

THE DANISH INDUSTRY FOUNDATION
DTU SCIENCE PARK
FUTUREBOX

DTC

DANISH TECH CHALLENGE

DTC Magazine 21/22



SwimCam

DIVING INTO GLOBAL MARKETS

Discover the 2020 winner's recipe for a hardware startup success

The organisers

Hardware startups struggle to attract the right talent

Former participants

Meet the startup selling motion capture tools to tech giants

SDG expert

Sustainability is good business



DTC ALUMNI SELLS MOTION CAPTURE TOOLS IN 150 COUNTRIES

Meet the startup Rokoko, who was part of the Danish Tech Challenge 2014.



DTC STARTUP LAUNCHES MEDICAL DEVICE FOR ALZHEIMER'S TREATMENT

Optoceutics' chief focus is currently on clinical trials.

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MAY WE PRESENT ...

Get to know all of this year's 20 participants in their own words.

THE CONTESTANTS 2021

AERIAL TOOLS 16

AQFEED 17

BLUE ATLAS ROBOTICS 18

BRØG 19

CEUS 20

EXO360 21

FINOIA LOCKER 22

GRIPWIQ 23

HEMBOO 24

HYDROSAFE 25

KOMBO AUDIO 26

NAUST ROBOTICS 27

SENSAE 28

SIMPLEWIRE 29

SINCERE AQUACULTURE 30

STAYSEAT 31

STEPUP HORSE 32

VENOMAID DIAGNOSTICS 33

VIKING DRONE 34

WOHN 35



4

HARDWARE STARTUPS STRUGGLE TO ATTRACT THE RIGHT TALENT

Attracting the necessary talent to develop their products is proving challenging for hardware startups, according to the CEOs of the organisations behind Danish Tech Challenge. COVID-19 and supply chain delays have only exacerbated the situation.



DTC WINNER IS DIVING INTO GLOBAL MARKETS

Just weeks old SwimCam – now called Athlee – was accepted to participate in Danish Tech Challenge 2020 and won. Only one year later, the successful hardware startup is transforming swim clubs in multiple markets with its game changing technology.

DANISH TECH CHALLENGE INSIGHTS

Understand the DTC accelerator program with numbers from the latest report.

14



SUSTAINABILITY IS GOOD BUSINESS

Christian Honoré dispenses valuable advice for startups on how to implement the SDGs in their businesses.

8



DANISH TECH CHALLENGE EXPLAINED

Each year, 20 hardware startups are selected to participate in Danish Tech Challenge. The program consists of four months of intense acceleration with counselling, workshops, mentor teams, exposure to investors, and access to a unique community of hardware and deep tech startups in Futurebox.

At the end of the program, one startup is chosen as winner of the Danish Industry Foundation's Entrepreneur Award, receiving a cash prize of DKK 500,000.

THE DANISH INDUSTRY FOUNDATION

A private philanthropic foundation that works actively to foster the competitiveness of the Danish business sector. The foundation focuses on four thematic areas: new technologies, sustainable production, internationalisation and cybersecurity.

DTU SCIENCE PARK

Denmark's leading deep tech community where startups, scale ups, and established companies get help to realize their ambitions. Together with the Danish Industry Foundation, DTU Science Park organises Danish Tech Challenge, Denmark's only hardware accelerator.



STEEN DONNER
CEO, DTU SCIENCE PARK

THOMAS HOFMAN-BANG
CEO, THE DANISH INDUSTRY FOUNDATION

HARDWARE STARTUPS STRUGGLE TO ATTRACT THE RIGHT TALENT

Attracting the necessary talent to develop their products is proving challenging for hardware startups, according to the CEOs of the organisations behind Danish Tech Challenge. COVID-19 and supply chain delays have only exacerbated the situation.

TEXT BY JULIE SØGAARD

PHOTO BY RASMUS DEGNBOL

Multiple efforts are being made to stimulate and enhance the dynamic among hardware startups. Danish Tech Challenge is a good example of this.

The Danish Tech Challenge also assists hardware startups with adapting to the ever changing conditions for startups.

For example, this year's accelerator program has added an extra module about how startups can implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in their business models.

"The Danish Industry Foundation thinks it is very positive that this module has been added, because it will soon be a prerequisite that sustainability is incorporated when you enter the market with your product or solution," Thomas Hofman-Bang, CEO of The Danish Industry Foundation states.

HARDWARE IS MORE COMPLICATED

While some hardware startups will see the SDGs as an opportunity, others will perceive them as yet another challenge to contend with. In general, hardware and deep tech startups face additional challenges that software startups don't, if you ask the CEOs of the two organisations.

"Compared to other types of startups, product development takes longer. Prototyping, scoping and proof-of-concept is more complicated than compared to a pure digital solution," Thomas Hofman-Bang says.

CEO of DTU Science Park, Steen Donner, fully agrees.

"We also continuously see the companies struggle with getting people with digital competencies because they engage themselves in digital businesses. But most hardware nowadays have digital components whether it is IOT or AI," Steen Donner says.

CANNOT COMPETE WITH CORPORATE CONDITIONS

Steen Donner also mentions two other reasons that make it difficult for startups to attract talents.

"When there is a shortage of talent, we see big corporates attract all the talent because they can give them conditions, that startups are unable to offer. Startups can't compete with high salaries, a nice canteen and what else big corporates can offer," Steen Donner says. Furthermore, when there is a scarcity of talent in Denmark, startups must look for them abroad.

"But with the current immigration rules, where you have to pay a salary of 700,000 DKK a year in order for them to stay in Denmark, it is almost impossible for startups to hire international talents," Steen Donner comments.

SUPPLY CHAIN DELAYS AND TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

Over the past eighteen months, hardware startups have had to contend with a number of additional challenges.

"There is no doubt that corona, supply chain challenges and challenges with receiving hardware components from China have severely affected some of the startups," Steen Donner states and continues:

"They can't get the right components and sub-supplies they need. They can't get their products developed."

Additionally, startups are unable to travel and hold physical meetings where they demonstrate their products to potential customers.

"The fact that you are promoting a physical solution also makes the go-to-market and distribution more difficult, whereas distribution of a pure digital solution is easier," Thomas Hofman-Bang concludes.

DTC WINNER

IS DIVING INTO GLOBAL MARKETS

Just a few weeks old, SwimCam – now called Athlee – was accepted to participate in Danish Tech Challenge 2020 and won. Now, only one year later, the successful hardware startup is transforming swim clubs in multiple markets with its game changing technology.

TEXT BY JULIE SØGAARD

PHOTO BY RASMUS DEGNBOL

An underwater wireless live-streaming camera with advanced software designed to help swimmers improve their technique in real-time.

Is it a recipe for a hardware startup success? It would appear so.

“The swim coaches love it. We have testimonials saying it is a complete game changer,” Thomas Terney says.

He is the one of two co-founders of Athlee, which was established in May 2020 under the name SwimCam just a few weeks before Danish Tech Challenge commenced. The brand-new hardware startup was not only selected for Danish Tech Challenge, but also became a finalist and ended up winning the entire competition.

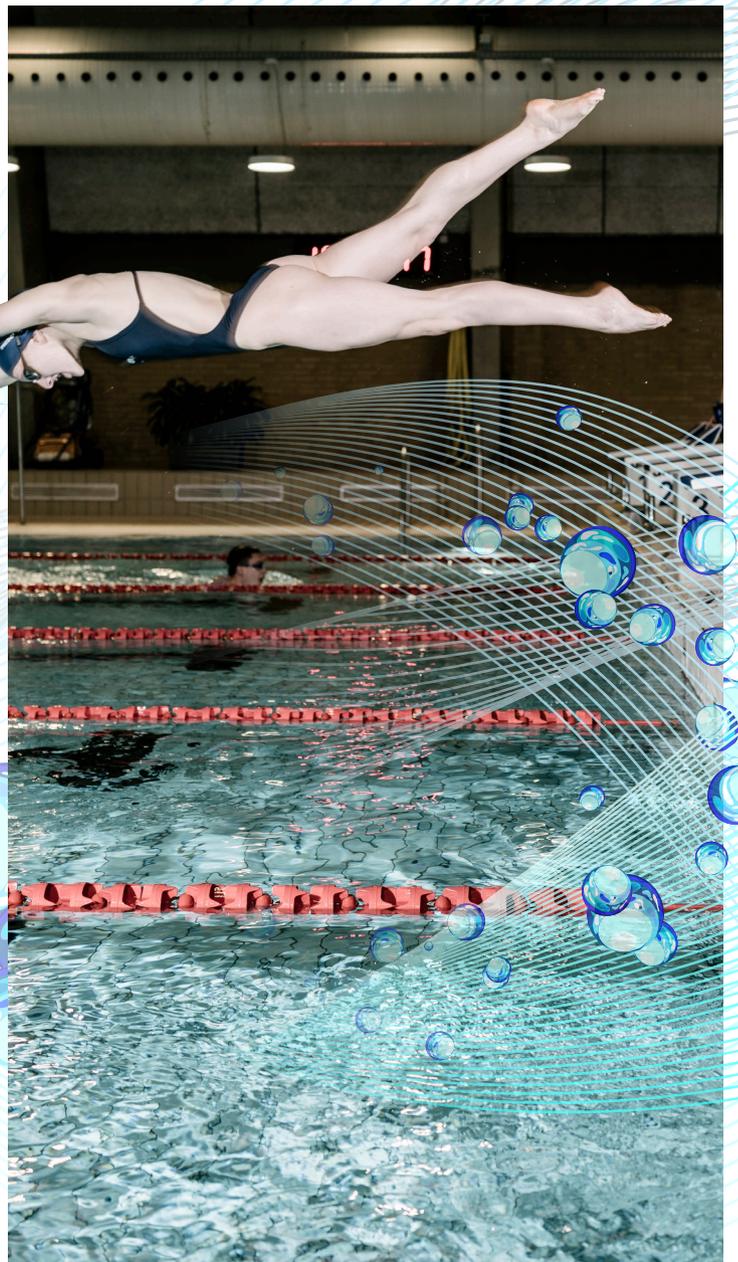
Dedicated to product development

A year later, the company has already developed its third version of the camera, it has entered several markets and plans to enter more are underway.

“Our firm belief from the start was that if we can create a portable, easy-to-use solution, we will beat our competitors,” Thomas Terney says.

Therefore the founders behind the Athlee have decided to dedicate all their time prepare for market entry.

“We had to do a lot of product development and we pretty much spent all the 500,000 DKK we won on that,” co-founder Anders Sandfuss Christensen says.



Preferred bootstrapping - now ready for investments

Although investors have been knocking on their door the founders politely declined.

"We wanted to reach the point where we had that right market fit before we would attract external investments, and we believe that we are there now," Thomas Terney states.

Up until now, customers have paid in advance of production. This way, Athlee has had income, rather than solely bootstrapping.

But the question, the two founders are now asking themselves, is how fast they want to scale up. Especially in the current situation with considerable, global supply chains delays.

"Would it be beneficial for us to take that risk and order hundreds of cameras, so we are ready?" Thomas Terney asks.

A great team

No matter what happens, the two founders take things as they come. They have a long history doing business together and see themselves as an invincible team.

Every day that I go to work I am so excited that I am working with Anders, and I think we complement each other very well. Anders, for example, is much more detail-orientated than I am.

Thomas Terney

"But we need the speed that Thomas gives us," Anders Sandfuss Christensen laughs.



THOMAS TERNEY
CEO & CTO

ANDERS SANDFUSS CHRISTENSEN
CFO & CSO

SUSTAINABILITY IS GOOD BUSINESS

Sustainability and good business are not opposites if you ask Christian Honoré. Under the Danish Tech Challenge, he advises startup teams on how to implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals in their businesses.



CHRISTIAN HONORÉ
FOUNDER AND PARTNER, 3B IMPACT

TEXT BY JULIE SØGAARD
PHOTO BY RYOJI IWATA - UNSPLASH

How can my business help solve global problems such as hunger, poverty, inequality, water pollution or climate change?

This sounds like an insurmountable task. However, an increasing number of companies are embracing the opportunity and including one or more of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in their business.

Christian Honoré is founder and partner of 3B Impact, a Danish-UK based advisory and venture builder specialised in helping corporates, investors and startups with sustainability and socio environmental impact.

He also assists the startups participating in Danish Tech Challenge to gain awareness of how their business can support the SDGs or, at the very least, not add to the problems being addressed by the SDGs.

THE SDGs ARE A GIGANTIC MARKET OPPORTUNITY

"An organisation with many CEOs among its members looked at just four of the SDGs. It estimated a potential USD 12 trillion market out there if we solve these problems," Honoré explains excitedly.

It is never too early to start implementing the SDGs in your business. Actually, the earlier the better, according to Christian Honoré.

"SDGs are a chocolate box of opportunities for startups to frame their startup in the right way. If they can develop their companies as part of solving these problems, they have a very strong value proposition," he says.

LOOK AT THE ENTIRE VALUE CHAIN

When Honoré sits down with the startup teams during Danish Tech Challenge they do not look at the product or organisation in isolation, but at the entire value chain.

When they have identified where they are in the value chain Christian Honoré helps the startups to find out which of the SDGs they can assist in solving or have an impact on.

"They do not have to do a deep analysis of each of the 17 SDGs, but they need to understand what they consist of and where they have an impact," he says.

Some of the startups can help solve the SDGs in a very concrete way – for example the SDGs that relate to health, because they produce a medical device.

AVOID SCALING UP PROBLEMS

Others do not possess a specific solution to SDG, but they still have to be aware that they do not scale up a problem such as waste for instance.

"How can they implement a principles of circularity into the design of the product for example?" Christian Honoré asks.

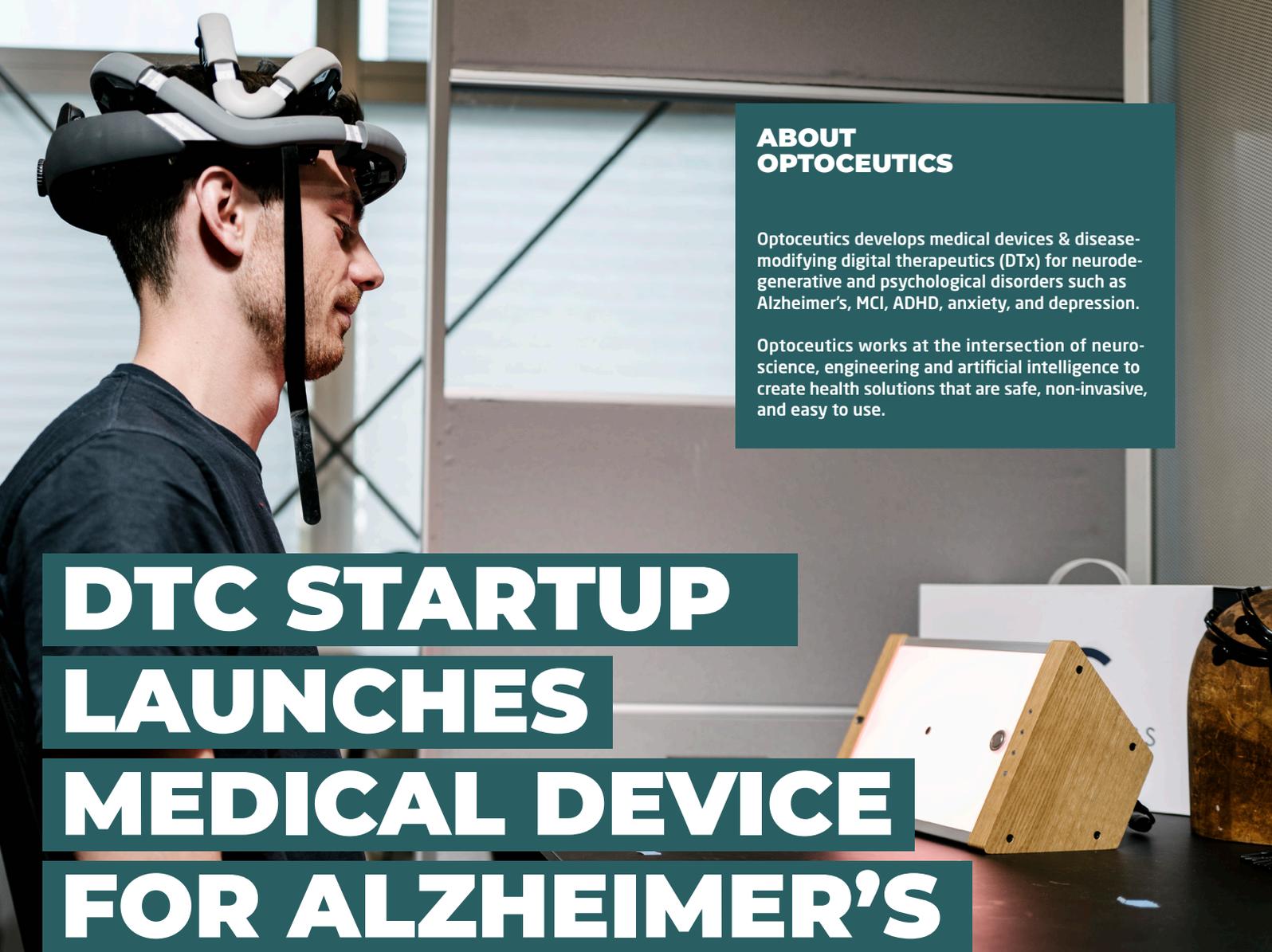
An important goal for Christian Honoré when advising startups about the SDGs was for the teams to understand both the specific risks as well as the opportunities of their value chain.

"Because the SDGs are actually good business the challenge is to find out how they become good business," he concludes.



“ SDGs

are a chocolate box of opportunities for startups to frame their startup in the right way.



ABOUT OPTOCEUTICS

Optoceutics develops medical devices & disease-modifying digital therapeutics (DTx) for neurodegenerative and psychological disorders such as Alzheimer's, MCI, ADHD, anxiety, and depression.

Optoceutics works at the intersection of neuroscience, engineering and artificial intelligence to create health solutions that are safe, non-invasive, and easy to use.

DTC STARTUP LAUNCHES MEDICAL DEVICE FOR ALZHEIMER'S TREATMENT

A random meeting sparked the development of a masked light technology for the treatment of neurodegenerative and psychiatric disorders. Now, the startup Optoceutics is one of the top ten participants with the highest valuation in the history of Danish Tech Challenge.

TEKST JULIE SØGAARD

FOTO RASMUS DEGNBOL & OPTOCEUTICS

In 2017, Mai Nguyen was doing her Ph.D. in Neuroscience at UC Berkeley, USA. Here, she met Jes Broeng, the Director of DTU Entrepreneurship.

"We had a dialogue about a primary literature paper. It was looking at strobe light and how it impacted Alzheimer's in mice. It improved memory and decreased plaque in the brain," Mai Nguyen says.

A cup of coffee and a patent

During the conversation she mentioned that strobe light can have negative side effects such as nausea, headache and potentially epilepsy.

"There should be a way to create a technology that can interlay the strobe light on and off so that it is comfortable to look at with little side effects whilst still stimulating the brain," Mai Nguyen commented.

"We could patent that," Jes Broeng answered.

Within an hour they patented the technology over a cup of coffee.

Jes Broeng invited Mai Nguyen to Denmark where she met two of her co-founders and the students at DTU who helped her develop their first prototype.

Later, Mai Nguyen and her team received 500,000 DKK from DTU Proof of Concept Grant to continue the project. In 2019, her team of 7 co-founders participated in Danish Tech Challenge.

Launching a class 1 medical device and recruiting

Today, she is the CEO of Optoceutics – a growing digital therapeutics company now employing 26 people – with a class 1 medical device ready to be released in January 2022.

“We develop disease modifying digital therapeutics for neurodegenerative diseases and psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, and Alzheimer’s disease,” Mai Nguyen explains.

OPTOCEUTICS’ CHIEF FOCUS IS ON CLINICAL TRIALS

“We are in clinical trials for Alzheimer’s because we wanted to focus the way we design our solutions on one disorder first. So we chose Alzheimer’s,” Mai Nguyen says and continues:

“We are starting stage 3 of our phase 1 clinical trials in January, which means hundreds of patients will participate. This means we are recruiting.”

Poised for exponential growth

Optoceutics sells the product directly to the customer and there has already been demand for the technology prior to being officially approved as a medical device for Alzheimer’s treatment.

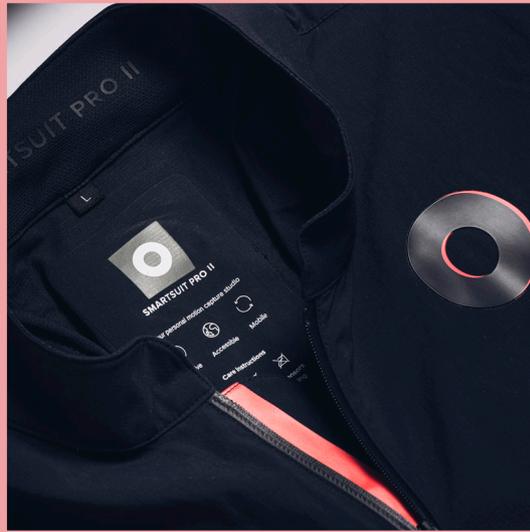
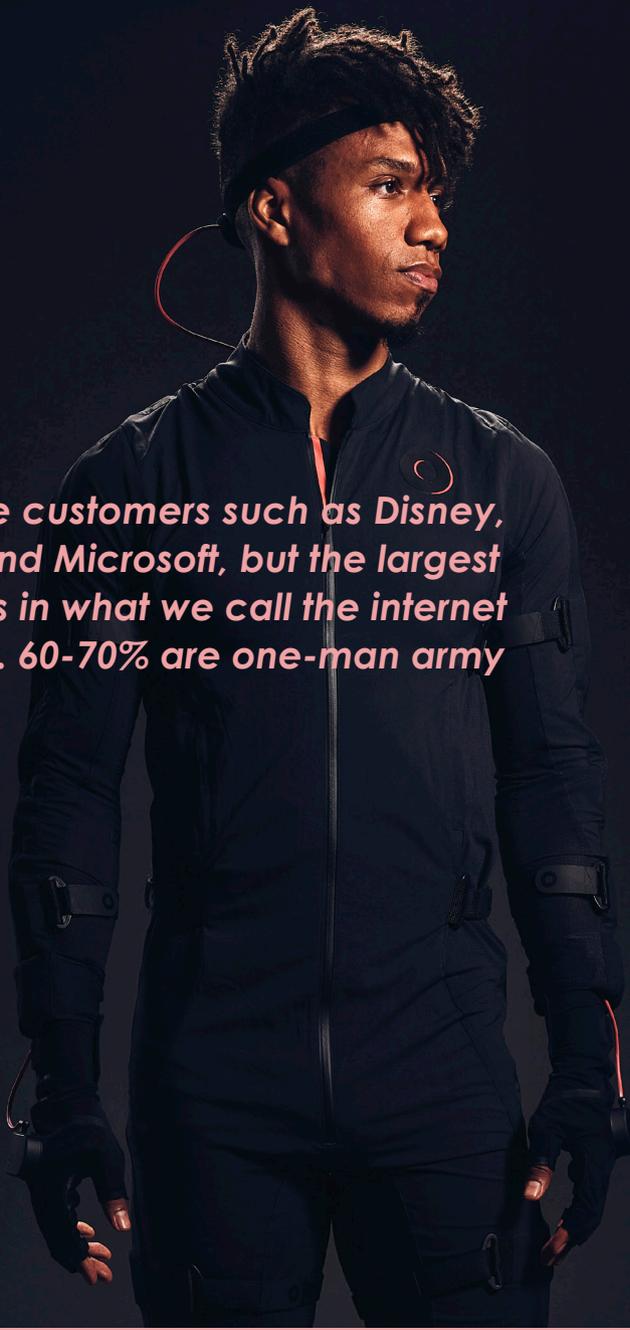
“It is the same product that will be released as a class 1 medical device in January. Right now we can only say it is a CE grade device – a brain stimulating device. But people still say ‘I want the device’ as it gives them hope where most pharmaceutical drugs have failed,” Mai Nguyen says. Therefore, Optoceutics could probably grow exponentially in the coming months if they wanted to.

“But we want to continue being able to serve our customers by doing the right thing and conducting our research to ensure that our product is up to standard and can benefit those in the community,” Mai Nguyen says.





We have customers such as Disney, Netflix and Microsoft, but the largest growth is in what we call the internet creators. 60-70% are one-man army creators



The DTC alumni

selling motion capture tools to tech giants

The startup Rokoko wanted to create motion capture tools for animation films and make games cheaper and more accessible to everybody. In 2014 Rokoko participated in Danish Tech Challenge. Now, the company is close to 100 employees. With customers in 150 countries, Rokoko has offices in Copenhagen, Athens, Los Angeles, San Francisco and will soon open in Asia.

TEXT BY JULIE SØGAARD
PHOTO BY ROKOKO



JAKOB BALSLEV
CEO, ROKOKO

In 2014 filmproducer Jakob Balslev experienced a problem when he wanted to use a technology called motion capture. Put simply, motion capture is a way to capture human motion and transfer it to animated characters in films and games.

"This technology was great when it worked, but it was too expensive, too hard to use and very re-stricted by surroundings. You needed a dedicated studio and a huge staff," Jakob Balslev says.

Therefore, he founded the hardware and software company Rokoko to reinvent motion capture.

A GROWING MARKET OF SELF-EMPLOYED CREATORS

Rokoko now offers bodysuits, gloves, a face capture tool, and software tools to create, edit and stream the animation.

"It is a motion capture system you can use anywhere, operate yourself and costs a fraction of the high end systems," Jakob Balslev says.

This means that even self-employed animation creators sitting at home can buy Rokoko's products. And they do.

"We have customers such as Disney, Netflix and Microsoft, but the largest growth is in what we call the internet creators. 60-70% are one-man-army creators," Jakob Balslev says.

Today, creators in more than 150 countries are using Rokoko's products.

VALUATION HAS SKYROCKETED

Rokoko was part of the Danish Tech Challenge 2014.

"Since then, the company has grown from a team of 5 to almost 100 employees," Jakob Balslev says.

The company has also attracted several investments from investors such as North-East Venture, Kickass Capital, Nordisk Film and a range of business angels.

After the latest round of investments led by Vækstfonden in 2021, Rokoko is now valued at 250 million DKK.

HIGHLY SKILLED EMPLOYEES IN GREECE ARE A PERFECT FIT

Rokoko's main office is in Copenhagen while sales offices can be found in Los Angeles, San Francisco and shortly Asia.

25 of the technical employees work from an office in Athens, Greece, which initially seem an unusual choice.

However, someone pointed Jakob Balslev in the direction of the many highly skilled people in Greece, who struggle to find the jobs they want after the financial crisis.

"He also thought that the cultural fit would be better for us than other countries due to our playful and energetic company culture. And he was right," Jakob Balslev concludes.



Danish Tech Challenge is without a doubt a huge seal of approval of the startup. Winning DTC has given us a lot of attention both from investors, but also from customers and various partners. We can't get our hands down!

**Thomas Terney, CEO & co-founder, Athlee (form. SwimCam)
Winner of Danish Tech Challenge 2020**

75%
RECEIVED FUNDING
DURING THE 2020 SEASON

1000+
JOBS CREATED

DKK 1.2 BILLION
RAISED IN FUNDING

90%
*find that DTC increases
their brand value*



If you are here with an idea that you want to make work – this is the place to be. We help each other as much as we can. We give each other feedback. Everyone here does their best to help each other.

Steen Petersen
Syncsense, DTC participant 2020

93%
*Startup survival rate
since 2014*

87%
THINK DTC IMPROVES THEIR CHANCES
OF FUTURE FUNDING



If you are a hardware startup - DTC is the place to be. We are a hardware product and in the development stage. Therefore, we want all the help we can get, and DTC is the most recognised accelerator we know of. And participating in DTC confirmed that it really does accelerate our business.

Jon B. Sødergreen
StaySeat, DTC participant 2021

100%
WOULD RECOMMEND
DTC
TO OTHER STARTUPS

MAY WE PRESENT...

DANISH TECH CHALLENGE

2021

AERIAL TOOLS
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STEPUP HORSE
VENOMAID DIAGNOSTICS
VIKING DRONE
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*DISCOVER THEM
ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES!*

AERIAL TOOLS

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Aerial Tools is a B2B service provider that offers high-quality aerial data. Aerial Tools develops a revolutionary robotic platform that can collect synchronised data from multiple sensors in remote and large areas via autonomous operation.

Which problems does your product solve?

One of the most pressing needs of the European Union is green energy transition. As a result, the new energy infrastructure is getting bigger and more remote. However, today's inspection methods are ineffective and very costly. Our robotic aerial platform can easily outperform conventional drones, and it can be a replacement for airplane inspections to empower the decision-making process of infrastructure owners.

What have been the biggest benefits of engaging in the DTC?

DTC has been an invaluable experience for our team. One of our many benefits was transitioning to a very agile business model that allowed us to commercialise months ahead of our original plan. Overall, it has been great to be around the allocated mentors and the other startup founders that were experts in several domains.

Which of the 12 disciplines have been hardest to pass?

As we pivoted to a more service-based business model, we had to re-evaluate our "Market & customers" and our "Business Model" in a short period of time.





AQFEED

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AQfeed's land-based cultivation system enables the pharma and cosmetics industry to get a high-grade and reliable source of macroalgae for extraction of bioactive compounds. With upcycled waste sources as fertilizer and new disruptive cultivation methods, AQfeed's technology paves the way for scaled production of macroalgae for the increasing demand.

Who should buy your product, and why?

With AQfeed's land-based cultivation system, we are able to supply the growing demand for high-grade macroalgae as bioactive compounds for the pharma and cosmetics industry.

Is it hard to be in DTC? In what ways?

DTC has led us to pivot into new markets by pushing us to challenge all of our assumptions from day one and get our due diligence in order in all aspects of our startup

What do you hope to get out of DTC?

After DTC, we hope to have validated a solid product-market fit and have developed a go-to-market strategy that enables us to have a clear path from DTC to market entry.

BLUE ATLAS ROBOTICS

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Blue Atlas Robotics builds a new generation of robots to impact the maritime industry. With high-precision, advanced photogrammetry techniques, the robot inspects and scans ports, vessels, and other underwater structures. Inspection imagery is converted into a 3D model of the entire scanned area, which gives users a fast way to identify faults or points of interest.

Why did you sign up for DTC?

We had heard from people in the tech community that DTC is a very hands-on and useful program to take part in. In particular, that it opens doors to mentors and experts that would otherwise be difficult to access to really help us to solidify our product and business model.

How did you get the idea for your product?

Our founder, Carl Chatfield, has been diving as a hobby for many years. Through this interest, he discovered that it's very difficult to see things clearly underwater and document underwater structures accurately. As a result, he challenged himself to see how far underwater technology could be pushed and began the Blue Atlas Robotics journey in developing an autonomous robot system for inspecting underwater.

What surprised you the most about being in DTC?

We were surprised by the sheer volume of assistance and mentorship made available to us! We expected some help to guide us on our way, but in reality, the help has been non-stop, in an environment full of people who genuinely pushed for our success. We could tell from the very start that everyone involved in the program was passionate and excited about new tech, which made it a great place to be.





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CPO & Co-Founder

Brøg makes a coffee machine where the brewer can control all the necessary parameters to make high-quality pour-over brews. Such as water temperature, bloom time, and total brew time. It is also possible to manage the coffee machine through an app that also will work as a coffee community.

What is the biggest experience you have had during DTC?

Our biggest experience was most definitely to pitch in front of the Keystone investor team. It created some really valuable relationships, made us more ready for an investment round, and was an all-over energizing experience.

How did you get the idea for your product?

The idea origins from a class we had during our 3rd semester at DTU called "From Idea to Check-Out." The purpose of the class was to create a B2C product of which you could argue that there was a market need.

Why did you sign up for DTC?

As entrepreneurial students from DTU we knew a few that had been, or were, participating in DTC that all spoke very highly of it. For this reason and because we wanted to get a solid push, we chose to apply and have been very happy with our decision!



CEUS

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CEUS is working on improving people's quality of life with distressing gut health. We are developing a device easily attached to the patient's private toilet bowl.

How did DTC help you along the way?

DTC provided us with the guidance and expertise for taking a holistic approach to business development, resulting in a better overview of how CEUS can create value for all stakeholders.

Which problems does your product solve?

CEUS works to improve the quality of life of people with distressing gut health. We are developing a setup that removes the hassle of today's stool analysis by offering a continuous monitorization that requires no physical interaction.

Where do you see your company five years from now?

Five years from now, we have just launched our medically approved solution, which is able to catch early stages of colon cancer by detecting occult blood in the stool.



EXO360

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At Exo360, we believe we can decrease pain and help injured patients on their path to recovery. Our mission is to create tangible and sustainable change in orthopedic care by utilizing advances in material design and additive manufacturing to improve non-surgical orthopedic treatment options. We will start with the ExoCast, supplying patients worldwide with quick, precise, and adjustable fracture immobilization, replacing plaster cast, and making non-surgical treatment a real alternative to surgical fixation of broken bones.

When and why did you start your company?

We began working on what would eventually become Exo360 in 2019. Mads Terndrup (MD) has a Ph.D. in Orthopaedic Trauma Surgery. After years of observing plaster cast application in multiple ER's around the world, he felt unsatisfied with the experience for both healthcare providers and patients. He got to work developing a better solution. Since then, the team has grown to include co-founder Michael Rosenfeldt and a team of multidisciplinary talent.

Why is it great to be part of DTC?

DTC has given us access to so many talented professionals that have pushed us to grow at a rapid rate. The mentorship from the program managers has been invaluable, and the consulting we have received has accelerated our business and go-to-market strategy substantially. On top of that, the friendships and camaraderie that we have formed with the other startups in the program have served as competition and inspiration we can't imagine we would experience outside DTC.

What future plans do you have after DTC?

DTC has helped us create a roadmap to raise capital and run design cycles towards clinical trials in 2023, in order to bring our first product, ExoCast for broken wrists, to market in 2024.



FIONIA LOCKER

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Fionia Locker is a digital robot-controlled medicine cabinet. Combining a digital software solution and a robot-controlled delivery of dose-packed medicine means that Fionia Locker can live up to current rules on the storage of medications and patient safety. Therefore, Fionia Locker can be placed locally in ex. nursing homes and the dispensing of the first dose of medicine can take place as soon as the doctor has prescribed the medication.

Have you made any changes in your company during DTC? Which and why?

Yes we expanded with a project manager. She was a much-needed resource.

When and why did you start your company?

We founded our company in 2019 to help the weakest patients get needed medicine fast.

What surprised you the most about being in DTC?

The pace, the seriousness, and the camaraderie among the startups



GRIPWIQ

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Gripwiq develops and manufactures complete custom-tailored end of arm tooling solutions for robotic packaging and food handling applications. This optimizes the existing gripping technology in terms of efficiency, food safety compliance, and speed.

Which problems does your product solve?

The community with the other participants, and how good the quality of the program is for a company like ours that started in my partner's garage.

How did you get the idea for your product?

We saw a need for a tailored gripper solution in the food industry. Our experience within automation and food industry gave us a new approach and ideas to solve an upcoming need for this product.

Who should buy your product, and why?

System integrators, machine builders, and food producers. They should buy it because our reliable gripping technology contributes to more efficient and sustainable food production.

Like we say, "if we can grip it, you don't need to pack it."



HEMBOO

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HEMBOO produces a biobased prefabricated wall system equivalent to conventional concrete solutions in effectiveness but uses renewable resources and emits only 20% of the CO₂. Our element is both structural and insulative, providing an all-in-one solution that is simple and fast to install on the construction site. The natural materials allow for vapour-permeable construction, which improves the indoor climate for residents.

How did you get the idea for your product?

Even though concrete as a material is responsible for an astounding 7% of global CO₂, we would still see big building sites with multi-storey concrete buildings every day. That's why we had to come up with an alternative solution.

What challenges do you have right now?

Getting a product to market in the construction sector involves certifications to show that it complies with the technical specifications of the law. Our calculations show it does, but we need to officially document everything and doing so is costly and challenging.

Which problems does your product solve?

We provide an all-in-one new way for project owners, architects, engineers, and contractors to build high-quality, sustainable buildings. While we radically rethink the materials used, we keep everything else as similar to existing processes as possible to make it easy to transition.



HYDROSAFE

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Hydrosafe provides tailored accessories that minimize hydraulic oil leaks in dusty environments, such as construction and agriculture, extending the lifetime of components, increasing effective tractor time, reducing machinery downtime, and making annoying handlings easier for the user.

Is it hard to be in DTC? In what ways?

It is called the Danish Tech Challenge, which means that you are challenged to dig into every corner of your business to find and document the value of your invention(s), culture, and skills. That is hard but very useful.

When and why did you start your company?

We experienced multiple entities talking about a need with no sufficient solutions, while they possessed the intend of purchasing a product that they gladly will help you develop. That is why we started the company in the summer of 2020 – also because we won Startup Programme by FFE.

Which problems does your product solve?

Hydrosafe prevents dust from causing hydraulic oil leaks leading to terrible handling options, poor identification, constant cleaning, and replacements of hydraulic connections in dusty environments.

KOMBO AUDIO

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Kombo Audio develops a High Tech Live music system, specifically for Non Technical musicians – enabling everyone to set up fantastic sounding Live music in seconds, without cables, sound technicians, complicated equipment, or moving trucks. All this is enabled through Kombo Audio's novel, modular, wireless transmission technology.

How did you get the idea for your product?

The Team behind Kombo Audio originally started the journey in 2018, where the team invented its wireless interface and began experimenting with prototypes in Skylab's prototype lab. It took several years of experimentation, market research, and bad decision-making until the team finally settled on combining the unique technology with the musical instruments market.

What have been the biggest benefits of engaging in DTC?

DTC has provided a very valuable framework to work within. It is extremely easy to get lost in the entrepreneurial process – but constraints such as DTC's 12 disciplines have helped us immensely in staying focused.

Who should buy your product, and why?

The Kombo system is specifically designed to give amateur and hobby musicians the chance to effortlessly set up High quality Live music anywhere they please - without wires, moving trucks, or time-consuming audio calibration.





NAUST ROBOTICS

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NAUST Robotics drastically increases yield in agriculture by scaring birds and monitoring the crops with an autonomous drone platform. After a one-time installation, it works without any human supervision so that farmers can save both time and money. Plus, they can get real-time data of their fields from anywhere, anytime.

How did you get the idea for your product?

Balázs tells: "The idea actually came from my father. We have fruit trees in Hungary that suffer from birds every summer, and during my education in drone technology, he used to "mock me" by saying, "Since you are studying drones, why don't we just use one to scare the birds away?". Turns out others have this problem as well, and this joke could be a solid business case

What is the biggest experience you have had during DTC?

We loved the 1:1 meetings. It is specifically tailored to our needs and level and contributes to the company's direction so much. We especially enjoyed the sales meetings, where we discussed how to tackle our challenges being so far from market readiness and how to obtain revenue earlier.

What future plans do you have after DTC?

Fundraising and all-in product development. Since the technology we develop requires a lot of time and money, we have to focus here.



SENSAE

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Sensae is building the largest database of emotions related to touch. This technology can totally change how haptics is deployed to the consumer electronic world as Sensae uses touch to communicate to the brain and interface with emotions. Sensae's first product is a unique wearable that provides active video biofeedback by combining key bio-signals from the user (heart rate variability, perspiration, blood oxygen level, temperature) with advanced Machine Learning/AI to proactively apply personalized vibrotactile touch stimuli to prevent stress build-up and provide tailored coaching, interventions and exercises through the associated mobile app: exercises are enhanced by affective haptics (vibrational stimulation based on specific frequencies).

How did DTC help you along the way?

DTC is structured in a way that you can't wait and push the hard questions for tomorrow. This is a huge value, as there is no space for hiding from a poor business model. We believe it helps companies dramatically in their journey.

Which of the 12 disciplines have been hardest to pass?

We spent most of our time on the problem. It is essential to go deep to really understand your market opportunity and know if the business is quantifiable based on the market research and business hypothesis. We have reached out to over 200 coaches and therapists in the last few months. It is a lot of energy and time, but it is worth it!

Who should people buy your product, and why?

We believe that mental wellness will become as important as fitness in the coming years. Anyone interested in self-development and who wants to improve their stress management should try Sensae. We are helping people get a better sense of interoception and help people navigate their stress levels and find the right exercises to get to their mental wellness balance. In addition, we are teaming up with coaches and therapists who can benefit from our dashboard, which includes some killer features such as longitudinal monitoring and remote live sessions.



SIMPLEWIRE

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Simplewire is a system for digitally tagging electrical installations that creates an easy overview for electricians and site managers, saving time and money while reducing the risk of safety hazards and costly downtime.

What have been the biggest benefits of engaging in DTC?

Hard to name just one. The sparring with our mentors, peers, and discipline owners has been invaluable for us and has put Simplewire in a position that far exceeded our expectations.

Which problems does your product solve?

Today electricians and asset managers rely on stickers or slow and unreliable methods of navigating around in electrical installations. With Simplewire they have a 100% correct overview at all times, enabling faster, safer, cheaper, and better handling of electrical installations.

How did DTC help you along the way?

DTC has taught us a lot about all the things we didn't know that we didn't know. In short, it's been a 360-degree boost of our business and us as startup individuals.



SINCERE AQUACULTURE

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Sincere Aquaculture is a Danish startup founded in 2020 that designs and builds hard tech products embedded with Computer Vision and camera technology for the global aquaculture industry. We are launching our first products in 2022, targeting the vannamei (King Prawn) sector. We are on a mission to increase farmers' profitability by reducing food waste (discarded biomass) and thus increasing the farmers' harvest yield, and at the same time working on eliminating the use of chemicals in the industry today. We do this by providing farmers with underwater biomass insight through Computer Vision and AI that gives the farmer continuous vital insight on parameters like real-time development of size and weight throughout the grow-out period. That way, the farmer can decide the optimal harvest time based on the entire biomass and not by small samples as they do today. Our Computer Vision and Machine Learning can also do early disease detection giving the farmer early warnings to mitigate and contain the outbreak as soon as it is detected. All the gathered parameters are made available to the individual farmer through our cloud platform or our app.

What do you hope to get out of DTC?

To learn valuable frameworks and tools that will enable us to scale our business faster with fewer mistakes and ultimately make us able to produce our first hard tech prototype that can be commercialized in Q1 2022.

Which problems does your product solve?

We bring vital insight on underwater biomass to aquaculture farmers globally through Computer Vision and Machine Learning, enabling them to increase profit by predicting optimal harvest time based on continuous data gathered on size.

When and why did you start your company?

We started the company back in 2020, where Gustav and Fridi wanted to build Denmark's first land-based shrimp farm. In the process and through market research, they discovered the complete lack of technology within land-based shrimp farming. They decided to use their many years of experience within technology and programming to build and design products and code that can make shrimp farming much more profitable and sustainable.



STAYSEAT

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At StaySeat, we work to create an alternative for the inefficient heating lamp that currently is used to heat up outside areas at restaurants. Heating lamps use A LOT of energy and harm the climate, which is absolutely out of sync with today's vision of a sustainable future. Therefore we have built a heated cushion that uses 95% less energy than a heating lamp that gives you the warmth locally (where you need it). With a 3-level controller, you can adjust the heat level perfectly as you like it in all situations.

How did you get the idea for your product?

Martin (one of the co-founders) walked around in Nyhavn in August last year, and here he observed just how many heating lamps were on yet did not heat anybody. The climate crisis is very, very real. Yet, we still use the equivalent of an indoor radiator to heat up outside areas at restaurants and cafes. We got together to create an alternative!

Why did you sign up for DTC?

If you are a hardware startup - DTC is the place to be. We are at its core a hardware product and in the development stage. Therefore, we want all the help we can get, and DTC is the most recognised accelerator we know of. And participating in DTC confirmed that it really does accelerate our business.

What surprised you the most about being in DTC?

Just how much we learn from the other companies. And it is funny because it is at the social events that these technical conversations take place, where we identify solutions for problems we are dealing with.



STEPUP HORSE

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StepUp Horse is a hardware and software solution for professional racehorse trainers. It is placed around the horse thorax and provides data in real-time to a smartwatch and a mobile app. The system tracks breathing, heart rate, speed & distance of the racehorse, enabling trainers to make better decisions while training.

How did you get the idea for your product?

It is not acceptable anymore for horses to die for the sake of a sport, and federations worldwide have taken the issue into their hands. When StepUp Horse founders realized their product – initially designed for humans - could help change this situation, they decided to dive into this market. The overwhelmingly positive answers from trainers and owners confirmed this growing concern.

Who should buy your product?

StepUp Horse's main target is professional trainers and owners of racehorses.

Which of the 12 disciplines have been hardest to pass?

Sales and Market & Customers: DTC pushed the team a lot to reach objectives that it did not think were achievable: 3 conditional sales agreements signed in 3 weeks – that was a real challenge!



VENOMAID DIAGNOSTICS

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VenomAid is transforming snakebite management, one diagnosis at a time, by providing affordable and reliable rapid tests for snakebite that empower all medical personnel to administer early and correct treatment, saving costs and, more importantly, lives. The solution can provide a result within minutes of loading either blood-, urine- or wound-swab sample onto the device, ultimately improving patient outcome by reducing the time between bite and treatment.

How did you get the idea for your product?

The idea was born in 2017 through the Tropical Pharmacology Lab at the Technical University of Denmark, while we were developing next generation antivenoms for treating snakebite. We came to understand that it was not only the treatment of snakebite that warranted innovation, but also the diagnosis. Thus, the early idea of VenomAid was born.

What do you hope to get out of DTC?

We hope to have a proper sanity check of our company through the 12 disciplines, which will ready VenomAid for investment in early 2022.

What surprised you the most about being in DTC?

It has been amazing to experience the ability of the program and discipline-owners to constantly push us to think in new ways regarding the many aspects of our business. We now understand our business and strategy in much more detail than before the program.



VIKING DRONE

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Viking Drone is a hardware startup focusing on delivering intelligent drone solutions for advanced applications. Unlike other drones, the Viking Drone Vali has an onboard supercomputer that is fully accessible for the user. The computer is capable of running real-time AI and machine learning algorithms on various inputs from video, radio signals, gas detection, and more – depending on the attachment. Any processing you can do on a computer, you can now do in real-time in the air with the Vali drone.

Why did you sign up for DTC?

We signed up for DTC because we needed all the help we could get to accelerate our business. We heard from others that the DTC program was really good as there is a lot of help to get on all aspects of the startup. Of course, the prize money was a good incentive to stay committed to the program, but the real value came from sparring with advisors.

How did you get the idea for your product?

Rasmus Gupta got the idea from working with other drones in the industry and experienced firsthand that drones are still maturing in their technological lifespan. Drones came from a hobby world and are now used for industrial applications. However, many drones don't live up to the high demands from the industry. A key turning point is in the air edge-computing. Having a supercomputer onboard the drone like we have now allows advanced applications in the industry to be performed by a drone.

When and why did you start your company?

Rasmus Gupta started the company in the wake of the first COVID-19 wave (march 2020). The world was changing, and it seemed good timing to start the company at that point. Through our short journey so far, COVID-19 has both been good and bad. As it has given opportunity for further funding more easily, it has also been the cause of the global chip shortage which hits every hardware company hard. Especially startups, that cannot afford to stock up, we have been left to be creative in our ways around component shortage.



WOHN

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WOHN is a super hack; we 3D print affordable tiny homes from upcycled waste plastic. We dial in on the global crises of affordable housing, the millions of tonnes of waste plastic trashed every year and the vast CO2 footprint of the construction industry. Enter WOHN, deploy the super hack, and 3D print the homes the world needs of the wasted plastic – now a resource. And in the process, take out concrete and steel from the construction equation. WOHN's LCA shows that for every 20m2 home we print, we pick up 6t of waste plastic, save 15t of CO2 and reduce the overall CO2 footprint of the home construction by 90% compared to similarly-sized homes of concrete and wood. Home units are one-piece factory build.

How did you get the idea for your product?

DTC has made us next level sharper in our business approach. After being through the program, we simply have better conversations with customers and investors.

What challenges do you have right now?

Whilst introducing a paradigm shift in sourcing and manufacturing into a very conservative real estate business, dealing with obsolete regulatory requirements is one of our biggest challenges.

Which problems does your product solve?

WOHN solves three problems with one integrated solution: Access to affordable housing, waste plastic, and the construction industry's huge CO2 footprint. Solution: Turn plastic waste into 3D printed homes.

*Are you a hardware startup?
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