

Woorank

A rising star in digital marketing

Often the most exciting start-ups spring from the unexpected. Woorank is on track to be one of these, having begun life as a little idea to make life easier for CEO Jean Derely. Today, Woorank is seeing turnover increase by at least 10% every month. It's grown from 4 staff to 15 in less than a year and it's making a profit. We asked Jean Derely how a moment of inspiration turned into one of Belgium's fastest growing digital start-ups.



Jean Derely

Jean Derely: About three years ago, I realised that most of my work, as a freelance digital marketing consultant, could be automated. Partnering with a couple of friends, I set up a basic system and put it online, as a free service, without any great expectations.

18 months later, we were getting so much traffic that we decided to invest €60k and hire two developers to create software that we could sell. Since we launched in April 2012, we've been growing like crazy and in eight months, we've hired nine new staff.

What has the Rising Star award done for Woorank?

It's amazing how famous this competition is. For us to be a Fast50 Rising Star in our first year has told us, and others, that we are a serious business. Being a winner says a lot to the press, to the authorities and to our staff.

Going to the Netherlands for the Awards Ceremony to meet the other very successful firms in the Fast50 was a great experience. It's so cool to meet other entrepreneurs, to see their energy, and to find that we all face the same challenges with our young businesses. They are inspirational.

What is keeping you busy right now?

At the moment I spend about half my time talking to potential new staff. Hiring the right talent is difficult because we're trying to do it quickly, to keep up with our growth. I've tried posting on job boards but without much success. Fortunately, I have access to a

wide network of talent, so all our recruiting is through contacts.

Integrating new people into our culture is a challenge that will grow as we do. We're very focused on customer support, on handling information fast, and on trust. Every email is answered within 15 minutes. We have a very flat structure. Everyone is a project manager with specific responsibilities, pulling in others as resources when they're needed. We also make sure that we have fun!

How well does Belgium support technology start-ups like yours?

We get lots of support from local government. It helped us fund our first developers, provides some tax benefits, and organises community events for technology firms.

However, the tax system is not ideal for new firms like ours. Other countries, like the US, make it easier for start-ups to incentivise their staff and to grow. But we're going to be in Belgium for the long-term. We're serving customers in 42 countries from Brussels and we want to stay here.

The US is home to most of our competition, with its cash-rich start-ups backed by venture capital. But we're not too bothered about them. Right now, firms are increasing their investment in digital marketing by about 30-35% every year, and so our market is growing like crazy.