Wise Words with Mehmet Fidanboylu

Marblar takes a crowdsourcing approach to scientific research, with the aim of developing concepts into real-world applications. Mehmet and his co-founders noticed that the majority of science projects were kept within a tight-knit team, which often meant that lots of exciting ideas were left to gather dust if the required skills for development weren't present. He decided that the best way to make these ideas a reality was to source help from far and wide, and created Marblar to encourage this. Marblar is a crowdsourcing site that financially rewards users for contributing ideas or suggestions to help further a project's progress.

Mehmet is a neuropharmacologist, musician, graphic designer, and the EQ of Marblar's co-founding team. Having spent some time as a bench scientist in big pharma, and then a PhD researcher, Mehmet had been working towards building a career as a research scientist. But throughout this time, and from a young age, Mehmet had an interest in the entrepreneurial side of things. He finally satisfied this interest by securing seed investment for Marblar with CEO and co-founder Dan Perez in

April 2012.

1. Where did the idea for Marblar come from?

The founding team for Marblar came together in their roles building and running the Oxbridge Biotech Roundtable - a student-run entrepreneurs organisation serving over 5000 professionals and students in the Life Sciences sector worldwide. It was here that we cut our teeth in running an organisation and pitching clients. In running OBR we learned that the process of commercialising university research (Technology Transfer) hadn't changed much for over 50 years, and that young scientists throughout the world were craving a creative outlet where they could demonstrate their technical savvy and have a tangible impact to science. Why not combine the two and re-imagine Technology Transfer as an inclusive and fun playground for scientists that is more in line with the 21st Century?

2. Can you describe a typical working day?

For the past 10 months I've basically been on Terminator mode, stopping for nothing. Being a student entrepreneur isn't a walk in the park. I can be running my experiments in the lab one second, and then nipping out to find a quiet room to speak with my developers the next, before running to the other side of London to a creative meeting with the rest of the team and our branding advisor. Thankfully now, my lab work has simmered down, and I have the daunting task of writing up a 400 page thesis, but that does give me a little more flexibility in terms of time. The relentless pace continues though. I will be working on Marblar full-time once I defend my thesis in January 2013.

3. How do you unwind or relax when you’re not working on Marblar?

When I'm not working on Marblar I'm working on my PhD, so I don't really get any time to relax. Back when I had some spare time, I used to unwind at the end of the day by sitting at my piano. It's digital, so I can plugin my headphones and play some jazz, or whatever I feel like without bothering anyone. With the light at the end of the end of the PhD tunnel very close I'm hoping that I'll be able to get back to playing.

4. What's the secret ingredient to success as an entrepreneur?

Secret ingredient? I don't think there's just one single attribute. I think it's a combination of being hungry and not waiting for opportunities to present themselves to you. You have to go and make all your opportunities yourself, and take them.

5. What drove you crazy when building your business?

Finding good developers. Every man and his dog is able to call themselves a web developer in this day and age, and it's virtually impossible to separate the signal from the noise.

6. What motivates you to keep going?

The same motivation that got us started in the first place - far too much scientific research doesn't fulfill its potential and make our lives better. Marblar wants to realise the promise of science. By building an arena for creative scientists to come together and brainstorm around how bleeding edge science could be put to good use we hope to disrupt the Technology Transfer process and move science forward more deliberately and efficiently than ever before.

7. If you were to start again, what would you do differently?

I'd learn more about coding so I could do more of it myself, but also show more restraint in anticipating problems and throwing everything but the kitchen sink to solve them before being sure that they actually exist.

8. Where do you see your business in five years, and how will you get there?

We want to become the default name for accelerating science innovation, providing end-to-end servicing for scientists to move their research out of the lab and into the real world. How are we going to do this? You'll have to wait and see!

9. If you weren't working on Marblar, what would you be doing?

Tough to say - I would have finished my PhD a good few months ago, that's for sure!

10. Tell Springwise a secret...

I was really bad at art and design classes at school. Oh, and I used to get sent out of Biology class for messing around a lot too. At a school reunion a couple of years ago my old Biology teacher refused to believe I was doing a PhD in medical research.

11. Any final words for aspiring entrepreneurs?

Don't aspire to be an entrepreneur. Don’t sit on the sidelines thinking about it. Get out there and live it.

Thanks Mehmet

You can read more about Marblar here, or visit the Marblar website here.