary to intent and wide usage, did not study “culture” per se. Critically looking at the wider field, “the concept of culture itself is elusively all-embracing but contradictory” (Baskerville, 2003). Studying culture is difficult. It is, largely, non-quantifiable, but Hofstede does that exactly. To begin, Baskerville (2003) takes issue with the basic reduction of complex, varied cultural elements of populations to that of nations, or the “national culture” used by Hofstede. National boundaries are not equal to cultural boundaries, and vice-versa. On top of simplification of study to national cultures, Baskerville (2003) sheds light on the difficulties, or impossibilities of quantifying culture into numerical matrices and indexes. By virtue of reducing complex, dynamic, uniquely-human actions like culture to a simple scale, aspects of culture and beliefs are almost certainly left out of consideration. Finally, it could even be seen that Hofstede wasn’t measuring culture at all. Socio-economic factors and happenings on the ground of these nations deeply affect the way that the populace goes about seeing the wider world, and that could very well be the driving factor behind many distinct results of Hofstede’s indexes (Baskerville, 2003). I believe that there are, naturally, an incredibly varied number of happenings and beliefs affecting the way that a group of people act and see their world, but if the argument is perpetually reduced to socio-economic factors, then the existence of “culture” itself may be questioned.

Finally, employment of Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions, which have been recently updated to avoid antiquated results, might run aground in the new, internationalized startup culture. Whether it’s seen as globalization, internationalization, or Americanization, it’s clear that the cultures, actions, and norms of startups in global hubs are converging. From San Francisco to Berlin to Cape Town, young startup founders have access to historically unparalleled international assets. Investors, mentors, employees, and business models are no longer geographically restricted in the same sense that low-tech businesses were half a century prior. As a result, cultural hybridity has evolved in these startup hubs, but the extent of such hybridity is unknown. Such internationalization has created a prevailing “entrepreneur” culture, which may actually mitigate the effects of founders’ inherent national cultures (McGrath, et al., 1992). Cultural blending, if found to this extreme, would mean that those involved in the following

research actually do not adhere to Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions, as the international entrepreneurial culture may have developed cultural mores of its own.

Recognizing that culture is constantly-changing, the antiquity of theories such as Hofstede's, along with accompanying indexes like the UAI, are regularly debated to ensure that further utilization of older findings is still relevant to those whom may be impacted by modern study. In 2014, Michael Minkov of the International University College in Bulgaria collaborated with Hofstede to run a modern replication study focusing on the UAI in Europe. Specifically focusing on nationally representative samples from 25 European nations and Israel, the close replication study of Hofstede's original UAI resulted in a very strong relation to Hofstede's previously-reported findings ( $r=0.81$ ) (Minkov & Hofstede, 2014). Most importantly for this research project, the countries employed for the following comparison were found to still be, largely, the same orientation of Hofstede's original orientation. For example, Denmark and Sweden were still two of the lowest uncertainty avoidance countries, while Greece was one of the highest. However, it is important to note that one nation involved in the study, Portugal, had a noticeable shift on Minkov's measure, and the country scored a mid-ranged, neutral score, as opposed to its previous standing sternly in the high uncertainty avoidance category (Minkov & Hofstede, 2014). Despite being a more updated version of the UAI, I decided to base scores and interview participants off of Hofstede's most recently published country scores, as he is the more widely-accepted expert on this matter.

## **4.0 Data Analysis**

### *4.1 Interviewee Search*

Due to the nature of this particular comparison-oriented research, finding interviewees was a particularly onerous task due to the short amount of available time and the generally restrictive qualifications necessary to be interviewed. As previously outlined, I specifically looked for tech-oriented founders in Berlin who hailed from one of 14 choice nations, as selected from the 10<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentiles on Hofstede's UAI. Therefore, the available population was relatively restricted.

In pursuit of finding a balanced set of interviewees, preferably 10 founders from each side of the uncertainty avoidance index, I utilized a variety of methods to contact founders. Primarily, the utilization of LinkedIn's Recruiter Lite account, equipped with increased search criteria capabilities, was the most fruitful. Being able to specify distinguishable traits, such as current job titles, geographical location, and language skills, I contacted 116 Berlin-based founders over LinkedIn with varying degrees of responsiveness. Additionally, less targeted approaches were taken by posting on startup-specific online communities, such as MeetUp and Facebook Groups. Many interviewees were also asked for help with outreach or connections following interviews, which resulted in few additional connections.

Following initial contact, rough explanation of the project and expectations for the interview, the interviewee was given the option of either a phone call, video call, or in-person meeting. At the end, 6 of 20 interviewees opted for an in-person interview, 2 preferred a video call, and the remaining 12 preferred a regular telephone call. Each interview took between 20 and 30 minutes, was recorded and subsequently transcribed, and all interviewees were sent a follow-up message thanking them for their time. Following the conclusion of the project, a brief one-page summary will be written and distributed to those involved, per their requests.

## *4.2 Qualitative Data Coding System*

### *4.2.1 Why Qualitative*

For this research, qualitative data was collected and subsequently analyzed to draw conclusions. Qualitative data was gathered for a variety of reasons. First of all, in assessing something as subjective and personalized as an entrepreneur's idea of success, it would eliminate potentially helpful auxiliary information to simply distribute a questionnaire that would be evaluated in a qualitative manner. Additionally, getting a better sense of how each entrepreneur thinks about and explains his or her concept of success and method of attaining it is something that can only come through qualitative data. Additionally, for studies in which there is not a large amount of information about the specific topic at hand, qualitative data is especially advantageous (Yin, 1994). However, the method used to gather this qualitative data was not completely arbitrary. As compared to simply conducting a large-scale literature

analysis, the interviews used maintained a certain amount of continuity in the information received from each founder, making a subsequent comparison more streamlined.

#### 4.2.2 Type of Interviews Employed

In the gathering of data from the two groups of 10 entrepreneurs in Berlin, a semi-structure interview format was used. As previously outlined, interview themes remained constant through each interview, but the specific questions were adjusted based on the answers, level of information, and tone of interview participants. Using this kind of empirical information gathering technique gives the research more credibility, as information came directly from first-hand accounts of those performing the work. Therefore, it removes one additional layer of potential bias and misinterpretation as compared to another method, such as secondary sources or relying solely on other academic papers. In these interviews, I, as both the author and interviewer, attempted to establish a friendly rapport with each interviewee both before and during the interview. By creating an open and casual environment in the interview, founders had ample freedom to explain their thoughts and reasonings behind answers. Leaving question open-ended like this and asking appropriate follow up questions provided additional information and elaboration that would not have been available if the interviews would have simply adhered to a strict script. Doing so also allowed the founder to speak more openly about what he or she valued in entrepreneurship and his or her venture, which is particularly useful for this research, as it hindered any attempt to steer an interviewee into a pre-determined bucket or category based on interviewer biases.

#### 4.2.3 Analysis of Data

For the purpose of this research, deductive methods are employed. As the overall project is based on the ideas generated in Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, such a method is appropriate. This research is deductive because there is both an established hypothesis regarding my anticipated relationship between a founder's national culture's position on the UAI and his or her idea of success and because this work is a reevaluation of Hofstede's theory in a new environment.

In the analysis of the gathered qualitative data, the Nvivo analytical software was utilized. Nvivo is a digital tool that facilitates the storage, organization, categorization, analysis, and visualization of data.



Especially pertinent for this research, Nvivo is specifically made for mixed-method and qualitative data. I employed Nvivo to more easily compare, search through, and visualize the findings throughout the over 56,000 words of transcribed interviews gathered for this project. Granted, using a software such as Nvivo does not replace the need for a close relationship with the data itself. As I conducted each interview, transcribed each interview, and have read the transcripts multiple times in analysis, the use of such a software did not replace the necessary close reading of the empirical data.

## **5.0 Findings**

After collecting qualitative data from these empirical interviews and reading, comparing, and analyzing statements in detail, I looked specifically for evidence concerning aspects previously discussed and adjacent concepts. In accordance with the main goals of the research, I focused on descriptions of success targets, information on goal-setting processes, as is highlighted in Locke's Goal Setting Theory of Entrepreneurship, and adjacent concepts that may or may not impact the success or actions taken in founding and leading a company. This includes concepts like human capital development, impressions of the wider entrepreneurial environment in the founders' adopted country of Germany, and driving forces behind founders' pursuit of an entrepreneurial profession and lifestyle. For the sake of organization, findings regarding different aspects of interviews are presented in order of the printed interview questions included in this paper's appendix. Therefore, findings progress from more basic, biographical information to deeper insights into entrepreneurial styles. The results of a close reading of the qualitative data are as follows.

### *5.1 Overview of Founders*

For a categorical summary of the information of participating founders, please see Table 2 and Table 3 below.

Table 2: Interview Results for High UA Group

<b>High UA Group</b>							
<i>FOUNDER</i>	<i>COMPANY</i>	<i>SUCCESS TARGET</i>	<i>TIME IN BERLIN (YEARS)</i>	<i>TIME HORIZON</i>	<i>STAGE OF COMPANY</i>	<i>HIGHEST DEGREE OBTAINED</i>	<i>TYPE OF STUDY</i>
<b>Alexandros Zogkas</b>	Webcaster Project	Have a platform with teams working on it	1	Short-term	Idea	Bachelor's in Information Engineering (Greece)	Technical
<b>Andrzej Karel</b>	TAK Innovation	Stable balance of a few employees, steady income, and impactful work	4.5	Mid-term	Stable	Master's in Management (Poland)	Functional
<b>Dinarte Jesus</b>	athlead	See transfers happen on the portal	4	Short-term	Seed	Bachelor's in Interactive Media Design and Computer Engineering (Portugal)	Technical
<b>Eny Patzig-Tyrpenou</b>	Ola Online Consulting	To have clients advised be successful	5	Short-term	Stable	Multiple Diplomas in Graphics and Marketing related fields (Greece)	Technical
<b>Maciej "Matti" Kawecki</b>	GetYourCoder	Ensure company can run without him and maintain his freedom	5	Long-term	Stable	Master's in Management (Poland)	Functional
<b>Malik Piara</b>	Upframe	Iterative approach and isn't attached to an idea	1	Short-term	Growth	Bachelor's in Product Management and Interactive Design (Germany)	Technical
<b>Olga Blaszak</b>	BerlinGreen	Build a larger, modular system	2	Mid-term	Preseed	Master's in Civil Engineering (Germany)	Technical
<b>Pawel Komarnicki</b>	Cubitoo	Have passive income	7	Long-term	Preseed	Master's in Computer Science (Poland)	Technical

<b>Pawel Maciazek</b>	GeekForce	Have stable cash flows and growth while recruiting top talent	3	Mid-term	Growth	Master's in Business (Poland)	Functional
<b>Yannis Evangelou</b>	lexiQA	Maintain company culture and lifestyle	10	Long-term	Stable	Master's in Translation (UK)	Technical

Table 3: Interview Results for Low UA Group

<b><u>Low UA Group</u></b>							
<i>FOUNDER</i>	<i>COMPANY</i>	<i>SUCCESS TARGET</i>	<i>TIME IN BERLIN (YEARS)</i>	<i>TIME HORIZON</i>	<i>STAGE OF COMPANY</i>	<i>HIGHEST DEGREE OBTAINED</i>	<i>TYPE OF STUDY</i>
<b>Andy Carvell</b>	Phiture	Strategic Exit	8	Long-term	Growth	MBA (UK)	Functional
<b>Caspar Schmick</b>	THE VIELD	Cover costs in the first year	8	Short-term	Preseed	Bachelor's in Business (UK)	Functional
<b>Erik Jälevik</b>	Fileside	Make enough money to live off of	9	Long-term	Preseed	Bachelor's in Computer Science (UK)	Technical
<b>Eyass Shakrah</b>	Frontier Car Group	Expand new financing options in countries without them	2	Mid-Term	Growth	Bachelor's in Business and Economics (Sweden)	Functional
<b>Henry Latham</b>	Scribe	Create a long-lasting product with "a million calm minds"	2.5	Long-term	Seed	Bachelor's in Political Science and Spanish (UK); then accelerator	Functional
<b>Jake Jones</b>	LegalOS	Make law more computable with measurable impacts	2.5	Mid-Term	Growth	Master's in English Literature (UK)	Functional
<b>Jakob Muus</b>	Tracks	Reduce error rate by 90% and be a large logistics player of the future	8	Mid-Term and Long-term	Seed	Master's in Management (International Program)	Functional
<b>Jon Sykes</b>	Racemappr	Encourage people to race globally by	2	Long-term	Preseed	Advanced Professional Diploma in Advertising (UK)	Functional

		centralizing the process					
<b>Kain Victor</b>	ReRoutr	Make ends meet with the project	8	Long-term	Preseed	MBA (Germany)	Functional
<b>Terry Llewellyn- Foxx</b>	Unnamed	Customer number one	0.25	Short-term	Idea	A-Levels (UK)	Functional

### 5.2 Difference of Time in Berlin

Initially starting with biographical information from the interviewed founders, there was a noticeable difference in the average amount of time each group had spent in Berlin prior to the interview. Specifically looking at self-reported time since moving to Berlin, the High UA group had spent an average for 4.2 years per person in the city, while the Low UA Group had spent an average of 5.3 years per person. However, when eliminating one extreme outlier from each group, the gap of the average time spent in Berlin widened to 3.6 years and 5.6 years for High and Low UAI Groups respectively.

### 5.3 Difference in Educational Focus

Following ice-breaking conversations regarding the city and founders' stories about coming to Berlin, each founder's educational background was discussed to better frame how each person cultivated the strongest aspect of his or her human capital, education. As different nations and even universities have unique names of degrees and varied amounts of necessary prerequisites, I simplified each founder's educational focus into either a "technical" or "functional" field of focus. Borrowing these terms from well-known management consultancy distinctions, technical fields are, as they sound, those fields focused on cultivating a technical skillset. This includes fields such as engineering and computer science. In the entrepreneurial world, those who studied non-technical fields typically lack the necessary knowledge base to do things like code a software or physically build a complex product. Therefore, those founders who studied fields like business, humanities, and social sciences, are classified as having studied functional fields.

In the group of 20 founders interviewed, there was a noticeable difference in the previous educational focuses of each group. In the High UA Group, 8/10 founders had previously studied technical fields, while in the Low UA Group, 7/10 founders focused on functional areas during their traditional educational careers.

#### *5.4 Impressions of Germany*

Organically throughout interviews with founders, the majority of them extemporaneously offered their candid opinions on their adopted environment, Germany, and those people from it. Such comments, almost exclusively, came in the form of criticism or frustration with Germany, German people, or German processes. To better compartmentalize the feedback received, Germany-related comments are presented based on the founding process in Germany, German human capital, and the wider Berlin environment.

Initially looking at the bureaucratic, administrative process of founding a business in Germany, a natural first step for any serious venture, founders who voluntarily offered their feelings on this process came across as frustrated and confused. Such sentiment was not restricted to one group of founders either. Comments ranged from a natural comparison, such as “[s]omehow, it is not very trivial, compared to Poland, to open a company here,” shared by a High UA founder, to the more shocked, such as a Low UA founder saying, “you travel around [Germany], and on the surface there are very little issues, but once you get under the surface, it’s just awful here.” Such comments can be seen simply as personal frustrations and annoyances, but one Low UA founder succinctly described the knock-on effects of such friction by saying, “[i]n terms of founding a business in Germany, we have multiple different issues ... [t]hat can detract a lot from the day to day things that we need to be doing.”

Moving on to focus on founders’ impressions of German people in the professional sense, the cultural differences that can create professional frictions became apparent. Starting by looking at the surface-level, more stereotypical observations, one High UA founder saw that the “German mindset is still very industrial,” a concept echoed by others. A more seasoned founder, also from the High UA group, saw the German mindset as detrimental to enterprising individuals. She believed that German professional preferences were “so so specialized [that] it looks like they want dumb people.” This is

certainly not a pro-entrepreneurial trait. Such impressions of interpersonal inclinations arose in interviews at such a frequency that they could not be ignored. One Low UA founder, a startup veteran and author of a book concerning organizational culture, also voiced his concerns regarding German tendencies. Regarding creating an empathetic culture, he said, “German leaders, particularly, are not very good at that, and they cannot deal with it very well. They talk about business metrics and KPIs. That’s great to get the business going, but that is not always good in fostering long-term sustainability.” Speaking with these founders, a trend of intercultural conflicts between foreign founders and German nationals became apparent.

Finally, focusing on the environment in Berlin, statements by founders were far more positive when it came to specifically looking at the city and the surrounding startup environment. Founders lauded the growth of the city in recent history and the maturation of the startup ecosystem in Berlin. The city also seemed to both attract a certain type of entrepreneur and breed a certain kind of culture. According to one Low UA founder, “[i]f you are not someone who is self-motivated, then you will find it very difficult to push yourself here. Berlin just doesn’t have that push and the energy in it.” This concept of the city’s inhabitants’ view towards work cannot be exemplified in a singular quotation, but this perception is important to illuminate.

### *5.5 Planning Styles*

Towards the end of interviews with founders, subject matter turned towards gaining a greater understanding of how each founder actually measured and is planning to achieve his or her intended level of success. To my surprise, the vast majority of founders had vague or overtly-informal systems of planning for the future. Of the 19 founders who shed light on their planning processes during the discussion of important indicators to measure their plans for the future, only 4 had a more formalized system of setting and evaluating goals, delegating tasks, and projecting into the future. Of these four founders with more distilled systems of planning established, all but one had achieved product-market fit and led stable, for startups, companies.

According to the majority of founders without formalized systems of planning, there seemed to be a common consensus that the stages of their companies and/or their fashions of management simply did not warrant such planning. An iterative approach to product and business progression was the most popular form of planning for the short-term development of their startups. Such a product-driven outlook did not seem to be intentional, but a byproduct of individual attempts to build a company. As one High UA founder put it, “I don’t think that I have such a strict way of looking at it.” The short-term-orientation of a trial and error development plan came naturally to these founders, regardless of their educational or professional background. Such a mindset could also stem from the inherently uncertain future that comes with a career in entrepreneurship. Focusing on trial and error product development gives founders the ability to distill a simplified outlook, such as “the strategy is just tackling it bit by bit,” as coined by a Low UA founder. The vague, product-driven planning styles of the majority of founders, regardless of background, can be best summarized in one founder’s comment. A High UA startup veteran founder stated, “[h]ow the hell can you have metrics for something that relies on uncertainty?”

Compartmentalized, organized planning and monitoring systems so omnipresent in more developed organizations might simply be impractical for startups, according to these founders.

### *5.6 Focus on Independence and Autonomy*

Throughout conversations with founders, many interviewees would frame decisions made in both professional and personal situations in the context of independence and autonomy. Of the 20 founders interviewed, 13 explicitly voiced their desire to maintain independence and autonomy over their professional endeavors. Of those 13, 7 hailed from the High UAI group, while 6 came from the Low UAI. Therefore, there was no noticeable difference in orientation towards autonomy seen between the two groups. Upon closer review, there was also no definitively different way that founders articulated desires for autonomy according to cultural background. However, there was a slight difference in how independence was articulated from the point of view of former engineers compared to those with more generalized professional and educational backgrounds. Engineers more frequently described their desire for independence in the sense of no longer just wanting to, as a High UA founder said, “make a small part

of a big project,” as one does in more traditional engineering occupations. However, there were not enough definitive statements like that made to draw conclusions on the origin of founders’ desires for independence.

Interviewed founders expressed a variety of different levels of aversion to more conventional employment situations. On one side of the spectrum, some expressed their desire for independence through an overtly hostile opinion towards being employed by someone else. For example, a Low UA founder said, “I cannot even comprehend the idea of working for someone else.” On the other hand, the majority of those who expressed an attraction to the autonomy and independence brought about by the entrepreneurial profession expressed this aspiration more in terms of autonomy over one’s work. A High UA founder saw the lure of autonomy over his work as simply saying, “[t]he freedom of thinking and the freedom of choosing for yourself is very important.” In the Low UA group, a fellow founder voiced a similar attraction to autonomy as, “I really like the freedom, and I really want to be able to determine for myself what I’m working on.” Framing the desire for professional autonomy in this sense almost comes across as putting the focus on the educational and professional achievements that one can attain via autonomy, as compared to simply being averse to working under others.

### *5.7 Idea of Success*

As the original impetus of this research, founders’ ideas of what success would be in their specific ventures was analyzed through various lenses. In the communication of these results, the original purpose of this research will be explored and additional ways of viewing founders’ success targets will follow.

#### *5.7.1 Cultural Orientation*

After speaking with 20 founders in depth regarding their plans for the future and hopes for their ventures, there was a trend noticed that differentiated between the two groups. When speaking with these groups, I noticed that more founders from High UA cultures initially would mention their idea of success as being the next iteration of their products or the next step in development. On the other hand, founders



from Low UA cultures articulated targets with much greater excitement and focus when it came to long-term, industry-changing success. For example, many High UA founders focused on either the next iteration of their product (or simply the functioning of their product), such as seeing transfers happen on a football transfer platform, or the maintenance of the status quo, such as a translation software company maintaining the company's culture. When looking at the High UA group, there were certainly founders with similar goals, such as 3/10 founders looking for the product/service to simply work, but there were noticeably more founders with larger ambitions. 6/10 interviewed founders in the Low UAI group had industry-changing ideas of success, such as a strategic exit, becoming a large logistic player, or "creating a million calm minds." This was a level of aspiration unseen in the High UA group. This became even more apparent when excluding those founders who were ultimately hoping to have their ventures simply provide passive income.

To summarize, looking at the 20 founders interviewed for this project, 3 founders were simply looking to achieve passive income (1 High UA, 2 Low UA). Excluding those founders, the High UA Group had 4 founders looking for their services to work, 4 had ideas of success that were focused around concepts like maintenance and stability, and the remaining 1 founder had a iterative concept of success, focused on building the company through trial-and-error without a long-term plan. In the Low UA group, 2 founders were looking for passive income, two saw success as initial confirmation (i.e. covering first year's costs and customer number one), but 6 founders had ambitious views of what success would be. These ambitions include a strategic exit, vastly expanding the company's offerings in an industry-changing manner, making law more computable, and encouraging people to race globally. Relying on this sample, there is a definitive difference between the ambition level of the concept of success when it comes to the interviewed founders in this research. To better visualize these differences, please see Table 4 below for a summary of founders and the scope of their ideas of success.

Table 4: Summary of Founders’ Scopes of Ideas of Success

<i>Ambition of Idea of Success</i>	<i>High UA Founders</i>	<i>Low UA Founders</i>
<b>Passive Income</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Minimal Verification</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Stability and Maintenance</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Unplanned/Iterative</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Large-scale Impact</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>

However, such a small sample size and such subjective things like “excitement” and order of mentioning success targets cannot definitively demarcate something as important as a group’s orientation towards the future.

#### 5.7.2 Stage of Company

Next, looking at the stage of development that each founder’s company was currently in, there was also no strong correlation between a company’s level of maturity and the envisioned success target of its founder. Exploring this correlation was very limited in nature, as I did not have access to sensitive information such as fundraising, revenues, valuation, and similar measures that a group like a venture capital firm would use to assess the maturity of a startup. Therefore, I assigned development stages from preseed, which would be a company that has not launched its product yet, to stable, which would be a company that has reliable revenue and is steadily growing its number of employees, revenue targets, and product and/or service offerings.

Following this analysis, no strong relationship was seen to connect the stage of maturation of the company and its founder’s idea of success, but there was an interesting cluster worth reporting. When assembling companies in order of maturity level, almost all of the companies denoted as “preseed” had a founder who articulated a long-term vision for success. This could suggest that a founder at the beginning of the entrepreneurial process might be more energized by the long-term potential of his or her company, as opposed to focusing on the first steps necessary to reach that idyllic future.

### 5.7.3 Educational Background

Similar to the exploration of the above relationship, my deeper dive into the correlational relationship between a founder's educational background and his or her success target showed no strong relationship between the two factors. This held true when looking at the level of education achieved by the founder (e.g. master's vs. bachelor's degree), but there is a correlation between the field of study of a founder's highest degree (i.e. technical vs. functional fields) and the scope of success envisioned by the founder. As previously stated, founders interviewed in the High UA group had mostly achieved their highest degrees in technical fields, such as engineering or computer science. Those in the Low UA group had most of their highest degrees in functional fields like business or humanities. Upon closer examination, the 7 High UA founders whose final degree was in a technical field encompassed the most tempered views of success. Of the 7 technical graduates, 4 saw success as the next level of verification, 1 saw it as passive income, and 1 was looking for maintenance of company culture. In the Low UA group, 9 of the 10 founders had their final degrees in functional fields, and of those 9, 1 saw success as passive income, 2 saw success as minimal verification of the venture, and 6 saw success as ambitious industry change or massive growth of the company.

Without further investigation into the values and mores of these founders, these results are not especially surprising. Typically, one would expect students to self-select into certain educational fields based on their aspirations, interests, and strengths. Engineering and computer science, the two most popular technical fields of study in this research, teach students to methodologically solve problems by breaking a large task down into smaller components. Compared to humanities, these technical fields may simply condition graduates to analyze problems in a more short-to-mid-term way that focuses on the immediate next steps instead of taking long-term views.

## 6.0 Discussion

Reviewing the results of the above qualitative research, a variety of different lenses were used to look for correlations and connections. In conclusion, the main findings revolve around the relationship between cultural uncertainty avoidance of a founder and his or her success target, but the each point will

be further expounded upon prior to addressing this central finding. Therefore, the following discussion proceeds point-by-point in accordance with the previously mentioned findings to better illuminate the relevance of the findings of this research.

### *6.1 Time Spent in Berlin*

When analyzing the feelings, beliefs, and overall mentality of the interviewed founders, the amount of time that each founder had spent in Berlin is important to recognize, as the Berlin startup ecosystem and wider environment may have impacts on the mores and mentality of founders.

Exclusively thinking about the theoretical differences associated with culturally-embedded uncertainty avoidance, the difference of Low UA founders having spent more time in the city was unexpected. On the surface, one would expect those more adverse to uncertainty to value the security and deeper sense of understanding of a foreign environment that comes from being immersed in it for a long period of time. One would also think that this sense of familiarity and understanding would be especially important when considering the concept of branching out of the established social and economic order to found one's own enterprise in a foreign land.

Harkening back to a more theoretical context, an immigrant entrepreneur is seen as possessing a unique viewpoint in the economic and sociological landscape of his or her adopted environment. Coming from a different culture, assuming that the foreign entrepreneur can be reasonably accepted into the local community, he or she possesses both insider and outsider information. Contrary to non-accepted outsiders, the immigrant can see what is important to locals and understand finer points concerning operations in the country. Unlike locals, the immigrant has the ability to view the landscape with an outsider's perspective and recognize often overlooked shortcomings and inefficiencies invisible to locals. This phenomenon is coined in Georg Simmel's work "The Stranger" (Simmel, 1971).

Therefore, as all of the interviewed immigrant entrepreneurs felt that they possessed both the necessary abilities and insights into the local environment to open their own ventures in Berlin, perhaps the subjective point of optimum "stranger-ness" was reached by both groups. If this is the case, there may be a slight difference in the amount of time that each cultural group feels to be ideal to reach the balance

of insider information and outsider perspective. For example, the High UAI group could value the perspective of an outsider to a greater degree than the Low UAI group does, and the Low UAI group may value the information gained by residing in the city for a longer period of time. To further explore this concept, it would be helpful to have more information on a larger group of founders' time spent in Berlin when founding his or her first venture in the city.

## *6.2 Educational Focus*

Selecting interview participants, or interview participants self-selecting, at random, one would expect that the educational foci of the entrepreneurs in the technology field would be varied to a similar degree. However, the strong difference in functional and technical fields, as previously explained, called into question how these two groups may have utilized their chances to cultivate their own human capital as a way of manipulating professional risk. Gaining a tertiary education by itself drastically reduces the specter of unemployment. According to the OECD, the population without a tertiary degree has an unemployment rate 50% higher than those who attained the higher degree (OECD, 2019). However, within this group of educated workers, there are differences based on what a student decided to study. Using the United States as an example, the unemployment rate for students in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) fields rested at 3.3% in 2017, while 5.8% of graduates in humanities were without work (NCES, 2018). Not to mention, average salaries for graduates are positively correlated with level of educational achievement. Therefore, each founder made a conscious choice to mitigate risk in the labor market by cultivating his or her own human capital through education.

Specifically looking at the differences between the technical fields studied by the High UA group and the functional fields of the Low UA group, I believe that this is a case of risk management. According to Dr. Allison Schragger, a professor at New York University and former risk consultant for the IMF and OECD, these types of decisions revolve around creating favorable odds for oneself (Schragger, 2019). By attending university in the first place, many students interested in entrepreneurship are hedging. This is the act of giving up some potential gains (e.g. starting a business at age 18 and reaping its rewards by age 20) in exchange for mitigating the chance of loss (i.e. having qualifications to be hired by someone else if

one's venture fails) (Schrager, 2019). When looking at the choice of studying longer and more trying fields, founders interviewed, especially those who specifically mention picking their fields because of the external market, obtained degrees to combat both idiosyncratic and systematic risk. Idiosyncratic risk is a one-off risk, while systematic risk is more widespread affecting everyone (Schrager, 2019). Therefore, High UA founders studying highly-employable STEM fields protect against the idiosyncratic risk of their ventures failing by having transferable, recognizable hard skills, while they also protect against systematic risk of a market downturn due to engineers' low unemployment rate. The high number of Low UA founders who studied non-STEM subjects were not as concerned with mitigating these risks with their humanities and social science degrees. However, they still conducted hedging (except one founder) by graduating with a degree, protecting them from the worst market-related systematic risks.

In the pursuit of a degree, all founders were taking steps to mitigate risk and hedge. Naturally, a degree holds within itself inherit advantages in critical thinking and skills, but in the purest sense of the profession, an entrepreneur does not necessarily need a master's in business or a diploma in advertising in today's economy of online courses and free information. Therefore, each group seems to have taken a different route in cultivating personal human capital, as today's knowledge-based economy allows each worker to take charge of cultivating and controlling his or her own human capital development (Gratton & Ghoshal, 2003). The self-selected skillset each founder cultivated in university may give greater insight into how each person views his or her ability to contribute to his or her venture and what is important to know to lead it to success. Knowing more about what skillset each founder believes is important in entrepreneurship compared to his or her own educational background would provide greater insight on this aspect of human capital cultivation.

Finally, the difference in educational selection may signal a difference between belief in credentialism and signaling. Assuming that one's venture fails and/or the founder is looking for other employment for any reason, the importance of one's achievements can be seen in various ways. If a founder ascribes to credentialism, as may be the case with those with technical backgrounds, they would believe that jobs are rewarded based on possession of specific degrees and diplomas (Kivinen & Ahola,

1999). Those with less concrete skills and certifications may be more inclined to view future opportunities as reliant on signaling. Signaling is the concept that one's specific degree title is not the most important aspect, but a degree is an indicator to others of one's productivity (Kivinen & Ahola, 1999). This could be an aspect of the difference between the groups' selection of human capital cultivation/education. For future research, it would be interesting to look at how hiring managers and decision makers view importance of degree topics in hiring procedure based on their levels of uncertainty avoidance.

### *6.3 Impressions of External Environment*

Thinking back to the concept of "the Stranger," as coined by Simmel (1971), how a foreign entrepreneur adapts to his or her new environment is a powerful force affecting the processes and outcomes of a venture. Speaking with this group of founders from across Europe, I was surprised to hear a large amount of criticism for their adopted land of Germany. Granted, one must keep in mind many people who go out of their way to voice opinions typically skew towards hardened supporters or strong critics. This is a phenomenon of human behavior any user of review sites like Yelp or TripAdvisor is sure to have experienced. Therefore, this criticism concerning Germany should be kept in that context, as there were multiple founders who did not voice any strong opinions regarding the country.

When comparing the amount of time required to found a business in Germany compared to the nations of the interviewed founders, there is no qualitative measure showing that in Germany it is notably harder to start or conduct business. Initially looking at the World Bank's measure of the ease of starting a business, the High UA group's nations of Poland, Greece, and Portugal required an average of 18.7 days to found a business. For the Low UA nations of Denmark, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, entrepreneurs required an average of 5.3 days to legally found their businesses. These measures are compared to the average amount of time it takes in Germany to found a business, which is 8 days (The World Bank, 2019). Therefore, the viewpoint that establishing a business in Germany is difficult must not be rooted in the legal system, but it must manifest itself in some type of non-quantifiable form, possibly cultural or linguistic. When looking at Germany's comparable ease of doing business, a more holistic measure of the regulations surrounding entrepreneurship, Germany still outperforms Low UA countries

like Greece, Portugal, and Poland, while it falls behind nations like Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Denmark. However, criticism of the business environment in Germany came from both cultural groups, calling into question what aspects of this process entrepreneurs truly value the most, and from where most perceived issues originate.

Going forward, the entrepreneurial environment and future founders would benefit from greater exploration of the differences between entrepreneurial cultures from city to city. Clearly, there are problems and frustrations that founders have in the Berlin startup scene, but such problems are not reflected in the data gathered by the World Bank. From my own personal experiences navigating German bureaucracy, these frustrations may stem from differences in formality, interpersonal communication, and/or language barriers.

#### *6.4 Planning Style*

Surprisingly, the 19 founders who shed light on the way that they typically set goals and plan for the future were far less structured in their thinking than I had anticipated. Having previously co-founded a travel technology startup in the United States and leading it for close to two years, I can personally attest to the pressure that founders feel from employees, peers, and investors to formalize processes. Granted, many interviewed founders casually mentioned structures such as initial use of tracking KPI's (Key Performance Indicators), but the overall lack of strong orientation towards the future was not expected.

Speaking with one founder who is a startup veteran and author of a book regarding startup process organization, he revealed a perspective that better explains the mentality displayed by these founders. Emphasizing “product-driven” development, these founders’ mentalities towards planning cannot be succinctly fit into the conventional realms of short-term and long-term planning that are preached in MBA and management-oriented classes. A product-driven approach is, as expected, the mentality of the company to not try to constantly plan ahead and future-orient activities, but instead, the company focuses efforts in constant trial-and-error tests or additions, revisions, and tests of its core product. Utilizing such an approach is both uniquely “startup” and creates a challenge for researchers,



advisors, and investors alike who are looking to evaluate a company on its planned advancements and execution of plans.

The majority of founders interviewed were focusing all efforts on the testing and advancements of their companies' core products, and most of them, even if it was subconsciously, were doing so via a product-driven orientation. Such an approach does not typically rely on traditional goal-setting procedures, making it difficult for this project to draw larger assumptions about a founder's planning style in a more conventional context. However, such a development does provide valuable insight into the mind of the entrepreneur. Such an insight brings into discussion concepts illuminated by an article recently published in *Administrative Science Quarterly* concerning founder inertia. According to the inductive, comparison study of startups in a high-tech field, founders typically viewed themselves as either "revolutionaries" or "discoverers." Revolutionaries drove their companies towards radical change and an ultimate vision, but this could also come at the expense of potentially advantageous developments. Meanwhile, Discoverers led their companies by constantly identifying new opportunities to exploit (Zuzul & Tripsas, 2019). This may be the difference between long-term, determined planners following a vision and those taking a step-by-step approach through iteration and discovery. In one sense, those striving for earth-shattering changes might be more inclined, and rightly so, to perform as a revolutionary, while those simply looking to innovate and make an impact may be better off as discoverers.

The entrepreneurial advice market today is overrun with books from "experts" proclaiming to teach the best way to manage one's startup. These include things like KPIs, intentionally cultivating a culture, and planning for the future. If the interviewed founders are to be believed, then these aspects of erecting a more formalized business with the same demarcations as companies one hundred times larger are simply an afterthought. The product comes first. Such a finding should be explored in greater detail, as having a better understanding of how founders view the planning process and the impetuses behind their organizations' growth can affect everything from hiring to organizational design to forecasting.

### *6.5 Independence and Autonomy*

The prevalence of independence-themed comments in this project's interviews may be framed as simply another manifestation of the self-centered millennial generation currently surging into the workforce. Another perspective would be to see these comments as representative of the over confident nature of those who pursue entrepreneurship as a profession. However, I see these comments in a different light and with varied driving forces behind them.

On a macroeconomic level, Europe's unique geographic and sociological topography allow for the close intermingling of different types of operating models that would all be considered "capitalistic." To briefly explain, there are nations who operate their free market systems under what is called a Liberal Market Economy (LME), while other nations operate under a capitalist system known as a Coordinated Market Economy (CME). In a LME, companies have greater freedom to hire and fire at will, negotiate labor contracts, and the vast majority of obligations that companies have is to their shareholders. Therefore, they work to maximize profit, sometimes at the expense of other groups like labor or the surrounding community (Hall & Soskice, 2001). Countries that operate under the LME model would include the United Kingdom and the United States. On the other extreme, nations with a CME model have companies that view actions in a more holistic manner. Therefore, they prioritize the stakeholders over shareholders. Such a difference can be exhibited in labor negotiations, pay, and social safety nets. Germany is a prototypical example of a CME nation (Hall & Soskice, 2001). Keeping this theory in mind, it is interesting to see that founders from LME nations like the United Kingdom and those from CME nations like Poland all voice desires for autonomy and independence in their professional pursuits. This also shows that their adopted country of Germany, a strong CME culture, does not have a strong enough effect on their preferences to change their orientation to favor the stable employment and progression that is so typical in a CME model. Granted, these are only initial reactions to the comments made by the interviewed founders, and there would need to be more research to definitively say what drives each group to want independence in work, as it could also be rooted in generational or educational differences, for example.

Taking a closer look at the articulation of the desire for independence by each founder, there was a marked difference between how certain founders voiced their preferences. On one side, there were founders who explained their want of independence in the context of decision-making autonomy. For example, one High UA founder said, “[i]n engineering you just calculate things all day long, and you can just make a small part of a big project. In here I have my own project, and I can influence it myself.” Statements like these make it sound like founders want independence to feel a greater ownership over the entire process of founding a business and building a project. On the other hand, there were three founders whose desires for independence were explain in the sense of interpersonal preference. For example, a Low UA founder said, “[i]f I’m being managed, and something that doesn’t make sense, then that makes me very frustrated to not be able to voice my concern for something,” along with, “I’m not very interested in working for other people,” by another Low UA founder. Both groups desire independence, but they seem to come from different driving forces. One is product-oriented, while another is person-oriented. The three founders who voiced person-oriented reasons for independence were the three founders from the United Kingdom. Therefore, there may be a culturally-embedded driving force pushing these specific people to glorify the concept of working for oneself and being in charge. Further study of the impetus behind someone’s desire for independence in entrepreneurship would help illuminate the complexities behind this aspect of entrepreneurial self-selection.

### *6.6 Success Targets*

Looking at the differences in the idea of success between High UA and Low UA founders, the scope of “success” truly stands out. Granted, this is a difficult, non-qualitative measure, scope. Therefore, all analysis must be understood as subjective. However, I believe that this is a significant finding for the implications that it may have if further study were to confirm such a finding.

Specifically looking at the realm of startups today, there is so much speculation on which platform will be the next Facebook or what little-known founder may turn out to be the next Elon Musk. Having the ability, or the pure luck, to select such a happening from the harbinger of overhyped news, investment rounds, or self-reported skills could mean exponential returns. This important insight is not

solely on the side of investors. Being able to have, even an opaque, additional viewpoint into the psyche of founders and their aspirations can allow other stakeholders and the founders themselves to better account for culturally-embedded, subconscious biases. If a fresh graduate is desperate to work in a fast-paced, “break things” kind of environment, understanding the driving force and concept of success of one’s future boss is vital to job satisfaction. If those from High UA countries truly do seek to mitigate their risk of failure by tempering their concepts of success, that is something that employees, investors, and the founders themselves should be aware of. On the other hand, if those from Low UA countries are more aspirational with their ideas of success, which brings with it increased risk of failure, stakeholders should know that as well.

Harkening back to Locke’s Goal-Setting Theory, having clear, ambitious, executable goals is a strong driver of performance. Each cultural group in this study, on average, possessed qualities of that concept but lacked others. Many in the High UA Group had measurable, achievable tasks, which they can build off of to create a chain of continuous successes. When it came to long-term vision and an ambitious end goal, many of them lacked that clarity into the future. I believe that this means that many could see their businesses continue to thrive, but they may end up with a different business scenario than they had originally planned. Looking at the Low UA Group, many had lofty, industry changing goals. This accomplishes the ambition that Locke calls for in goal-setting, and many also mentioned executable next steps. However, the long-term view of success was typically better articulated than the concept of how to achieve it. As a result, I believe that this tactic may leave some employees disoriented when it comes to understanding how they should contribute to the overall success of the company, and it could even leave the company languishing in a trial-and-error mindset without making material progress towards the end goal. These concepts are, however, simply speculation, and it would be of great benefit to be able to follow the work and mindsets of these interviewed founders to have a more holistic view of how tactics, ideas of success, and goal-setting change as a company becomes more mature.

Briefly looking at the tested correlations of educational background and the stage of the company, I am surprised to see no apparent relationship. In the case of educational background, initially, one would

believe that many of these startup founders are calling upon their most formal sense of professional training (i.e. education) to learn how to run their businesses. If that were the case, then engineering and computer science graduates would, theoretically, view the process of building a company like that of building a software or an engineering project. Therefore, they would view development, planning, and success in an iterative, step-by-step manner. In the other case, those who studied business or humanities would look at the startup as a large problem in a more general context. As one Low UA founder who studied literature stated, he constructs the development of his company as one would construct the arc of a story. Tying this discussion back to the previously illuminated relationship between being in the High UA group and having more modest views of success with defined next steps and being in the Low UA group and having a more long-term, vague version of success, one could also see education playing a role. The majority of founders in the High UA group have a technical education background, which may make them more prone to only look at the short and mid-term tasks that must be accomplished. The Low UA group, in comparison, studied more functional fields, which may lend themselves to “high level” thinking and planning, but not the methodological chipping away of tasks that an engineer may exhibit. Such a relationship between education and scope of success target in a startup is very difficult to measure if it is truly a causality situation or simply a result of self-selecting types of products, interests, and a multitude of other factors. A larger, more specialized study focusing on the educational background of founders and their concepts of success would be more appropriate in discerning whether this relationship has validity.

## **7.0 Future Research Suggestions**

As this research project was largely an initial exploration of the connection between culturally-rooted uncertainty avoidance and success targets in startups, there are various outcomes of the work that I believe would be scholastically and professionally beneficial to research in further detail. The concepts of culture and entrepreneurship touch fields from sociology to management, and future research should be focused on better examining the links that “softer,” more human aspects like culture have with financially-driven disciplines of management and business.

Initially looking at the ecosystem in which this research was conducted, Berlin, the surrounding landscape of a startup should be better understood. Running comparison studies between groups of founders in similar industries with similar backgrounds in varied startup ecosystems would help illuminate the differences that one's environment can have. Speaking with these founders, many went out of the way to mention their impressions of Berlin, the connections they've made in the city, or the ways that Berlin is changing. Comparing the mores of founders, investors, and employees in today's "born global" startup capitals, particularly in Europe, would help all stakeholders make better informed decisions when exercising the mobility of their human and financial capital.

Shifting to look at the findings of this research, there should be future research focusing on the effects that a founder's education can have on his or her mentality and actions in entrepreneurship. Education, uncertainty avoidance culture, and scope of success targets were all correlated in this research, but there should be more research into whether education truly impacts the ways that entrepreneurs go about conducting their business. Do these founders self-select into educational tracks that simply emphasize their skills? Is traditional education really necessary or impactful in today's age of massive online courses and glorification of drop-out entrepreneurs? Such exploration could reshape how educational institutions and startup founders advise the next generation of ambitious founders. Also looking at the findings of this research, there should be a more definitive measure created to gauge the ambition level of articulated success targets. If Locke's theory is to be believed, internalizing and defining the concept of "success" is a powerful act that can help leaders ultimately reach that vision of success. However, how does one categorize the ambition level established by these founders? If an out-of-reach target is set, that is sure to have detrimental effects, but if the concept of success can be achieved with minimal effort, a company might be settling for less than its potential. Setting these goals should be more clearly defined.

Naturally, there are a multitude of additional research suggestions that have been sporadically mentioned throughout the progression of this research, and this is not an attempt to demean those as insignificant or unimportant. The above recommendations of future research, however, are directly tied to

the findings of the project, and, therefore, they have been listed here in a separate section to emphasize their importance.

## **8.0 Conclusion**

Throughout the process of conducting this project, there has been a steady progression of understanding surrounding the current state of research, the relevance of delving deeper into this work, and the telling correlation shown by the project's findings. For the sake of brevity, each point and minute detail will not be fully expounded upon in this section, but the most relevant insights of this paper will be summarized.

Initially looking at the current state of research in this specific area of study, there are many things left to be desired. As markets became more closely connected over the past century, the idiosyncrasies of culture have slowly revealed themselves as more than just quirks that people should be coached out of in favor of a colonizer's culture. Granted, globalization and Americanization of many parts of today's hyper-connected marketplace have brought about the destruction and extinction of many cultures in favor of a more unified, homogenous culture, but that certainly does not mean that cultural differences have ceased to be relevant. When examining today's contemporary literature and research regarding culture, readers are not left wanting for choice. However, their relevance to today's business environment can be seen as questionable. For example, Geert Hofstede's original Cultural Dimensions Theory was constructed prior to the global expansion of the internet, hyper-connectivity. Cultural differences that may manifest themselves in the context of more "traditional" business environments, such as the operations of IBM that Hofstede studied, are very different from those seen in today's born global startups. Not every millennial and member of Generation Z is striving to launch or work in a startup, but the entrepreneurial environment, which is historically a main engine for technological and economic growth, is moving towards these nimble, international, technologically-driven companies. Despite the fact that the operations and aspirations of many entrepreneurs is moving towards these kinds of businesses, the academic literature has widely ignored the cultural mixing that occurs in such companies. If anything, these companies frequently have outsized economic performances while operating with fewer than 10

employees and can be prone to greater intercultural conflict than a larger company with established norms of operations. With small workforces, how employees relate to, communicate with, and collaborate with each other is vital to success. Despite the relevance of such study, today's research rarely focuses on the ways that individuals' cultures can affect the operations of these small enterprises.

Upon initial realization that aspects of culture had not been fully fleshed out in the startup environment today, one must contemplate whether this is truly a worthwhile logical progression from the research into modern relevance or if this has been ignored due to its triviality. Having founded a technology startup in the past and having seen firsthand the massive amounts of capital involved, the willing labor force desperate for hire, and growing infrastructure to support and encourage these kinds of ventures in cities around the world, I firmly believe that further study of startups and how those involved work together is valid and needed. With so much money changing hands, especially at the time of writing with all-time highs of stock markets and an abundance of deployable capital, startups need to be better understood. Many of these operations gain initial funding when the company is simply an idea of the founder or founders. If an investor is paying large sums of money for a fractional share of someone's risky idea, he or she deserves to know as much about this individual's professional capabilities and tendencies as possible. Assuming this founder is a human, he or she is naturally endowed with a culture, and that should be better understood to help investors make more informed decisions on these risky investments. Additionally, each employee hired operates under his or her own culturally preprogramming. In such small enterprises, each employee has the capability to affect the company's chance of success. Therefore, understanding employees' cultural predispositions and, potentially, how those might interact with the culture of the founder is of the utmost importance. Granted, all organizations, large or small, contain employees and founders with cultures, but the new nature of startup founders' and employees' global mobility emphasizes the cultural differences that may arise when a founder from the United Kingdom hires a Polish developer and a Danish strategy officer while starting a three-person business in Berlin. As a result, I find this project to be especially pertinent to today's changing face of management within startups.



Following the exploration into the relationship between culturally-embedded orientation towards uncertainty avoidance and the concept of success, the correlation between three important human capital-related aspects hint at influential findings related to culture that should be explored further. Human capital, basically the way that each member of the labor force develops his or her marketable abilities, is comprised of many parts. Naturally, the most easily recognizable aspect of human capital cultivation is traditional education. By gaining degrees, further study, and selecting certain focus areas, workers start to mold the end product that they will ultimately bring to the labor market. In line with this project, the “labor market” does not necessitate being hired by someone else, but includes pursuing an entrepreneurial venture, as it is still a conscious economic decision regarding how one wields the powers of human capital. Education provides certain tools for professional undertakings, but the cultural background of these workers is an innate programming that affects how each person views everything from education to work to success. This relationship was seen in the above research by the strong tendency for those founders from High UA countries to choose more certain, traditionally employable fields of study like engineering and computer science, while those from Low UA countries were more willing to study generalized fields that taught “soft” skills. However, it is unclear whether culture and background made founders more likely to study these areas or if external factors were at play, such as familial background, labor market forces, or personal preferences. Such educational differences may not seem significant, but the indicator of success target articulated shows how these cultural differences may manifest themselves in ways that affect founders’ businesses. As shown in the findings and discussion above, amongst the same groups showing a cultural-educational correlation, a strong correlation between culture and scope of success target emerged. When examined in totality, there is actually a three-way correlation among culture of founder, education, and scope of success target. This eventually shows that founders who come from High UA countries were more likely to study technical fields and have more modest views of success in their startups. In comparison, founders from Low UA countries were more likely to study functional fields and have more ambitious success targets. In accordance with the overall spirit of the research, I naturally want to attribute both educational choices and scope of success targets to the culture

of the founders, but this might not necessarily be true. Only replication and further research into the reasoning behind decisions made by founders can help clarify whether educational choice determines scope of success target or any other variety of variable combinations.

This is not an insignificant finding. Having greater insight into how founders from specific cultures may approach choices like human capital cultivation in education and the scope of their success targets in startups can better inform all people involved in the startup ecosystem. Most importantly, the weight given to the success target, which is the ultimate goal, in Locke's theory displays how important it is for a founder to have this concept established as a driving force propelling the efforts of the organization. Therefore, it is significant to recognize that the empirical information gathered in this research does support the hypothesis that culturally-embedded uncertainty avoidance affects the level of ambition in success targets between these two groups of founders. Culture cannot be avoided, and it is surely something subject to slow, unyielding change. Therefore, understanding how it affects the economic engines of tomorrow's new products, services, and holders of wealth is vital.

Going forward, with such information, the assembly of teams can be better managed than it is today. Assuming that the cultural impetus behind scope of success targets as shown here is, in fact, valid, different sections of companies and companies at different stages could be broken up in accordance to cultural background. Bringing into discussion the concept of workplace diversity, the diversity of culturally-embedded tendencies can be beneficial if done correctly (Wooten & Page, 2019). Reviewing the book entitled *The Diversity Bonus*, in *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Wooten (2019) discusses how a variety of different measures of diversity can enable organizations to create something that is greater than simply the sum of their parts. By properly creating an environment in which workers of all levels can utilize their abilities and ways of thinking, tasks, especially those of complexity and requiring outside information, are more effectively accomplished (Wooten & Page, 2019). Building a company, product, team, and service from nothing, as these founders do, certainly falls into this classification and would therefore benefit from a diversity of viewpoints.

In the context of information exhibited in this research, those from High UA countries, if they also display a tendency to favor more incremental, short-to-mid-term targets as shown in this research, might be more advantageously deployed in specific functions. For example, these workers and engineers might feel more fulfilled and could perform better in roles focused around the next iteration of a product, reworking an existing offering, or driving development of an offering towards a tight deadline. As far as founders are concerned, they could harness this information to better plan for the future actions of their own companies in closer alignment with their own cultural predispositions. In comparison, assuming that those from High UA countries do prefer to see success as a long-term lodestar, they can be deployed as such. For example, those predisposed to thinking in longer-term, more grand, vague fashions might feel more fulfilled and effective in strategic planning roles, forecasting, or acquisition scouting. These are all functional areas where the long-term outcome must be envisioned as a driving force for more immediate actions. On the side of founders with this cultural predisposition, they may be more adept to pitching to early investors, who typically look at long-term, grandiose visions, and working to establish the purpose and vision of a company early in the business's development. Afterwards, they must be sure to make definitive plans for short and mid-term steps towards that final vision. Finding fulfilment in one's occupation is not simple, but by working to align those involved in these growing companies to positions and duties that more smoothly segue into their natural tendencies, a better fit may be achieved. There is strong support that those who find a rewarding fit in their professions are positively impacted in a variety of aspects (Kristof-Brown, et al., 2005). Recognizing someone's natural predisposition towards uncertainty avoidance may help workers and founding teams better sort into fulfilling positions and workstreams.

Ultimately, these two types of founders and entrepreneurs would ideally function in tandem. Technical and functional, short-term and long-term, execution and vision; none of these can or should exist without the other in a business context. Not only is this a call for a future of intercultural business integration for the sake of profits and innovation, but the wider societal effects of increased person-to-person collaboration emphasizing different cultures' strengths would only benefit wider society.

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## 11.0 Interviews

### Olga Blaszk, Co-Founder at BerlinGreen, Berlin, Germany, May 30, 2019

H: Just to get started, how long have you been in Berlin?

O: So, I moved to Berlin in 2017, I think. I've been in Germany for 8 years. Before that I was studying in Hamburg and Aachen.

H: Ok great. So, what do you think of Berlin?

O: It's a great city. It may not be as beautiful as Hamburg, but the startup scene is great. So much international. Even if you don't speak German, it is very good.

H: Ok. I visited Hamburg for the first time about 6 months ago. It is much prettier, and Aachen is also beautiful.

O: Oh yes, but nothing to do.

H: Well, I live in Gottingen. So, I think it is similar.

O: Yes, definitely similar. Just a lot of old people and students.

H: Would you mind telling me more about your educational background?



O: Well, I was originally studying engineering, but now I'm going more in the direction of business. I was working in project management at Arup, which is a big engineering company worldwide. Yeah, so I'm an engineer. But I've always wanted to have my own business. When I was studying, I had my own online shop. I was selling watches and jewelry from China. It was a very simple business.

H: That's great. So, in Aachen and Hamburg did you do a bachelor's or master's or both?

O: Exactly. I did my bachelor's in Hamburg, and my master's in Aachen.

H: Ok great. So, were they both in engineering?

O: Yes, they were both in civil engineering.

H: Ok, so I think that that is an interesting transition. Going from a master's in civil engineering, and now you want to be an entrepreneur. So, what made you interested in entrepreneurship?

O: Yeah, so I've always wanted to sell my own things and to make a product. In engineering you just calculate things all day long, and you can just make a small part of a big product. In here I have my own project, and I can influence it myself.

H: So, you mentioned that you are from Poznan, is there a strong culture of entrepreneurship there?

O: Yes, actually a lot of people have their own companies, but they are simple businesses and not startups. For example, they sell their own clothes, and it is just simple things.

H: Is that something that when you were growing up you thought you might be interested in?

O: Actually, my whole family is university-based. My father is a professor and my grandfather's a professor. So, no entrepreneurs. They always told me that I should find a normal job, and what I'm doing is not secure.

H: Ok, so thinking about where you grew up and your family not being entrepreneurs, how do you think that affected your professional interests?

O: Actually, my boyfriend is from the family of entrepreneurs, so he always showed me the other side. From the family point of view, it was very hard because they were not very supportive.

H: So, did you always think that you wanted to go into entrepreneurship, or when you started studying civil engineering did you think that you wanted to go work in a big company?

O: I always thought that I wanted to work in a big company like where I started. But then I got a scholarship, and I'm actually doing this company with my boyfriend, so when he started it, I thought that it was very cool. So, when we got the scholarship, I quit my job.

H: So, is he also Polish, or is he from Berlin?

O: Yes, he is Polish. He is an architect, so he designed the product. Also, we met in Poland about 10 years ago.

H: So, I'm thinking that civil engineering would draw you to solving problems in a very step-by-step way, and that's not always how you can do things when you run your own company. So how do you normally go about solving these problems that are multifaceted in a way that's not always so measured?

O: Actually, in a way engineering can help you. Because of my studies I have an analytical point of view. When there is a task, I can break it into smaller parts, do them, and in a minute it can be done. So, I think that this actually helped me.

H: So, in the company at large, do you normally break up tasks, or is it early enough to where everyone does a little bit of everything?

O: We're starting to break up tasks, which is a bit hard because it is a start-up. For example, for the Kickstarter program, we have to turn it into a series of tasks that we can accomplish.

H: Definitely. I co-founded a travel technology startup in the US, so I definitely understand how it is hard to schedule things and breakup tasks when the team is changing and growing along with the product.

O: Ok definitely, and our team is growing. Right now we have 4 people, including one intern.

H: An intern, that is great. Would you mind briefly telling me more about the current venture that you were working on?

O: As I said, the Kickstarter is what we're working on right now. We're launching in two weeks, so we have to focus on the presale. That means a lot of marketing and a lot of product development as well. Our engineers are still working on the app and the software.

H: Ok, so if you are at a networking event, and someone asks you what does BerlinGreen do, what do you tell them you?

O: We do smart, indoor gardens, and they make your office or your home green. They can provide you fresh salads and herbs.

H: Great. And do most people understand what you mean?

O: Actually, the best part about the product is that when they see it, it is very easy to understand.

H: Ok. So, I understand the hardware, but when you would you mind telling me more about what the app does?

O: Yes. So, the app controls the box. With the app you can change the light settings. For example, a lot of our testers use the box as a light alarm clock. You can say to wake me up at 7, and the light slowly increases. That is one of the functions. We also have smart sensors inside; those include sensors in water sensors. You get a notification on the app saying that you need to water your plants.

H: That sounds very useful. So, in founding Berlin green, what is your idea of success for this company?

O: So, the product is just a very small version, and we want to go bigger and make whole offices. We want to make a system for the walls. The green box right now is a version that you can put on the table or on a shelf, but we want to create a version for the wall with a modular system. You can have one, two, or three boxes and control them all.

H: Ok great. So, for you personally, at what point of growth in this company would you feel successful?

O: That is a hard question. I don't know. Maybe when our technology is so sophisticated that we can sell it to another company and work on another product.

H: So, it would be to build it to a point that someone else wants it? Then you would leave it, or would you want to continue to grow?

O: I don't know. If we get such an offer, it means that we are worth something.

H: Ok. So how did you all come to this idea?

O: So, completing the team was very hard. Originally, we were two people, Philip, my boyfriend, and me, and then we had someone helping us with the hardware part, but he decided that he wanted to take his full-time job, and he didn't have time for the start up. I was really looking for people because software developers are very hard to find and want a lot of money. We spent about 2 months searching for the two engineers. They came later about six months later.

H: You said that Philip initially came up with the idea? Do you know how he came up with the idea?

O: So, he was working as an architect in green architecture consulting. They were creating very nice pictures of green buildings just ideas and very unrealistic to finance. He wanted to create something for real people that real people could pay for.

H: Ok I understand. I've seen a lot about cool green architecture online, but I do think it is very hard to afford. But they always look cool. I know that right now you were working on the Kickstarter campaign, so in between now and the ultimate goal of selling it to someone else or staying with it, what indicators are you looking to measure to make sure that you are on track to reach that success?

O: So, one indicator is the number of boxes that we sell in the presale. This is market verification. This will affect how we market. This is very important because we don't have a very big marketing fund, but I think if people are interested than they will buy it. Another indicator is if we can find an investor, and how much investment for how much valuation. I think for now that is it.

H: So, of those two indicators, which one would be the most important?

O: I think the first one. Customers would definitely be the most important thing. You can convince an investor with a nice presentation, but customers decide if your product is good.

H: Definitely. So, the Kickstarter goes along with the presale?

O: Yes, so Kickstarter is like crowdfunding, people pay for it, and then they will receive the product a few months later.

H: So, this initial program is crowdfunding to be able to make the first products to send to people?

O: Yes exactly.

H: It is early in the development of the product, and it is early in the development of the team, but have your ideas of success changed so far?

O: So, our first idea of success was getting a scholarship. And now it's so good. Berlin is giving me €2,000 per month, and now it is not so much if you were also trying to live and build a product. But now success is successful crowdfunding and successful investors.

H: Ok, so do you take this one at a time, or how do you normally change your concept of success? Some people have one ultimate idea of success, and then they figure out how to get there, and others take a step-by-step approach looking at shorter term goals. Which one do you think you use more?

O: So right now, I think that it has to be smaller. We focus on making the machine and then make sure that the machine is selling. That is success.

H: So in between now and your ultimate dream of success, what steps are you going to take to make sure that you can reach it? How do you plan on reaching that?

O: So right now, it is manufacturing, pricing, relationships with manufacturers, building the product, making sure that we have all of the big things covered.

H: Ok. And when did you say that you started the project?

O: So, we got the scholarship September of last year, and that's when we started full-time. But we were working part time since January of last year.

H: And when do you plan on sending in the application for the Kickstarter?

O: We're sending that in two weeks. So, it is very soon.

H: Great. So, you've actually answered all of my questions, thank you so much. However, is there anything that you want to make sure that I know about BerlinGreen or your journey or anything that you want to add?

O: Yes. I would say that making a product is very hard. Hardware that is. With an app or software, it is not that hard. You can have good developers, but with hardware there so many things that you have to consider.

H: Definitely. So, with a product like this, would you say that the actual technology part like the app, is not as difficult as physically making the product?

O: Yes, I would say that the hardware is the hardest. We only have one person working on the app, and it is going well, but we have 3 people working on the hardware.

H: Great. So, before we go, are there any other questions that I can answer? You've been incredibly helpful thank you very much.

O: Yes, so what is your project about?

H: Yes, I'm doing an interdisciplinary Masters. My project is a mix of globalization, management, and applied business theories. So, there is a theory saying that based on where you're from, you will see the world differently in business settings. There is an idea of uncertainty avoidance, which is how you approach uncertainty and ambiguity. My whole thesis is looking at the two extremes of cultures that look at uncertainty in completely different ways, then I'm looking at how these people assess what success is in

their startups. I know that you definitely don't want to read 70 pages of this, but I will be making a two-page summary, and I would be happy to share with you when I'm done if you would like?

O: Yes definitely. I would be really interested to learn more. I think that are Polish people have a lot of that entrepreneurship thing. We are always trying to find a new idea.

H: Do you think that that is something that our generation in Poland has but not the older generation, or maybe the cities vs the rural areas?

O: I would say that the generation before may also have the same thing because in the 1990s Poland was developing very fast. Therefore, people had to do a lot of things. If I compared to people in Germany, the people in Germany are very different because they are looking for secure jobs. That is my observation.

H: That is very interesting thank you so much for sharing.

Andy Carvell, Partner at Phiture, Berlin, Germany, June 11, 2019

H: So, how long have you been in Berlin?

A: 8 years.

H: And what do you think of Berlin? What were some of your impressions, and how they changed since you've gotten here?

A: Yeah, I came here just to do a 10-week project and finish my MBA course in 2011. I thought it would be more of a vacation and just working in industry there and just write it as a thesis. That was 14 weeks. I chose Berlin for a variety of reasons, but mostly because I heard that techno music was very good here, and it's actually much better than I could have imagined. So, it's a really great city. I still really love it, and it is still very much my city. I have no plans to leave. In terms of how it's changed, I think that it's slowly becoming more gentrified in certain areas. One thing that Germany needs is increased public pressure on certain prices, specifically rent and income for how expensive it is. I'm now getting around to thinking about buying a house here, and now I'm really figuring out that it used to be much cheaper to buy real estate here. And we are also discovering this at the city business level. We're seeing the startup industry becoming more mature over time. Before, there used to be a great deal of smaller, consumer-facing startups with small teams. They were either just trying to copy something that was already established in the US, this was either a well-funded or not so well funded, it was just copying it, or they were just coming up with relatively creative stuff. But they were never very good teams here. I've started to see a lot of maturity of those startups here and seeing that improvement in terms of business ideas and the businesses coming out of Berlin nowadays. They have access to better funding and maybe better talent, so you see the business is developing well. As far as real estate prices go, we're looking for office space, and we moved into our new office in October. There's potentially room for expansion, and if you look at the residential market, business real-estate the same and much more expensive than it used to be.

H: Definitely. So, you mentioned an MBA, would you mind briefly telling me more about your educational background?

A: Sure. I studied computer science in undergrad, and I used to be a software developer. Around 2009, I took the time to go travel and decided I want to go study. I went to Warwick Business School in the UK. It was a 12-month intensive MBA because I was already fairly old at that point. It was a very intensive year. I did specialize a little bit. I did a few elective modules in marketing and marketing strategy. This is what we're applying now. Phiture is an intersection of tech and marketing.

H: Ok great. Would you mind briefly explaining Phiture more to me?

A: Great. I would say less than 25% of people pronounce it the same way that we do. We say Phiture. It basically came about organically. When I came together with my co-founder, we both worked at SoundCloud. During my time at SoundCloud, I published a business framework called the mobile growth stack, which is like a tool to help marketers visualize all of the key levers that they might want to employ in the growth strategy of a mobile app. It's now become a pretty standardized framework in the business for mobile apps. Back when I first published it, I was still at SoundCloud in 2014. As that framework got better known and I went to conferences and things, I was increasingly approached by people outside of SoundCloud who wanted my help with thinking through their growth strategy and things like that. I decided to then work with Moritz and work both in SoundCloud and consult on the side with other companies. After a while, we decided that we just wanted to do this full-time because we could learn more, earn more money, and it would ultimately be more rewarding.

H: Ok great. With Phiture, in your opinion, what would success be for the company?

A: So, I would be pretty happy with a strategic exit in the next few years. If we find a company that wants to acquire us, and hopefully they keep what we think is special about the company, and they can maintain that, and take it to the next level through the acquisition. We would also be happy with very sustainable revenue and a company that is running where the founders could step back and just draw passive income. I would be happy with that too.

H: Ok. In either of these two scenarios, you would be looking to allow yourself to go and work on another project or take time off or something like that, instead of leading the company following some type of acquisition. Is that correct?

A: Yes, I think that's true. Usually after an acquisition there be a lock-in period for a bit. We will not just be able to say see you later guys. However, I'm getting pretty old at this point, and I'm not necessarily thinking about retiring, but maybe I'll think differently in 5 years.

H: Great. So in between now and one of those two outcomes, what kind of indicators are you and Moritz, the other co-founder, looking to measure?

A: The key measures, if I had to simplify it, would be revenue and EBITDA, or profitability basically. Maybe a third one would be the kind of quality of clients that we're working with. That's more subjective, but we are working with some big brands. We've been very clear about the kinds of brands we want to work with to help add to our credibility and help us find new clients in the marketplace. This is opposed to working with other clients that may be able to teach us something or would maybe just be well paid.

H: Ok great. I know that especially right now in the U.S. with all these big firms going public, revenues are off the charts, but not profits, so that's important to think about, and looking at EBITDA, profits, and the kinds of clients that you're bringing in, how would you rank those in order of importance?

A: EBITDA, quality of clients, revenue. Or maybe EBITDA, revenue, clients. Definitely EBITDA is number one. If we are just bringing in a lot of revenue but spending a ton of money, I don't think we'd be very happy with the kind of valuation we would be at.

H: Ok. It's pretty straight-forward how you measure something like EBITDA or revenue, but how do you take a step back and assess the quality of clients so you're receiving?

A: Yeah, I say that we don't have a very formalized process of doing that. We definitely don't have a very clear review point where we measure that, so it's on a more ongoing basis of when we look at the pipeline. We're in pretty close communication about that, so it's something that happens more organically in the pipeline just from day-to-day discussions.

H: Ok, I understand. Thinking about where you started and now that you're looking ahead at the future toward a potential exit, how has your idea of success for the venture changed over time?

A: I would say that hasn't changed that much. I think that we need to figure out, as company, how big we want to be. Not in how big in terms of revenue or EBITDA, because I wouldn't exactly put an upper limit on that, but big in terms as number of employees, because that really does change the company and the culture. If we're a 25-person company like we are right now or 100 or 1000-person company, that is very different. There are also very different ways of scaling revenue. I don't think that we have quite worked that out yet as far as what a long-term strategy would be. As far as our goals, thinking about the kinds of clients we want to work with and what kind of services we want to provide, those have been pretty stable. For revenue targets and EBITDA targets, those are things that we set at the beginning of the year, and we track those on the 3-5-year plan, and those have been tracked very well.

H: Great. I know that you're incredibly busy and tight on time, so thank you so much. So, in between now and a potential exit or success in the future, how do you actually plan on achieving that success target?

A: Achieving an exit or company goals?

H: Yes, company goals.

A: Ok, company goals. We started using OKRs at the beginning of this year, but in the first 2 years we were too small to have anything rigid in place, and we needed that agility and flexibility to be able to react and change things quickly. I didn't feel like we needed that. We still had our top revenue targets, but we didn't have anything more like an OKR framework. How we're in the process of working with the whole team on setting OKRs and to help them build their own OKRs, focusing on building personal and company-wide objectives. So that's how we are doing it.

H: Perfect. So, do you have any personal objectives that you set as far as, maybe, what you want to see one year from now or 2 years from now?

A: Yeah, on a personal level, I think it's all about ensuring that I'm comfortable with and happy about the direction that things are moving while also pulling myself out of the day-to-day aspects of the business or at least focusing on what strategic objectives need to be reached to do something like that. Where can I add the most value and not just going to work every day and being busy, I hope that I'm doing something that matters, but I'm constantly reassessing where I can be that matters most.

H: That makes a lot of sense. Thank you so much. Is there anything else before we go that you want to make sure that I know or anything you would like to add to your answers?

A: No, I don't think so. But maybe in 30 seconds or so you can tell me more about your project?

H: Yes of course. This is for my master's thesis, and I'm looking at how culture plays a role in how people assess success targets in their entrepreneurial ventures here in Berlin. There's a management theory that states that everyone, based on where they're from, views uncertainty in a different way than people from other cultures. My idea is that the way that you view uncertainty may change how you view success in your overall venture, and of course success targets change how people go through the goal-setting process

and plan for things in the future in their ventures. It has been very interesting so far, and at the end I'll be making a brief 2-page summary, and I'll be happy to send it to you if you would like?

A: Yeah, sure. Please do. And if you would like to chat at any point in the future, I would be happy to chat.

H: Yes, of course. And I think I just held us to time.

A: Yes, I really appreciate that. Please let me know if I can help with anything in the future.

H: That sounds great, thank you again for all your help. We'll talk again soon.

Yannis Evangelou, Founder at lexiQA, Berlin, Germany, May 14, 2019

H: So, just to get started, how long have you been in Berlin?

Y: So, I came here in April 2010. So, this is my 10th year exactly.

H: So, what originally made you want to come to Berlin?

Y: So, I've lived most of my life in Greece, but I spent 3 years in the UK where I studied for my master's and started a PhD. And I also worked at the same time. In Guildford, so in the Greater London area, but I didn't want to go back. I went back once because I had a job at the university, but I was not very fond of living in England. But I had to find another way out of Greece. This was before the crisis, the Greek crisis, so it didn't have anything to do with financial reasons. So, I had my own job. I was working as a contractor working for an English constellations company in Athens. And I carried my job to Berlin. I just tried to find an international destination which would also have a challenge like learning a language, but a useful language. I didn't want to learn Czech or Dutch or something. This wouldn't be useful for anything. So, I tried to balance things and find a good course of life. Because I was in between Berlin and Paris. I spoke French fluently, but I didn't speak any German. But I was always fond of a certain quality of life. So, I didn't want to become a student again. I didn't want to spend €1,500 for 8 square meters in Paris. This would just be to say that I live in Paris. Instead I could spend €500 in Berlin and stay in 60 square meters. That's how it was back then. It was different.

H: So, you mentioned that in the UK you had started a masters and a PhD. Would you mind telling me a bit more about your educational background?

Y: So, I studied mathematics for 5 years in Greece. Which I dropped in the 5th year, which was the last year, to study translation. So, I studied translation from Greek to English and French and vice versa at the British Council in Athens. Then I went to the University of Surrey in 2005. I did the master's in translation there. Then I started a PhD at the University of Surrey. It was a part time PhD. I was working at a British company back then. Then I went back to Athens to work on the PhD remotely and returned to Surrey every now and then. And then I went back to the UK for a job, I was an associate professor for translation at Surrey. But it was also in technology in fact. That only lasted 6 months because I didn't want to extend because I didn't want to be in the UK for a long time. Also, because Surrey is very small. It's maybe 1/4 the size of Gottingen. It's a university village. It's much worse than that. I went back to Athens just to think of my way out of Greece. This is when I decided to come to Berlin. So, I worked as a professional Greek reviewer and translator, but mostly reviewer. From 2006 to 2013 this was with the largest English company in translation services. In 2014 I quit translation and started a boot camp in Berlin. It's an American startup institute. I started an internship there. I studied coding there for 2 months. Then I started working as a junior developer. First as a freelancer then at couple of startups, and then I



had an idea. I thought I knew what I wanted to do. My life was getting more comfortable. So, in 2016 started working with two Italian investing groups. This is how the company started.

H: Thank you so much for all the information. So, with your educational background and all of your interests in translating, I know that there are a lot of translation services and companies. So, what made you interested in starting your own company? What made you interested in entrepreneurship specifically?

Y: That's a great question. I didn't have any entrepreneurial background. There is no such family background. So, this was something completely new to me. However, this startup institute helped me meet a lot of entrepreneurs, and this helped me with learning how they think. Maybe it helped me less with learning how to code, this is maybe something that I had to do later on my own. I really liked that it's much more feasible than I thought. To convert an idea to a start-up, it's not easy, but it was much easier than I thought. When I first came up with the idea back in 2013, I thought it would be impossible. Then I phoned the group of people, but I didn't have any experience, and I didn't really know what to do. I didn't know in which direction I should go. I didn't know what to follow. I had no idea. Then I was getting feedback from various people who had been doing this for years, and this structured my thinking. So, I got a mindset like an entrepreneur, but I'm still learning because there are so many things that I don't know. And every time I experienced something new, I'm very thankful for it. Then I try not to repeat my errors.

H: Yeah, that's great. So, thinking back on your time in university in Greece, and thinking back on your time living and growing up in Greece, how do you think where you grew up impacted your professional interests?

Y: Right. That's straight to the point. The thing is I grew up in a very small Greek town where there is no entrepreneurial spirit. No one talks about entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is more of a few owning a cafe or a shop. If you ever say anything about a start-up, no one will understand anything. I was there last month, and my friends were all telling me that they don't understand what I'm doing. They just don't get it. It's not their intelligence. It's mostly about their background because they just don't see it. They think that if somebody runs a startup it's instant success. They think that they must be making so much money, but it's not always like that. But you also don't have weekends; you don't have holidays, and things like that. So, this affected me a lot. But I learn things the hard way. The way that I grew up gave me a negative impression of entrepreneurship. I thought that it was something totally different and something that one could not do if you did not go up in the right circumstances. Then when I came here and met lots of people who had already done it and who had backgrounds similar to mine, I started to believe that maybe I could do this. I definitely do have a chance, so maybe I should try. It was almost like having an inferiority complex in the beginning. I thought just because I wasn't raised in the States and I didn't have a business management master's, but I saw a lot of people with ideas and passion, so then you can work with people with MBAs or hire them. But it's not totally necessary to have it just to start your startup

H: Yes, that definitely makes a lot of sense. Those are all really great answer. So now shifting to thinking about your current venture. You pronounce it Lexi Q&A?

Y: So, we pronounce it lexica, but a lot of people say that it's Lexi QA.

H: So, would you mind just briefly saying what it is?

Y: LexiQA is a software service provider, which has built a quality assurance product. I will try to make it as simple as possible. LexiQA offers translation reviews and review for machine translation. It's like Grammarly for translations. Have you heard of Grammarly? It checks your English text as you type. It suggests corrections and so on. but we do the same, but we come in all languages. Then we check all text.

H: I seen. Well, that's a great way to summarize it. So, when you founded LexiQA and first starting to get it off the ground, what did success mean for you?

Y: It has changed. Success in the very beginning was to be able to convert leads to customers as soon as possible. At first it was to convert 3 customers in the first 6 months. And then we wanted to go for seed funding. A few months later, 9 months later in fact, we decided to not go for seed funding. We decided to try to grow organically. We said if we have to have the money, then we will use our savings. We already had the first clients, but the point is that LexiQA is a B2B product mostly for large enterprises. So, it takes time to get into large companies' systems. They must be convinced, and it will take a lot of time just to sign the contract. It takes an average of 6 to 12 months to convert each to a paying customer. However, this is what we decided to do. In the beginning we had a hard time. Then we started getting traction after the first year, and LexiQA started officially in April of 2016, but it unofficially started in January of 2017. We had initial funding of €60,000 of cash and various assets. In October of 2016, we decided to not go for seed funding but to see how it can grow organically. Then in April of 2017, we started to have our first clients, and then we saw the data working, but it takes more time. We can reach more clients, even if it's tied to business development mostly at home. I go to some conferences a couple times a year. I will go to Utah in Salt Lake City at the end of June. This is probably the only conference that I will attend this year. Therefore, we don't have much exposure to the public. The point is that LexiQA has an advantage and a disadvantage. The fact that we work from home and work remotely. Were based in the UK, Athens, and Berlin. In three different places, in three different countries, and three different people. We're all in the same team that started it. But the advantage is that there's no competition for the same thing. So far. So that means that potential clients only have one option.

H: That's a great place to be in.

Y: It's not either LexiQA or something else, it's either you work with LexiQA or you don't get this feature.

H: Yeah, that's a great place to be in. So now that LexiQA has been growing and acquiring new clients since that first client in 2017, how has the idea of success changed for the company?

Y: Right. So, the way that it has changed... so, the way it was before was that we wanted to start to pick up these clients, and then go for seed funding, then expand in turn from 3 to 20. Then we would try to make a 1-year sprint to try to grow the value of the company. Then we decided to go against that. We wanted to decide what works for us as a team. So success now for us is the fact that three and a half years later we're still here, all three of us, we have 600% growth from last year, which is great, and in a way, success for us now is that we keep growing organically without breaking anything. So, saying doubling the size of the team in the next couple of months, we didn't want to ruin anything with structure, culture, or organization. So, the team integrity is so important to us. That is the total success goal.

H: So, looking ahead and looking at the next one, two, three, five years, what important indicators are you looking to measure to see the successful growth of your company?

Y: The first indicator would be the recurring clients. So far, we have 100-percent rate of recurring clients, so they're happy. We could say, well they don't have any other option, but that doesn't really offer us anything. Or maybe if they start to think that they pay too much, and it falls to 80 or 90%. Come on, having more clients means that you have a greater chance of making someone not happy, but you cannot go down to something like 50%. This is the first indicator for us. The other indicator is the number of words which are reviewed on LexiQA. Those also grow exponentially. It's growing every month. The other thing is how many invitations we get to major conferences and attend major conferences. It's a big

market. Translation is a 45-billion-dollar market, but the point is that you have the same players, and you want these players to accept you. It is a close group, and then they continue to invite you to their conferences. That means that you've really been recognized, and you're really doing something well. This is why, for example, I will be in Portugal in mid-June and in Utah in late June. For us this is an indication of something.

H: Ok yeah, so that makes a lot of sense. So, looking at retention rate of clients, the number of words translated, and invitations to these events, could you rank these from most important to least important in your opinion?

Y: In my opinion, first it is definitely the recurring clients. Second is the conferences and invitations. Third is the number of words. Because some people might keep the same clients, but the volumes of those clients might go down. Maybe that isn't always a reliable indicator.

H: Ok I understand. So, with these three indicators in mind, how are you going about planning to succeed in achieving your objectives in the next few years? How do you go about planning for your success?

Y: First, one of our major plans is to expand our number of services. So that means that our team would expand. And our partnerships would increase. So, we would have more partnerships and more people on our team. Because a small team working remotely can be efficient, but it can't scale. Even if we get 10 quite big clients this way, working from home, it's fine. But you cannot go from 10 to 50 in a couple of years by keeping the same structure. So, at the moment, or since the beginning, we've all been kind of interdisciplinary. Well I code, do the business development, do design, speak with investors, and do a lot. A lot of us do a lot of everything at the same time, and this cannot scale. There comes a time where you have to decide if you want to scale or if you want to keep a level size of what you're doing. We want to scale, but we don't want to stay home at the expense of the team integrity or of our own integrity. So, if somebody came and said that they like what we're doing and they want to invest a lot and scale very quickly, I don't think that we would be very interested. It would just change our lives a lot. In the years since LexiQA was conceived, there have been 4 children born and families have started. And lives have started. And now we have more clients than children, but maybe that will change by us having more children and not losing clients. We want to focus on doing things step-by-step, organically. And we want to keep everything healthy. We want to have a healthy company. Because, you know what, we're not that young anymore. We are 39, 39, and 45. We are not 20-year-olds anymore, but now we're less impressed by these big numbers.

H: Yes, that definitely makes sense, and that's a fantastic answer. So just as the final statement on LexiQA, could you put it in just one sentence: how you would define or name the idea of success for LexiQA in the very long term?

Y: So... it's not the easiest question, and it can be too personal at the same time. The way I see things, if I managed to do the two most important things to me at the same time. The two most important things are raising my children being a stay at home parent and working full-time as an entrepreneur at the same time. And I managed to do it in the end, and it doesn't break, then this would be my success. This is what I would consider successful. I don't consider success being to have an exit and earn 2 million euro or something. If I had to do that at the expense of raising my children or something, I would not view it as success.

H: Yes, I definitely understand that.

Y: Yes, it's definitely a personal thing, but it's true.

H: Yes, and in the end it's your life and your company with your partners, so you can see it that way, and that certainly is success. And just before we go is there anything that you would like to add on to your answers?

Y: I think they your questions have covered everything. These were amazing questions.

H: Well thank you very much, I've been working on them. Before we go is there anything that you would like to ask me?

Y: Yes, I would love to know a bit more about your research. Why were you interested in the connection of someone's background? It makes a lot of sense to me, but I would like to know your viewpoint.

H: Yes definitely. So, you've definitely seen the common thread within my questions. So, thank you for paying attention. So, my ultimate research is looking at two different groups of people that are supposedly very different from each other because they grew up in different countries. And these people, theoretically, are supposed to be predisposed to view uncertainty in a different way than others. The theory states that some people, because of what country there from, view uncertainty in a different way than people from other parts of the world. So, my research is taking a group from one side of the scale and comparing it to a group on the other side of the scale and seeing how their views of success in their entrepreneurial ventures might be different. The theory is that, because everyone approaches ambiguity and uncertainty in a different way, and there's no more uncertain career path than entrepreneurship, it's very interesting to see how one group of people define what they ultimately want in their ventures, compared to what a group of people on the other side want. I would be happy to share my findings with you when I'm done.

Y: Yes please. I really like the context and your viewpoint of your research. So please do.

Erik Jälevik, Founder at Fileside, Berlin, Germany, June 7, 2019

H: So, just get started, would you mind telling me how long you've been in Berlin?

E: Yes, I've been here since 2010.

H: Ok, so what originally brought you to Berlin?

E: To be honest, nothing really. I was living in London at the time and was looking for a change, a job, and things like this. It was just the right time, and I thought why not? It was really more of a spur of the moment kind of thing but really ended up working out.

H: So, in comparison to London, what kind of differences do you see with Berlin?

E: Well, it's changing a lot right now, but at the time it was definitely cost of living. London was already crazy at that point, and it's quite tough to find a good place to live and all those kinds of things, and Berlin seemed to offer all these things. It offers a big European city, but much more affordable. Cost of living and all of those kinds of things, and I also like the vibe of this city and the culture. It's a pretty good balance of things for a city.

H: Yeah, I definitely agree, and I'm a huge fan of Berlin. My older brother lives in London, so I've spent a lot of time there. It's very different but also fantastic. Would you mind telling me a bit more about your educational background?

E: Yeah, I've got a degree in computer science; worked in software development for the past few years or so. I did study English for a while there. Buy I had a bachelor's degree in computer science, which is the main thing.

H: And correct me if I'm wrong, but this was in the United Kingdom?

E: Yes.

H: And have you done any type of further education with certificates or workshops or something like that?

E: Well, as part of your everyday work, you have to learn things at work in this industry, but I didn't go to any formal courses or things like that.

H: Ok. So with a degree in computer science, I know that that is a skill that is in such high demand in large companies, so what made you interested in going and founding your own venture and spending your time on it instead of just staying in a large company and working your way up?

E: Good question. I guess I had just been doing that for too many years, and I wanted to do something that was fully mine and I could have complete control over the whole product. When you're working inside an organization, you're either product developer, a designer, or something like that. Unless you are in charge, you're not responsible for the whole thing. It is very tempting for me to have that whole overview. It is mostly that. I want the freedom to be able to make all the decisions that I think are the right ones.

H: I think that that makes a lot of sense.

E: And also, for me, the commercial motive was not the main one, but having some kind of bootstrapped product out there that would bring in some type of income, and me being able to live off of that, that was enticing. The idea of having something out there that would provide you an income would be great.

H: Ok, I understand. I can see how being in a large organization for so long and learning so many things would make you want to use everything that you've learned and build something yourself. So thinking back to, I know that you mentioned that you've been away from Sweden for about 20 years now, but thinking back to where you were growing up and living in Sweden, how do you think where you grew up impacted your professional interests?

E: Good question. I don't know to be honest. Apart from the obvious stuff of growing up in a Western European country with ready access to computers and technology as a kid, that obviously played a part by being able to play around with these things as a kid and gaining some experience with it. That was maybe something. I don't know if that's the difference between Sweden and other Western countries so.

H: Ok, do you remember why you specifically wanted to study computer science?

E: Yes, that was always something I wanted to do. This was not something that I jumped into straight away. When I was in school, I spent time doing a few different things. At the time, music was my big thing and my passion, and I want to do music production and be a DJ and that kind of stuff. Then I quickly realized I needed something that I can make some money from. I did some random jobs and eventually started doing some game testing for a company, and they needed some technology solutions, and I had to go with it and started recording things there. Then I realized this would be a good career, and I realized that to really do things in this industry, I had to have a degree. So, I went to university and

studied computer science. I've been working in the field ever since. It was a bit of trying things out, and then I realized that the computers are what I used to play around with as a kid, why not have that as a reasonable career? That is when I decided to make that my main thing.

H: Ok. So now moving to what you're working on right now, Fileside, would you mind telling me about the venture overall and the product?

E: Yes, so it's mostly scratching an itch of my own. I started to do it on my own when I was working full-time, and it is essentially something that is quite boring because it is just a file manager for desktop computers. This is a pretty old school thing, but the reason that I've been doing it is that, for quite a while, I've been using Mac in Windows, and they're always little annoyances with both of them that I have not quite been able to get along with. For many years I thought about trying to find an alternative, but I've never found one that I've been very happy with. I thought, how hard could it be to make one that would have the features that I like? The main idea is that when you work a lot with files, you end up often accessing a few locations at the same time. For a project, you have files in different locations on your computer, you're used to access them at the same time. So, what my product does is be able to make different layouts and you can call up different presets and then I can pull up different products that I'm interested in. With other programs you have to open up different windows and scroll down, and then you have to go and search for something else, and then you end up having so many windows open, and it's very annoying. At the end of the day, it's just a tool for managing the files on your computer. It's mostly aimed at people that do a lot of work with files on their computers.

H: Ok I understand. I've noticed that with my own personal work, you can get lost in the sea of opening and minimizing files, and you can never quite figure out where something is. So, thinking about, I know that it's pretty early in the lifetime of Fileside, but how would you define your idea of success for this venture?

E: It's pretty easy actually. It is I want to be able to bring in enough money from this that I can live off of it. I don't want it to be a big startup or anything. It is in a niche tool, and if I can make it into income for me, that is really the scope of the project.

H: Ok great. So, I know that in between now and being able to live off of the revenue from it, there are a lot of steps between now and then. So, what kinds of developmental milestones are you looking for?

E: Well, first is make sure it is usable. It is useable already and very close to a kind of first release. I just have to tweak some things and polish it. That is the next milestone, and depending on how much I have to work, I'm currently doing some freelance work at the moment, I would have only a few weeks to finish that, which would be a milestone. I have a lot of decisions to make as far as marketing, and I don't exactly know if I should put out a free version to begin with or maybe a paid version then the free version, so there are some decisions to be made. Once that is out, I must switch to actually getting the word out in various kinds of marketing, so then others become aware of it. Then it will be incremental updates because I have a lot of different things that beta users have requested that I will add and that I know would be useful, so I've planned to release those updates for those.

H: Ok. So in the past you've mentioned that you were interested in doing something with music and then aired on the safer side of doing something with computer science because that's what the market was, and now you're balancing the idea of staying with your current employer or going full time on Fileside?

E: No, I've actually left my employer, and I'm working on Fileside all of the time.

H: Ok great. So how did you make that decision to work on Fileside full-time?

E: So, I basically quit my job that I had for four and a half years at the end of last year, and I had some savings and knew that I can take some months off, and when I need money, I will just do some freelancing. I had some months where I could dedicate all of my time to this, but now I'm about to start a freelance project next week, and I will have to juggle that a bit. I think that that is a pretty good setup for someone in my situation. I can do just a little bit of freelancing then take some time off, and then I can just do it again. That seems to be really a good trade-off.

H: I agree. And with your specific set of skills, that gives you the ability to do that when a lot of people without your skills may not be able to. So, in between making that decision to work on Fileside full-time and now, has your view of success for the venture changed over time, or have your expectations changed?

E: I don't know if my view of success has changed, but I've learned more in the beta process. How viable this space is and if anyone even cares about it. You should do this at the front. I thought that this was some interesting feedback, and I still need to build some features. But I think that my expectation... I don't have very high expectations, to put it that way; to make a lot of money from it. I have to price it very low because people are used to these things being free. Software is very hard to sell to consumers in this sense. Maybe my expectations have gone down a little bit in this sense. Now I see myself as a freelancer and also having this product.

H: Ok, so do you think that that change of expectations just came with market research or speaking with beta testers, or how exactly did you come to that conclusion?

E: Yeah, it came from discussions I had with the beta testing group, who are all people that responded to saying that they will be interested in helping me with it. These are all people that I know, maybe previous colleagues, so I don't know how much I can trust what they say, but from that I get the impression that they think that it's a good tool, but they do not think that it is 100-percent needed for them. Then, maybe I think that this might just be my own problem, and no one else cares about it. So mostly comes from this feedback.

H: Ok, that makes sense. This is actually my last question; you've been so helpful thank you so much. I also know that it's Friday afternoon, so I'll let you go home. So, in between now and the ideal future where you will be getting enough revenue from Fileside to where that is what you're working on the whole time and you can achieve that independence, what steps are you going to take him between now and then to reach that goal?

E: So up until now, the focus is really just been making sure that the features are right for the first version. Then I will switch to various forms of marketing. This is an area where I am more or less clueless. I have always worked in making things and designing software, so the business side of things and marketing is not really something I know about. I've started to pick up a few things, and now I'm looking into this indie hacker's community. That is what made me feel good going to this in the first place. What made me hold back in the beginning was the idea that I didn't know anything about marketing. I never thought of myself as an entrepreneur, because I was a maker. This indie hacker's community is a lot of people in the same situation, so those who are product people and have skills in making something, but then they just do it as a side project in something that's small in scope and then just tried to launch in the small-scale and get some type of input from it. I read so many stories of people who had done this with various forms of success, by success it would just be that you are getting some form of monthly income from that. There's a variety of different levels. Reading a few of these stories made me think that I should try something like this. It really makes sense. From there, I thought about a few ideas of some simple marketing techniques that I can do. That will be my Focus after 1.0. Maybe I will contact people who write reviews and articles

or whatever, or maybe I will write some articles and blogs myself. I will see what works. Then maybe I will get some traction, but I don't know. Much further than that I don't have a plan to be honest.

H: I definitely understand. That is such a hard question because I know you're so focused on development right now.

E: Yes, and I know because I've read all of the books and all the very basic advice. They say that you should start selling before you even have a product, but I just don't know about it.

H: That's very true. It's much easier to write it in a book than actually do it in real life. Before we go, is there anything that you would like to add to your answers to make sure that I know about you or your venture?

E: Not that I can think of. But I would like to ask a question about what you were working on and what you need these answers for.

H: Of course. I am currently working on my interdisciplinary master's, and it is at the intersection of business, globalization, and applied management. For my thesis, I'm looking at how one's culture can impact someone's view of success in their entrepreneurial venture. I know that you haven't been in Sweden for a long time, but I'm also looking at the United Kingdom, so that worked out nicely, but there is a theory that says where you're from and where you grew up that you view certain circumstances in a way that differs from those who come from different cultures. There's no more uncertain career path than that of entrepreneurship. Therefore, I'm looking at how those from cultures of countries on one extreme of the scale compared to those on the other side of the scale; how their views of success in their startups may differ. In the end, I will be typing up a two-page summary about my findings, and I would be happy to share with you?

E: Or yes definitely. I would be happy to read it.

H: It's been very interesting so far, and I should be done with interviews in the next week, and then I can start looking at some findings.

E: This sounds wonderful. May I ask about your background as well? You have a German name, and you speak with an American accent.

H: Yes, of course. I have a hilariously German name, as I have my grandfather's name, and he is from Germany. However, I am from the U.S., but I've spent a lot of time in Germany, and I still have family here, and now I'm working on my master's here. What got me interested in entrepreneurship was that I co-founded a travel technology startup in the U.S., so I've always been interested in startups. After I graduate, I will be working in management consulting in the U.S., so I thought that this specific project was a nice mix of all of my interests. It's been great so far, and I would be happy to share my findings with you in the future. Also, you mentioned on LinkedIn that you would like me to take a look at the product, and I would be happy to do that.

E: Yes, that would be perfect. Just getting it in front of people for maybe half an hour is so helpful. You can do exercises just about what you're seeing and how it can be helpful. If you would be available for that, that would be so helpful.

H: Of course. After we hang up, I'll just sent you my email address, and I'm always happy to help you. I know that in the startup world, it's so helpful to just get another set of eyes to look at a product.



E: Yes, of course. I should do this with a lot of people because it's so helpful. When are you going back?

H: I'll be in Berlin for the next three weeks, and I will be travelling in July, but then I will be back in the U.S. If I can ever be of help, please do not hesitate to send me a message. Thank you again for taking the time, and please go out and enjoy a beautiful weekend.

E: Yes, I will. It is carnival this weekend, so it should be a really great time. Thank you again. Bye.

Dinarte Jesus, Co-Founder of athlead, Berlin, Germany, June 3, 2019

H: So just to get started, how long have you been in Berlin?

D: 4 years. 26th of May, I was coming four years ago.

H: So, what originally brought you to Berlin?

D: It was this startup system. So, I'm from a really small town. It is an island in Portugal that is north of the Canaries. On this island you didn't have a lot of innovation, and there was no startup system. I was always passionate about the U.S., because I grew up looking at Facebook. I wanted to go to a place where I could have this kind of mindset in this kind of surrounding. It's about the mindset. There I just couldn't have it. London was always my goal because back then it was a common place. I did not have to learn a new language, and I did not know German. It was really a coincidence that I ended up here. I was doing design and coding, and I was working with someone who was living here. They invited me over, and that is how I ended up in Berlin.

H: OK cool. So, did you always live in the same city growing up, or did you grow away for university?

D: Know what, I stayed there. So, there they have the university. It is the University of Madeira. I had the idea of computer science, so I was staying there.

H: Would you mind telling me more about your educational background?

D: Sure. So, there was computer science, and fields inside of computer science like engineering. I want to do more like the interactive design. I got a bachelor's degree in interactive design, you'll also learn the coding side, but you'll also learn about how our user interacts with the product. Before that I did a technical school. There are normal schools that you can go before university it in Portugal, and there are these college technicals. It is like a university where you learn a profession. I was in media technician, that is what I was before university. Then I applied and went to the university as well to add more value. There you can study and focus, and then you can just have a job. That is where I learned how to code, but I went to the university because I always wanted to do something on my own, and I was passionate about problems with technology. I was thinking about how powerful technology is and how quickly something can be used by millions of people. I wanted to code this, but I was bad at designing, so I thought that I would go through this degree and learn how to design to start to put things together.

H: Ok. From my perspective, with your education you had all these skills that are in such high demand, but what made you more interested in entrepreneurship than going to work for a large company?

D: Yeah exactly. I keep receiving proposals on LinkedIn every day. That is kind of nice. sometimes I don't even have the skill, but they think I'm a developer so I can figure it out. For me, it's about using technology for good. Technology is a god-like power in our society. I saw it being used by people just to get money, but I always liked the social aspect more. I always wanted to solve problems. I was working

for a company that made a VPN. Why a VPN? Because people always have the right to privacy. The next company I was working was also related to helping people change careers, not just one career to tech, but I was helping, but it did not take off. Then I ended up working for a company called Edu, and they let you take your doctor degree online. The knowledge itself comes online, and they partner with hospitals to let you go and practice there. This can have a huge impact when looking at countries in Asia and bringing the technology there. I was always looking at how we can use this power to help people instead of just selling them things that they don't need to make money. I think that the company that I'm now founding is like this. That is what I think many people get wrong on the social foundations. Many people don't treat foundations like a company, so they don't do sales and marketing. That is a big problem; you have to treat a foundation like a company because you will have competition from other companies. It may not be a good competition, but you will have competition for users and donors. My company, I want to help people, and I want to be there for the people.

H: That's great. So, thinking back on growing up, and not exactly coming from a huge hub of startups, what made you interested in entrepreneurship?

D: I've always followed the influence from the U.S., like Bill Gates and Steve Jobs. I built my first computer when I was 12 or 13, and I was listening to these icons, it was fascinating. The way that they were reaching thousands of people at such a fast scale, was always impressive to me.

H: And is there a strong culture and sense of entrepreneurship where you grew up? Or maybe did you have family connections to entrepreneurship?

D: No, no. I was the one. Since a young age, I felt... well my uncles all live in different countries and have their own businesses. My uncle in Venezuela, it is complicated, but he has been living there for many years and has a restaurant. Then I have another uncle who lives in Australia, and he has a business in Australia. So, I grew up listening to the kind of freedom that they have, and they would come to visit us, and my parents would go and travel, but they would not be able to pay for these expensive trips. They were so humble but...looking at my uncles who have so much freedom. Personal and financial freedom. Together with technology and stuff it started to make sense.

H: So now thinking about what you are working on today, athlead, Would you mind briefly explaining athlead and how it works?

D: Of course. So, what comes from a problem that I had as a young football player. I played for around 8 years, in all of my youth years, I would get home super late because of the trainings, and the challenge that I had was that I wanted to go pro. It was so complicated. It was so hard to get to a better club. I lived on an island, so there are not so many good clubs there, so you had to go to the mainland. I didn't have any contacts there, and it was hard for me to get in contact with the clubs. That is what made me kind of give up. The world of using agents was full of scams. I had two or three teammates who both got scammed for 2 or €3,000 each. They would promise to take you to a club, and that never happened. That is why I do not want to do that. Then I decided to go to university, so I put the dream of being a player aside. Then being in Berlin, in the startup world, I wanted to start something on my own. I was a developer and working at an agency, but I wanted to do something on my own. I knew that startups were hard. If you don't follow something that you are passionate about, then it is impossible. I thought, what can I do? I thought back to this old problem that I had as a player, and I was exploring this field. That is how I came up with the idea of athlead. I spent about 2 years trying to understand the market, and last year I spent building the product and focusing. So, what do we do? We help players market themselves to clubs. They can create a profile, and there are a lot of social networks and sports, but there is no way to validate this data. So, we have scouts, and the scouts normally work for clubs. They go and check the players, but it turns out that 80% of them are freelancers. We are incentivizing those people to be on our

platform, check those players, and sell that information to the clubs. They get a commission for their work, and we get a commission for our work. Then players get more credibility for their skills, and clubs can make them offers. Players then have the freedom to choose where they want to go.

H: That's a great idea. It is also a very nice story, and it makes a lot of sense. Growing up in the U.S., I always liked European football, and I played for a long time, but there are not very many ways forward in the U.S. I think it is a similar problem.

D: Yes, and there are so many things online that you cannot decide what is real and what is not. And maybe a player in the U.S. does not have the need for a high salary, so maybe they could go to Europe and play for a small team in Portugal because there is a cup and all of the clubs get to play in this cup. They do not have the salary power, but maybe that is not a problem because they only need visibility. The other way around is that high powered clubs who want good players, but they do not have the budget, and players in the second or third divisions can go to the U.S. They do not have the skills for the position at a high-level club in Europe, but they can go to the U.S. to show their potential.

H: Yes, that is very true. So, where you are right now, for athlead, what would success be? When would you feel successful?

D: At the moment, I want to see players start to take ownership of their careers, and I want to see clubs offering these players. I want to see transfers happening. That is also something that we're working very hard for, we want to change the name of transferring to recruiting. We don't want it to be buying and selling of players because we want to avoid treating people like objects. We are trying to move the communication to more of recruiting, and we want to make football more like other jobs. This is a success, with some things moving. Another success would be entering the African market. First, I was testing the market, and I was really shocked to see how many players in the African market are trying to enter Europe. If you can help that, and it is hard because you do not have a way to trust people, and I can have 80 people or more writing me with their stories, but if you do not verify, then you can lose your credibility with clubs. With that, then we would not be able to help other people in the future. I think being able to get over that would be a big success for us.

H: I understand. I think that that also makes a lot of sense, and you'll see it with a lot of different types of startups who were trying to go to the African market. The way that the continent has developed, they have skipped other developmental stages that Europe and the U.S. have gone through, so the landscape today is different. You can look at mobile banking for example. I think that this is a similar problem because there is not a strong club network there. You still have the talent and the fans, but not the infrastructure. That is interesting. So maybe every 3, 6, 9 months when you start to look back on your idea of success, what important indicators do you look at to make sure that you are on track?

D: That is hard because there are weeks that feel like months. I have a great team, and two other co-founders have great experience. One went to university with me, and one used to be a scout. We work together, and we look back to see now we have this and now we have that, but it is hard. That is what is hard about startups because you have to look back and see how far you've come, but it's all about the future. First, you look in the preseed round, and now we're looking at the seed round, and that is always hard when raising money. Every couple months we tried to look back and see how many players used to have, and we look to see how many clubs we had. However, we're looking to see how much it is being used. We want to have scouts who are constantly talking with these players and these clubs, and we have to have this feedback. The feedback is most important because some people say thank you so much for your time and thank you so much for building something like this. We have a Slack channel where we show this kind of praise. Sometimes we go and look back and it feels good.

H: So, you have the number of players you were working with, the number of clubs, the reports, and the feedback.

D: Yes, will they know the number, so we have all the number of players, the number of clubs, and the number of reports. One in the future that we will keep more in mind of is the feedback that we will be receiving.

H: So, of all of those indicators, could you rank those in order of importance?

D: The feedback is definitely the most important right now. Numbers are good, but the way that the market is looking at your product and how you it sees it, that is the most important thing. Even if you have less numbers, if you were solving a problem, then that is what you want to hear. Also, that is a mistake that I see in so many startups. They're always worried about chasing and finding users that they never focus on actually solving the problems. Just two weeks ago, I got a call at midnight in Portugal from a club, and they said that by using our tool for only 2 days, and it is helping them. That is the kind of feedback that you want to get from players and clubs. In the end, if you don't have clubs, then we can't help players. Having that kind of feedback is what you want, and you have to make sure that you're listening to what they say. We also want to look at other clubs and see if they think the same. You do not want to make a product that is tailored just to one person or one club. Plus, they need the players because without players there are no clubs. And it is clear that players want better clubs, so if you build it, they will use it. The feedback, in the club's feedback importantly, is vital to us.

H: I feel like players, especially young players, are more willing to try new things, so getting those clubs involved are so important. So, my last question is, from where you are now and where you want to be in the future, how do you plan on achieving this success? What do you plan on doing in the future to achieve the targets in the goals that you've said?

D: Well, we have the right team now, but it has been a bumpy road. We've had to let go of some people, and we've had to lose two people to get one right one. Now that we have this team, we want to find the right people to be able to move forward. Building a sustainable product and a sustainable company, we have to have the right people to be able to make that happen. Right now, we're looking to reach those players who will have more success, and that will help us with investors as well. That is where it gets tricky. Investors want to have the returns, which is normal in business, but we want to make sure that these people do not want to compromise our mission just to get their returns. That is why the vision of the company is so important.

H: Yes, that is so important. I co-founded a travel technology startup in the U.S., but that was a big problem that we had. There so many investors in the U.S., but so many of them do not have the same values and mission is you.

D: Yes, we are aware of it, but if we can make it happen, that is another story.

H: Well, that is all of my questions, and you made it so easy because you gave me so much information. However, is there anything that you would like to add to your questions or to make sure that I know?

D: No. But if anything comes up feel free to send me a message and come back to me. I think coming from the university's side, it is important for us to push our universities to really show them that it is good what they teach, but they must be updated. We must also push back and show them how to change to be relevant today. Hopefully when I have more time, I want to be able to come back to events and help with this.

H: That is a great idea.

D: They get lost in themselves and in papers.

H: Definitely. With the way that technology is changing, we study things that happened 30 years ago, and they're already old. I'm studying an interdisciplinary master's, which also studies a lot of entrepreneurs, but these aren't exactly startups by what we would say startups are today. They are more traditional businesses. I definitely agree. Do you have any questions for me before I go?

D: No. Please let me know if there is anything after this or a follow-up.

H: Of course. I am writing my whole thesis soon, but I know that you do not want to read all of that. In the end I will be making a two-page summary, and I would be happy to send it to you if you would be interested?

D: Yes definitely. I would love to see it.

Jake Jones, Co-Founder at LegalOS, Berlin, Germany, June 12, 2019

H: So how long have you been in Berlin?

J: Two and a half years.

H: Great. So, what originally brought to the City?

J: So, I moved to start LegalOS. It was for the company, to kick it off. My co-founders are both German, hence why I came to Germany.

H: Ok, I understand. And where were you living before?

J: I was working in London as a management consultant with Accenture.

H: Oh, that's great. I have a few friends who work with Accenture in Dublin, and then I also have a few friends who work with Accenture in Dallas and Atlanta. Great firm, and after I'm done with my masters I'll be starting with Deloitte in the US.

J: That's great. What track are you on with Deloitte?

H: It's organizational change. It's very pure-play management. It should be interesting. After many years of school, I'll be very happy to go into the workforce in Atlanta. Now, would you mind telling me more about your educational background?

J: So, I studied English literature in undergrad, and I actually did English and American Literature in undergrad. I did a year in America during that time. I did my master's in English lit at University College of London. Also, I took a long time to finish my undergrad because I began with physics initially and discovered that I would get better grades and enjoy myself much more if I did something that I'm good at.

H: Ok, great. I know that leading into entrepreneurship and a profession like management consulting, you don't have to study one thing specifically, but in my mind, English literature doesn't exactly feed into something like that. So, what made you interested in entrepreneurship?

J: Yes, there are a few elements to that question. What made me interested in entrepreneurship was tech in general and my family. With tech, from a very young age I was exposed to tech in computers and software and even an element of coding with my dad. My dad was an electronics engineer, and I was computer literate a long time before anyone else. I was computer literate when I was 3 or 4 years old. I was touch typing when I was 4 or 5. My dad also shared a business with my mum, so that always seemed like something that I would be doing because it was the obvious kind of thing that I saw my parents doing so I thought that I could also do it. The point to English literature was that I wanted to get to a point where I was achieving or learning something about excellence. I want to be doing something that is tapping into what I was really good at. And I want to do something that was very above and beyond what I was originally able to do. My differentiator in education was that I was always very good at literature. I read a lot. I agree that there is not a 1-1 transfer, but a lot of the soft skills that you need in business, you are almost made fun of in English literature, like the boldness and directness and elements of ego, those things are kind of shunned in the English literature circles. My thing was always being into the arts and the sciences. This was kind of a mix of logical problem solving and rational thinking, and that comes through in literature. In that way, I think that management consultancy and design, which is also my background, combined with English literature, that is a more holistic approach to entrepreneurship.

H: That's a very interesting take on it. In my opinion, the American system of schooling tries to foster a similar type of holistic learning. If you are learning these fundamental skills and doing something that interests you and helps you grow, then your profession does not have to be a one-to-one feeder. So, thinking outside of just your family, which had a clear effect on your entrepreneurial interests, was there a larger culture of entrepreneurship where you grew up?

J: So, I grew up in a town north of London called Bedford, where there was no sense of entrepreneurship at all. So, most of the parents of my friends were all doctors and lawyers and consultants, investors, so no. The short answer is no.

H: Ok. So, would you mind briefly explaining LegalOS for me?

J: Yes, so we're building the first coded-based library of legal content within contract law. So, what we have on the market at the moment, which is being used by our customers, is a contract automation tool. They put information in, even for complex contracts, and it creates a contract for them which is machine readable. It can be used in HR or you can add it to your CRM, and it is machine readable, so all the variables can be abstracted by the system. Normally, if you were creating a contract, you'd have to type in all the variables and change everything manually. For example, if someone takes 5 days of holiday, the contract doesn't change, so you have to go in and physically change it. LegalOS makes it very easy and quick to change, which makes a contract more dynamic. We have a lot of other aspects that we provide on top of this service, but that is the main idea that we raised money on. The underlying technology is really what we raised money on and what we're all about, and that's the library of content. The caliber of employment law and sales that we will have, we will cover 80% of the German market in the next couple of years.

H: Ok, I was going to ask, is it only for German-based law the moment, or is it for European law, or what's the geographical limit?

J: So, the tech that we are building is meant to be jurisdiction independent. It is about how you map the way the law is structured. We combined that infrastructure; it's a new legal ontology. It combines, for example a micro-agreement, that exists in any country. 80% of the work, which is the hard work, is jurisdiction independent. That is the tech, and that has to have a representation of it. That has to have a contract that can be machine readable and can stand up in a court of law. That's the 20% icing on the cake. We go region by region, and it takes about 2 years to get a region done. But now we're growing, so

we want to do each region within six months. Now looking at Australia, the UK, America; we're focusing on languages to keep it more straightforward for end products as well.

H: I love that idea. It's fantastic. So, establishing this company in Berlin, have you run into any regulatory or legal hurdles that you've had to overcome?

J: So, we've not run into any regulatory or legal hurdles specific to what we're doing. No one says we can't do it because law works this way, and part of that is because we have a very strong legal network here, so we know the regulations and how to play by the rules. In terms of founding a business in Germany, we have multiple different issues such as incorporation, multiple funding rounds, setting up the corporation, setting up the shareholder agreement, and that's a lot of work. That can detract from a lot of the day today things that we need to be doing.

H: Ok, I understand. Many of the entrepreneurs I've spoken to have run into some more problems, which I find interesting here.

J: I think for us the main thing was finding someone in the team who had a natural inclination to do that kind of work because there is a lot of paperwork. Also, we had to have clear responsibilities to know what we're doing. For example, I'm doing the operations work, and my co-founders are working on other aspects of the business. That means that the person doing that specific aspect of the business has the knowledge and time and experience to be able to do something like that. They are also German, so that gives them another level of advantage in working on that kind of thing.

H: Great. So very quickly, how long has LegalOS been around since initial creation of the company?

J: So, that's two and a half years. The start of 2017, we had a movement towards doing something with law. We did not know exactly what that was going to be, and we did not know until about midway through the year, then we raise our first amount of funding, and that was a scholarship. It was towards the end of the year the we actually founded it as a GmbH.

H: Ok. So, at this point of the company, how would you define success for the company?

J: That's funny that you asked that. As a management consultant, you have to ask that of your clients. You have to ask what would success be for this project? So, I also always ask myself that question with this product. For me, it would be to have validation with this product by raising a seed round, and we did that a week ago. We actually notarized our shareholders agreement last week, so now I'm reassessing what success is for the next 18 months to 2 years. It's no longer about raising more money, because raising the money was not just for the sake of raising the money, it was for the validation that I could do this. The next idea of success would be to actually get the product out, and that it would have the measurable impact that I wanted to have. That and I want to make law more computable, but also have more measurable impact like saving time, and, and, and. So, now it's more impact-based.

H: Ok. So, raising the large round of funding is very difficult, but it is very easy to measure. Those impact goals, by nature, are much harder to measure. So, what important indicators are you looking to measure to ensure that you are on track to success?

J: So, the way that we have structured the work that we do is that we're outcome-oriented instead of output-oriented. We do not look at milestones like finishing the product or releasing a feature. We look at milestones like reducing the time spent on contract creation by 90%. We have a lot of KPI's that we're going to be reassessing soon, but they represent milestones for the product. For the short-term, our aim is to have just a few customers, and we currently have 4-6, but they are huge customers. We want to have

massive customers, and we can work within those customers to find product-market fit. We want to have 4 customers with hundreds of users within a practice and that they're spending time and money on the software. That is our short to mid-term goal. By the end of the year, we want to see adoption around 5 to 10 times. That means, so we will have 5 to 10 times more users than we currently have today. A more mid-term goal is to save around 90% on the time that it takes to create a contract. That is from the time that they spend right now on our software, not on someone who does not have the software. The final measurable output, which is what our investors are expecting, which we have to keep in mind, we want to have monthly recurring revenue of €100,000 and 80% of German law covered. Those are the high-level objectives, and those can be broken down into smaller KPI's like engagement, time saved, basic financials, coverage.

H: Ok, so looking at those specific indicators, could you loosely rank them on importance to you?

J: Yeah. So, to me, as the product lead, adoption then saving people time are number one. Adoption is number one because it doesn't matter how much time you're saving people if no one is using the product. Adoption within existing customers. Number two would be saving people time. I see that as representative as whatever value we're trying to add to people's operations. Those are one of the many different measurable impacts that we can have on people. The third thing would be the coverage of content. That is an output, for sure, not an outcome. It's a bit of a gamble, but we can do it. If we're able to do it, there's no one competing with us in that space, and that would be amazing. That would be a massive success story for me. Lastly would be monthly recurring revenue.

H: Ok, so I like the approach of having goals, especially the way that you've broken it out here, but in the very long term to you, what would be the ultimate goal? When you set out to found this venture, what did you want the very end goal to be?

J: So, when we set out to start LegalOS, it was always about access to law. We wanted to make it a lot more accessible to everyone, even people who are not lawyers. It's less of a charitable mission, but it was more about the idea that law is broken. Law is s\*\*\*. That was always the Vision, and that is obviously being refined a little bit now, so it's about the computability of law. If there is something tangible that you can see. We want the focus to be our computable content.

H: Ok, great. My final question is, and I really appreciate your time, you've been so helpful, in between now and your ultimate goal of facilitating the way legal transactions work, in my opinion, it almost comes across as democratization of legal usage, how do you actually go about your planning and goal-setting to reach that?

J: They're a bunch of ways. They're traditional ways like how we break that mission down into a more short-term mission, and then we break the mission down into milestones, and milestones down more. The approach is always a fractal approach, and that comes from writing. What I spent a lot of time on in university was writing a lot of short stories. The way that you develop an arc is: what is happening in the story, what is the premise of the story, break that down into the steps of that being accomplished, and you continue to break that down into different steps. You have to have the vision that you know is your guiding star, then you know what are the three steps to get there, but you don't have to know the second and third right now, you just have to know the first. The first is the mission. How do we achieve the mission, what are three or four steps to reach there. You keep doing that until it can be measured. The mission can really be measured right now, and then we would start breaking it down into quarterly plans that should be outcomes. For product-focused companies, it should really have a focus on outcomes instead of outputs, as anyone can just make something.



H: Definitely. It's very important to focus on those outcomes, as if no one is using it. Yeah, you just made a very expensive toy. You've been fantastic, and before we go, do you have anything that you would like to add to your answers, or do you have any questions for me?

J: I'm interested in your project.

H: Yep. This is my master's thesis for a two-year program organized by the University of Glasgow, and it is at the intersection of globalization, management, and theoretical economics. It has been very interesting so far, and I am looking at the way the culture of founders affects success targets in startups. There's a management theory essentially saying where you're from and grow up, each person is endowed with a culturally-embedded way of seeing the world. One thing that viewpoint affects is how we see uncertainty and ambiguity. My thesis is that groups of founders from the 2 most extreme groups on this index, that they would see their ideas of success of their startups in different ways. Theoretically they are predisposed to view uncertainty in different ways. There's no more uncertain career path to take than entrepreneurship. Luckily, there are plenty of European countries that fell into those groups, so I've gotten a chance to speak with a lot of very interesting people here in Berlin. If you're interested, I would love to share my two-page synopsis with you in the end?

J: Yes, I'm interested.

H: Great. I will share it with you. Also, I think that LegalOS is very interesting, and in my previous experience founding a travel tech company in the U.S., I know that legal contracts are very daunting. So, I'm really excited to see where you go from here. I wish you nothing but success.

J: Thank you very much. It was enjoyable, and it's always great to reiterate and reaffirm what we're working on and kind of think out loud. I'm looking forward to chatting again soon.

Andrzej Karel, Founder at TAK Innovation, Berlin, Germany, June 5, 2019

H: So, how long have you been living in Berlin?

A: On and off since 2013, if I'm not mistaken, it is with a year or two of breaks.

H: Ok great, so what keeps bringing you back?

A: Normally it is for work, but now I'm settled here and have a family. Basically, I set up my company in a way where it is based in Germany, so I work both here and in Poland.

H: That's nice. Especially because they're so close to each other. Would you mind telling me more about your educational background?

A: Sure, I have studied in Poland management, I got a master's in it at the University of Economics. That was in management and marketing. Then I moved here, and I started studying at a school in Potsdam, so that's it I've also studied in an institute. These are the things. I kept working in that direction.

H: Ok great. So, after studying and studying more for a master's, what made you interested in entrepreneurship as opposed to going and working in a larger company?

A: So, I had kind of worked or collaborated with large companies, but I was always a freelancer. In this, I could compromise between my own freedom and working with larger clients.

H: Yeah, I feel like that's always the balance and trade off people are trying to make.

A: Exactly.

H: So, where you grew up in Poland, would you say that there is a strong culture of entrepreneurship?

A: That is interesting. I would say the Poland is quite entrepreneurial as a society. We're quite good at making things happen and like to find opportunities, so I think the Polish people are faster to adopt than Germans when it comes to technology and these kinds of things. So, I was always looking to do something on the business side, but also the more creative side.

H: Ok. And how do you think where you grew up specifically impacted that interest, or do you think that it impacted it at all?

A: I don't know. If I would be from a different city would it be different? I don't think so. Maybe if I did not live in the Warsaw area but in a smaller city, maybe there will be a difference, but yeah.

H: I always find that interesting to ask because most people don't think about it. Would you mind briefly explaining your current entrepreneurial venture?

A: Yeah, I have a company called TAK Innovation. It is more of a network of researchers and consultants who usually help with user research and marketing, but mostly with user research with websites and things like that. We are helping clients to understand where they are and what they should focus on. That is one part, but we also do workshops and organizing these kinds of events.

H: Ok. So, what inspired you to start a company like this?

A: I was always working as a freelancer and at some point realized to get certain clients and certain results, I need a bigger back office. It is not like we're just a few people sitting in the same room, but yeah.

H: Ok, I understand. So, in your mind, what would success with TAK be to you? What would success in your mind be?

A: I think it would be setting up the agency in a way that it is possible for a few employees, but less than 10 to say, to be able to have a steady income, of products and clients, and be able to impact these products and clients. Basically, it is the amount of flow between the amount of clients and the amount of work and the amount of money that you can make.

H: Ok, so to you it seems like it is both the impact that you are having, but also the stability of the people working in the company. Is that correct?

A: Yes exactly.

H: Ok, so in between now and a certain point in the future where you have reached this success with TAK, maybe you continue running it or leave or something like that, what important indicators are you going to be looking to measure to ensure that you are on track to that success?

A: I think that it is that amount of cushion that you have. For example, small agencies it is the amount of cash flow that they have. I know some companies who are just starting, and they have one or two clients that are not paying on time, and then it gets very tight. You have to invest in your own team and still be

stable. The KPIs would basically be that. The amount of people and the amount of money that we have. How can we tweak it and how can we continue to move on.

H: OK, that is definitely important. I know how tough it can be as a smaller company that works very closely with one or two clients, then late payments can be very very hard. So, looking ahead, those KPI's and that kind of goal-setting, is that something that you typically measure frequently? How do you personally go about setting those goals and moving towards that success?

A: I don't think that I have such a strict way of looking at it. I have not created one sheet or something. At the moment, it goes back to finding the good clients. For example, one measurement for me is how much time we have to put into winning over a new client as compared to working with them. There is a request coming in, and I have to assess is it worth investing maybe two weeks of time to maybe get a client or maybe not. I'm not sure if I'm saying it correctly.

H: No problem. So when you were thinking about that balance between the time spent and the possibility of getting a new client, are you thinking about your time in measuring work-life balance, or are you looking about time as in you could be using that time to make more money doing something else?

A: Ok. Sure, that is always going back and forth of my head, is this the right business, will it be easier to start a different project, or maybe I should get employed? So that has been a challenge for me in the last few years due to the extended family that I have now in becoming a dad. Yeah, it is always a bit of one thing.

H: Ok, so what keeps bringing you back to being an entrepreneur and running your own business when you have to make that hard decision?

A: I think that because I see that there are lot of opportunities, and I see other people and companies growing and see their actions, and I see the basic market growing in that direction, I know that it is a good moment to invest in this kind of design and this kind of IT design and these things. Yeah. The opportunity is out there basically.

H: Ok, and that is a very important reason to be pursuing your own company. I definitely agree. So, thinking back to the very beginning of TAK and where you are now, how has the idea of success changed?

A: One thing that pops into my head, I don't know if this is the right answer, I know a quote that people were saying that people over estimate how much they can do in one year, but they underestimate how much they can do in 10 years. So now I'm looking more into long-term. Maybe I was too optimistic in the beginning, but in the long run I see that this makes sense.

H: And what were the reasons for you changing from more short-term to long-term orientation or mindset?

A: It is a deduction process. I think if I should continue this, then I have to look at it from the perspective of others in my own family as well. How do we plan together as a team? Which way do we go?

H: I would definitely say that the family is the most important team, so I like how you framed that. And my last question is, so in between now and that point in the future with TAK where you have a nice balance of work and a certain type of stability with the team, how are you planning to achieve the success that you are going after?

A: One thing is more specialization. We need to do fewer things, but we need to do them better. We need to offer less variety, and we have to reorganize our operations to assign people to do this or that instead of everything.

H: I think that's a great direction. Well you have been fantastic, and I want to be conscious of your time, so those are all my questions. Is there anything that you would like to add or make sure that I know about you or your company? Or do you have any questions for me?

A: Maybe you should tell me again about your thesis?

H: Definitely, so my master's thesis is about how entrepreneurs view success in their entrepreneurial ventures. There is a management theory that based on where you're from and where you grew up you view uncertainty in a unique way, and that affects business decisions. We all view uncertainty and ambiguity in our lives in different ways. So, I'm looking at how two groups of people from very different backgrounds, based on this scale, view success in their startups. It has been very interesting so far, and I've been very lucky because one country to measure is Poland, and there so many Polish entrepreneurs in Berlin. If you would like, when I'm done, I'll be creating a brief one- or two-page summary, and I would be happy to share with you.

A: Yes, that would be great. I would want you to know that from the culture perspective, I think the difference between the Polish approach in the German approach, like the Poles are like the Latinos of Eastern Europe. We are very more hands-on than the German sometimes, and my responses were about the stability of the company because that is my learning, and this is also about the time of my life. Maybe if you asked me in a different time of my life, I would have different answers.

H: That definitely makes sense. It has been very interesting so far, and I've gotten a chance to speak with many Polish entrepreneurs, but once I'm able to draw my findings, I'm looking forward to sharing the results with you.

A: Perfect.

H: Well, thank you again for taking the time, and I'll speak with you again soon.

Maciej "Matti" Kawecki, Partner at GetYourCoder, Berlin, Germany, May 29, 2019

H: So, are you ready to get started?

M: Yes.

H: Just to begin, how long have you been in Berlin?

M: This October will be 5 years already.

H: And what do you think of Berlin? How's it changed since you've gotten here?

M: The first time I was in Berlin it was 1999. So, it was a huge construction site. And it's still a construction site, but much more developed. It's a very nice place to live. From my perspective, it's very not German. I used to study in East Saxony where the Brown party won everything recently, and then I was living in Leipzig, which is probably the best city in Saxony, but then we moved from Saxony to Berlin. As I work in mainly an international setting, Berlin is a very nice place to work. I was asking my family if they would like to move to Sweden, but they don't want to. My girlfriend is from Saxony, and

she studied in Poland, and I'm from Poland and studied in Saxony, so everything is similar but different. Also, it's quite easy because we don't have to fly here.

H: So, you said you studied in Saxony, would you mind telling me more about your educational background?

M: I studied electrical engineering in Zittau. Then I was also studying operations and economics in Breslau. Currently I'm a master of disaster, but technically a Master of Engineering. I was thinking about maybe making my PhD, but it doesn't sound so attractive financially.

H: So, by studying electrical engineering and having a master's, what made you interested in entrepreneurship? This is opposed to working in a large conglomerate or organization.

M: I used to work for Siemens. I started my first company before making my bachelors because my father was running a company. He was designing automation systems, and he just needed someone to drive and test a system. So, then it started to be quite a large amount of pocket money, so I thought why not just make a business and make it official. It started, and then I was doing it in between my studies all the time. I was working as a CAP drawer, but I used to work for Siemens, but it was quite boring. So, I left. My father in the 1990s had the choice to either run his company or go and make the lights in a theatre. And then he said, "ok I will design automation systems," and it skyrocketed. If he had told my family, "next week we're going to the moon," then we would start packing. Then he burnt out when he was 50, and then he just sat for the next 20 years on it. Ups and downs.

H: And his company was based in Poland?

M: Yes.

H: So, thinking about where you grew up in Poland, how do you think that area impacted your professional interests?

M: Actually, I'm Salesian, which is the southwest part of Poland. Therefore, we had a lot of contact with Germans. My grandmother was living in Germany. After the war all of her cousins stayed in Germany, and it was quite messed up. But actually, I think that many Polish people are very flexible in their thinking. From our history, Polish people always had to fight the system. Therefore, fighting the system and beating the game is a national pastime. Each culture has both sides positive and negative, but we stay flexible in everything. The saying is if you want something solved in 3 years, give it to a German, and if you need it tomorrow, give it to Polish people. But on the other side, there is also the dark side. Many people tend not to plan so much because they think what will happen will happen. So why plan? That's the negative. So now when I'm working in a multinational setting, if I want to have something planned, I give it to a German or Swiss, but if the system should be hacked, then we give it to Polish companies because they figure out everything that's possible. It's nice because many companies in Germany tend to say that it's not so serious or too risky, because people in Germany team to avoid risk, and I think the German mindset is still very industrial. They think about production. I think the wave of digitalization will hit it quite hard.

H: So now thinking more about what you're working on right now, would you mind briefly explaining more about your current entrepreneurial venture?

M: Now I always say that I drink coffee in Stockholm. After getting rid of my IT software house that I was running with my brother, we had a lot of programmers and producer software. We sold the company. And now I think, "ok what do I want to do?" Ok, I want to be free, and freedom is one of my values. I

also like to travel, but I don't like to talk so much, but I like to listen and to learn. So, therefore, I would rather ask tough questions and just listen. Then I could just start from scratch. Ok, so let's just focus on building safe channels, relations, and scouting. And now I mainly take Polish, German, and Finnish companies to Sweden because, you know, Germans are quite laggards in innovation. Sweden is always on the innovative side, so what Germany lacks they can see in the eyes of their counterparts. And in Sweden people want to have quite modern things. So, I have the Swedish approach to innovation. Many German start-up people want to start something, but then they hit the wall because they don't want to start something. My friend was telling me that they were taking part in an innovation competition in Germany, but then he was thinking that no one had anything right now, which is not an innovation competition. Many innovators are suffering in Germany, so it's easier to test things in Sweden or Finland, where people are more open to new things. Also, you can start things in Finland right away, and my experience in Germany is the you need at least 2 years to start anything. For companies it is validating their ideas and bringing on early adopters. I offered some scouting to other German companies because their approaches are more innovative, but one company close to Frankfurt said that they have to make a management decision, and they said that almost 2 years ago.

H: Wow, there must be a lot of managers.

M: Yes. In my approach it is more of the lean startup, so I want to approach it and see what happens. What will go wrong? If something goes wrong, we will just see what happens. No one will die, and it will be ok. It's the mindset. I do think that in Berlin the mindset is a bit similar, so looking at Munich or Frankfurt is very tough. Berlin is different because it is quite international and much more open to things. It is also much cooler to do something like this in Berlin.

H: So, your current company does a lot of different things with innovation, and naturally you do have to do so many things with innovation.

M: Yes, of course, because I get bored very quickly.

H: So, when you initially started this company, what was your idea of what success would be?

M: I wanted to sell services of Polish companies to Germany, but it did not work so well. So, it was an iterative approach. Well, I had to found a company in Germany to begin, as many companies are doing nowadays. They found a company in Germany to look more German, but the back office is all Polish. And then I shifted from Germany to Scandinavia, so I was learning on the way. I always ask myself what we have learned and what is the best approach for the next time. So, I'm always keeping things updated.

H: So now that you've pivoted to work a lot in the innovative space, what would you say is your idea of success in your company today?

M: I think it depends on which level. Of course, I see the company and think, "can the company run itself without me?" And also, I must see how much revenue the company generates. We would rather do fewer fat cat projects than run service as a service. We prefer to run fewer large accounts and focus on large lifetime values of the customer than many small ones. Mostly I'm looking at the idea of, "do I have my freedom," and "can I do the things that I want to do?" For example, today the school of my daughter is closed, so I'm doing home office, and I can do the training here. If you are working as an employee, then there's so much less that you were given, so you have to adjust. And I just don't like to adjust myself.

H: Well, that sounds great. So, when you were thinking about the success of your company, and you're thinking can it survive without you, what were some of the important indicators that you were looking for?

M: It's like how much output can I get for each time unit. How much time do I have to spend to get revenue? What is the perfect solution to getting money without just showing up? However, just showing up and getting money is too boring. What do you do then when you just get paid, and you can sit on the sofa? There is some kind of optimum of how much time you can spend to get funds as well. On the other side, running a company can be quite risky. You never know what's going to happen. But also, if you work in a big company you never really know what is going to happen. When I was working in the factory of Siemens, many people were being transferred to Portugal. It is a safe job, but if the company closes the plant, you have no influence. For me, it is important to have freedom and fun.

H: Ok I understand. So thinking about when you started this company and where you are now and where you will be in the future--maybe you see yourself moving on or retiring or something else--how do you think you were and will be able to achieve this success that you want to?

M: In terms of personal development or what is the focus?

H: Yes. So, you mentioned that the success that you're looking for is that you want the company to be able to run without you, and you also want to derive satisfaction out of it. But how do you think that you have been able to achieve this success?

M: My approach is testing, testing, testing. You never know what's going to happen and what's going to work. I think that many Germans would call it the braveness to test systems. But I'm an engineer, so I like to test systems. Nothing bad can happen because I can always start something else anyway.

H: Yes definitely. So, are most of your employees also engineers?

M: No, I actually have 11 employees right now because we're quite a network. Many people consider us as freelancers, but we actually run as a limited company. I always say that we're like a bundle of wolves. We work together to descend on the projects, and we cooperate. It's very flexible because we don't have any fixed payroll, and if someone wants to take a break, then that's very easy. But I forgot the question haha. Oh sorry, no, I normally work with the IT people because I was running the IT company myself and we regularly work with IT companies. I also work with one lawyer, who is Polish. If I need an agreement to be written I give it to her. And in Sweden I work with someone who studied economics who is into financials and cyber security. He's more of the economic side, and I'm more of the engineering guy. We can make each other quite angry if I can get too engineering focused. I always say that he talks, and I listened. And he's warm, and I'm rather cold. But together we can get to anyone because if someone doesn't like me, they like him. We can work from both sides.

H: Yes, that's definitely a great relationship to have.

M: Yes, it's not as homogeneous. We don't have so much tension.

H: So, you definitely did not forget all of the questions that I sent you because I really only had to ask 4 or 5 questions, and you answered everything. So that was so easy. However, before we leave is there anything that you wanted to add or to make sure that I knew?

M: Yes of course. I always like to ask this question. What is the goal of this work? You're looking for certain nationalities? Because I think that I'm different, and if you were to look at another Polish guy, he would be different. It's quite hard to put a nationality in a box. It's like saying Germans are so clean and so organized, and I know so many who are messed up.

H: Haha great question. So, I'm studying applied economics, and there's a theory that based on what country you're from, you approach uncertainty and ambiguity in a different way than people from other countries.

M: Ahh yes, I've seen a graph about this. Also, I think that it's quite right because all these countries are very different.

H: Yes exactly. So, what I'm looking at is, specifically in Berlin, is that this place is so international and it's full of people from different countries, so a lot of people can come here and operate in different ways. So, I'm looking at two groups of people who are from completely different sides of the scales, and I'm looking at how they view success in their startups. It's also so lucky that Germany is so close to Poland because Poland is one of the countries.

M: Well yes. I believe in Berlin we have over 100,000 Polish people.

H: Well, I'm very lucky. If you'd be interested, I will be making a 2-page summary at the end, and I would be happy to share with you.

M: Yes. Yes. My stomach is saying on one scale you would have the Americans, and on one side you would have the Japanese or something.

H: Good point. I actually think that some examples are Greek people on one side and then people from Singapore on the farthest other side, but I'm focusing on the top 10% on each side. This includes countries like Poland, Portugal, the UK, Ireland, Sweden, and Denmark. It's been very interesting so far. I've done most of the theoretical work already, so now I'm just doing interviews, then I will be compiling information, and then I will be able to look for some findings.

M: That's interesting. In my opinion, Polish people are quite similar to Swedish because we both appreciate the personal freedoms. And Finns and Germans are quite similar. I would be happy to help you find additional people if you need help with your interviews. There are Facebook groups and Meetup groups, and those can be very helpful.

H: Yes, that would be incredibly helpful. I will send you an email with more information.

M: That sounds wonderful thank you.

Paweł Komarnicki, Founder at cubitoo, Berlin, Germany, June 14, 2019

H: And to get started at, how long have you been living in Berlin?

P: I have been here since January 2012.

H: Great. And what originally brought you to Berlin?

P: I got a job at one of the startups. I was a line developer there, and I just took the chance.

H: Ok. And have you visited Berlin a lot in the past? Or was this more of a leap of faith kind of change?

P: It was actually a leap of faith. It was the first time I was ever in Berlin when I was starting the job.



H: While that's incredible. I love those stories. So, would you mind telling me a bit more about your educational background?

P: Yes. I studied computer science at a technical university in Poland, and it was the University of Technology. It was a full-time 5 years studies that ended in a master's in computer science and engineering.

H: Ok. So, I definitely know that with a master's in computer science and engineering, along with your great language skills, there are definitely opportunities to work at large companies, so what made you interested in entrepreneurship?

P: Yeah, the reason that I decided to open my own company was because I saw that I can bring more value to the market if I start something new instead of just working on one part of the larger machine. It is more about the impact. Also, now I'm trying to create a product that is a little bit different than what is currently on the market. That also creates things like having to look for different funding because many people are not so interested in it, and they're just a lot of other reasons.

H: Ok great. Where you grew up in Poland, was there a strong cultural of entrepreneurship, or how do you think where you grew up impacted your professional interests?

P: I would say yes. When I was growing up, we were already transforming in the 1990s so many companies were recruited. During that time period, my father had his own company, and he still has it. I kind of grew up in this mind said that having your own company is a great adventure, and it can bring a lot of value, not only monetary value but also to the people around you.

H: Ok. So, you've mentioned value now twice, would you mind telling me more about how you see value?

P: Yes, it is not only money, but also the impact on the people who will be touched by the product that we're bringing to the market. It is also the positive aspect that changes in our customers lives and other people who are inspired by what we do. It is also this social impact. For example, I have my own personal company, but I also co-founded a company. In the co-founded company, we want to have a very high social standing. We focus on work-life balance, keeping people healthy, and it is also about that. We do not want to be another underfunded enterprise company, but we want to bring better value to the general population.

H: Ok great. So, do you think that that is something that you've always been interested in, or is that something that you have developed since coming to Berlin and since having this experience with these startups?

P: Basically, I wanted to have my own company and some point as a creator. I always wanted to have my own company at some point my life. Working in startups, especially these early stage startups, gave me a very interesting perspective on what works and what does not work. I learned about how the happenings in the company can affect everyone involved. My mindset evolved with time in Berlin, and it just got refined.

H: Ok, I understand. So now shifting to what you are currently working on, would you mind telling me more about your current entrepreneurial venture?

P: Yes. So, like I mentioned, I currently have two companies. One is my personal, creative agency because I am a software engineer, but I also do design services and a little bit of software marketing and

advisory. Also, I use this kind of experience to start to create a digital health startup. It will help people with chronic diseases to get back on track in their lives and prevent depression, basically.

H: That is fantastic mission. And I'm just looking at your LinkedIn profile, what is the name of that one?

P: It is not yet public, so it is a little bit of stealth mode. I cannot tell you so much. We're actually launching in July, so basically in 3 weeks. Then everything will be out in public, and that is basically the plan.

H: Great. And what is the second venture that you have?

P: So, that was the second. My first one is cubitoo, that is a creative agency that I run alone and create my own products. The second company is this digital health startup.

H: So, let's focus on cubitoo because that seems to be more of a for-profit venture, is that correct?

P: Yes definitely.

H: For my research, that is what we need to focus on. That would be great. Focusing on that, thinking ahead what would be your idea of success for this company?

P: My idea of success would be to make it profitable in terms of giving it a passive income potential. I will create a fleet of products with different aspects of running companies, and then these will be software-as-a-service products which will bring some revenue. Then it would be to make it sustainable, so I could, at some point, explore other possibilities and hire other people to run day-to-day operations.

H: Great. So, I know it's early in the development, but do you have short-term goals for success as well?

P: Yes. I would like to hit 100 uses of my first product in about 6 months, so that would be the biggest goal for me.

H: Wonderful. So how are you going about balancing how much work you have to put into this product and launching this business and also living your life outside of work? How do you typically make that decision?

P: So, I made a split because I've two companies. Monday until Friday I try to just work 8 hours a day. That is my gauge to keep it balanced. Monday to Friday I worked on the business that I co-founded, and on the weekends, I work on my own product. So, on Saturdays I work on the cubitoo product, and I try to make Sundays relax days.

H: Ok great, and I really like that schedule. So, looking ahead, way down the line, with cubitoo you mentioned that you would love for it to become a source of passive income. In your mind, why do you think of it as something like that and not something that you would build to a massive scale and a massive company?

P: For me and because I cooperated with seed funds in the past, I saw the formation of these heavily funded companies... it is a great thing to have so much money at the very beginning of the company, but also I see that the way that venture capital operates, they want to have these big companies to attract more investment so they can get their returns through that. I find it, personally, unsustainable unless you are a company that is sending a lot of things and has warehouses and a lot of logistics involved. Then, of course, you need a lot of people. The way that I am going with my physical products, I can do everything

on my own. I don't really see a need for having so many people on such a scale because scale is not so critical in these products. People in the organization just have to engineer properly, and we can offload daily marketing and daily operations to others. It is not so critical to have a big organization. Also, big companies, in my mind, create a lot of risk based on how quickly you can generate revenue. I was kind of caught in some of the layoffs in a start-up I was part of. They had to downsize because they do not have enough money. One company had to close because we ran out of runway. When you have a lot of people, you have a lot of responsibility for that because it is not only your work, but also there's all of the internal operations.

H: You're definitely right. That is a lot of responsibility, and it is great because companies also recognize that not just as an afterthought. So, thinking more about entrepreneurship in general, you are looking to get a lot of different things out of your company, and you've seen all these different startups come and go, but at the end of the day, what do you hope to gain from entrepreneurship? Maybe building a skill set or a certain lifestyle? What really attracts you to that career choice?

P: So, basically, one of the goals is to have passive income from one of these projects, which, in turn, will give me a lot of autonomy. I will have more time and more money to do things more experimental. Maybe I will do things, venture into other services, these kinds of things. Also, one of my personal goals regarding my company is, at some point, I would like to work and travel. Then I could do something like run a business from anywhere in the world, for example renting a flat in Japan for a 1 month or Australia or Canada. I can do work for part of the day and then explore the location for the rest of the day. You cannot do this when you work for someone else. My goal would be to also be autonomous and not be bound to one place but be able to run anywhere.

H: I completely agree. I love travelling, so that is kind of a dream of mine as well. In your career so far, is your view of success for companies that you've founded changed?

P: Yes. When I first started my career, I was seeing myself in a corporate environment as some kind of boss. As I got older, I saw that time is money, basically, and I would rather work less and earn a little bit less money. That is better than spending all my time in the office and not enjoying my life at all. I did an experiment where I was working 4 days a week instead of 5, and I was making more money because I had so much more energy and I was so much more productive. In the 4 days that I was working for the company, I was very active in doing more than I would normally do in 5 days. Normally, I was too tired or too stressed or too overloaded.

H: Ok. That's interesting that you got a chance to try the four-day work week, as I've heard a lot of things about that. I have not gotten a chance to try it, but hopefully an employer in the future will let me try that.

P: I would definitely recommend it.

H: So, you've been incredibly helpful, and thank you so much for your time. I only have one more question. So in between now, starting cubitoo, you have the goal of 100 users and then looking at eventually finding passive income, what steps are you taking to meet these goals? How do you go about your planning process?

P: So, the big first step was founding the company, and I took this at the end of May, so now I'm in the process of founding the company. It is established, but I'm waiting for it to be completely founded and to have all the tax IDs. I made the product already last October, so I can use a little bit of time to make an extended vacation. That is the first step. The next step would be to start marketing through sources like Hacker News and maybe do some blogging and social marketing to not exactly start a movement, but I would like to inspire people. My product makes more pragmatic and more efficient communication in

teams, so I want to convince people to be better at work by using my product. For example, you will have one frame that will have all messages and all deadlines, and it's very easy to navigate. I'm also bringing my second company, the health startup, the product is going very amazing. It is basically due, what, the 1st of July, but it is basically finished at the moment. I just have to do landing pages and polish a few things and add content, which has already been created by my co-counter founder. So, we just have to get it all started and then hopefully it'll start paying back quickly.

H: Ok, and do you normally take things on a step-by-step basis, is that how you normally plan your work?

P: Yes, I'm very organized and have goals that I follow through to do this. I have personal and those for projects. I would focus my work to be very efficient, but I do not use complicated programs. I just work to focus all of my work in my efforts.

H: Great. I'm very excited to see how everything goes in the next couple of months. You've been so helpful, and I really appreciated. Before we go, is there anything you would like to add to your answers, or do you have anything that you would like to ask me?

P: Yeah. I have one remark regarding entrepreneurship. This is about Germany in general. Somehow, it is not very trivial, compared to Poland, to open a company here. In Poland with a system where I could register a company very quickly in just one page. And here there are so many different things that I have to provide to different departments, so I think that Berlin is already great because you can do so many things in English, but not everything yet. That is a bit of a bummer. It is getting better, but I think that there's a little bit of work if Germany wants to have more foreign entrepreneurs. Maybe they could do more work in English because everyone here speaks English anyway. Or maybe they could provide alternative ways to help you establish a company quicker and easier.

H: That is interesting you say that because of lot of entrepreneurs that I've talked to have mentioned that one of the hardest things is actually just getting all the forms correct and having all the papers, which is definitely a problem.

P: And another thing would be that it's not always so clear how a company should be operated from a financial standpoint. There are so many things that you established, for example in starting capital. I was so nervous that I would mess something up. Maybe this would be a project for one of the government agencies to create a checklist for everyone to follow. For example, some people put just €1 in for their starting capital, and that is too low because everything that you do for the company has to go through the company's bank account. Luckily, I was already aware, so I put more startup capital in. I did not do €1 or €100, but I did €1,000. I know that the registrar fees are 200 something for this and 15 for this, and then when you've used up 50% of your starting capital, you have to do other procedures. And if you want to send money to your own company, you have to go to a notary, which costs more money. It is just a little complicated, especially in the first weeks or months when it is hard to create revenue yet. Maybe that is an idea for politicians to create something to make it a little bit easier and to make it a bit more straightforward. Then we don't have to have an MBA in accounting to be able to set up a business.

H: Yes, I completely agree. It should be as easy as possible to set up a business. Thank you again for all of your help, and do you have any questions for me before we go?

P: So, the assessment will be anonymous?

H: Yes completely. I'm actually just doing this for my master's thesis, and the only person, aside from me, that will see your name is my supervisor. It will be mentioned once at the very end in the appendix, so don't worry. I'm really looking forward to the end of the project though, and I really appreciate your time.

P: No problem. I was a student once, and I know how difficult it is to do the research. Please keep me posted, and we are connected on LinkedIn, and I will be posting updates to cubitoo and my other startup soon.

H: Yes, that would be great, and I will look out for it. I'm very excited to see your progress. Thank you again and have a wonderful weekend.

Henry Latham, Head of Product at Scribe, Berlin, Germany, June 14, 2019

HB: How long have you been living in Berlin?

HL: Two-and-a-half years. From London and went to Brazil for a few years, then I wanted to start a new business, so Berlin made sense for me.

HB: So, why did you want to come to Berlin?

HL: So, I was originally in Portugal, in Lisbon, and I started my own business, but I didn't really know how to go about it. I was learning as I was going; doing product development and made a lot of mistakes the first year, but we got into an accelerator program the second year. It's like an MBA for business while also building a business. There's a lot of rapid learning while also getting some advisory. The second year we really doubled down on product as a skill, and I thought that I can work it myself. I worked from Brazil and Portugal for about 3 years. Then I went to start my second business with all the learning from the past 5 years. I knew it was either going to be London or Berlin to find high level people and a good ecosystem. I like to learn languages, and I like living abroad, so that's why I picked Berlin.

HB: Ok. Sounds like you learned a lot on the job and also from the accelerator. I feel like anytime someone does something for the first time, they have no idea what's going on. But would you mind telling me more about your educational background?

HL: For sure. I did undergrad in political science and Spanish at Bristol University in the UK. After 2 years in Bristol, I did a year in Spain, during then I started self-teaching Portuguese on the side and after 10 months in realized that I was good enough to have conversations. Then I travelled in Brazil by myself for a few months to gain fluency. Then I came back and studied my final year and also started my own business. I always minimized how much work I actually had to do while still being able to get a degree and work on my business. This might be interesting, in Bristol, as a university, it doesn't do much for startups, and I started the business with a fund there for €1,000, but that's not really a huge amount for building a tech business. Building a team on the side and self-teaching design for some products and self-teaching everything was a lot. When we graduated, we started doing the business full time, and I was self-teaching, not in the optimal way to be honest, but I got the theoretical way down and then started applying the skills. I built something, realized that I wasn't good enough, then I went back to the drawing board. I think I should spend more time building the theoretical understanding of everything though. In terms of informal learning, that is how I've been most effective. There's a slight difference when you're doing an MBA, you already know that you want to be in a business, but if you have a start-up it, literally depends on you learning this thing right now today or tomorrow. Also, the content is framed in a way that you immediately know how you're going to apply it. You'll also see you immediately how you should learn and what exactly you need to do with it. That's always been very effective for me, and I've always been a big believer in taking initiative in something like that, as compared to a two-year master's or something like that. I think in the modern world, you have to have a skillset that is constantly changing, and you have to have a mindset that's very entrepreneurial. You have to take the bull by the horns.

HB: Ok, I understand. I think that you would also agree with this; a political science background like yours doesn't exactly segue directly into a tech startup, so is there something in the environment where you grew up that impacted your professional interests? Was there something that made you specifically interested in entrepreneurship?

HL: I've always wondered that as well. I think there are two things. My dad runs a one-person travel company. It's not huge, but it's enough for him. I liked seeing that there was another option. I came from a high achieving school in London, so I liked seeing this other option and possibility. Also, I think that I'm seen as a disagreeable character. I'm reasonably nice to people, but if I disagree with someone, then I say it. If I'm being managed, and something that doesn't make sense, then that makes me very frustrated to not be able to voice my concern for something. That makes it very difficult to work in a traditional environment. Nowadays, I freelance about 2 days a week while working on the project, but I have the ability to go at the problem and other people can stay out of the way. For me, it's really about autonomy and pursuit of the truth in my mind. What's the best thing that we can do based on information that we have? My realization was that I need to work by myself, in a way, or at least be able to manage other people.

HB: Ok, that makes sense. Now, would you be able to describe briefly what you're working on?

HL: Sure. Scribe we started a year ago with a German co-founder, an American co-founder, and a British co-founder. It's a journaling application helping people overcome anxiety with free writing. I've been journaling for the past 7 years, and it helps me prioritize my day. When I get up, I make a coffee and write for 5 minutes. How should I focus on my goals, how can I use my time best, how to try to compartmentalize my thoughts. Things like that. Then we realized that, as a vision, we wanted other people to experience that, and, in the world, it's a lot more of an issue to be able to be calmer, understand yourself better, and prioritize your day. At the moment, we're a bootstrapped business, but we are generating revenue. Therefore, we're bringing in a few hundred dollars a month. We're also doing this as a side business right now because I'm still running my consultancy business, and we did not do the outside funding route. In my first business, I wanted to be the next big thing and wanted fame and glory. It depends on how you define success. Now, I'm more about how we can have an impact but in a much more long-term sense. We look at longevity. We didn't want to be a startup that has millions of users but closes down in 5 years. We want to control our growth and be very stable. If we come to a point where we want to scale and want to go after a global market, maybe we will look for some more funding. But we defined success early on as knowing our team very well and on a very human level, and we've just wanted that to be around 5 to 8 people in the end. Right now, we have 4 people. So, we have Croatian, English, German, and American. The cultural mix is great. We're also very honest with each other, which is great. I really like our team culture. Those things that bubble up under the surface in other companies, we work out our problems.

HB: I see you mentioned that right now your idea of success is building the team to a certain size and having great team chemistry and making sure everyone is continuously growing along with the product.

HL: Yes, exactly. Of course, we have to make sure that the product grows to a certain size so we can do this full-time, but the team is really the focus.

HB: Do you have other ideas of success for Scribe?

HL: Yes, of course. Our main idea is that we want to create millions of calm minds, that's what we say. However, that is predicated on the team being able to work on it full-time, which is achieving profitability, being motivated to stick with this company for 10 or 20 years, and that has things to do with internal culture. We have to have profitability, and we have to have a strong internal culture to achieve

that. With my freelance work, I cannot have my internal team firing on all cylinders without the team motivated and focused on a clear vision. At that point, the goals aren't even important.

HB: Ok, great. Also, I really like the idea behind the app. I really think that that's a great place to be, especially right now.

HL: I agree. We're hoping that journaling will be what meditation was 5 years ago. We want to get into the market, stay in the market, and then we want to grow up to maybe 5 or 10% of the market share.

HB: Exactly. I also really like that this isn't just another addictive thing we are constantly swiping and wasting our time on her phone.

HL: Yes, definitely. We want to be beneficial. Of course, as a product manager, you have to use the same skills. Manipulative is a bad word, but we do have to be manipulative to get people to use the app and to create a positive habit. Manipulation doesn't have to be negative. There's no evidence in literature saying that journaling is negative, it's just like saying that meditation would be a negative. We just want these people to develop a habit and continue to come back and be able to get better at this.

HB: I imagine that you've read the book *Hooked*?

HL: Yes, of course. It's 101.

HB: Ok. I can see as you develop Scribe overtime, you have a lot of things to measure. However, what major, measurable indicators are you looking at as the team and company grow?

HL: So, we have a slightly unique approach based on the lean startup model. A trap that a lot of companies fall into is called the "build trap." They build a lot of things, but there's no outcome. They build a feature, but they don't know how it ties into a key metric. I'll make sure that everything that we build ties into a key metric. We want to make calm minds, so how do we achieve that, we must have a clear strategy, and our strategy to get there must be very clear. Our core idea is building a world-class, distraction-free app. Below that, we will break that strategy down to specific instructions. We want to assume that people will pay for desktop apps, they will pay for our desktop app, people want to journal every day, people will journal every day. Of course, we have key metrics. On a high level, the way of paying users. If you are paying for the app, you are using it every day and receiving value from it. We focus on something like that. If we focus on retention, for example. We could focus on retention, but that can lead us astray. We do have an advantage because we're bootstrapping, and we're not exactly full time yet. We're not rushing to meet a KPI in order to raise investment. That's why we're not going down the investment route because just getting a million users next month, you can just buy users. That's not sustainable. You can go in and then you can fall out. Every time we define an experiment we're going to run it. We say, "how is this going to impact us." Is this going to give us x amount of paying users? If not, we're not going to do it. We can't waste time fixing little bugs and tiny visual nuisances. These have to be impactful changes. Then we run these experiments very carefully. We did an audio guide feature, and many people didn't know how to use it, so we created an audio journal intro and gave them an exercise to write along with an audio intro. That feature didn't work, and people didn't really understand the feature, as it's a revenue target, we've got to keep the product very simple and keep moving towards that one objective. Before we start, we define the experiment as what is the expected outcome. A lot of companies don't do that and then look at the outcome afterwards. Then they have biases because they've invested 2 weeks into it already. Then you create a product with 10 s\*\*\* features.

HB: Ok. So, it seems like you have one goal and are constantly checking in on whether or not you are making progress towards that goal.

HL: Yes, and I'm ruthless about this. We have a board with our final outcomes. We have a to-do list, looking at in progress, looking at done, and then we look at if it actually brought us towards our end goal. We have goal sheets showing where we currently are and how each thing we do in the week brings us closer to that. Each team call is talking about assumptions and always brings us back to if we are going to hit revenue. We are building something that is focused on something specific.

HB: Ok, I understand. So in between now and this ideal point of profitability, and then growing profitability after that, do you have short then medium then long-range goals that you focus on?

HL: Yeah, we've talked about it. I think that's the difference between business school and doing a business. You set goals, and you want to set an ambitious goal, but you're always aware that you're going to fail in the process. This is something that I'm trying to work on, to be honest. Most companies set a very specific KPI. With a product-led business, it's very difficult. If you're sales-led, you can scale sales. But if you're product-led, you can create new features, but then you're just assuming that people will go with them. There's a risk if you set strict KPI's because then you're optimizing for this KPI instead of the long-term vision. Unless you have an inherently-viral product, then there's not really a business there yet. We're founders, and we realize the gravity of what we're doing. We're always thinking about how to mentally push ourselves further and how to question what each one of us are doing. Now you're looking at the delivery, and what is the KPI for each experiment. You're normally just pulling numbers out of thin air. You've got no idea what you're going to be doing in 6 months. It's very dangerous to do this because you try to assume that a business runs a certain path. Well, a startup is inherently uncertain and in 3 days we could completely change our strategy based on feedback. If you set a very clear plan, you can follow this plan even if it doesn't make sense based on new information. You have to get used to being very comfortable with this kind of uncertainty. That's a difficult culture because people like to plan. You have to put yourself into a psychological state where you're always questioning.

HB: Definitely. So always having to go back and check and refocus on what you're working on, I think that there could be some issues that may arise. How do you create the mindset of being able to constantly rethink and reposition yourself?

HL: Psychological safety. Google did a project called Aristotle and was looking at the best things that the most effective teams do. One was called psychological safety, which allows people to constantly reorient themselves based on new information. I would much rather an experiment fail than it be lukewarm. It's fine if we launched new features and haven't found the one thing. That's the stage we're in right now. We're in the phase of finding new features. We spent three weeks working on this audio guide thing, but no one uses it, and no one got it. It is also my thing because I spent time designing it. I've seen the outcome when you don't then withdraw the features like that. You have to learn from the failures and learning from the failure really gives you the clarity that you have to have. Part of that is leading by example. It's ok to work on something, put it out, it failed, then you pull it back, then you work on something else. It's fine. We just need to keep pushing until we find the thing that works. It's a completely different mindset, not a very difficult mind set for people to accept. I know that the more senior you get, the more people expect you to know what you're doing. You cannot predict the future, and there's no solid roadmap for it. This is really part of the book that I'm writing. There's a stack. At the top you do the startup process with KPI's and things like that, next is the team culture, being able to have relationships on an individual level and be able to question each other. That relationship is founded on three different columns or pillars. One is being mindful and open and detached from your ideas, 2 is being robust and being able to deal with failure and be fine and be able to push each other on ideas and critique each other. 3 is focusing on the essential and cutting what is not completely necessary. Those are the three columns. One thing that will be very interesting is that once the book is published, I'll see if I can actually get people on my team to follow it. This is all really leading by example. When I say being mindful, I



meditate for 20 minutes every afternoon. I communicate very clearly to people saying that it's 3 o'clock, and I'm meditating. I'm not sitting at my desk looking busy. I know that I will be very clear minded and I'm still thinking about very high-level things while doing this, but you have to lead by example. If you say one thing and do another, then people stop trusting you.

HB: That's a fantastic way to put it. I also really like the idea of mindfulness, and I've always dabbled with it, but I think that when I start to feel the benefits, then I say that I'm fine now and don't need it.

HL: I think mindfulness has that effect. A lot of people just associate it with meditation and wellbeing, but it's really about self-awareness. Are you someone who is comfortable going back on something that you've said when new information comes in? Can you be adaptive in how you evaluate yourself as you go? These things are core. I did a lot of research on startup success and failure for the book. Looking at processing, expertise matters, but if you don't have the people necessary who are critical of each other in an effective way, it's just never going to work. These are things that I've really observed in the last 7 years. It's a massive ongoing learning project for me. Individuals first, create a culture with high level decision makers, then you worry about everything else after. Without that foundation, you're screwed.

HB: So, I really only have one other question, which don't feel like you have to give away any secrets or anything, but in between now and the point where you all get to focus on this full-time, and it's full speed ahead, how are you doing it? What are you looking at and saying that you have to do this? What is your goal setting/strategic outlook look like?

HL: Because we're very product-led, everything depends on the product, and everything is driven by the product. In that sense, it is a little bit easier because we just have one strategy. The main strategy that we keep coming back to is building an amazing, immersive writing app. We've also tried strategies of building a community of people suffering from anxiety and providing support for them. Because of the product, we've pivoted away from people who are new to journaling and have to learn from scratch and need a lot of guidance. Now we're looking at experienced journalists. We created a very concrete plan, but then we can scrap it in a moment's notice if it's a strategic decision. On the way to building a profitable app, we have paying users, but we don't know who they are. There's not a clear persona. What the other founders are doing at the moment is focusing on the user persona and a group of people who we can identify and who will communicate with each other. For example, Hyper Island is university for design, and a lot of them journal. We figured out that one of our users was from some place like that. Therefore, we knew that other people there did not have to learn how to journal, and we don't have to teach them that because that's very very time-consuming. Once she came along, we knew that it would be great to speak with them. So, we're currently interviewing them to try to figure out is this our core persona. How can we create a product to suit their specific needs? For example, three specific journaling exercises every day. If we can build an app that really pleases these guys, we already have a few thousand paying users because they all talk to each other and are physically around each other. If the product is good enough, then it will start to naturally go viral there. Then the next strategic point is where we go from there. By now, if we find out in a week or so that that is not the person that we feel that we can build a product for, then we will visit again and find another stepping stone.

HB: Great. Well you've been incredibly helpful.

HL: Yeah, it's been great for me too, and it's really great to speak about this out loud. When I tell people that I'm building my own business, they all think that I'm taking investment, so that's a very different concept for them. There is another idea of success. There's that kind of startup and then also the digital nomads that have just one person businesses.

HB: Yeah, exactly. So, before we go, is there anything you would like to add to your answers, or do you have any questions for me?

HL: Yeah, I would actually just be super interested to hear about your take when you're done on the cultural aspect of it. Culture, to me, is the hardest part of the business. To me, culture comes naturally to me. I always did things in leadership, and I always want to be empathetic. I'll be tough, but very honest. I've observed that a lot of this is not coming out for elite people, and they do not quite see how to keep people around for 3 or 4 years at a company. A lot of German leaders, particularly, are not very good at that, and they cannot deal with it very well. They talk about business metrics and KPIs. That's great to get the business going, but that is not always good in fostering long-term sustainability. That is something that I keep thinking about. That is just very difficult for me.

HB: Yeah, I understand. I also think that maybe Berlin is very unique because it is such a one-off place in Germany and also in Europe in general. So maybe you would even need to do a comparative study between German cities to understand more about the German culture of working.

HL: Yeah, I completely understand that, and I'm really interested to see your take on cultural entrepreneurship later on.

Terry Llewellyn-Fox, Entrepreneur, Berlin, Germany, May 14, 2019

H: So, just to get started, how long have you been in Berlin?

T: 3 months or so.

H: So, what do you think about the city so far since getting here?

T: I've been coming here on holidays and little trips for a few years. I've been here 4-5 times a few years ago, but I didn't want to dilute the holiday feeling. Of course, I had a pretty easy and comfortable life in the UK. And then about a year ago I met my partner out in Asia. So, she lives in Hamburg, and I thought to be closer together, being in the same city felt like a bit much, but the same country would be nice. Yeah so, I thought f\*\*\* it why not. I needed a new challenge I was just too comfortable and getting too lazy.

H: And where were you living in the UK?

T: So, I've been in the Suffolk countryside for the last few years, so I escaped London probably about 8 years back. I just couldn't take that anymore.

H: Oh yes, I see. It is just an absolutely massive city.

T: Yes, it's just so hectic.

H: Yes, my older brother lives in London, so I was there nearly 6 weeks ago to go see him, and one of my best mates in the program is from London and went to York, so I've been around the UK a good amount. So, would you mind telling me a little more about your educational background?

T: Yeah, I found school very easy I did very well on my GCSEs. I got predicted perfect A Levels. I was starting a program to get a scholarship to William Taft, the university in California, and then I discovered alcohol. And the next 15 years disappeared, and literally nothing happened in that time. And then in that time I did have a couple of attempts of going to university. I was a mature student, but I was only 21, so I guess that qualifies me as a mature student. To study architecture. But then again, the pull of booze was

too strong, so I didn't end up doing anything with that. But I realized that eventually you could live without booze, but at that point I was 30. That was 5 years ago or 6 years ago. So, I've done 15 years of living between 16 and 30 in 5 years. So, it's been quite dramatic. But for education I went back and started a course at The Open University doing law, but I kind of realized that being in an office, the kind of situation I would need to be in to practice law, is not the kind of situation I can work in. I need to be out, and I just can't be in an office.

H: So, do you see yourself trying to find educational opportunities in a more non-traditional way like looking at online courses? Or maybe just reading different literature? Or how do you typically try to learn more about what you're interested in?

T: Just informally. I get irritated with myself if I miss a deadline or if I say that I'm going to do something and then something else comes up. I find it very frustrating. So really there are a couple of things that I'm trying to pick up at the moment.

H: So, thinking about all of your previous experiences and where you're from, how do you think they have impacted your views on entrepreneurship? Or just having your own go at it.

T: I don't personally see any other option for myself. I cannot even comprehend the idea of working for someone else. It is something that I have thought about over the last few years. Kind of like when I'm away on a long trip and I come back and realize that that the bank account is fairly depleted, and I wished a couple times that there would be another lump coming in at the end of the week. Then I could budget a bit more carefully if I knew that that would be there. But the trade-off for that security is way too much for me. The idea about asking someone if you can take a holiday or if something comes up short notice that you really want to do. So a specific example that I was thinking about 18 months ago, a friend of mine who had been away in the States for a few years had to come back to Europe for a week and so he called and we had a chat, and I said that I would be on the first flight out and see you tomorrow morning. Then I ended some of the work I was doing, handed it to the other people and that was that. I was chatting with someone about a position at a big company and talking about the holiday situation, and he said that you would have to have approval for something like that and you would have to have a certain amount of x weeks or months. That was it. The day that I knew I could not function like that anymore. Once you have that level of autonomy, I just can't see how you can step back from that.

H: Yeah especially if your friend was telling you about the American system of taking holiday.

T: Oh yes, I've heard about this.

H: Oh yes, that's very tough.

T: I can't even get my head around how as a nation you would accept that kind of standard practice.

H: I will say that I see a lot changing. So, when I graduated from undergraduate, a lot of the companies that were coming to campus and giving their sales pitch were talking about how they have a more European style of holiday.

T: So, were those mostly tech firms?

H: So, there were a lot of tech firms, but you'll always have the Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan's. They always try to kill you, but those aren't the ones that have to implement those measures. It's typically the more middle types of companies. They think how they can differentiate themselves in the marketplace.

So, I saw a lot of my own friends who are looking for something more livable. So, shifting gears to what you are currently working on. Would you mind telling me about your current entrepreneurial venture?

T: Sure. At the moment I would like to continue the work I was doing in the UK because it was quite fun. Then it would give me just a little bit of stability and income, but I'm not allowed to do that here. Because I don't hold a degree in either interior design or decoration. So, I'm not allowed to practice it because they are unionized. The trade body says that you have to be a member. And without the relevant experience and education you can't be in the trade body and without membership in the trade body you can't get a tax code and without the tax code you can't issue an invoice and without the invoice it's illegal for someone to employ you to do that. It's also illegal for them not to hold onto their invoice for 10 years. So, a bit of a stick in the slopes for that one. On the other hand, that is giving me the pressure to move on and do what I really wanted to do when I came here, which is to create a business, heavily technology-based, that enables people to create artwork from their own photographs. It's an ancient concept, I think painting by numbers was invented in the 1920s. It's just reducing a picture down to its component colors, labelling them, and giving you the materials to paint it yourself. But up to this point, most of the services have done it very basically and cheaply. But the system that I want to create is long lasting and good quality. See, you would use artist-quality paint on an artist quality canvas. So, it's something that you can do for other people or that they can do for themselves, but you can put it on the wall and be very proud of it. Not just a thing to kill time on a rainy day, which is what most of them do. At the moment the idea is kind of small. I'm making it try to work on a small scale and that's easy enough. But what I would like to do is to release some kind of version as quickly as possible. In order to do that, it involves a lot of money, app developers, coders who really really understand the graphics area, and we're also talking about implementing AI into it to take the design element out. Because, at the moment, every automated task that you give the computer has to be checked by our us afterwards to make sure it works artistically. And that takes about 6 or 8 weeks. The first month was pretty much just finding my feet. And trying to figure out if I was crazy or could find support. And it's nice that everyone seems to know someone who can help, and everyone seems to know everyone. And my skill set is more artistic, and I'm happy to give things a go to reciprocate that because I can't offer money. I don't have the finances at the moment. So, I'm trying to do what I can. For example, there's a guy who has the printing equipment, and in exchange for trying his printing, he would help me to do some mockups. And I'm helping to do some marketing for him because that's not his strong point, so I'm speaking with print magazines and that kind of thing to help him try to increase his visibility and that kind of thing.

H: Ahh that very nice that you've already been able to find a community because it's definitely apparent that these people are here, but you have to go out and find them. So, you've talked briefly about scaling that up and moving pretty quickly and switching the tracking procedure. So, what would be success in your mind for this winter?

T: Success would be customer number one. That would be an unreal level of success because this is an idea that I've had sloshing around for maybe 10 years. So actually implementing it in actuality, having it up and running to see the first order from someone, that would be an unreal level of success. Obviously, I have this huge dream of how big it could be in two or three more years, in the future, we can be turning out things all across Europe, and it has connections with major tech companies, and just for example, I don't want to be involved with Instagram, but something on that level. Then you can easily click through and use the resources on the platform. That would be peak.

H: Ah yes, I see. So, thinking about in between now and customer number one and who knows what down the line in 3-4 years+, what are some of the most important indicators that you are assessing on your road to success?

T: So, I think the huge ones which I'm dreading, is properly incorporating the business in this country. Because just the paperwork I've had to deal with on just a fundamental level just being here as it an EU citizen, I don't have visa problems, I don't have a right to work problem, but I'm still finding it a f\*\*\*\*\* nightmare at times. The idea of incorporating the business here, I really don't fancy that, and I really dislike the way that it seems so far that you can't be trusted to do it yourself. You have to go and hire a professional, which bothers me because it's not that I dislike going to pay the money to get it done, but you're taking away a level of contact with your business. I prefer being able to do the entire thing myself and know what's going on with my business. In having to outsource, that is just removing me from it, and if I want to outsource it and enable myself to spend time on other things, that should be my choice. If we can reclaim something and tapping something else and do something, those are things that I want to know. Because I think that that helps for you just having an idea of where the company is going, knowing that you've got to do x amount of this procedure to move forward, and that you can factor that in. I think that knowing that, instead having to get that information from someone else like a tax lawyer, I would just prefer to handle that myself.

H: I think it's a similar process in the U.S. to the UK. Where if you were willing to try yourself and you make a mistake then you'll see how it goes.

T: Yes, and it really doesn't make a difference. This is something that I can't get my head around. In the UK if you want to start a business... A friend of mine, this is just an example, has a really nice little grocery store. And she'll sell these little French macrons she was making, so we said why don't you box them up. So, she did it, and she went to the council to ask, "do I need any permission to do this and this?" Firstly, they walked her through it, and secondly the only thing she needed was a visit to the kitchen to make sure it was sanitary enough. They gave her a couple of tips. She needed to install an extra door in between her kitchen and her bathroom. And that was it. And then she's away. They give her a certificate saying that the kitchen is sanitary, and you can produce food for public consumption. And that's it. A friend of a friend here wanted to set up a type of outdoor market. And he just gave up after about 3 months of trying to get the right permissions and going through all of the different things. Just completely gave up. And also, just the money. The money that they required is just staggering.

H: Yeah that's a very interesting point of view. I think from the American perspective; we lump a lot of European business operations all together. But I imagine that people in the Netherlands have similar differences compared to German and then in the French example...

T: And it didn't even cross my mind to think about how different it would be because it's just the modern European nation. You know, you travel around it, and on the surface, there are very little issues, but once you get under the surface, it's just awful here. And I just don't understand how they can stifle creativity so much. How can any message from any government not be just go for it? It doesn't matter if you fail. F\*\*\* you. It's just really not important to anybody. You might feel a little sick afterwards by it, but you could make something really great. It's very much the American model. Every time you feel you've just learned something important to be able to succeed the next time.

H: And to think you're only about 60 to 70 minutes on a plane to Heathrow from here. So in between customer number one and your ultimate view of success, what measures will you be looking at to assess your progression?

T: Other than customer numbers? That would be speeding up the customer process from initial contact to them receiving the product. That's going to be something because at the moment it's quite time-consuming. I can see how it can be made quite quicker, but it needs capital investment to make it do that. And for that we need customer numbers, so it's all very dependent on customer numbers. I don't know whether borrowing the amount of money that we need to make it instantly scale up is a good idea. I kind

of prefer the idea of growing it organically. But who's to say if it looks like it's working then maybe my opinions will change completely.

H: So I know that it's very very early, so you haven't had a lot of chances of pivots in looking at completely different types of operations because you just haven't had the duration yet, but how do you foresee yourself pivoting from your big vision of success? Have you had to do that in the past with previous businesses? Have you dealt with large changes to your idea of success in your entrepreneurial visions?

T: It's not something that I've had to do. Up until this point, most of my business in the UK was without stress. I just let it flow, and it went where it went. I didn't have any type of ultimate aim or ambition. I just started to do something that companies needed me to do, and then I just drifted along, picking up customers and ideas along the way. So, I never really had an ultimate idea of where to go with them. With this one, it's not really something that I've considered. I haven't really thought about having to change the direction.

H: So, finally, how are you looking to accomplish certain milestones in your mind about what you want this company to be? How are you going through the planning process to reach these milestones? What will you be doing in between now and milestones one and two to finally reach this idea of success?

T: So right at the moment, I just have a very basic plan of what I need to have. I buy an iPad, have it in my hand just to show people, get them interested in coming aboard on the project. I'll make some prototypes, and I'll try to create a very basic, it's not even a program, I'm just using Adobe software to show people the process. So that's pretty easy to achieve. In the next part, to achieve beyond that, is to find suppliers. Testing different qualities of product, paint, canvases, that kind of thing. And then the hunt for a developer is on as well. So those are really just the fundamental basics at the moment. Once that's all realized, then I think the next hurdle after that would be to find someone else that is interested in coming on board for a share rather than a direct payment, which I think will be rather difficult. I just like to think that once we have a nice presentation, there will be people who want to get on board, but this isn't an industry that I'm familiar with, so I have no idea how it functions at the moment. So, what I'm doing at the moment is I'm going to hacker meetings to talk with companies. I should have been at 1 yesterday, but I was just for too sick, but I have one tomorrow and Thursday, and it's sponsored by Adobe. So, I think they'll be some very reasonable people there. Something that I will say about this town, the meetups and the get togethers are great, and they're constant. So, finding people is pretty easy, but then you have to go and take that step to actually talk with them instead of just being in the room with them. It's not a skill that I currently have, selling myself. Or selling my ideas. But got to get over that one

H: Yeah exactly. Well great. So, you've given me so much useful information. And even in a very short conversation, I can tell that the way that you are viewing the environment around you and how you can take your idea and make it something successful is so different from people that I've seen from other countries and different backgrounds. But I would be happy to share my ultimate findings with you once I'm done. I am I'm just going to be in typing up a brief two or three pages to share with my participants if you would like?

T: Yeah, yeah yes please. But I would also be interested in reading the whole thing in the end. Is that a few years down the line?

H: No, that's actually in August. It will be about 70 pages, so not so long. I've done most of the theoretical work already, so now it's all interviews, and I'll be compiling all the results. Before we go is there anything else that you wanted to be sure that I knew about your venture or how you got to this point or what you're thinking about the future?

T: About the venture not so much. About how I got to this point, it's just a personal thing. After hearing so many people talk about, I mean, they say how many times “Oh I would love to be able to draw,” “I would love to be able to paint.” And you can, and everyone has a different perception of what a painting is. So, the idea of making something just to give people or not to get them into the idea. Once you have the main thing that people buy, just have a little something else to show them all, “here's a blank page, some paint leftover, you know, you deserve to have so much left that you can do.” A lot of people, I think, want to realize their creativity but don't. I think that art can be kind of inaccessible to a lot of people. I would like to change that.

H: I think that it can be daunting to a lot of people.

T: And also, I don't know if this speaks more about my point of view or not. But if you're not immediately good at something then it can be off-putting. So, if your first attempt at something, you think “looks awful,” but your first time of doing anything is awful. It's too easy to say, “oh well, I'm awful, oh I give up.” Instead of just trying to increasingly get better at something.

H: Yeah, I think definitely if you were in the area where you're going to Adobe get together and you're surrounded by this and your first two attempts were completely awful, then there is a level of embarrassment. So, I definitely understand what you mean. So, do you have any questions for me that I can answer here at the end?

T: No, not really. Just on a personal level are you living in Berlin right now?

H: Yeah, so right now I'm here until the end of June just doing research, and then I'm travelling and eventually going back to the U.S. So, the program has been interesting because I told you that it's organized by the University of Glasgow. So, we were there for half a year, and it's run by a consortium of 3 different universities. We did University of Glasgow for half year, University of Barcelona for half a year, and wow going from the University of Glasgow in the winter to Barcelona is quite a difference. And then went to Western Germany for half a year. And now I'm just conducting research and writing my thesis. So, I'm here until the very end of June or the beginning of July because there's a certain point where I have to go back and speak with professors, but there's a lot of movement. It's been great because, especially with a project like this, it's focused on multiculturalism and how all these different people come together into one unique environment, to say the least. I don't think there's a better experience that I could have had than to go into all these different countries. I study with people from 27 different countries, and there are 32 of us. It's been incredibly interesting so far, and I'm looking forward to sharing what I find with you.

Pawel Maciazek, COO & Founder at edrone, Berlin, Germany, May 29, 2019

H: Just to get started, how long have you been in Berlin?

P: I was living in Mannheim before then spent one year in Berlin. That was 4 years ago. And now I normally travel between Berlin and other cities.

H: So, what originally brought you to Berlin?

P: Well, what brought me there was a particular business. We decided to open an office there. Also, the connection was pretty good from Krakow at this time. Also, the general costs of establishing a business, in my opinion, were much lower than other German cities like Frankfurt or Munich.

H: Yes definitely. I can say that living here is much cheaper than living in Munich or Frankfurt. And in my opinion, it's more fun.

P: Yes, I have to say that you are totally right. If I have to compare the cities, it is much more interesting to be in Berlin. But regarding the business, I must say that Berlin is not the best place for many industries. But for our industry, for IT, it is pretty good.

H: So, would you mind telling me a bit more about your educational background?

P: Yes, I finished my high school in Poland then I started to study in Germany. I chose the University of Mannheim. There I studied international economics. But there's more to it, I just don't know the translation to English. What else have I done? Then I've tried to learn as many foreign languages as possible. Maybe that is a different story. However, yes, I have an international business background.

H: Ok. And did you continue and study for a master's?

P: No, after I finished my bachelors, I started to run a business in Poland. And it was far too hard to continue to study in Mannheim. So, I made my master's in Poland.

H: Great. So, what made you want to go and study in Mannheim instead of studying in Poland?

P: I think I was looking for a nice challenge. I was pretty sure that I would study in Germany because of the family connection. My grandfather was living in Mannheim, so it was pretty easy to make that decision. At first, I did not know if Mannheim was the right place, but I saw that the university was interesting. So those are the reasons. First the family and then that it was a great offer.

H: Ok. Actually, one of my close friends actually studied in Mannheim and is now doing his master's with me. It's a fantastic university and a beautiful city as well.

P: Yes, it's not as beautiful and interesting for studying as Berlin. Haha and but I agree

H: Oh yes definitely. So, thinking about where you grew up and when you were studying in your youth, how do you think where you grew up impacted your professional interests?

P: Well it's not a 0 and 1 answer. On the one hand, I grew up in a pretty poor environment. So, this made me pretty ambitious, and I use this in a business environment to make me pretty hungry. I wanted to make something of my life. Also, I've seen it many times, especially in Mannheim, that people from rich families would motivate me. I would see what they have, and I would want to work to get it. This happened a lot when I was studying in Germany. Part of my family came from Germany, so this improved my economic situation to study, and it gave me a better start. However, to finish answering your question, I don't think that just being from Poland changed something in my career. I feel like now I just need to find challenges, like a different language, and me being not afraid to go into risky projects and make an impact.

H: Yes, that's very interesting. I've heard from speaking with people in Berlin about the difficulties and advantages that people can have coming from two different backgrounds. So that makes sense. Now thinking about your current project, would you briefly tell me more about your current entrepreneurial venture?

P: Yes sure. Now I'm handling several new challenges. Two companies. One is a software house that develops game-changing software for clients. We do it in a different way, so we have clients from places



like Germany, Australia, and the U.S. With the help of this business, I can also realize a lot of my ideas for startups. For example, with this company I can start many startups, like I've been starting one for e-commerce, one for the startup house, we also started doing something as business angels and VCs, and there are several things that I'm doing right now. However, I spent a lot of time building the software house from a medium to a large enterprise. Right now, we don't even have 300 developers, so I say that we're medium-sized. And this may be good for some things like the atmosphere of work, but there's a lot to think about regarding the size. We could easily grow and fight with the bigger players in the market.

H: Ok, so thinking about the venture focusing on software development, you've spoken about growing the company and that's what you're spending most of your time on.

P: Yes, exactly.

H: How would you define overall success for this company?

P: Wow this is a good question. From my point of view, the overall success will be in two or three points. First if we have stable cash flow and stable growth, such as in 6 or 8 months. Then we would be secure. The second one would be to recruit the best talent on the market. This would be the second definition of success. And third would be to work on very innovative products. First cash. Second recruit the best talent on the market. Third is to realize interesting projects. Not just interesting as far as the money goes, but to make sure that we're doing new and interesting things and making sure that we're on the cutting edge of technology.

H: So, in those three points, aside from revenue, those are a bit difficult to measure. So, it's a bit hard to measure if you're getting top employees or making the most innovative products. So what indicators are you looking for to measure those?

P: I'm not sure if I understood the question. Are you looking for indicators for 2 and 3 or just 2? Yes, you're right, it's not so easy to measure. I actually need to figure out how our HR department will be measuring this. We need to figure out the options for recruiting the best talents. The general overview is that we're focusing on artificial intelligence. There are 10 people in the Polish market working on this, so if we can have 3 or 4 of them, I would see that as a success.

H: And how would you be measuring the innovative products?

P: Yes, this is something that we cannot measure in numbers. It is just something that we must develop as a case-study afterwards. Looking if we have done something that no one has done before, if we are doing something that is so innovative. I'm sorry, I was not prepared for your question. This is something that it is very hard to measure. We do a quarterly review; there we sit with team members and talk about what parts of our projects we've fulfilled and how we've learned from them. Do they fulfil our ambitions and our plans for these projects? Then we make a portfolio of projects that we think that they helped us reach a new goal.

H: Ok, I think that makes a lot of sense. So, looking at these three different points for success, how would you rank those in important? What would be the most important?

P: Of course, because I'm a businessman, number one is cash flows. That is most important. The second data point that I pointed out of the three is the second most important. I say that being innovative and working on these innovative projects would be number two, and actually working with the top workers and having the best people is the most important. So those are my top 3.

H: So, since you founded this business, how has your idea of success changed over time?

P: Well, so, there is always a type of software house. One or two people had similar ideas and that's how it went in the industry. So, we got together, and it was always working to not make just another software house, but in the beginning, it was focusing on unique projects. But as we grew up in business, we always kept cash flow and revenues in mind. So of course, we would test things, and we are willing to change, and maybe in the future we will change things and grow. And then we can come back to this topic and see if we need to change something. But right now, because we're not such a big company, we are keeping true to our ideas and our plans.

H: Ok great. So, this is my last question. Looking forward, how do you plan on actually accomplishing these goals in your company?

P: Well, number 1 is to grow up in the international market. This is to grow up with our clients, grow up with the department skills, how do we get money for new partners, these are the terms. For me, this is the most important thing at the moment. Second, regarding point two, about how we recruit the best talents on the market, next quarter we start a campaign that will make us... it is a public relations campaign so many channels will show how interesting our projects are, what kind of things you can expect when working with us, and it's just a marketing project to show what to expect from us and from the organization. This is the number two. This is the number three, regarding the most interesting projects, as we get a better overview of the market and know more about projects coming to us, we can choose better. We can create a better portfolio with projects that we can realize because we're learning things, instead of just realizing projects because we have to cover our resources.

H: Ok, I understand. Before I go is there anything that you would like to add to your answers or anything that you would like to make sure that I know about you or your company?

P: No, I don't think so. You said very interesting questions, and I try to answer as best as I can. I'm fine I don't have other questions.

H: Ok great. Is there anything that you would like to ask me before we leave?

P: Yes sure. Tell me something more about this survey. You are looking for people from outside of Germany who are making a business in Germany? This is for a story, or maybe if you could give me some details I would be delighted.

H: Yes of course. For my master's thesis I'm looking at how uncertainty avoidance in someone's culture affect how they view success in their startup. There is a management theory saying that based on what country you come from, you view ambiguity and uncertainty in a specific way. Therefore, everyone approaches and uncertain situation in a different way. So, I'm seeing how groups of people from different countries move through their entrepreneurial ventures, set goals, and how they try to realize their success, and how this may be related to their cultures. If you would like to learn more, I will be typing up a 2-page summary at the end in about 6 or 7 weeks, and I will be happy to share with you.

P: Yes perfect. When you're finished, I would be very happy to read it.

Jakob Muus, Founder and CEO at Tracks, Berlin, Germany, June 13, 2019

H: So, if you're ready to get started, I'll just jump right in. So, how long have you been in Berlin?

J: On and off for 13 years, but I've been living here for 8 years.

H: Great. So, what originally brought you to Berlin?

J: I did an internship at the Danish Embassy in Berlin. While there is when I met the guy, who is now my husband, and I decided to move to Berlin. After I finished my studies, I decided to move here. That's why 13 years ago, I first came here, for the internship, but then 8 years ago I moved here to start living.

H: Yes, I feel like there's a big trend of people coming here for one reason and then meeting someone and ending up staying. This should be the city of love. I love that. So, would you mind telling me a little more about your educational background?

J: Just once again, I need to tell my colleague something... So, I studied my bachelor's at Copenhagen Business School in philosophy and business administration, and I moved onto a master's of innovation management and business development. I doubled that master's with a program from the European Management Schools, which is a master's in management. I did that in parallel. It's a program in Vienna, Copenhagen, in Prague, so it is two masters.

H: That's great. Those are also three fantastic cities. Very nice planning. So how did the philosophy aspect play into your future trajectory? Or was that more of a personal interest?

J: No, that was a direct goal for me. I knew when I started high school that is what I wanted to study. Also, I knew that I wanted to study business, but I've always been interested in one aspect of business that is not in many business schools. The Germans call it "Bildung," as opposed to "Ausbildung." It is the idea that you are not only learning something in school, but you are also learning the reasons behind it and the philosophy behind it. It was an experimental study program in Copenhagen Business School. We had classes in philosophy and things like that, but we also studied micro and macroeconomics. As you go on in your studies, it becomes more and more integrated. In the second year, you start studying a lot of philosophy. I started to think about a lot of things that I like in management and in a philosophical context. I also studied some classes in organizational sociology. The point is that a lot of the things that you are studying is also having to do with innovation. A huge chunk of innovation has to do with sociology as well. Innovation can survive in a company, but it is dependent on the people in the company that came up with the innovation. If you want to study business, it is a good idea to understand what is going on with people, and why people are acting like that. That is why it helped me a lot by having that in my bachelor's. As a master's, I don't think it would have been as helpful.

H: Wow, that's great. So, with all of these degrees and your language skills, I know that you could have gotten a fantastic job in a large organization, but what made you interested in pursuing entrepreneurship?

J: So, I did get a good job in a big company. When I first moved to Copenhagen, I started my own company. I was more in the marketing field, one was my cash cow, and another one was something that I wanted to build up. I was always very restless about it, so I was able to sell my company and then get a job at the Volkswagen Group. That is where I really started my career. I was in the Volkswagen Group research, then I moved to financial services. I worked for 6 years in different innovation roles and financial roles in the group working specifically on innovation management, but mainly focused on product services management. How do we combine these beautiful pieces of hardware with the technology in the innovation.

H: That's very interesting. So, thinking back on where you grew up and where you went to school, was there a strong culture of entrepreneurship there?

J: In my family, yes. There is entrepreneurship in the sense of having your own company and being able to say that you can solve this problem and build this company. That is something that I had throughout my entire childhood with these innovations. This was with my dad and my brother and my grandfather. I felt an urge to go out and solve a problem either in a company or on my own. I could see that from there.

H: Got it. So, shifting gears, I can see how the Volkswagen Group experience would help you think of Tracks, but would you mind briefly explaining Tracks?

J: Tracks started in 2008, but the idea came about before that. When I started at the Volkswagen Group Research, my interview question was “why don't we have platooning on the road?” Platooning is when two trucks are connected with technology to ensure that the brakes are 100-percent synchronized. The front truck, when he touches his brake pedals, it works on the rear truck. They must be in a very very close distance. We're talking technically 5m, but realistically 12 to 22 m. You must keep this distance, so the training truck drives in the wind shadow, which saves a lot of gas and money. When you know that it is technically possible and when you would save something, you have a win-win situation for everyone involved. Why do we not have it on the road? Economically there is a mismatch. My I said that my method is always to follow the money, so there must be a hidden cost. It is the coordination cost. There must be something to help lower this coordination cost. How can we lower this coordination cost, as it can help everyone. I put together a concept for a platooning service with my co-founder. We quickly got preseed money to develop this from an idea to a clear company, and while we were doing that, I realized that our service consisted of three technologies. This includes the two trucks that are platooning, when they're driving we need to measure how much they can save to be able to share the savings from the back truck to the front truck, and then we have something to make sure that the front truck always accept the payment. But I realize that these three technologies, it is very complicated, the middle one, because no one knows how much you save, so we don't know how much you should spend. It is very complicated. I hired a CTO. He is a former professor of mathematics, and he started working with us because he found the topic so interesting. Now he is looking at using machine learning to create a predictive cost measuring tool to show how much you would have saved by platooning and also how much you did save by platooning. Then we can show the trucks and the operators that. Now it is basically an AI services for trucking companies.

H: Wow, that is incredibly interesting, and that stuff isn't something that I, as a person outside the industry, would have ever known. Thank you for helping me understand that. With so many things going on with Tracks right now, and with so many things happening with development trying to make those calculations, what would success mean for the company?

J: On the long-term, the very long term, the mid-term, or the short-term? In the short-term, I would be very happy if we could get over the terrible seed round, which is always very difficult for a company like ours. Basically, we got a good pre-seed round, but we are seven employees, so we do spend €6,000 a month. We also don't have a product, so many investors do not want to put money in us because we are high risk. But we also need money to be able to get to the point where we can actually deliver something. That is very annoying, but I think that we're getting over it soon. We just have to give a few more shares to survive. In the mid-term, success for us would be to be able to create predictiveness with an error rate below 2%. Currently, the error rate is 20%, so you don't actually want to do anything. My personal goal is that I want to create something that people use either as a fuel management tool or to show computing course. My mid-term goal is that I want to see this work because I want to be able to see the linear savings of the customer and also the people at the very end of the logistics chain. It is a good industry socially and environmentally, so I want to see many other people coming in to help. Right now, our entire economy is dependent on these goods coming in, but the ways of organizing things is the same as 50 years ago. We're currently squeezing the last drop of it out at the moment. We make the truck drivers go and drive, but they never come home. We're turning people that have a driver's licenses, we're saying that

they can own the truck and own their calendars, but they become slaves to the system. All we do is that we take away social security from them, and we give them all of the risk if something goes wrong. The industry is getting more and more automated, and I'm hoping that with our data services, not only with platooning, but we're looking to make it easier to drive with more than just half a truck load, because you will be able to see that if you're driving somewhere and have room for more we can show them where there are more things that need to be shifted. We can show them how much more money they will get and how much more money that the person sending the goods will get. We become more efficient, cleaner, and safer. We want to help them get there.

H: That was a fantastic answer. Thank you. I know that you've a lot going on with securing the funding and with development, but looking ahead at the midterm and long-term goals, how do you as a company come together and measure to ensure that you are on track to that measure of success? What indicators do you look for?

J: That's a very good question. Right now, we are building up a technology and feature roadmap to apply for multiple grants, and right now we're trying to fix the designs for the company and shift the company from being very small to be ready for growth. Over the next few months we're looking to shift from 7 people to 17 people, so we must prepare for this. I must admit that I don't have any direct management tools that I can point to, as I'm still learning. All of the development is run directly by my CTO, as he is very experienced with that and running the roadmap. He has many many years of experience, obviously. I can see that we're going in the right direction, so I'm not worried about our management. I know that we should start building up our professional management side of the company. Then we can get more things done without it all landing now on my desk.

H: I definitely understand. I know that in the early stages, many things fall to the CEO when a lot of things aren't directly aligned to someone else. I know from your business background and taking the proactive approach of trying to organize everything for this big growth that you're talking about, I know that you've been reading up on a lot of different types of managerial styles. So how do you foresee yourself in the future actually setting goals for the company?

J: I've been flirting a lot with the idea of using OKRs. I like the idea. Bigger organizations tried to change their ways to OKRs, and I also like the idea of being born using OKRs. This is the process of creating a more structured kind of management. We must look at what our goal is for 1-year, 3 years, 5 years, and our goal is to try to set those up. We must give each other these types of goals so we can start with OKRs. It is very difficult because every process that we do is like open heart surgery. The company has to continue living while we do it.

H: Exactly. So now looking ahead, I know that you're focusing on many things, but on a day-to-day or week-to-week team basis, how do you actually go about ensuring that you are always achieving these goals and ensure that you're always moving forward?

J: So, we have daily meetings, which is our standard. I also have this standing meeting with our CTO. Everything tech related goes to him. That means that every, like HR, marketing, or sales thing comes to me. So, we always have these meetings where we catch up and inform each other, and that works right now as informal management. But my big thing is basically taking information from my management classes and from when I worked in corporate and continue to use them, which includes using to-do list, having my own rhythms to ensure that nothing gets forgotten, and, as I said, this is something that my other colleagues that work in the business part of the company are trying to change. Now we're trying to use a program to share our to-do list. We're trying to have clear areas of responsibility. We want to have a process of clear feedback every Monday, and so on and so forth.

H: Ok, I understand. This has been incredibly helpful, and I only have one more question for you. Just thinking 10, 15, 20 years from now, what do you ultimately want to do with Tracks?

J: I know that right now we're in an industrial revolution. In the last industrial revolution, many things happened. Many big companies rose because many things changed. Now the focus is data. Before they were better at using steel and doing better things with that. Now I want to be able to play a role in the logistics of the future. If we know how far the trucks are driving, we know how far they've come. We can coordinate them and coordinate shipments, and that works a lot with autonomous driving. We will have a lot of opportunities to play a lot of different roles, not only as a logistics provider. I see a lot of directions that we can go with the company as the landscape changes. We can become the kings of the logistics industry. When someone wants to build a gas station, we can show them the best places to build it. We can also make something like a free integrated transport system, and that will show them that the only part of the transport industry that is necessary is those that will take loads from the big logistics hub into the city. However, the long-distance trucks, they have to know where to go and to have their timings. So, I don't know, but my long-term idea is to not have an exit. With that being said, if someone comes and has a very very good offer on an exit, I must consider that.

H: Ok. I definitely understand what you mean, I believe that right now we're in a time of unparalleled change. What I like about Tracks is that it almost bridges contemporary businesses and more traditional driving and logistics, and it's also looking at what we'll need in the future. I wish you all nothing but great success in the future. Before we go, is there anything that you would like to add to your answers, make sure that I know, or do you have any answer questions for me?

J: You're always welcome to reach out to me. Please tell me more about what you're studying and what you're working on.

H: Of course. I'm working on my master's, which is a joint degree program, so it's a little similar to what you did. It is a bit at the intersection of applied management and globalization studies. It has all of these different aspects to it. My thesis specifically focuses on how founders' cultures may impact how he or she may view success in a Berlin-based startup. There's a management theory that based on what country and what culture you're from, you have a predisposed way of looking and uncertainty and ambiguity. There's no more uncertain career path than entrepreneurship. My theory is that by looking at two groups of founders here in Berlin from completely different sides of the spectrum, they would view success of their entrepreneurial ventures in different ways. It's been very interesting so far, and it will all be coming to a close in about 2 months.

J: That is super relevant and also super difficult because it's hard to think about success in the future. Also, how did you find me exactly?

H: I actually found you through LinkedIn. I have a LinkedIn recruiter account, so I can search through a variety of criteria. Luckily, a country like Denmark, which is a country that I'm looking for, I was thinking that not many people born outside of Denmark speak Danish, so I could search for people who speak Danish. That's how I came across you.

J: Ok, that makes sense. I was asking because I had something to do with one of the institute leaders in Göttingen, but that was a long time ago and had something to do with technology.

H: Well, that's great. I can thank the LinkedIn algorithms for providing you though. At the end, I will be making a 2-page summary of my findings, and I would be happy to share them with you.

J: Yes, that would be great.

H: Well, I know that you are very busy, so I will let you get back to your work but thank you so much for speaking with me. I'm looking forward to reconnecting soon.

J: Yes, of course, thank you so much.

Eny Patzig-Tyrpenou, Operations Manager at Ola Consulting, Berlin, Germany, June 13, 2019

H: Alright, so just to get started, how long have you been in Berlin?

E: I think since 2011.

H: Ok great. So, what originally brought you to Berlin?

E: I fell in love with a German guy in Greece, and he is my husband now. 2011 was the worst period of the crisis in Greece. There were no options for the job with my husband; he was in the online marketing. Greece was very far away from online marketing, so we cannot find a job there.

H: Ok I understand. Would you mind telling me a bit about your educational background?

E: Yes, I have 5 degrees. The educational system in Greece is different. Almost everything is in the private sector. The first one is the American College in Greece, and you may have seen it in mine LinkedIn. There I did marketing management. It was geared towards advertising, which is what I chose to do. After that, I worked for one year, and I went back to school. Then I went to school for PR and advertising. That was my second degree. There I also did psychology in advertising. That was the third degree. Then I took a job, and I did graphic design intensively during the summer because I tried to go into the design and creative part. So, what I finished in graphic design school, and then after that I moved from Athens to Thessaloniki, the second biggest city of Greece. And then I started working in PR, and I started to like design, and I was in a construction company doing the management and sales of a company. They recommended that I study interior design. Then I started studying interior design. It was 4 years, and I did 5 years in total. The university was in Greece, but it was also with the University of Lancastershire. So, then I updated my education by finishing that program. Somewhere in there I thought that I was finished.

H: That is very impressive. So, with so many degrees and being so well qualified in a lot of different areas, you definitely could have worked for a big company, so what made you interested in entrepreneurship?

E: Actually, I do not agree. In Greece to have marketable qualifications, this is mandatory. They want one person who can cover many needs. Multitasking is a qualification that everyone looks for. In Berlin I had difficulty working in an environment that did not acknowledge my ability to work in so many areas. It is too specialized, and the positions in companies are only one thing. You expect to only do one thing. Multitasking is something that I'm very good at, and I like to combine the information and knowledge, and that is not something that is needed here. I tried to work in a company here, and I felt extremely bored. I felt like I did not have to think because my task was so specified, and I could do it blindfolded. I did not think that I was rewarded for what I did, and I know and wasn't using what I know. I start to forget what I do.

H: That's very interesting to hear. It's also interesting because it is also very different in the US.

E: I had small experience in the U.S. When I met my husband, he was working as the chief marketing officer for a company that is now closed, but it is still operating in the U.S. He was working from home, and sometimes I would help him with something that he did not have the time to finish, and he told me that in the U.S, it is exactly like how it is in Greece. The more that you can do, then the more that you were rewarded. The more you can do, the more that you stay in a company. This is a qualification that they want and they like. In Germany, from big jobs two small jobs, it is so so specialized. It looks like they want dumb people.

H: I can definitely see how growing up in Greece and being in those kinds of educational environments will affect your view on working. So, do you think that growing up, I do not want to speak for you, but how do you think growing up where you did affected your views on entrepreneurship?

E: I think that it definitely made me a better entrepreneur. The freedom of thinking and the freedom of choosing for yourself is very important.

H: Ok great. So now shifting to what you are working on right now, it is Ola? Would you mind briefly explaining Ola?

E: Yes, Ola, that is “everything” In Greek. The origin of my husband is Spanish, and Hola is hello in Spanish. We were putting this together because I have the graphic design knowledge, and he has the online marketing knowledge. Doing this job, I have HTML expertise, and I also think that I can sell anything. I immediately pointed out that Berlin is the capital of online business. The biggest thing happens online. That was very impressive for me because Greece is very backwards. People do not do things online. People want to have a physical talk with people, and they want to touch before they buy. Therefore, I wanted to help the Greek people use the online market. Therefore, Ola is a company that helps Greeks understand how the online market works, and that is the approach that we did for the website.

H: Ok. I really like how that is a blend of your cultural understandings from growing up and studying in Greece and now living and working in a multicultural area. So, in your opinion, what would be your idea of success for Ola?

E: I think that success for Ola... when I see that the website and the consulting ideas that we give to people work, and they understand the value of the service that we provide. This makes me very happy, and it also makes me very happy that I have helped a lot of young Greek people. They can make a start here. They have managed to do well, and they have changed what we are trying to become. They are healthy business people. They have jobs. And they're able to enjoy life. That makes me very happy when we do that.

H: Great. So, thinking about the future, I think maybe 5 or 10 years from now, what would you like Ola to become?

E: Ola? What to become? I am always thinking about returning to my country. I am trying to preserve the connection to my country with Ola, so we work with a lot of customers that still live in Greece. So, I would like to return to my country with the knowledge of the European market. That would be the end goal that I die with Ola being alive and a business on a European level, but also in Greece.

H: Ok thank you. So, I know that for some entrepreneurial ventures, looking at revenue and growth can be easy to measure, but you said that you are trying to help these entrepreneurs in Greece grow and understand the market to find success. So, what kind of indicators do you look to gauge that you are on track towards success?



E: Personal contact. Most of the time it is personal contact. This is a very characteristic Greek thing. A lot of the feedback in statistical information that you get online can I get it from a lot of people, but they always tell people how they learned, and a lot of that goes mouth-to-mouth. This may not be the most efficient, but I enjoy it because he keeps the human relation alive.

H: That's great to hear. I have visited Greece, and one of my best friends is from Athens. She has a similar mentality. She is abroad right now in the UK, but she always said that she wants to preserve that connection to Greece and wants to find a way to give back. That's great to see the continuity between Greek people and their passion for their country. So, when you and your husband sit down every quarter, half a year, or year, how do you go about planning and setting your goals?

E: We do parallel tasks. We're also opening other businesses, and we're also running a very big Facebook group of Greeks here in Berlin. We're also doing a big marketing project that takes a lot of our time. Some clients that we worked with have stopped working with Ola. Ola is not a survival company, and I do not think that I have to have the money to survive. It is a company that I want to use to maintain my connection to Greece. I don't have to have it.

H: Ok. As you take on new projects and grow your knowledge, does your idea of success for the future change?

E: No, not at all. Everything that we do stays online. Right now, I'm preparing and creating this community. Then we will open a website because everything is online. Everything, like the experience that I am gaining with Ola is helping me grow--like with design, and I am also opening an e-commerce shop with jewelry. I am trying to create a situation that is a perfect example of what Ola knows how to do best. All I know is how to do e-commerce, handle social media, and create communities. I am trying to build the image of Ola, but not so public. Eventually, it is going to all merged together.

H: Ok. So, you are incredibly busy. I really appreciate your time. I actually only have one more question because you've been fantastic and given me so much information. So, it seems like you have personal and learning reasons for Ola, so how do you actually ensure that you are getting better and taking steps towards your ultimate success?

E: I'm doing some webinars and going to some conferences and meetups. I do a lot better organized here. I am making releases with other people who are helping me improve my abilities to do things like HTML encoding for a website. I want to be able to understand the internal functioning of a website. Now I'm doing a course for Google Analytics, but mostly this comes from accepting difficult projects. I will say no to a very easy website if it's just to get money. I accept products and clients that are new challenges to me. I always say yes, so I can encounter and overcome the difficulties by studying how to do it.

H: Ok, thank you so much. Before we go, is there anything that you want to add to your answers or make sure that I know know about you or Ola? Or do you have any questions to ask me?

E: What is the point of your research? What is the goal of our discussion?

H: Great question. I'm currently working on my master's thesis. My master's program is interdisciplinary, and it is in between globalization and applied management. What I am looking at is a management theory that says based on where you grew up and where you're from, you look at uncertainty and ambiguity in a different way. It is saying that every culture approaches uncertainty in in a different way, and there is no more uncertain career path and entrepreneurship. So, I'm taking people from one side of the spectrum and then the other side of the spectrum, and I'm looking at how their cultures may influence their ideas of

success in their startups. I will be finishing in the next 2 months, and if you're interested, I would be happy to share my two-page summary with you at the end.

E: Yes, I think that that is very important. I also do volunteering, and I have created a large group of Greek people here in Berlin, and we're having a big event soon. If I can ever help you, please let me know, and I would be happy to help you again. I really like your idea. From the 8 to 7 years that I have been in Berlin, I think that it has changed me also. One thing that has come out of me is that we cannot be one. North and south, the mentalities are so far away that they cannot communicate. Businesses and socially. The mentality of the U.S., I have seen things with people that I've worked with online, the American prototype is not close to the Greek one. That is my result. We cannot be one. Also, Berlin is not really Germany. It is so multicultural, and it is not German.

H: OK, that is very interesting. I was actually just reading a journal article about cultural blending, but that cannot happen very quickly. So therefore, there are a lot of issues when they're happening. However, I really appreciate your time. I really am looking forward to speaking with you again soon.

E: Yes, please send me anything that you want. I will read it all because I'm very interested. Thank you too, bye.

Malik Piara, Founder at Upframe, Berlin, Germany, May 30, 2019

H: How long have you been in Berlin?

M: Since August.

H: Since August. So, what are your initial impressions about the city?

M: Oh wow. The first thing I can say regarding the startup scene is that it is overwhelming. Coming from the small city of Lisbon, it is about 6 times smaller, it is just overwhelming because there so many things going on. So, it takes a little time to adapt. The city itself, I find Berlin very ugly. I don't like it very much here. However, it is good to be here. Many people come to Berlin for a purpose. They are here because they have a goal.

H: Ok that makes sense. Also, it's probably tough to find any city beautiful when you grew up in Lisbon. Would you tell me more about your educational background?

M: Yes, it has been quite a journey to be honest. I went to this private school since I was 3 years old. It is a Catholic private school, and it is normally ranked in the top 10 in Portugal. When I was about to pick my focus in the tenth grade, I went to study economics. For many reasons I failed at first. Then I decided that I don't want it here. I don't feel too comfortable around these people, and I don't feel like I can be myself. Then I decided to take a different route, which is the professional course. I went on to study computer programming, I went on for one year, and it was great. I was the director of the class, and I was learning. At the same time, I felt like it wasn't enough because I wasn't surrounded by vicious people. Even sometimes working with my professors, it wasn't what I wanted to do. So, I went back to the traditional education for one year, and I went to the sciences. This time I followed through and studied the sciences. I did the first year and the second year, which is the 11th grade, then I dropped out of school. Then, I just started studying on my own. What I did to trick the system was that I did not drop out of school, but I just cancelled all of the classes. However, with this system I didn't go to the classes, but I could still go to the exams, and the exam was all in. I did this with every single subject that I had, and I was all in. This was my trick to drop out of school, but I did not actually drop out. Then I ended up finishing, and I got into university. I got into the University of Lisbon studying computer science. I

studied there for one year, and it was great, and I learned a lot. It was much better than anything that I had before. I was the excited kid who is smiling every single day at 9 a.m., and even the professors thought it was weird. However, I did not feel like I was surrounded by ambitious people there. And then I found CODES, so I came here. And I'm currently on my way to the second year of 3 years. Here I am studying for two degrees in product management and interactive design. So the overview is common; normal traditional path of school, I started school and failed economics, but it was not because I did not like it, it was just personal, and didn't want university and its science, dropped out, studied computer science by myself, and now I'm here.

H: Ok. So, having studied so many different things, what made you interested in entrepreneurship?

M: To be honest, I think it has always been in my nature. I would not say that I was born this way, but external and internal conditions have guided me to be who I am. As a kid, I grew up with my mum being sick since I was born. She had this mental illness, and it was always difficult to cope, so I was never able to relate and have a conversation with her. That brought a lot of emotional trauma and emotions growing up. My dad was always working to support us and to help the family. So, I grew up very isolated. In a weird way, I found that computers were my friends. I started interacting with computers when I was 5 or 6 years old. First, I was playing these flash player games on my own, but then at a very early age I started to interact with a bit of programming and building things. I built my first thing when I was 10. The first successful project that I had was when I was 10. It was a wrestling website in Portuguese. It had about 80 active users weekly. The way I started building those projects was first with design. I started designing the things that I wanted to build on Photoshop, and I went to forums and tried to get people to give me the code and tell me how to do this or that. Some people were nice and helpful, but then I started to learn HTML and learn how to do those things by myself. To answer your question, I started building things and doing projects when I was a kid, and I started to do this around when I was 10. I also started to play online games, and I would always be the one creating alliances and trying to get people to join me. Then when I was 10, I started to have online alliances with 600 people, and even weird enough it was parents and even a chemistry professor of mine. Sometimes I would even fake my age, like when I built the wrestling website, I would say that I was 16 or 17 to get some credibility. First, I started to build these things that were not related with entrepreneurship directly. This is all to say that I think what got me here were the things that I did as a kid. The things that everyone said I was wasting my time on; those were the things that ended up shaping me.

H: Ok, so I would definitely see how that could give you the skills in the interest to start to do what you've done, but I think that there's a big difference in doing it for fun and doing it for a profession. So, what made you interested in this change?

M: To be honest, I don't think there is that much of a difference. To be honest, Upframe was founded by accident. There was a time as a kid, I've always really admired Bill Gates, and people have always told me that I was good with technology as a kid. I was always the one growing up who knew the most about technology, so I looked up to these kinds of figures. I thought maybe if I could build an operating system... I really admired these people, and I sent him a letter as a kid. I don't know if it ever reached him, but it became a habit of mine. I just wanted to let people that I admire know that I admired them. When I was 15 and 16, I started to send messages and emails to people that I admired. One day I asked myself "who do I want to be." I was totally lost after failing this and that. So, I stopped and made a list of people that I admired in some way, and I realized that that list was not that big. I went to LinkedIn and started to look up these people, and I sent some founders and people that I really admired messages. Surprisingly, most of the people actually replied and invited me for a coffee. There I was as a 16-year-old kid, and I was grabbing breakfast with the founder of the biggest startup in Portugal at a cafe next to his house. I was thinking what the hell is going on. Why is he giving me his time? His company is growing, and it is in all of these countries, what the hell. Why is he giving me his time? As this started to happen more, I

thought maybe I could start giving an hour of my time to help people like me. I started to find these people, and everything was in the right place, and it was the right time. So Upframe was born. It was bringing people together in the right room and give them the tools that they need to build what they want. I just started to organize a meet up and inviting people to speak and... but I had no clue. I was always seeking advice from the best people that I know. I was thinking, “who are the best people in Portugal that I can reach out to?” Some people became advisors, and I was always seeking them out. Upframe was always iterating and quickly took shape. It became a community for university students who wanted to become entrepreneurs. It became, what I call it, a pre-accelerator. It was all about what we called the “playground.” It was a 6-week program to get students who already had a mission or knowledge, and we would connect them and help them do things like do user research, test the product, do market research. Many people who are going to accelerator programs in Portugal did not approach solving problems in the right way.

H: Ok, I don't know if you are good at reading upside-down, or you could just know what I was going to ask, but you answered plenty of my future questions there. So, you mentioned in the beginning that you had an idea of what you wanted Upframe to be, but how has your idea of success for Upframe changed?

M: Good question. I think a reason why Upframe has been successful is because I was not attached to a certain goal or idea. I started to have problems when I started to fall in love with the goal or the idea, then there were problems. I always think that in the beginning first timers have an advantage because they don't have the advice. In the beginning my goals with Upframe was too... I started a messaging group and invited five other kids that I looked up to and ask them what they wanted. Initially the goal was to get people in the right room and give them the tools. Then we started to do the right thing and create reactions.

H: Ok, so it sounds like you had a general idea of what you wanted it to be. However, now and back then, what did you think about when you thought about the general idea of success for Upframe? When do you think you would be satisfied with the success of the project?

M: That is a great question. You know what, I have a problem being satisfied. I did not realize how big Upframe could be. Once it started to get traction, I started to change how I approached it and how I looked at it. It is hard to answer this question because I'm currently going through a transformation in my life and starting to see things differently. It was always about this toxic notion that things are never good enough, and you have to make them grow. Up until recently my vision for Upframe was very... it was about building a world where people were actually able to be what they want to be. When I was studying computer science, my friends who are there, I could tell that they did not want to be there. They told me that they were there because of the market and the market for programmers. I had a friend who is learning Japanese by himself, and every day I was meeting kids like me from small villages in Portugal, and it just was not fair. They are smarter in a way that I don't think I will ever be able to be. Because they are from these places, even though the internet has somewhat changed the rules, they will never have the opportunities. For example, I'm here in Berlin because of luck, not opportunities. This is the difference that I care about. They could not make that choice, and that outrages me. We don't live in a world where everyone can be what they want to be. I like to study philosophy and look at utilitarianism, and I want to think about how to decrease suffering for everyone. How can we use technology? How can we do something to really change things for the better? The vision for Upframe was to slowly shift things to a digital approach to be able to affect people worldwide. Therefore, we wanted to build startup clubs in different cities in Europe, run independent programs, and we would be able to tie everything together.

H: Ok, I really like that vision, and I really like the ultimate goal. However, that is very difficult to measure. So, for you, what kind of indicators do you measure to make sure that you're moving to that success?

M: I used to focus a lot on data and quantitative metrics. In the beginning, I was thinking about how many startups are built because of Upframe. People with more experience who I've spoken with have told me that is very shallow because the work that I'm doing here is not about forcing people to make startups. That is the next step. It is more about training people. It is about showing them the possibilities, showing them what is out there, and connecting them to help them get there. I think it's more of a qualitative metric in this case. I think Upframe is a special case because it is building something unique. And so, my metrics until now were very qualitative driven, and they were focusing on the process and following my gut. What I found out about results for this kind of work is that these results don't come out for a very long time. One of the 6-week programs that we've built, we had 107 applications, we accepted 12, and out of those 12, and that was in 2007, two startups were born, actually 3. Another person is building e-commerce businesses for other people. When looking at those metrics, by the numbers, we get surprised because it was a shame that we could not do more. But it was still impactful. One person on my team was from one of the smallest villages in Portugal. Now he's working for a big company from San Francisco, and he is changing how the web works for people all around the world. That is my view of success for you. Someone from a small village met a mentor from Upframe, and I know his life changed.

H: That is incredible. I wouldn't be too tough on yourself. That is still a great ratio of success.

M: Yes, and indirectly there were other startups built indirectly. I cannot blame myself, but they're still there. What I am trying to say to wrap this up, is the work we were doing is the work that should be optimized for uncertainty. I was focused on what people were telling me about metrics, but how the hell can you have metrics for something that relies on uncertainty?

H: Yeah definitely. It's my last question, but because you have gotten different advice from different people, how do you plan on actually achieving your goals?

M: I am finding out that there are actually many ways to do so. The goal is that I want to build a world where more people have a choice to be what they want. It does not have to be every person, but more people. Something about this expression is that it is very abstract, and there so many things I can do to make it happen. Right now, I'm going through a stage in my life where I am detaching myself from Upframe, and people are there building events that do not rely on me anymore. Maybe it will end at some point, but I don't know. I'm learning to detach myself from outcomes and focusing more on the process. I want to build other things and join other people. I'm moving to Hamburg to join XING to build a product, and I don't know what will happen there. I want to be working with people that work to help people be what they want to be. I'm building two new products right now for fun, but who knows what will happen.

H: OK that is great. Those are all of my questions, but before we go is there anything that you wanted to add to your answers or make sure that I know?

M: Yes. I wrote an article about this this week. The conclusion took me a lot of time and ego reversal to get there. I don't have any mirror for building Upframe. My track record until then was black. For the record, I have a lot of ego attached to me. I like to be the center of attention. It is a personality trait and something that I'm not totally in control of. I always saw myself as someone who could be like Bill Gates one day, and that is very dangerous. What I am trying to say, is that I created my own luck. The argument I'm trying to make is about creating your own luck. I created my own luck by putting myself in environments that enabled opportunities to arise and for me to take advantage of them. In the real world, collision is an opportunity. There is a lot of serendipity and opportunity out in the world waiting. You can create your own luck by putting yourself in places, come on, and the best thing that can happen is way better than the worst thing that can happen. If I go to a meet up, the worst thing that can happen is that I don't speak with anyone and I'm alone for 2 hours. If I keep putting myself in situations where that can

appear, then eventually it will. That is what happened with Upframe. Putting myself in situations where I was speaking with people and meeting them, opportunities came up. Eventually we got to work with the best investors and accelerators, and eventually we were in newspapers and online. You can make your own luck, and I think entrepreneurship is about people who make their own luck. Luck is not random, but you are in control if you know how it works. Me being in Berlin, I put myself in a place to allow things like this to continue to come up. The other thing I can say, with some arrogance, is that I will get products and continue to build in the same way. I have no doubt in my mind that success will eventually come to me. This is a trial-and-error process. What I'm doing right now is getting in the habit of failing as fast as I can. If I have an idea, I build a prototype in a week, is it helping people? Yes or no? Kill it and move on. I build a product in one week. What is the worst thing that can happen? I wasted one week. What is the best thing that can happen? The scope is so much larger. The probability is on your side if you keep doing that. Mark Zuckerberg was 19 years old. What did he know about product management? That is another side that I realized very quickly. Having the opportunity to be with these people who I admired so much, they were also so young and that empowered me a lot.

H: Very nicely said. I'm totally done, but do you have any additional questions for me?

M: No, I actually have to go. But I would like to talk later and learn about your background.

Caspar Schmick, Founder at THE VIELD, Berlin, Germany, June 12, 2019

H: So, just to get started, how long have you been in Berlin?

C: This is my 8th year now. I arrived in 2011.

H: And what originally brought you here?

C: A job with a technology company.

H: Great. Would you mind briefly telling me about your educational background?

C: Yeah. I studied business with a bachelor in England at the University of Buckingham, and also at the same institution I followed the bachelor with a Master of Science in service management. After this, I went into professional life. I worked in the sports media industry for about 11 or 12 years. First, this was on a full-time employment basis with various employers in London and Manchester. I worked with Deloitte with their sports business group. I was part of that, and after Manchester I went to Berlin to work for One Football, which is a football application. It is one of the first apps in the market. Since 2016, I have been working on freelance work and on the company.

H: That's great. I saw Deloitte on your LinkedIn profile, and I'm actually going there to start my professional career after my masters, so it's always great to see Deloitte alumni out doing interesting things. Would you just briefly tell me more about this service management masters? Is this more of a professional degree?

C: Service management was, at that stage, a relatively unique degree that combines how to manage the delivery of services, in a way. It has marketing elements, it has quality management, and it has human resources management components that combine to deliver that service for that program.

H: Ok, I understand. That sounds very useful to essentially any field. So, thinking a little more about where you grew up, how do you think where you grew up impacted your professional interests?

C: Well, I grew up in a family with two sisters and a brother. I played a lot of sports when I was a kid, and I lived in a street where you can play in the street. So, my friends and I were playing football and basketball and we rode bicycles all day. There was a lot of freedom involved. My parents didn't have to watch us the majority of the day. Through that I got a high affinity to sports, so I think that that was also a reason why I was fascinated by the sports industry. Is that where your question was heading? I also partially grew up near Dusseldorf in Germany, and in school in Germany you were not directed in any way towards what you may be interested in after school. A lot of people leave school without knowing at all what they want to do or what they may be good at. That was a big thing because I also did part of my school in England, and in England you get much more guidance towards after-school interests. I thought that that was a massive difference.

H: Ok, interesting. Now would you briefly tell me more about your current entrepreneurial venture? It is the Vield.

C: Yes, it is filled with a "V." It is located in Velix (sp.), so it is like the German pronunciation of field. It is basically an innovation off-site space that we have created from an old barn that we bought about 5 years ago. It is an hour north of Berlin. I bought it with the purpose of turning at least part of it into an innovation off-site space. I saw with my co-founder that there was a gap in the Berlin off-site retreat space. Basically, a lot of companies do this frequently, especially in established startups and big companies who tend to take two or three days out, even up to every three months. All the teams come together and formulate new strategies or have some type of off-site with the team for various reasons, but there are a lot of urban spaces in Berlin, but they are distracting, very old school with conference tables and a blackboard, and they can also be very expensive and impersonal as well. What we want to do is to have a very innovative and open space. It is not luxury or anything, but it is very focused on how work can be delivered in the most efficient way by giving tools and having coaches at hand to deliver workshops or inspirational talks or sessions, depending on the requirements of the business that is booking the place. That is what we're doing. We are currently building it. Of course, we're refurbishing the entire thing, and we are going to open at the beginning of September, if the building of the site goes to plan. That is a big if though.

H: I feel like building anything is a big if when it comes to time frame. I really like that idea though. So, in thinking about how the doors will be opened, hopefully, very soon, what is your idea of success for the Vield?

C: For us, success would be to cover our costs in the first year. Those are our running costs. Our running costs are projected, but of course the plan always turns out to be different than the projections. Our projections are that we will have relatively low running costs. We want to have a relatively lean operation with not very many employees. We will have a few employees doing operations, and of course we will have housekeeping and so on, but we will not have a restaurant or anything that is constantly running. For us, it will be covering our costs for the first year. After that, we have to see and invest a little bit more. We do not expect to become filthy rich with this kind of venture, but we want to have synergies with what we're doing anyway and so on. The Vield can kind of be elongated by other businesses that we do. I cannot put any digits on it though.

H: Ok, I definitely understand. So in between now, the first year, and then going forward, what kind of the indicators are you and your team looking at to ensure that you are on track to the success that you've envisioned?

C: An important thing for us is establishment with brands, not exactly customers. Well of course customers, but the number of days booked in the place is essentially a currency, as that is our main source of revenue. We want to ensure that the partners that we work with, for example with a lot of great

companies sponsoring parts of the furniture and things. Someone is helping us with the kitchen, someone is helping us with the mattresses, and these are also startups who are cool and also have a lot of credibility in the market, and we want to be a credible brand as well, but also we want to have a story to tell. We'll not want people to go to our place and get drunk all the time and just have a retreat. What we want to do is that we want people to work here, and we want to be perceived as a place that really delivers an added value to companies as they go on offsites. Very often, that is not the case. When we look at how we are perceived and what outsiders think about us, everything else will follow. That is very important to us. Of course, this also has things to do with marketing, but that is essentially the most important thing. We want to make sure that, first of all, we are making a case of who we are, and we're also finding the right people to come to our space.

H: Definitely. I know that it's a little early to be really thinking about this, but maybe in 5, 10, or 15 years and the Vield is up and running, how could you see your view of success changing over time?

C: I'm not quite sure. Maybe I don't understand.

H: Of course. Do you think that maybe once you reach your first idea of success, and the Vield has become a well-regarded offside location, do you see yourself wanting to grow it or maybe take yourself out of the day-to-day operations of it, or how do you see the long-term idea of the Vield growing?

C: I think that we could see ourselves adding a social aspect to it. The region that we are located in, north of Berlin, it is one of the most least populated areas of Germany. That is not because it is not very useful, but they're are not very many opportunities for young people to work, so a lot of villages are dying out. In our vision and mission, we want to help young people identify career opportunities and get people together to really think about sustainable businesses and ways to improve sustainability and, in general, this area. This has to do with nature, but also, of course, sustainable businesses. We could be thinking about making our space more of a common good space, and that can be an understanding of success as well. There can be a charitable aspect of it. On the other hand, businesswise, the physical space, we're also having and opening an agency that can work remotely outside of the space. What I'm doing right now with my co-founder, the co-founder has a very strong background in design thinking and coaching, and she can take a brand to the outside world and make it more of an agency approach that is not so much linked to a physical space, but it is more of a mental capability. Another option would be, given now that we have a lot of experience in building sites, interior, and creative spaces, and also in applying for grants, I don't think that we would build another space like that, but we could help others who want to build a space like that and help them deliver these products. There a lot of mistakes you can make, and I think that we've made them all. We think that there is a big opportunity there without degrading what we're actually doing too much. Let's see.

H: That's great. I know that you are very tight on time, so I want to be cognizant of that, but you've been so helpful. I really appreciate that. Is there anything that you would like to add to your answers before you go, or do any questions for me before we have to leave?

C: No. I hope that I've been able to provide valuable insight to you. So, what exactly is the title of your thesis, and what are you going to do?

H: Yes. For my thesis, I'm looking at how culture plays a role in how people view success in their Berlin-based entrepreneurial ventures. I think that having seen both Germany and the UK throughout your childhood and in studying in the UK, I think that maybe you've seen the differences between both of these places. There is management theory that is based on where you grew up and what culture you're from, you view uncertainty and ambiguity in a different way. And my thinking is that...



C: Oh yes, I've heard of this. It is from Hofstede? I studied that in university as well.

H: That's great. I'm actually studying two polar opposite groups of people on that index, and I'm comparing how these entrepreneurs' view of success in their startups here in Berlin. It's actually all coming to a close in the next 2 months, and when I'm done, I'll be writing a 2-page summary. I would be happy to share with you once I'm done?

C: Yes of course. I would love to read it. Also, what is the opposite? Is it African countries?

H: No, it's actually comparing countries like the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden and on the other side, which is high uncertainty avoidance, you have countries like Poland, Greece, in Portugal. This has been very interesting because I've gotten to meet a lot of different people from around the world. It's been a great project to work on. However, I will be happy to share it with you when I'm done. I really appreciate your time.

C: Hans, it was a pleasure, and good luck with your thesis. I am looking forward to reading more about it.

H: Thank you so much. Best of luck with the Vield.

Eyass Shakrah, COO at Frontier Car Group, Berlin, Germany, June 17, 2019

H: So, just to get started how long have you been living in Berlin?

E: 2 years.

H: Wonderful. What originally brought you to Berlin?

E: The startup world.

H: Definitely. Now would you mind telling me more about your educational background?

E: Sure. I studied business and economics in Stockholm and then went on to do investment banking for a while before jumping into the startup world.

H: And where were you doing investment banking? Was that also in Stockholm?

E: No, that was in London.

H: Ok that's great. My older brother was an investment banker in London as well, so I'm somewhere familiar with the space. So, coming from undergraduate to a world like investment banking, what made you interested in entrepreneurship?

E: I think that the step into investment banking was more of a derailing from what I wanted to do before. As a teenager, I had a lot of small projects and small business ventures. When you go to business school, everyone wants to be an investment banker, so you think that it's a great place to start off. I do think that it is an interesting place to start off though. Entrepreneurship is great because it's not very hierarchical, and it's great to start up a lot of different ideas. It's a great environment, and in some ways, organizations are more efficient because you don't have the politics and these kinds of things.

H: Ok, I definitely understand. So, I definitely wouldn't say that it's a typical past time for teenagers to be involved in entrepreneurship, so do you think that somehow where you grew up impacted your professional interests?

E: Yeah, that's interesting. For me, I started out learning how to code when I was a younger teenager, and I think that where you live is very pivotal in your life as a teenager. Maybe you don't see it as entrepreneurship, but you'll see it as just trying to make your life online. I was not so much thinking that I wanted to run my own business or startup in an environment like this, but I was just doing what I was interested in. There were no family ties or anything like that, but it was just me and some geeky friends just trying to find our way.

H: Ok great. So, shifting gears and focusing on a Frontier Car Group, or do you just say Frontier?

E: No, we say FCG.

H: Ok FCG, I like that. Now would you mind telling me more about your venture?

E: Sure. FCG started about a bit more than 2 years ago. What we do is we allow people in emerging markets the transparency and ability to sell their cars and refinance these cars. They're similar companies here in Europe, like one called Alpha Eins here in Germany. We're not only allowing people to get paid right away and do it hassle-free, we are building an amount of trust in these countries. For example, the number one way that carjacking happen in Mexico is when people try to sell their cars. There's not any type of centralized registry for car ownership. So, if someone takes the sheet from you showing that they have the title to it, now there's no way to check it. So, there are so many robberies and the issue of trust is such a big problem. Therefore, being able to get over that trust issue is a big point of growth for us. Right now, we have roughly 2000 people, and we buy the car from the consumer and at the same time have an auction app with all of the dealers in the country so that they can bid on the car in real-time. A consumer comes to us, we inspect the car, and based on this inspection, we'll show all the dealers, all the dealers get on-boarded onto our app to see all these cars based on the inspection report. Today we've sold cars for roughly 540 million dollars and work currently in 9 countries.

H: That's very impressive, and I also really like the idea behind it. In my opinion, it's bridging the gap between liquidity of large assets in these underdeveloped markets and also helping to alleviate the trust issues in these countries. I really resonate with that, and it's incredibly interesting. So, taking a step back and thinking about FCG in the broader sense, what does success mean for the company?

E: I think today, in these markets, if you exclude India where we have a joint venture, and if you exclude the U.S. which is a highly competitive market, there are roughly 25 million used cars transacted on an annual basis. The system of transacting this is incredibly crude in these countries at the moment. Initially, the number of cars we traded was our method of gauging success. However, today what we're doing is rapidly evolving into way more than that. 60% of the cars that we sell in Nigeria, we sell with dealer financing. A lot of the lending programs in these countries are virtually non-existent because the banks won't lend to these people without any type of credit history. So, all of the people that use our platforms are scored based on how they pay their bills. This is not yet a huge part of our program, but we are starting to extend credit based on these data points. So, like I said, 60% of the cars we trade in Nigeria come with our credit, and we received roughly 5% interest on that over a 30-day period. That translates into close to 75% on an annual basis. The reason for that is that these dealers don't have any other avenue to get credit for funding, because it's a very task-based method for working, and also the dealers would not extend these credits because it's normally not based on any type of track record that these people have. Also, they would not accept these people's accounting methods because it's not a very common practice

among these small dealers. Right now, we're looking at more of the financing route for car trading. That's something that we're really focusing on.

H: Ok I understand. So, when you and your team take a step back every quarter or half a year or before year-end to assess your progress towards this huge success, what indicators do you measure to ensure that you are on track to reach this success?

E: Sure. From our perspective, of course we have budget forecasts, and at the moment the number of cars that we transact based on the total number of used cars transacted in the world is currently still under 1%. When we set up budgets and forecasts, it's not based on when we think we're going to get this share of market share, because that is not realistic at this point. We're looking at our historic growth, and we are seeing how we can grow based on what we saw last year. That's the kind of bottom-up approach, if you will. We're looking at selling based on how many salespeople we have, based on our previous track record. We're also looking at the top-down approach by looking at how many cars are being sold in this market and how many cars we want to be able to sell in the future. This kind of long-term forecasting is more top-down looking and future-forecasting. So, if we think that it's going to be growing at 18% amount every year, where does that put us in this future? We are mostly looking at the ground level things, like how well did we do based on how well we've done previously. When looking at things like the growth rate and what we have to be able to do to continue that, what we're really focusing on is making sure that we are preparing ourselves to be able to grow at a much faster rate in the future. Of course, we also want to see sales, revenues, the cost of revenues, so how much would we sell for each dollar spent, the marketing cost for generating that revenue, so customer acquisition costs, and also the entire amount of money that we have to put in to generate that revenue.

H: Ok, that's great to know. So, thinking back over the past 26 months of development of the company, how has the concept of success changed over time, or has it?

E: Yeah, that's a great question. I think that initially it was more about, can we gain traction. With a certain level of milestones that we had to hit to be able to say that we think that it is working and is worth investing more time and money in. I said that we were in 9 countries today, but we originally started in 4 countries. We give ourselves 6 months and try to reach these certain milestones in each country, and if we can't then we must go back and re-evaluate everything. For example, we were in Turkey, and this was before the lira was tanking and things like that, and we were not hitting or meeting little milestones in Turkey, so we want to make sure that we knew why that was happening and if we could actually overcome that before investing millions of dollars. The view of success at that point was going through a process from A to Z, how do we get the customer through the marketing, how do we get the customer to sell the car to us, and then how do we sell that car to the dealership. We didn't look at it like do we need to have x number of course of month. Now, today, we know that the business works, and we've reached a certain scale, so I think that success now is a much more granular process. We look at success on a department level. The marketing team in Mexico will have a successful month or quarter if they hit their marketing KPI's. It's hard to look at everything on aggregate and say it was one month or one quarter successful. How you think about goal setting becomes more and more gradual and on a departmental level as you grow.

H: Ok, that makes sense. I really appreciate your time; this is actually my last question for you. And, of course, you don't have to give away any secrets of the operation, but how are you and the rest of the c-suite team actually planning on achieving the success that you set out to achieve? What's the strategic roadmap look like?

E: Sure. That's a tough question. I always think about the business at this stage in a few different dimensions. One is that we're looking at the car trading business. We've learned a lot over the last 2 1/2

years, and we know that we want to grow the core car trading business. We realized that to grow our car trading business, we know that we need something like Carfax. If we are buying or selling cars, we want to make sure that we know if this car has been lost or stolen or something like that. There's no process like that in these countries. Something like a centralized database for car ownership does not exist. Setting something like up in these countries is very very important. So, right now we're looking at pieces of infrastructure we need to continue to grow our business. Those key pieces of infrastructure that we need to continue to grow our business will be needed by other companies at periods, and we are looking at tapping into these opportunities outside of just car trading itself. This year were looking at doing roughly 580 million dollars of sales. The year after that were looking at roughly 1.4. In percentage terms, that means that our percentage growth each year is also growing. Not only our business is growing, but also the percentage of growth is growing. That means that every six months or so, we must reevaluate how we do things in every single department. How we do sales today is very different from how did sales 6 months ago. And then it we'll continue to have to change if we grow at this rate. Remember we're still below 1% market share globally, so we still have a lot of growth in the future because we're still just such a small part of the entire industry. Our plans are ambitious. I don't think that we'll be expanding into as many countries as we have historically, so we're just going to go deeper into each country that we're in today. We want to sell more cars and want to have more to offer around these car sales. Dealer financing has been a great success for us so far, and I think that that's something that we really want to continue to grow in the future.

H: That fantastic answer. Now, thank you so much for your time. Before we go, is there anything you would like to add to your answers, or do you happen to have any questions for me?

E: I would say one of the biggest pieces of learning from me from launching businesses in these countries, we want to be able to make it really easy for clients and consumers and customers to be able to tell us what they want us to do differently. That's one of the biggest drivers for our strategy. Anyone who is working with us, we want them to have five or six different ways to give us feedback. Then we can look at all this different feedback, and then we can say, ok our dealers don't really like it when we do this, so how can we actually change this. A lot of us aren't industry experts, and I don't even have a driver's license. So, what we have to do is have to constantly be asking for feedback. From that feedback, we're going to be able to fix and build on top of our platform.

H: Ok, interesting, so are all the strategic changes that you make on a country-by-country basis, or is that something that you make on a global scale?

E: That's a great question. We do most of these things on a country-by-country basis. Very early on we realized that we did build a slightly different product for each country. Of course, we have a centralized codebase, but we must adapt things on a country-by-country basis to make it country specific.

H: Ok that makes a lot of sense. I'll let you get back to work, and I really appreciate your time. It's a little scary, but I will be making my findings for my thesis in the next month or so, and I would be happy to share my two-page summary with you in the end if you be interested?

E: Yes, please. And where are you based in Germany?

H: I'm actually here in Berlin, but the university is in Göttingen. I'm really happy that I added you on LinkedIn, because I really like the vision in the growth behind FCG, and I'm really excited to see where you all take it the future. I wish you nothing but success.

E: Yes, and if you're ever back in Germany, please look me up and I'll be happy to reconnect.

H: Yes, that sounds fantastic. I will send you a message later on. Thank you again for your time and have a great rest of the day.

Jon Sykes, Founder at Racemappr, Berlin, Germany, June 11, 2019

H: Great. So just to get started, how long have you been in Berlin?

J: I've been in Berlin for a few years now, but I've kind of come and gone.

H: Ok. So, what do you think of Berlin?

J: It was one thing when I first came. I first worked in an agency, but for a year and a half I've been doing my own thing. So, I went from agency life to agency and startup life. That is all good. As far as the city goes, it's changing a lot. Therefore, more foreign people here. There's far more openness for people who don't know German, for example. It really is growing up as a city more and more.

H: I certainly agree with that. I had originally spent a summer here during my undergraduate career, and even back then it seems like a completely different city. Now would you mind briefly walking me through your educational background?

J: Sure. I went to secondary school in the UK and did A levels at that school, which is very common. I did undergraduate in business administration in Cardiff. Then I did an advanced professional diploma in advertising. That was a one year post graduate course specializing in advertising. It was quite prestigious at Watford College. It's a great way to get into the market.

H: Great. So, this final certificate course, was that primarily focused on professional development?

J: Yeah. I did not know what else to do. As a student I studied business, I decided to not go to theatre school. I never really had a plan, and I did advertising because of the recommendation of someone else. To get into an agency in the London area, I had to find something to do. I wanted to try it out and see what it was like. A few years later, I had my own agency.

H: So, with this educational background in business and working in other agencies, you definitely could have stayed on the track of working for other people and building your way up. However, what made you interested in entrepreneurship?

J: Because I'm not very interested in working for other people. That is something that I struggle with. I think it's more of the idea of working for other people's decisions that affect your life and your work outputs. I'm someone who is built to work. I enjoy working, and I work a lot. I believe that if you work hard and you do well, then you deserve it. Working for someone else was not enough to push me. I always knew since I was young that I wanted to build things. My dad has his own company, so it was always my expectation of myself to create something, but I did not know what. The agency was a lot because that is where I really progressed professionally. However, Racemappr, my startup, is really my passion. I love to create things. I'm an idea person, and this business was something that has really evolved and that I've pushed through.

H: Ok great. So, a little bit of background, prior to my masters', I co-founded a travel technology startup in the U.S. That was something that I never really planned on doing, but it was definitely a passion. So, I can definitely commiserate with the good and bad aspects of patterns like that. So, you mentioned that your dad also ran his own business, so how do you think where you grew up influence your professional interests?

J: So, I grew up in the London area, and it was an area that many would consider prestigious. So, I always grew up with quality professionals. Everyone around me were doctors or lawyers. There was always so much pressure on you to go and make something of yourself. Of all the children, I was probably the one who is least motivated for education. I think that this scenario of being around people who have done things that society would see as achievement, that would impact you. I think that moving to Berlin was the biggest thing that I've done to decide what I do not need in my life. I am not motivated by money at all, so it was something that really allowed me to push myself to go and build. I guess I've always grown up and pursued things kind of the opposite to where I grew up.

H: Ok. So, you mentioned moving to Berlin in conjunction with that, do you think that in comparison to other startup hubs abroad, the Berlin startup scene is not as one track-minded by looking at only profit outcomes?

J: I think that is a generalization that one can make. I was in the startup scene in London. I have a lot of friends who have socially minded startups, and Racemappr also has a social aspect behind it. But I'm conscious of making a successful structure first. That can help you grow it. I don't think that the social mission will help you grow it to start. I think that there is an attitude in Berlin that is very different from other cities because of the history of it. The attitude to work is very very different here. If you are not someone who is self-motivated, then you will find it very difficult to push yourself here. Berlin just doesn't have that push and the energy in it if you are not someone who is self-motivated, then you will find it very difficult to push yourself here. Berlin just doesn't have that push, and the energy in Berlin; it's just very different London. It's just very different. That does not mean that it's necessarily a better environment, but it just changes the push of life. I'm also someone who worked in London for 7 years and came with that attitude. I think that someone who has that understanding about push in a different environment just stands a much better chance of being successful here.

H: Ok, definitely. I certainly know what you mean. My older brother lives and works in London, and he is always working. It seems like a relatively intense environment.

J: What industry is he in?

H: He is in investment banking.

J: Oh wow. It's not working, it's client management.

H: Yes, it's very different from here. So, switching gears and looking at Racemappr, would you mind briefly telling me about the venture?

J: Yes. So, I love doing races and finding people to do races with. Overall, I want to simplify the process of finding new races and connecting people in them. The whole idea is just to make it easier to find these races. For example, there are hundreds in Berlin, but most people never find them. So, the process is to take something like the experience of race day and put it online. We're doing that with various social tools that help event organizers. Most of the organizers and volunteers don't actually have any social media skills, so what we're doing is utilizing social media to help these people do what they're doing. That is my objective. Of course, it is a process depending on what you learned and when you watch it.

H: Ok I really liked that idea. I know that a lot of sports and activities like that have such a strong community around them, so that makes a lot of sense.

J: There are clubs as well. When you have racing from a business point of view, it is hard because the average person does fewer than 5 races a year. What I'm doing is creating a connection on a daily basis, and I want to help these people engage on a more constant, driving-connection basis.

H: Now I understand. So, in your personal opinion, what would success mean for Racemappr?

J: It's interesting because my minimum is to say that I want one person to find one race or one person who has never raced before to find one. However, when it comes to investments of my time and energy, I want to encourage people to race globally, and I want to facilitate that. And I want to centralize the process behind it all. Of course, that is my vision. I certainly have put her up myself, but success for me is to get my vision of my product live and get it to a point where it is making a difference for people.

H: Great. And if you don't mind me asking, what is the size of the team right now?

J: So, I'm the only founder. Right now I'm talking with someone to hire, but it is just a question of cash flow. I do have a tech partner. A friend of mine who is a business partner at the agency, he is actually building the app and building the website. He's working on a project basis. I also have partnerships with multiple student organizations, and they help provide students a lot of different experiences. Then we have interns as well, so we have a runner in Chicago trying to build a community there as well. My design agency was also doing the designs behind the app, but that is an advantage of having another company as well. We can cover a few other processes for the app.

H: I must say that looking at the logo, it looks fantastic.

J: We often get feedback, come on, just going to start up nights, people automatically trust it and love to the scale that we we're striving to achieve because of the professionalism of the design. Because that is my other job, I know the value of something like that. Because of my approach and the amount of time that I can dedicate to that, I've created a more scalable approach to all of this.

H: I really like that. I can certainly imagine that you would have a leg up at many start-up nights. Many in the early stages have very rough sketches and very rough prototypes for designs.

J: Definitely, and it depends on what market you're going after. For example, we don't have to define our market. We know that our market already exists, we're just changed yet. There are already 3 startups in London who are doing something similar, but it will be all about execution. I've met a few of them. There's no question that there is an opportunity here, so it'll be a question of execution. Who will be the first one to get here?

H: Well, I definitely have my fingers crossed for you. So in between now and a time where you would feel comfortable taking a step back from Racemappr or giving it to someone else or a point where you have achieved the success that you want, what are important indicators that you will be using to gauge success for your company?

J: I mean, at the moment I'm not looking that far ahead. Until you know what it is, it is not worth doing. I've had one investor say that it is a lifestyle business because he thought it was just a marketing program. I would love to travel the world racing, and if I could build that as part of the company, it would be wonderful. I could go around and experience Racemappr everywhere. However, I think a lot of founders at this early stage...I'm not just trying to get an IPO or an exit, I have a lot of visions, as far as product, design, scaling. There are so many things to be done ahead of me. The strategy is just tackling it bit by bit.

H: Ok. That makes sense. And how long has Racemappr been around?

J: Well, I had the idea years ago, but I started to pick it back up three years ago. I tried to find a co-founder, but it did not work out. Again, I was so clear on what I wanted in that dynamic to have things balanced. I really launched about 2 or 2 1/2 years ago. The website has been live for about 2 years. Most of the time has been spent building the app, it was always going to be a mobile product. I think that this summer, actually today all the events for the US, the UK, and Germany should be going live, I will be going through testing of the new app. There's a certain point that we will push it live and start to get feedback. My goal is to be rolling out all of that new functionality, and I want people to be able to find races, but that is not an entire product. That is not the vision behind it.

H: Ok. So in between having the initial vision of Racemappr and starting it about 3 years ago, how has your view of success changed over time?

J: It's difficult. They're different conversations that you have throughout the process. Sometimes you have to talk about numbers, but you have to define what you think it is in terms of a company. You have different conversations about the scale of things that you can achieve. I don't think that my idea of success has changed as far as where I see the app being able to go. It is a very stable system. Looking at the global potential and the range of services and connections it will bring together, that makes me not have a set objective. I do not have a minimum point of success for me. I'm not looking to make 1 million euro and then be happy with that: that's not success to me. It is about doing something that genuinely scales and genuinely changes things. It is interesting because some people say that we just have listings of some of them, another said that this is brilliant for me. And that is just our MVP. I want to build a product that allows itself to be built upon. So that is what success would be.

H: Ok great. This is my final question. Thank you so much for your time, you've been brilliant. So in between now and these different milestones of development that you've mentioned, how do you plan on achieving the success? How do you go about setting these goals?

J: Remaining flexible is always the biggest one. Anything can change so quickly. I've been very busy with the agency over the past few weeks, so I have been left engaged, but there has been work in the background. The biggest change for me will be hiring and seeking investment to grow. The question is how I approach that. Sometimes it is about just going to find the money, and other times it is looking for opportunities like grants. There's a very simple way that we can generate revenue, and it is just building in a tool that would do it. That is something that I am looking towards as well. Basically, we will see how that goes. That is basically it.

H: Awesome. Before we go is there anything that you would like to add to your answers or make sure that I know? Or do you have any questions that you would like to ask me?

J: No. The main one, would be what would be your objective? What do you want to find out?

H: Definitely. Very briefly, for my master's thesis, I am looking at how culture affects the idea of success in Berlin's startups. There is a management theory that based on what country you're from you have a predisposition towards uncertainty that's different than others. For example, you from the UK and me from the U.S., we would approach things in a different way. Therefore, I am looking at groups of countries on either extreme of the scale, speaking with those entrepreneurs, and I am comparing how those founders view success in their startups here in Berlin. My theory is that, based on how you were culturally pre-programmed to view uncertainty and ambiguity, that would have an effect on how you view success in your company. Once I'm done, I will be creating a two-page summary at the end, and I would be happy to share with you if you are interested?



J: Definitely. That sounds very interesting. A lot of my friends are founders, and it is very interesting to see what people think of as risk. I take a lot of risk, but that comes from some level of security based on how some people would describe it. If I fail, I would not be completely down and out. I have a lot of friends from the UK who are averse to that, but they take risk in a different way.

H: Exactly. I'm even starting to think the Berlin might attract a certain kind of entrepreneur, and the ecosystem might favor a different take on entrepreneurship. It should be very interesting, and I'll be happy to share with you.

J: That would be great. I don't think that it just attracts these people, but I think that it breeds them. The ecosystem and the environment that you are in while you're here, that really changes how we see ourselves and our companies. It's the same as the attitude to work culture, which is not just where you grew up and were told to see it, but it is shaped by your first experiences in a company. So, having worked in advertising agencies, I think the worst that we did was 36 straight hours of work, but that was normal in that industry. It definitely affects people.

H: Well, I will definitely send you my findings in the end and thank you again for your time.

Kain Victor, Founder at ReRoutr, Berlin, Germany, June 13, 2019

H: So, to get started. How long have you been in Berlin?

K: For 8 years.

H: Great. So, what originally brought you here?

K: Well, I met a woman who was German and lived in Berlin, then she was pregnant, and we were together. And the rest is history.

H: Yeah, it's incredible how many people I've talked to who met someone and ended up moving to Berlin. This city has a way of bringing people together, which is nice. Now, would you mind tell me more about your educational background?

K: Yeah, I did a Bachelor of History and a master's in geography at university, and I did some of the subjects in Copenhagen, but I did most from my hometown. Then I did an MBA a few years ago. It must have been 4 years ago, but maybe two or three years since I graduated.

H: So, what made you want to go and get an MBA after already having a masters' and a bachelor's?

K: Well, I always liked to learn. So, the master's was more just for the fun of it, and my family has a business background, so I always knew that I wanted to be closer to that side, and the MBA is very similar to that, as compared to sociology or the geography.

H: I definitely understand. I've always enjoyed learning and education as well.

K: Yes, definitely, just the little things like knowing how to do bookkeeping, which I hate doing, but it's good to know how.

H: Yes, I definitely know. So, what made you interested in specifically pursuing entrepreneurship?

K: Well, I always wanted to build something. I always knew that I wanted to do something like that. I had worked in a company for a while, but I was fired from there, so I started to freelance. Freelancing is one thing, because you provide a service, but you don't exactly have your own company. Then I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do, and I thought that maybe I should build my own company. So, I built the minimum product, and I started to look for investors, and I also reached out to other companies at the same time.

H: Great. So, you briefly mentioned that maybe there were family ties that impacted you and made you want to do business, but how do you think where you grew up impacted your professional interests overall?

K: So, one thing that I loved was that I worked in IT, and I was the only one in my family, and most of my friends were also in other things. But my family was in something very different. I knew that I loved writing and words, but getting money from it is something completely different.

H: Ok, I understand. I come from a similar background. My grandparents and father are also entrepreneurs, and I co-founded a travel technology start-up in the US. I think that there is a big family aspect to it. Now would you mind briefly telling me more about your current venture, ReRoutr?

K: Yes, definitely. So here in Germany you have a lot of rules against torrents and illegal downloads. This actually makes those who operate the internet services liable for what happens on their service connections when it comes to torrents and illegal downloads. This is very hard for the company, as if someone gets caught because a friend or the mum or the dad illegally download something, but it's very hard to track and very hard to enforce even in the house. It is not a very good environment for this type of enforcement, because everyone is at risk. I looked into a few different ways to get around this problem. There are two possible ways, one would be blocking it, and the second one would be connecting VPN to the router so that everything on the Wi-Fi goes through the VPN. The last one was the path that I chose because it was the most durable.

H: Ok, so it's a piece of hardware not software, correct?

K: Yes, it is a piece of hardware with a customized software that's preconfigured on it. Once you plug it in, it's operating immediately on the Wi-Fi and runs everything through VPN. It is a hardware service with an attached software service.

H: Ok, I think that's a fantastic idea. I've tried so many different VPN services, and I feel like a lot of them are not very good. It's great to see that someone is working on it at the source, so to say. So, thinking about where it is right now in the development and in the business cycle, what would be your idea of success for ReRoutr?

K: As I said, I finished the prototype, but having a family of 3 kids and a wife, I've taken another freelance job. So, I think that the success criteria would be being able to have a couple of customers on board and be able to make ends meet with this project. If I can work on it full-time, well I also have three kids and the smallest one is 1 1/2 years old, I don't really have that much free time to work on it, but I really want for this to be my full-time job.

H: Yes, you sound incredibly busy, so I really appreciate you taking the time to speak with me. So, in your mind what would be the dream success for ReRoutr?

K: So, what you would really be building some type of sustainable company where you can see a small amount of employees, a working space, a product that satisfies customers, and a good amount of growth.

It is not going to be Google or something. I do not think that it's going to be a massive company, but I want to have a good product and a good working environment for these people.

H: Ok, so thinking about that specifically, a good working environment, especially for you, how do you see entrepreneurship playing into how you see your life playing out in the next 10 and 20 years?

K: I definitely want to continue it. I'm currently building out this product, and I really like the freedom, and I really want to be able to determine for myself what I'm working on. I'm working on these other products as well.

H: So, for is it mostly about the lifestyle that it offers or more about the financial freedom that it offers?

K: Lifestyle.

H: Yes, I think that that is always interesting to see how people see that. Something that I really liked about speaking with people here in Berlin, a lot of people are looking for the Independence that you can have with this kind of occupation. So, in the future, let's say that you cover the funds and have the first few customers coming in, how do you plan on setting your targets for the future? How do you normally go about goal-setting?

K: I always make a visionary plan and look to see where I want to be in 5-8 years, and then I try to follow it. Normally, when I look at it three or four years later, quite a few things on the list have been done. Now that I can start focusing on the sales, now that I have the prototype done, I can start finding more precise things like looking at finding customer support and sales people to start growing that kind of minimum revenue. I would prefer to try to finance as much of it as possible not through external funding.

H: Ok, so you definitely have a lot of different aspects of growth, looking at how much money is coming in, how much investment you have to take, the people. But what would you say are the most important aspects of growth in the future? The growth of the product, the team numbers, the funding that you can or cannot raise, or the way the team is working together? What do you think are the most important things that you will measure?

K: For me, personally, it would really be creating a nice working environment for the people that work with me. That would be the number one priority. However, I have to have some users, and I really don't want to sell people something that they don't like. I don't want them to make a purchase and then be unhappy about it afterwards, and I want to finance it myself as much as possible, even though I would love money quickly, but that's not the most important thing.

H: I definitely understand that. You've been fantastic, and I know that you're busy, so I only have one more question. So, in between now and the point where ReRoutr has a strong culture, working environment, and people are happy working there, how do you plan on achieving that goal? What are things that you know you have to do to get to that point?

K: That's a good question. First of all, I would have to jump out of my freelance work. Then, I can start doing full-time work on it, and we can start making money. I think that after working with a lot of IT companies as a product manager, one of the most important things is having a good organization where you can trust people. You have to have clear areas of responsibility where you can tell people to go and do something for you. I don't care when you work, how you work, or where you work, but, actually, you've worked on it before so maybe I should be asking you. This is something that I'm really thinking about. What kind of approach do I do first? First, I will be focusing on sales, because without any type of revenue on the product, you cannot build anything. After that, once the product is in use, I want to see

how we can optimize that. How can we figure out the way to get people to maybe pay more for the product? However, I cannot give you anything more concrete because I've never done something like this before.

H: Ok. I think that those are fantastic steps to take, and I really do hope that very soon you will be able to spend all of your time on it and really focus on it. It's a really great concept, and I wish you nothing but success. Before we go is there anything that you would like to add to your answers, make sure that I know, or do you have any questions for me specifically?

K: Yes. What are you using your research for? Also, do you think that maybe people are going to entrepreneurship for finances, because I cannot get my head around that. I would definitely make more money as a freelancer. So, I can't quite understand that.

H: So, I'll address the second question first. In my experience, for the millennial generation in the US, there are rock stars like Mark Zuckerberg and Bill Gates. They're very cool, unorthodox, young titans of industry when they were successful. So, there's a culture of people wanting to go out and be their own bosses, and in the end, you can be richer and more powerful than those who went to work for other people. Now there's somewhat of a divide between those who were young and high achieving who started their own businesses who want to make a lot of money very quickly, and other people who are working in more corporate environments, which is seen as a more stable occupation. However, there is slower growth in the professional track.

K: Ok, I definitely understand that.

H: Yeah, I do find it very interesting you see it the other way around. That might be indicative of how the Berlin and European financial markets function. In the United States, it's very easy to get money for the products, so the idea is that you get money quickly, you try to do it very quickly, and you also can fail quickly. Everything happens very fast. You either get a lot or you get nothing at all. Now looking at my research, I'm currently working on my master's thesis, and I'm studying how someone's cultural background affect their view of success in their technology startup in Berlin. There's a management theory that says that based on where you're from and what culture you got from birth, you view uncertainty and ambiguity in a different way than someone from another culture would. What I'm looking at is two groups of entrepreneurs in Berlin from completely different sides of the spectrum, and I'm comparing how they view success in their technology startups. It's been very interesting so far, and soon I will be making a short 2-page summary. I would be happy to share it with you.

K: Yes, please. Please share that with me. I think that that is an extremely interesting topic. Nice choice of anchoring that with risk and view of success. Part of my educational background is that I went to the most left-wing high school in Denmark. The school was actually run on a democratic basis. Every pupil, teacher, and academic had one vote per person. Everyone could bring something up for discussion at school meetings, and then we vote, and then implement the finding.

H: Wow, that's fascinating. How do you think that is impacted your view of entrepreneurship or business in general?

K: That question I cannot answer without thinking about. I can tell you that 90% of the skills learned have nothing to do with math but having the ability to get in front of 100 people and take advantage of your key skills and utilize them in your work life afterwards, that is what brings success.

H: Very interesting. Maybe it had something to do with you really valuing independence and having a saying what you're doing. That is just my speculation. I didn't even know that there was a school like that. It must have been a great way to go and learn about so many things aside from just reading a book.

K: Yes, our history teacher would even say that according to the law you have to learn these few areas, but everything else we can vote on. What do you want to study? Do you have any ideas about how you want to cover these things that we have to cover by law? It was totally up to us. It was very very interesting. We would take responsibility for our own learning process.

H: That's just fascinating to me. I think that a lot of the schools in the US have started to go the other direction with a lot of pressures from the outside to make sure that you say this and don't say this. It's very refreshing to hear that there is an alternative.

K: Interesting. A lot of the people that I went to school with, it was a relatively small school, but they have very good careers afterwards. I would say that the success rate is very high.

H: That is fascinating. I'll probably go and read more about that this evening. But thank you again for taking the time to chat with me, and I will 100% send you this summary of my findings once I'm all done.

K: Perfect. I would love to read that.

H: Great and looking forward to reconnecting soon.

Alexandros Zogkas, Co-Founder at WebcasterProject, Berlin, Germany, May 8, 2019

H: So, just to get started, how long have you been in Berlin?

A: Umm, I came two times. The first time was uh last May. It was for two months. It was to make the papers, the Anmeldung. Then I was forced to go back to Greece and come back this November.

H: And, so, since getting here in November, how do you like it?

A: If I like it?

H: Yeah

A: Uhh, I like it a lot during May and June when it was good weather.

H: Yeah, compared to December and January.

A: Yeah. Well, it's a big city and it's a bit different from my city. My city is Thessaloniki in Greece.

H: Ahh yep. The second biggest city?

A: Yes, you know a lot.

H: Well, I've been to Greece once.

A: Ahh, so. It was a bit stressful to find how the things work here in Germany, it was something so different. After that, it was a nice city. Very international

H: Yes, very. So, tell me a little about your educational background.

A: Umm, I started studying a Bachelor of Information Engineering in 2008. After 3 years I did a post and went to the military, which is obligatory in Greece. I chose to do more months in my service in order to be an officer. For some period, I was working in Crete. I left in 2013 to continue my studies. Also, in 2013, I started my thesis project, which was a medical device. That lasted two years. In these two years, I had been to three or four business competitions trying to have funding for the project. I had some conferences, some medical conferences. Then I stopped in 2015. I gave my thesis, defended my thesis, and I did an internship in elevators as a production engineer. I was working for quite some time changing posts inside the company because it was quite small. Then I decided to come to Berlin, and I started doing online courses for data science mostly, which I continue now with some statistics, business, and whatever I can do by myself.

H: Ahh so a little bit of a lot of different things? So, which one of those previous experiences, would you say made you more interested in entrepreneurship?

A: For me it would be business competitions. The reality is that I found out the reality that they exist mostly for advertising reasons because in Greece there is not much funding or money. So, imagine, I had been to a competition for all of Greece, it was from the Greek Collective Organization, and the prize they give was 30,000. For starting a project and making a prototype in the medical field, 30,000 is nothing. So mostly it was about advertisement. I was lucky because I did lessons for how to build a business model during one competition that lasted for one month. I went there every day then had to give a presentation. From that point on I started thinking that it's good to have something that is your own and something that you want to build.

H: I definitely understand that. I started a travel technology startup in the U.S., which something like an app or a website is enough to make the first version or a prototype, but with medical devices you can maybe make a little piece of it.

A: And the difficult part with this is that because it is medical, you need trials, and after trials you need certificates. Also, during all of these years you need backup while you're doing trials. A friend of mine, we were working together, he was an automation engineer too, uhh we started thinking of what we could do if we went out of this field and move to this field of services. And the Webcaster project that we started is the idea that came first, and it has changed a bit in the process. Which is to build a platform for collaboration between people who want to do projects. If you're like me and changing a career or in a country without infrastructure, you don't know where to start. That's the point.

H: That makes a lot of sense. So, taking everything that you've gone through in the past with your education and experiences, I wanted to ask, thinking about where you grew up in Greece and where you went to university, how do you think were you're from has impacted what you're interested in?

A: Umm... A lot. A lot. You told me about the U.S. The U.S. has a capitalistic and business point of view, and in Greece there is not such a point of view. The Greek economy is really hard to innovate in. It's really hard to start a business. There is no startup in Greece. There's a different category of business, but there's no discounts that you pay for the taxes that you pay. So, when you start a business, you put the key in the door, you start paying. For a startup, when you don't know what is ahead then it's impossible for you to pay these taxes, so you need funding, and who will give you this money? So, this stops a lot of the population from starting innovative businesses. And this goes to the mentality and the way of thinking. Just because you have an idea, if you have no practical experience, you cannot start it. It's just an idea. There is a lack in Greek society of the business side of the view. You can have technical knowledge, a lot of technical knowledge. Most employees in Greece are doing different jobs at the same

time, so you have to be 3-4 employees at the same time. But if you know how business works, even if you have an idea, you can never start. This is why most of the companies are really mainstream. Maybe it goes from the father or the mother to the son or the daughter. Maybe you start a business but it's the same business as everyone else. If you have a good idea, it must be software because software is easy. If it is hardware, then a lot of things are difficult.

H: That's really interesting to hear. So, experiencing that in Greece and coming to Berlin, what differences do you see?

A: Here, half of the city is innovation. Very good stimuli I had was from an interview I had to be a developer. I went for an interview in a startup that is just quickly getting first money. It's two brothers that just started the company, and they needed a developer. So, it'd be three persons.

H: Haha wow, so very early.

A: Yeah, during our talk, I told them that I had some ideas that I would like to start startups. And they told me, go, do it. Make something quick. Don't wait for a good moment, you have to start now. If it goes well, then you can continue. If it does not go well, stop it, do it later, or go to another idea. This was mind-blowing because in Greece if you have an idea, you have to focus on it because it's really difficult to start. You need many courses to even start something. If you want to change something and start something else, you have to dump everything, and that is very hard. You only have one or two shots, then you're out of bullets.

H: So that's very different.

A: So when I came here and found out about the startup scene, and I had some other different tasks and some other employees, I started to hear that here it's much easier to start something and to try something, and I figured that that was right for me. Realizing that the ideas can come and start quickly and then you have to go and start them. Because the infrastructure in Greece is, how I would say, 0 to 10% of what it is in Germany. So, what all can you do with this 90% that you have in Germany? You'll have to find that. I'm not sure what infrastructure you might have.

H: Yes, there's certainly a lot of possibilities that's true.

A: This is something that now I have to realize, and I have to learn. Because in my background, I have a lot of information that for here is basic. These are things that in Greece did not exist.

H: So, shifting to the project that you're working on now, the project that you're just starting, it's Webcaster Project correct? So, would you mind just briefly explaining what that.

A: Well as I've told you, I've been in different places with different products and different teams, and I found out for someone in a not good environment it isn't very good to start a new project. And I really like helping people and new ideas and to work with people like founders who have ideas. There are so many problems, but there are people that don't know how to start. They don't know if there is something that they can do with these problems. So, it's really about getting a platform like the social media, but specifically for individuals who want to work on projects, and they don't have the correct environment to start something. So, they can find it online. So, if you have a team and have a project then you can find help too, and if you don't have a team then you can find them and, at some point, many teams will get stuck. There's information that I have that you don't. But it's very important to have your knowledge at least for our project. So, the idea is a platform connecting individuals with projects and between individuals who have ideas to create a team so they can work on these ideas. So right now, we don't know

if we will continue helping them take, you know, venture capital. So, I don't know if we will continue helping or will just leave the team or just help them somewhat with whatever they need after that.

H: So, with this specific project what would success be?

A: What would be the success? First of all, to create a platform because we are only two at this point right now. And we do not have, and we do not know how to get, resources, so we have to start with our own. And I just came to Berlin, so my resources are limited with time and money. The final steps are unknown. Now, I've found a job or something, and I'm using a portion of my salary to hire a freelancer developer to start the platform, to build the first version. I will also use the knowledge of a friend of mine. She's studying marketing, doing a master's now, and this combined knowledge will help me to start the platform, make a trial, see how it goes. And the first thing would be to get online and to give it time of about 3 years to check how it's going and to see how it's growing. It's good that it's only a platform, so it's just software and everything can be online, so when it starts not everything has to be perfect for it to be able to work. Then you just keep it working. After the first year that we have some players, and we have some users. Now looking further, we will ask for funding.

H: So, compared to something like a medical device... A medical device should be perfect.

A: Haha yes it must.

H: You definitely don't want to just give it a shot. Yeah, I think that that makes sense.

A: Something that I've learned here is that you really have to stick to ideas. If it's an idea then it has to start, but the important thing is to make a list of ideas. Start with whatever you can. Start and something will go well, and you will continue with this.

H: So, you've mentioned a few different steps in the development of the platform. So, what would be a few indicators that you will be measuring for success in your project?

A: Users, and most probably we will have a subscription fee, but only a really small fee to check if someone would pay or not for these services. So, one is the subscription, how many will subscribe, how many users we will have come on, and how many projects will start. These 3 indicators. If we have these three, then we can see how the platform will advertise to these users in these projects.

H: So, of those three indicators how would you rank them in importance?

A: Users, projects, and subscription charges.

H: I have one question. So, how would you measure all of these, but I assume that you have an internal dashboard or something?

A: At start yes, but at some point, we will need tools. And this is something that after the platform prototype starts is something that I have to see what technologies are used by the users so we can have better metrics.

H: So, I know that it's earlier in the development and these are the three indicators that you'll be looking at. Which I think is a good idea that you'll start to measure those and see how you will publicize it and how to go to venture capitalists. One of my mentors once told me to provide them the metric that you want and even if you have to make up your own metric, that's ok. So how do you see this idea of success



changing as you develop, because you will be measuring these three, how do you think your idea of success will change?

A: I'm sorry could you please repeat?

H: Yes, so you have your three indicators. And you said eventually you will find one to really focus on. So, how will you choose the one that is most important?

A: I do not know if I will choose. As I told you, for a project to be successful it needs a team. So, I will have to figure out what technology professional will help me to realize what is the metric that will show me the most. So, I will not decide what is important, but I will have to decide what professional helps me see what is important. Then find out how I can use such a professional. Maybe how I would pay? Or maybe I would ask for someone to help me with the project?

H: So, at the moment you're starting to plan things. So how do you plan on achieving this level of success?

A: So, I'm trying to create small steps. And if I had a lot more money to spend, then I would try to do some things in parallel like developing the platform and in the meantime, I could talk to someone with skills in data science to help me see what the correct metrics would be. As for the developers to put in the platform tools that help us find these good metrics to explain, because resources are minimal the steps are small. Like now, I'm gather some money to be able to start the platform. I have a basic platform. I will put it online, see how it goes just advertising in a small group. So, we can test what is good and what goes wrong. Then give it again to a developer with changes. Then do it again with a bigger trial asking and finding more users and pretty known users so we know that they won't mess up stuff. Then back to the developer to make something better. Then speak with a data scientist to know what metrics and what tools we need to gather data, and then put it online. Then try to test it in the real form.

H: This has been so easy because when I have a question you have just naturally answered everything and given me so much information, so you've made this so easy. Thank you. So here at the end just in one sentence, when everything is done with the project you built, what would be your dream success for something like this?

A: This is something that I think depends on the personality. For me, success is to have a platform. I don't believe that it will be a huge platform. But success would be to have teams working on projects and to have one project start as a company and to be another success. At that point would be the point where I leave the idea. I would try to give it to someone else, and I would go to another idea. For me that would be success to know that an idea from one of these ideas inside of my idea was a success.

H: So, before we end, is there anything that you would like to add to your answers or that you would like to make sure that I know?

A: Actually, I think that I've told you everything.

## 12.0 Appendix

### Founder Interview Question List

\* Denotes required questions

*Biographical*

- How long have you been in Berlin? \*
- What do you think of Berlin?
- Tell me about your educational background. \*
- What made you interested in entrepreneurship? \*
- Is there a strong culture of entrepreneurship where you grew up?

#### *Cultural*

- How do you think where you grew up impacted your professional interests? \*
- How do you normally approach ambiguous or uncertain situations?

#### *Venture Founding*

- Briefly tell me about your current entrepreneurial venture. \*
- What does success mean for your company? \*
- How would you define it? \*
- How did you come to start this project?
- If you had to give someone advice on overcoming the uncertainty related to starting a startup, what would you say?

#### *Venture Goal*

- What are important indicators of success for your company? \*
- Can you rank order these success indicators by importance to you? \*
- How do you measure these success indicators? \*
- Has the way you view success changed over time? How? What were the reasons? \*
- How were you able/ are you planning to achieve the success you defined/ your intended success?  
Could you give examples? \*

#### *Closing*

- Is there anything you'd like to add to your answers? \*
- Before we leave, do you have any questions that you'd like to ask me? \*

### **13.0 Declaration of Authorship**

I, Hans Albert Braunfisch declare that this thesis “The Role of Uncertainty Avoidance and Success Targets in Berlin’s Startups” and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I further confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission.
8. I hereby confirm that the hardcopy and the electronic version of my thesis are congruent.

Signed:  Place and Date: Little Rock, U.S.A. July 25, 2019