

Startupper faces

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Alessandro Cadoni, who is 26 years old and a former student of LIUC University, took a picture of the video presenting **his testimony as a startupper, on the 25th anniversary of the University in Castellanza**. His creation is called **Friendz**, a digital startup, which, in a year and a half, has provided work for 13 people (designers and developers), including the three founders. “Friendz was created following an intuition I had while I was finishing my bachelor’s degree in industrial engineering. After publishing a photo on Facebook, in which a product was accidentally shown, I thought I could sell this type of photo to well-known brands” Alessandro explained.

A year later, Friendz can now count on 25,000 users; for 2016, the company foresees a turnover of €500,000 (in the first three months, it invoiced €200,000)**it is valued at €1 million**, and 10% is owned by a business angel, that is, a financial backer who put up part of the capital in the very early stage.

“The greatest difficulty is gaining the trust of big companies because, in Italy, if you’re 25 years old, you aren’t a credible businessperson. Then, when they understand and see that we have skills and knowledge of the sector, they change their attitude,” the young entrepreneur said.

In contrast, the business founded by **Nicola Cairone, 32**, who is originally from **Agrigento** and a former engineering student at LIUC, is more traditional. “**Margarita Philosophica** came out of a meeting of a number of friends with various skills: **managerial, design and graphic**. The background of the founders is fundamental for an innovative business. For example, I’d worked for Dolce and Gabbana, where I acquired an all-round knowledge of the business of the sector. The fashion industry and the idea of being a businessman excite me,” Nicola explained.

Margarita Philosophica currently offers **clothing products that are rigorously made in Italy, from the fabric to the packaging**, it can count on a distribution network of about 10 shops and has a turnover which is still not very significant, given that it was founded only recently. “The most critical aspect is gaining the trust of potential clients who ask you for a load of guarantees, even though you’re at the beginning. In any case, the feedback we’ve had has been more than encouraging. Our challenge today is to establish a partnership with showrooms of international calibre, which will be the real springboards for new brands,” Nicola said.

di Michele Mancino Translated by Alice Bogni (Reviewed by Prof. Rolf Cook)