Case 1: VRATSA SOFTWARE (VSC)

Vratsa Software Community

Who?

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Vratsa Software Board

Iliyan Dimov: **Software Developer**

Teodor Kostadinov: Software Developer

Emiliyan Kadiyski: **Programming Teacher**

Started in 2012, now they have 3 **awesome lecturers** and a **coordinator**.

What?

They are building an IT community which through quality education gives people in Vratsa the chance to have challenging and well-paid jobs as software developers in their hometown.

Why?

To start and develop software industry in a small town by engaging young locals to work in big software projects from their hometown.

Where?

In the town of Vratsa (population 45 000 - http://www.vratza.bg/en/?view=photo), outside of local markets and public institutions, there are no businesses. For the young people of Vratsa, the town offers little in the way of job opportunities, which is why after high school they all move either to Sofia or abroad. Vratsa Software ultimate goal is for their students to work as software engineers right there in Vratsa.

How?

By providing free IT courses and events in the town.

In 2013 they began 2 courses. It wasn't long before individuals and institutions heard about what they were doing and offered their support — providing a computer room, sponsoring their events, or even volunteering their time to teach additional classes. In Oct 2014 they organized an IT event for 200 participants with 20 IT lecturers , who all committed to the entire weekend for free. In Nov 2014, just a year after, VSC won the Reach for Change and Nova TV social entrepreneurship national competition. With the funding they established their own IT center in Vratsa and attracted a software company to open an office. The Reach for Change competition provided them with mentors to help improve their idea and develop a business plan — one of the things they decided to forego in favor of jumping in and starting their project right away.

Consequently, other awards followed:

- 2015 Annual Award for Social Innovation by Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of Bulgaria
- 2016 BAIT award (Education)
- 2016 Google RISE Awards
- Forbes 30 Under 30 Europe Social Entrepreneurs 2017

Biggest challenge

During the first year their biggest challenge was to provide the chicken and the egg at the same time. They started 9-month courses in

programming and promised their learners that in 9 months there would be companies in Vratsa providing jobs for those of them who complete their trainings successfully. At the same time they met company managers convincing them to open an office in Vratsa and promising them that in 9 months there would be ambitious, motivated and skillful people available to work for them. Fortunately, they succeeded. Today they have both the chicken and the egg. But there is still a lot to be done.

Conclusion

"The experience of launching Vratsa Software in the unconventional way we did has convinced me that you don't have to wait to act on a big idea. If you're inspired to create positive social change, keep your day job and work on your dream as a hobby. Soon you'll be inspiring others to join in and offer to help, which is a more valuable resource than funding alone. If society likes your idea and utilizes it, the funding and support will come."

Message:

"Have a big social idea? Jump in and the funding will come." (Emo Kadiyski, coofounder)

Web links:

https://www.facebook.com/vratsasoftware

http://school.vratsasoftware.com/en/

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/emo-kadiyski/have-a-big-social-idea-ju_b_7101992.html

Videos:

not available in English