Media release

Helping marketing campaigns go viral and prevent attacks from cyber criminals: two promising startups kicked by CHF 130,000 each at the Venture Kick final

St.Gallen/Zurich/Lausanne, April 27th, 2016 – Two great IT startups, SThAR from EPF Lausanne and xorlab from ETH Zurich, raised CHF 130,000 each by winning the third and last round of Venture Kick. Both startups develop groundbreaking software technologies to help advertising agencies and politicians design wildfire-spreading campaigns, and companies or governments defeat cybercriminal attacks as well as cyber espionage.

What if an algorithm could predict collective human behavior and send the right messages to the right people, at the right time and place? For sure, marketers would like to use it to design efficient and viral advertising or electoral campaigns. Hopefully for them, SThAR has got it all. The EPFL spin-off developed a software capable of identifying where and when to deliver a message most effectively and create buzz both on traditional (offline) and online media such as social media.

SThAR: When the laws of physics apply to marketing

SThAR develops predictive softwares based on an emergent science called “sociothermodynamics”. Their algorithms draw on large quantities of telecommunications data from telecommunication companies (i.e. mobility, connectivity) to generate a roadmap with the best places and the best times for executing coordinated marketing actions. SThAR’s predictive models are borrowed from physics, the field of CEO Alberto Hernando: “After my PhD in quantum mechanics and complex systems, I started to study social and economic processes behind electoral results or demographics using mathematical methods. I got fairly good results about describing and predicting population flows and opinion dynamics” he explains. SThAR’s system was successfully tested during local elections in Spain and is now on its way to the market, thanks to the money of Venture Kick: “Venture Kick is not just about the money, but about the support that we found from the excellent professionals to enhance the robustness of our business strategy and make a market entry a reality”. To help him boost his venture, Hernando was recently selected in the venture leaders in Technology team of 2016. He will present his Big Data technology to American investors in June.

xorlab: Defeat sophisticated cyber-attacks beyond conventional and easy to break solutions

Cyber-attacks can bring companies or even states to their knees. Take the attacks on the computers of the German Federal Chancellor and the US State Department last year, or the ones on the American bank HSBC early 2016, which led to the shutdown of its e-banking and mobile services. xorlab’s innovative software solution protects against so-called “client-side attacks” such as “spear phishing”, “watering hole” attacks or “drive-by” infections, which open up a pathway to an organization’s IT infrastructure and are usually the first step in a targeted attack. The product, a hardware appliance, can be integrated in the customers’ network and goes beyond conventional computer security solutions. It allows the data coming from external emails (i.e. PDFs, Word or Excel documents) and websites to be scanned, in order to check whether they try to attack the computers of an organization. The victory at Venture Kick comes at the right time for Antonio Barresi, xorlab’s CEO: “We already have two pilot customers. Now, our objective is to deploy our product’s first beta version in a productive environment.” The help of Venture Kick was substantial for Barresi to achieve his goals: “The direct feedback received at the kickers camps were very instructive and the pressure, a real driver. We were forced to dare the next strategic steps and not only focus on the technology.”

Links

Interview of SThAR CEO after he won the second stage of Venture Kick
The article about SThAR on epfl.ch
Learn more about xorlab (interview after their victory on the second stage of Venture Kick - in German)
About Venture Kick
Since the launch of Venture Kick in 2007, 419 project teams benefited from the overall support of CHF 16.75 million. The program has contributed to the creation of 3,450 new jobs for highly qualified people and to a financing volume of more than CHF 1 billion. 54 of the actual «TOP100 Swiss Startups» started with Venture Kick. Ten are even in the top 10 such as L.E.S.S., Abionic, Flyability, Bcomp, QualySense or Lunaphore. These results show that the Venture Kick approach creates a great benefit for the Swiss economy and its workplace.

Double the number of spin-offs
The mission of Venture Kick is the early identification, structuring and promotion of promising business ideas with a clear vision: To double the number of spin-offs at Swiss universities and to raise the attractiveness of these young companies for Swiss and international investors. Thanks to Venture Kick, startups learn how to win customers and convince investors more rapidly. They benefit from hands-on execution boot camps (the kickers camps) and from quick access to extensive business and investors network. The program is open to young talents with innovative business ideas, who have not yet created their company and who are still enrolled or employed at Swiss institutions of higher learning: students, postgraduates, researchers and professors.

Venture Kick is highly competitive. Each month, eight projects get the chance to present themselves to a jury. The four most promising then receive CHF 10,000 and qualify for the second round held three months later, where the two best teams receive another CHF 20,000 each. In the third and final round, taking place six months later, the winner is granted CHF 100,000.

Venture Kick is supported so far by Gebert Rüf Stiftung, Ernst Göhner Stiftung, Fondation ProTechno, OPO-Stiftung, Fondation Lombard Odier, Debiopharm Group, Rising Tide Foundation, André Hoffmann, Hansjörg Wyss and Martin Haefner.

Additional information
- See the complete list of Venture Kick startups [here](#)
- Check the great results of Venture Kick in the [2015 annual report](#)
- Stay tuned with the successes of Venture Kick alumni on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)
- [www.venturekick.ch](http://www.venturekick.ch)

Contact
Media French-speaking Switzerland: Lara Rossi
+41 (21) 533 09 85
+41 (79) 425 13 26
lara.rossi@venturekick.ch

Management French-speaking Switzerland:
Jordi Montserrat
+41 (78) 708 18 04
jordi.montserrat@venturekick.ch

Media German-speaking Switzerland:
Tina Lohfing
+41 (0)71 242 98 87
+41 (79) 961 87 61
tina.lohfing@venturekick.ch

Management German-speaking Switzerland:
Beat Schillig
+41 (0)71 242 98 98
beat.schillig@venturekick.ch