

Bachelor Thesis

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Investigation of factors, which influence the likelihood of fast growth in Swiss technology start-ups.

**Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts - School of Engineering and Architecture
Bachelor in Business Engineering Sustainable Energy Systems**

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Declaration of authorship

„I hereby declare that I have written this thesis by myself without any help from others and without the use of documents and aids other than those indicated. All text excerpts used, quotations and contents of other authors are explicitly denoted as such. "

Horw, 04.01.2013

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Management summary

This thesis examines factors influencing the likelihood of fast growth in Swiss technology start-ups. Main factors influencing growth found in the literature are: entrepreneur's personality, founding team, business culture, venture capital, social skills and networking, characteristics of the industry, legal form, and luck. Complementing the literature findings, additional relevant factors were identified through interview data collection: focus, business model, product, location, vision, quickness, market, and persistence. With respect to Switzerland's start-up economy, governmental support organisations (such as CTI), foundations and business competitions were recognised to be crucial. Many leading Swiss start-ups were started as CTI-Project or have won grants from business competitions.

In order to gain profounder understanding and to obtain deeper insight into growth factors relevant for Swiss technology start-ups, a survey has been conducted through the use of 9 in-depth interviews and 2 questionnaires in written form. In total, 5 start-up experts and 6 entrepreneurs have participated the research. Autonomously listed factors and the factors identified in the literature review were discussed within the scope of the interviews. Most propositions built on the literature found reasonable support. Interdisciplinary and knowledgeable teams, for example, were identified to be more successful than homogenous and unexperienced teams. Furthermore, a business culture of innovation and flexibility was found to be advantageous. Moreover, the legal form of incorporation is necessary for external funding due to ownership deployment. However, opposing the literature findings, larger teams were not found to be more successful than smaller teams, since a large number of founders tend to have disputes. Also, a better recognition of business opportunities by entrepreneurs being involved in networks found no clear support. Finally, the influence of luck on early business success was recognised. Most entrepreneurs stated that luck played a significant role in the success of their ventures.

Based on the results of this thesis, the following recommendations for rapid start-up growth are given:

- Founding the company as AG in an industry familiar to the founders
- Assembling a heterogeneous and knowledgeable founding team with high ambitions and willingness to work hard
- Early allocating responsibilities
- Entering the market timely with an innovative product
- Focussing on strategy and growth
- Raising capital early
- Maintaining a social network of contacts
- Not to underestimate the power of luck

Zusammenfassung

Ziel dieser Arbeit ist es, Faktoren zu untersuchen, die die Wahrscheinlichkeit für schnelles Wachstum in Schweizer Technologie Startups beeinflussen. Wesentliche Faktoren, die in bestehender Literatur ausfindig gemacht werden konnten, sind: Persönlichkeit des Unternehmers, Gründerteam, Unternehmenskultur, Unternehmenskapital, soziale Fähigkeiten und Vernetzung, Charakteristiken der Industrie, Rechtsform und Glück. Durch Primärdatenerhebung in Form von Interviews, konnten weitere, ergänzende Faktoren ausfindig gemacht werden: Fokus, Geschäftsmodell, Produkt, Standort, Vision, Schnelligkeit, Markt und Durchhaltewillen. Im Zusammenhang mit dem Wirtschaftsstandort Schweiz wurden ausserdem öffentlichen Förderprogramme (zum Beispiel KTI), Stiftungen und Unternehmenswettbewerbe als äusserst wichtig erkannt. Viele führende Schweizer Startups wurden als KTI-Projekt gestartet und / oder haben Startkapital in Unternehmenswettbewerben gewonnen.

Um tiefere Erkenntnisse zu erlangen und relevante Wachstumsfaktoren für Schweizer Technologie Startups besser zu verstehen, wurden Daten mittels qualitativer Methoden erhoben. Dazu wurden 9 Interviews geführt und 2 Fragebögen beantwortet. Insgesamt wurden 5 Startup-Experten und 6 Unternehmer befragt. Während der Interviews wurden wichtige Wachstumsfaktoren abgefragt und die Relevanz der Literaturergebnisse besprochen. Die meisten auf Basis der Literatur gebildeten Thesen konnten bestätigt werden. So zum Beispiel, dass interdisziplinäre und erfahrene Teams mehr Erfolg haben, also homogene und unerfahrene Teams. Auch wurde eine flexible und innovative Unternehmenskultur als vorteilhaft eingestuft. Ausserdem wurde erkannt, dass aufgrund der Anteilsverteilung im Falle von externen Investitionen die Rechtsform AG als Voraussetzung gilt. Grosse Teams jedoch, wurden entgegen der Literaturergebnisse als unvorteilhaft erkannt. Gemäss den Interviewpartnern tendieren zu grosse Teams zu Streitigkeiten. Ebenso wurde nicht klar bestätigt, dass soziale Vernetzung zu besserer Erkennung von Geschäftsmöglichkeiten führt. Letztendlich wurde Glück als wichtiger Faktor im Erfolg von Kleinunternehmen genannt.

Basierend auf den Ergebnissen dieser Studie werden folgende Empfehlungen für rasches Wachstum von Startups gegeben:

- Gründung einer AG in einer dem Unternehmen vertrauten Industrie
- Zusammenstellung eines heterogenen und erfahrenen Gründerteams mit hohen Ambitionen und grosser Bereitschaft zu harter Arbeit
- Frühe Aufteilung von Verantwortlichkeiten
- Frühzeitiger Markteintritt mit innovativem Produkt
- Fokussierung auf die Strategie und das Wachstum
- Frühzeitige Kapitalbeschaffung
- Unterhaltung eines sozialen Netzwerks von Kontakten
- Den Einfluss von Glück nicht unterschätzen

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Preface

In the third year of my studies I was attending two entrepreneurship classes at the University of the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia. Throughout the courses I developed strong interest for entrepreneurship and I highly appreciated the lectures and also assessment tasks that were part of these classes. One task was to research important factors for growth in small companies. Therefore, I decided to further investigate this topic in more depth within the scope of this thesis.

Choosing relevant experts and entrepreneurs was crucial and thus, quite a challenge. Especially successful entrepreneurs are very busy. I experienced, that start-up leaders in early success stage feel flattered and honoured by the attention aroused. However, from a certain moment in time of success, entrepreneurs are too busy and get invitations for interviews frequently. Nevertheless, in the process of investigating the research topic I had the chance to meet and interview interesting personalities, who offered me exciting insights to their thoughts and work.

In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Willy Kuchler, who supported the thesis in the name of Innovations Transfer Zentralschweiz. I further would like to thank Christoph Imboden, the supervising lecturer, Martin Jäggi the expert and all participating interviewees, who supported me in writing this thesis.

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

AG	Aktiengesellschaft (incorporation, stock company)
Blue ocean markets	In contrast to red-ocean markets with high competition and low margins, blue ocean markets offer high margins and low competition.
ETH	Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule
GmbH	Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung (limited liability company)
HSLU	Hochschule Luzern
IFJ	Institut für Jungunternehmen
IPO	Initial public funding
CTI / KTI	Commission for technology and innovation Kommision für Technologie und Innovation
Liabilities of newness	Characteristics, dependent on the age of a company
Liabilities of smallness	Characteristics resulting of the size of small companies and the independency to large enterprises.
Lucerne UASA	Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts
Small business	Typically companies with less than 50 employees in Europe and less than 500 in the United States of America
SME	Small and medium enterprises
USP	Unique selling proposition
Virality	Fast spreading, tendency to spread by word of mouth.
Venture kick	Venture kick provides “free” seed funding up to CHF 130,000 in three competition rounds (10,000 – 20,000 – 100,000)
VoIP	Voice over IP. Voice calls (telephony) over computer networks. E.g. Skype.

1 Introduction

1.1 Starting situation

Swiss economy growth strongly depends on research and development undertaken by technology start-up companies. The question hereby is, what factors must be considered and what requirements must be met in order to gain fast growth?

1.2 Research problem

The purpose of this study is to investigate factors that influence the likelihood of rapid growth in Swiss technology start-ups. A diversity of worldwide empirical studies exists, researching factors that influence small business growth. However, fewer studies exist, analysing in-depth Swiss technology start-ups.

1.3 Research objective

Acknowledging existing studies doing research on growth factors of small businesses, this study aims to specifically investigate factors influencing the likelihood for fast growth of Swiss technology start-ups. In order to reach the objective, existing studies are discussed and literature is reviewed. Necessary factors and supporting factors for growth are analysed and discussed. Then, in order to gain deeper understanding of what does or does not lead to rapid growth in Swiss technology start-up companies, qualitative research is undertaken. A survey was conducted by holding in-depth interviews with experts (persons involved in the Swiss start-up scene) and entrepreneurs. Further, collected data is analysed and compared to the literature findings. Based on the results, a guideline for entrepreneurs is developed, that when followed, leads in higher odds for fast start-up venture growth.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

Despite of this introduction, this thesis consists of six main sections. First, foundations are acquired by reviewing today's literature and studies. Upon the theory, a theoretical framework is developed. Then, the methodology of the thesis is presented, demonstrating how samples were selected and explaining data collection. Subsequently, collected data is analysed and compared to the findings concluded on the basis of the literature review. Next, results from the analysis are presented and a discussion takes place. Last, recommendations for entrepreneurs are offered, followed by final considerations and an outlook to future need for research.

2 Foundations

This section reviews existing literature and studies. The literature review was conducted during autumn of 2012. Although the focus was lying on research papers and empirical studies from recent years, a few of them date back to the 1990's or even further. Nevertheless, the majority of the studies were published in the last 10 years. The bibliography covers research papers that were mostly published in journals and are dealing with small business and new venture growth. The list of references is completed by a short selection of books and also a publication that was developed through workshops, interviews and research in relation to the New York World Economic Forum. Within this collection of studies, various factors influencing start-up growth were identified. Some of them found more support than others and were named numerous times. These factors were selected to be further investigated on in within this study.

2.1 Reasons for growth

Nowadays, growth is considered to be essential for the success of small businesses. Taylor and Cosenza (1997) suggest that growth is a fundamental goal of every company and that larger firms typically have greater durability compared to smaller firms. The authors further state that growth is necessary for survival. This approach was also taken by Kraus, Harms and Schwarz (2007) in their study. They propose that failure rates of small businesses are naturally higher, since the combination of *liabilities of newness* and *liabilities of smallness* hamper the strategic starting position of *SMEs*. Restricted capabilities for profit from economies of scale represent another constraint of smallness (Kraus, Harms, & Schwarz, 2007). Furthermore, Dobbs and Hamilton (2006) argue that greater performance often is associated with growth and therefore investors typically appreciate growth in start-ups. Indeed, smaller firms more easily reach impressive growth in percentage terms, whereas larger firms tend to ascribe higher growth in absolute measures (Delmar, Davidsson, & Gartner, 2003). In this connection, innovation and research are seen as driving forces in economic expansion, as Zinkl (2005) argues in his paper. Since start-ups contribute a significant proportion to the total of innovation in developed countries, they represent an important factor also in Switzerland and create numerous jobs (Swiss Economic Forum, 2010). Concluding, striving for expansion can have a significantly positive impact on future durability of start-ups and reduces financial risks by providing stability.

2.2 Types of growth

Firms can expand in different manners and growth can be measured in various ways. This section therefore discusses the different types of growth in the phase after first successes, when the company is established. Bjerke and Hultman (2002) distinguish between two main variants of growth: managerial and entrepreneurial (Figure 1). This approach is strongly based on the corporate strategy matrix developed by Ansoff (1965). While entrepreneurial growth focuses on owner-managers who tend to take more risks by developing the company into new markets with new products, improvement of current operations is regarded as managerial growth. The thoughts behind managerial growth are to plan united, structured systems, controlled by business concepts. Efficiency, gain from economies of scale, application of standards and educated managers are the main drivers for the managerial growth. On the contrary, the entrepreneurial growth follows the idea to learn from diversity and to act in processes guided by visions. Therefore, entrepreneurs perform as leaders and promote a suitable business culture (Bjerke & Hultman 2002). When firms aspire to

grow managerially, it is recommended to improve and concentrate on sectors that are already contained within their businesses. Differently, if companies intend to grow by establishing independent business ventures or adding new business ventures to the existing ones (exploiting opportunities), this can be regarded as the entrepreneurial way of growing (Bjerke & Hultman 2002).

	Same Market	New Market
Same Product	Market Penetration <i>Managerial Growth</i>	Product Development <i>(Limited)</i> <i>Entrepreneurial Growth</i>
New Product	Market Development <i>Entrepreneurial Growth</i>	Product / Market Diversification <i>Entrepreneurial Growth</i>

Figure 1: Managerial and entrepreneurial growth

Adapted by Bjerke & Hultman from: (Ansoff, 1965)

However, Schaper and Volery (2007) use a different approach and discourse financial, strategic and organisational growth, as shown in Figure 2.

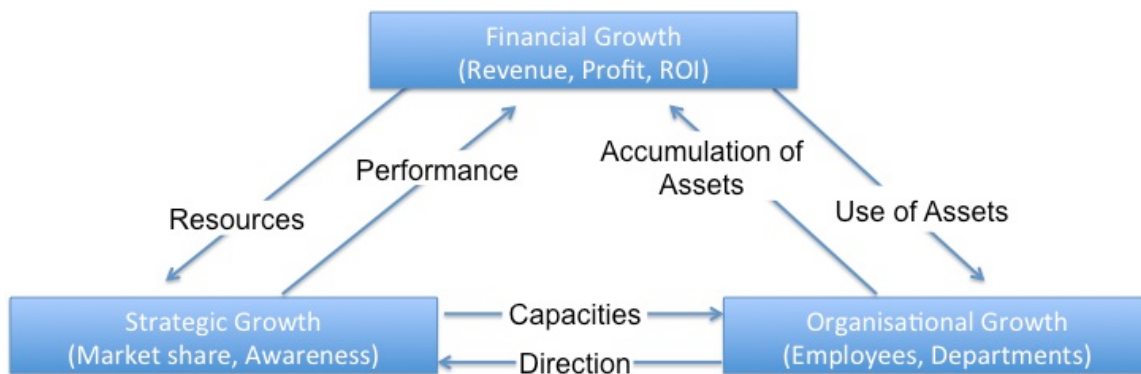


Figure 2: Dimensions of growth

Source: (Schaper & Volery, 2007)

The framework provided by Schaper and Volery has the emphasis on resources, capacities, assets and performance. This is a less strategic but more fundamental approach. Smallbone and Wyr identified four main categories of variables that influence growth: management strategies, characteristics of the entrepreneur, environmental / industry specific factors and the characteristics of the firm (Smallbone & Wyr, 2000 in Dobbs & Hamilton, 2006). Over all, it can be concluded that growth happens in different manners, particularly as managerial and entrepreneurial growth, as well as financial and organisational growth. Strategic growth as it is called by Schaper and Volery equals the concept of managerial growth, from Bjerke and Hultman.

2.3 Factors for growth

Today's literature considers various factors to be influential on *small business* growth. This section reviews aspects that are seen to be most significant and discussed in current studies. However, they

can be divided into two groups with two dimensions: imperative and supportive factors of internal and external influence (Figure 3 on page 8). Nevertheless, this subdivision is not of definite character and may be further discussed.

2.4 Imperative factors

This section examines factors that are seen to represent the most important influences on new venture growth.

2.4.1 The entrepreneur's personality

In start-ups, the founder typically has a higher personal interest in the firm than managers of larger companies. Accordingly, the entrepreneur's personality is regarded as highly relevant for a firm's growth performance and business success (Barkham, 1994; Barringer & Jones, 2004). This relationship between the owner manager and the growth of the start-up leads to Storey's conclusion (1994a), that the entrepreneur's achieved level of education and former industry experience are strongly linked to the company's growth performance. According to Dobbs and Hamilton (2006), a person's communication skills, search skills, foresight and imagination can be improved by education. Barringer and Jones (2004) further explain that knowledge-intensive education, for example engineering, computer science or biochemistry, lead to advantages if a business is started in the entrepreneur's field of expertise. Macpherson and Holt (2007) identified the ability to learn and to apply this learning to change strategies as relevant for growth. Foster, Davila, Haemmig, He and Jia (2011) found character traits, such as optimism, risk taking, adaptability, resilience, determination and the capacity to live with large amounts of uncertainty, to be over represented in their sample of entrepreneurs compared to ordinary population. Baron and Markman (2003) use a more general approach in suggesting that the better the entrepreneur's personal characteristics matches the requirement of being an entrepreneur, the more successful that person will be. These authors bring up the ability of starting new companies by transforming discoveries into marketable items as a valuable personal characteristic. Concluding it can be said that abilities, such as recognising business opportunities, education (in terms of developing communication skills amongst others), risk willingness and industry experience are leveraging the odds for new venture growth.

2.4.2 Founding Team

New ventures might be founded by individuals or founding teams. Lüthje and Prügl (2006) argue in their study that start-ups benefit from interdisciplinary founding teams. According to them, a major reason for this phenomenon is that individual founders are not able to cover all the talent and knowledge areas that are critical for small business success. Barringer and Jones (2004) and Storey (1994a) support this thesis in their studies. Diverse fields such as product design, manufacturing, financial planning, market analysis, strategy and leadership require a broad knowledge of the founders. Empirical research has identified a positive correlation between founding team size and new venture growth. Indeed, start-ups founded by larger teams tend to be faster growing than such founded by smaller teams (Dobbs & Hamilton, 2006; Siegel, Siegel, & MacMillan, 1993). However, instead of prioritising solely business size for success, heterogeneity in terms of educational background and professional experience has been identified as relevant. Consequently, the broader a team is set-up, the more advantageous it is (Lüthje & Prügl, 2006).

2.4.3 Business culture, strategy and the ambition to grow

The growth rate of start-ups also depends on their business culture and the owner-managers' ambition to grow. The study of Hansen and Hamilton (2011) compares growing to non-growing start-ups. It identifies owner manager's growth ambitions by reflecting their optimism, their opportunistic strategic way of thinking and their business culture of innovation and flexibility as the main difference between growers and non-growers. Reinventing the daily business processes and products is generally associated with innovation, whereas flexibility refers to agile approaches for products, markets and customer services (Liao, Welsch, & Stoica, 2003). Hansen and Hamilton found that growing firms were more flexible and proactive as well as more innovative, especially towards international market opportunities than non-growing companies. In general, the owner-managers of the growth firms had a better understanding of strategic issues (Hansen & Hamilton, 2011). Further, the authors also state that several owner-managers of both company groups, growing and non-growing, claimed to actively manage their company's growth rate and size. Consequently, the close connection between the founder as the manager-owner and the start-up leads to the conclusion that the founder or the founding team are the leading force to establish an innovative and flexibly driven business culture.

Edelman, Brush and Manolova (2005) determine that neither resources (human capital and organisational resources) nor strategies alone explain firm performance. Instead, it is the fit and adaption of a quality customer service strategy to company resources that enhances firm performance. Another finding was made by Siegel, Siegel and Macmillan (1993) by investigating strategic differences between growing and non-growing companies. Two sample groups were used to not only determine differences between high-growers and slow-growers, but also between young, small companies and larger mature companies. On one hand, high-growth young and small companies were more focused than their low-growth counterparts. Also they generated more revenue by a single product. On the other hand, high-growth large mature firms have shown a greater inclination for market and product diversification, compared to the slow-growing large companies. Siegel, Siegel and Macmillan interpreted these findings as logical, since smaller companies have fewer resources and therefore may have higher success potential by applying a focussed strategy. Contrarily, more mature firms widen their product lines in order to spread product and market risks (Siegel, Siegel, & MacMillan, 1993).

2.4.4 Venture Capital

One of the most important considerations entrepreneurs encounter when they attempt to convert a venture idea into a revenue-driving business is the procurement of capital. New ventures finance methods exist in a broad range. There are mainly four different possibilities for funding that can be divided into two groups: internal and external funding. Internal funding includes own recourses and funds from friends, family and fools (the three 'f'), whereas external funding refers to business angels and venture capitalists. Internal financing often is called 'bootstrapping'. Bootstrapping is used in various contexts to refer to success achieved through an individual's own efforts (Harrison, Mason, & Girling, 2004, p. 310). In the financial context Freear, Sohl and Wetzel (1995) describe bootstrapping as creative way of acquiring resources without borrowing money or raising equity financing from traditional sources. On the opposite, external finance sources consist of business angels and venture capitalists financing new ventures in exchange for company shares. Various definitions about business angels exist. However, generally the term refers to high-net-worth individuals who typically invest their own funds in small private firms. Differently, venture capitalists invest pooled money in a

professional fund on behalf of their clients (Hadzima, 2005). Wong, Bhatia and Freeman (2009) examined the differences between business angels and venture capitalists in terms of their financing behaviour. The study outlines four major characteristics that distinguish business angels from venture capitalists and their role in financing new ventures. First, the two investor groups play complementary roles in start-up finance. Second, business angels typically take on more risks. Third, the invested sums are typically smaller and fourth, business angels invest in younger firms compared to venture capitalists that prefer to invest in companies with explicit growth potential and a stable financial position (Wong, Bhatia, & Freeman, 2009). Consequently, this leads to the conclusion that business angels typically invest in higher risk ventures where venture capitalists are not (yet) willing to invest. In later stages or future investment rounds, when risks are decreasing and businesses are proven, venture capitalists become active. From an evolutionary perspective, each investment method can be allocated to a different phase of the start-up. In early stage, seed-funding takes place. According to Bygrave, Hay, Ng & Reynolds (2003), many entrepreneurs waste their time seeking capital from angel investors or venture capitalists too early. Seed-funding is the time when friends, family and fools (the three 'f') may be interested in investing. As Harrison and Mason (1995) stress, there is evidence from a number of countries that new ventures face a shortage of long-term investment funds, especially in start-up and early growth phase – the so called 'equity-gap'. This gap between funding from friends, family and fools and funding from venture capitalists typically is filled by business angels (Harrison & Mason, 1995; Van Osnabrugge, 2000; Wong, Bhatia, & Freeman, 2009). Van Osnabrugge further explains that the sum invested by business angels typically is below US\$500,000 – the minimum amount of money venture capitalists raise interested in. However, each growth phase in the firm's evolution requires the right investment capital regardless of the type of founding.

Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether bootstrapping is confining or hampering new venture growth. Some researchers bring up arguments to expect positive relation between bootstrapping and new venture growth. This behaviour may be explained that resources at hand may be used more effective or creative in times of financial constraint (Bhide, 1992). On the opposite, others argue that finance constraints in ventures that are bootstrapping would hinder subsequent venture growth (Carpenter & Petersen, 2002; Cassar, 2004). Whether bootstrapping or not, entrepreneurs prefer not to give away company shares but keep ownership as far as possible. The question about opportunity costs when not taking external investments may arise.

2.5 Supportive factors

The factors discussed in this section are seen to be of less influential character than the factors discussed above. Nevertheless, since new venture growth is influenced by a vast amount of elements, they can still play an important role in new venture growth.

2.5.1 Social skills and involvement in networks

Networks of relationships are often regarded as informal and personal or formal and professional. Functioning as instrument for obtaining knowledge, business referrals, matching resources, and feedback that increases an individual's intuitive understanding of their business and market (Macpherson & Holt, 2007). In the pre-founding stage of new ventures, researchers indicated the importance of networking and building social capital to be relevant factors (Baron & Markman, 2003). Social capital may be described as the "...goodwill available to individuals or groups" (Adler & Kwon, 2002, p. 23) this in detail includes feelings of gratitude, reciprocity, respect, and friendship (De

Carolis & Saporito, 2006). Baron and Markman (2003) particularly point out that new venture creation is the outcome of the interaction of entrepreneurs' social networks and cognitive biases. Interaction in networks increases entrepreneurial opportunities and its chances for new venture creation, but only in case the person is tending towards entrepreneurial activities (De Carolis & Saporito, 2006). Hansen and Hamilton (2011) identified the 'use of extensive private business networks' as one out of four factors differentiating growing from non-growing small firms. It can be concluded that through the interaction and use of networks (private and professional) the odds of entrepreneurial behaviour and performance of new ventures increase.

2.5.2 Characteristics of the industry

This section will further discuss the characteristics of the industry influence start-up growth. Gilbert, McDougall and Audretsch (2006) conclude in their study of new venture growth, that industry is one important factor amongst others that predict new venture growth. Their paper refers to numerous studies of other researchers that were investigating new venture growth. In this regard, it has been identified as necessary to understand the characteristics of the industry, in order to comprehend patterns of growth. In particular, the industry's stage of both, emerging and growing markets have significant impact on new venture growth, as stated by many studies (Park, Chen & Gallagher, 2002; Robinson & McDougall, 2001 in Gilbert, McDougall, & Audretsch, 2006). In detail, Sandberg and Hofer's (1987) proposition of "new ventures will be more successful in industries that are in the development or growth stages of evolution" received strong support ($p < 0.05$), according to their study. Park (2002) on the contrary found that in emerging markets, alliances experience increased popularity compared to non-emerging markets. He concluded alliance strategies were supporting drivers for venture growth. In conclusion, it is hypothesised that start-ups in emerging markets or markets in the growth stage, have better chances for fast growth than new ventures in non-emerging or non-growing stages.

2.5.3 Legal form

This section aims to show the connection between the legal form of new ventures and their performance. Cassar (2004) argues that the choice of legal form affects the availability of particular forms of financing. However, Storey (1994b) claims that the gain of the limited liability as legal form is a deception. Instead, the choice of the legal form aims at balancing credibility and taxation variations against statutory audit costs and public information. Taking this approach into consideration, financial institutions may assess incorporations (stock corporation, Aktiengesellschaften in Switzerland) to be more credible. Further, this choice of legal form also may be an indicator for future growth or growth potential (Cassar, 2004). Consequently, Storey (1994b) and Freedman and Godwin (1994) debate that incorporation leads to more use of (or supply) of financial support from banks. Hypothesising the positive correlation between greater financial capital and start-up growth, incorporation represents the most beneficial legal form for fast growing start-ups.

2.5.4 Luck

A less rational and non-scientific factor for start-up growth is luck. Luck is neither predictable nor calculable but still remains an important factor for the success of new ventures. It has been found that many successful start-up entrepreneurs are not able to build up a second flourishing new venture. According to Dobelli (2011), beginner's luck plays an important role in business. Dobelli argues that wrong associations with former successes (the so called association bias) lead to the

wrong estimation of the own talent. He further explains that the shift from beginner's luck to talent is vague, but an indicator for talent could be the succeeding achievement of good results. However, it still could be luck, as Dobelli claims.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

Upon the basis of the literature, a theoretical framework is drawn as shown in Figure 3. It provides a general representation of the relationships between the previously discussed factors and start-up growth. Entrepreneur's personality, founding team, business culture and venture capital represent factors that can be controlled by the firm and are therefore seen as internal. At the same time they are regarded as highly important and belong therefore to the group of imperative factors. Social skills and networking, as well as the legal form of new ventures also can be regulated by the company. Since these factors together with the characteristics of the industry and luck seem to be of less crucial necessity, they are counted to the supportive group of factors. However, the latter two factors cannot be directly controlled by the firm and are therefore regarded as external influences.

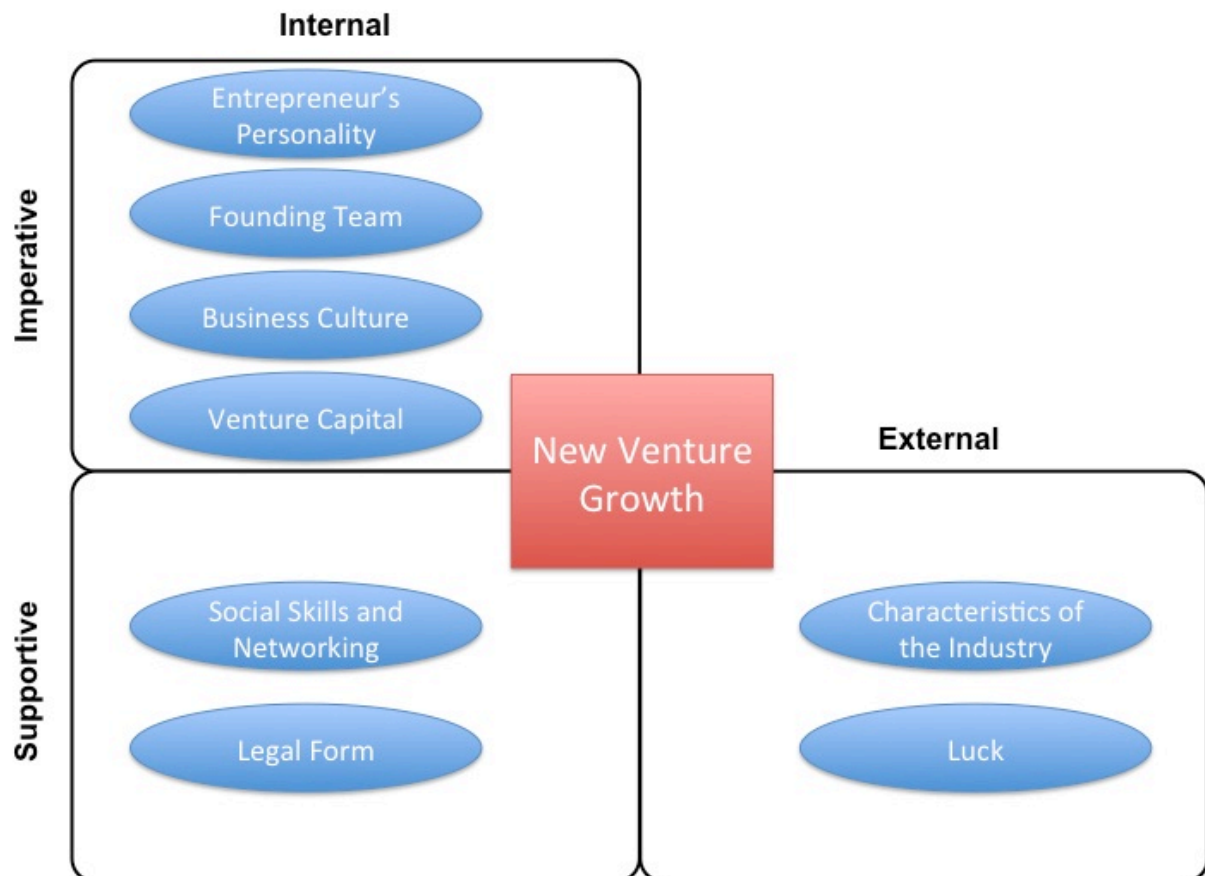


Figure 3: Theoretical framework

2.7 Interim conclusion

Table 1 summarises the factors found to be relevant for fast growth in start-ups.

Table 1: Relevant factors for fast growth in start-ups

ID	Factor	Findings
F1	Entrepreneur's personality	Prior education, industry experience and social capital and skills are regarded as highly supportive attributes of business entrepreneurs. In more detail, these traits include recognising business opportunities, education, risk willingness and industry experience.
F2	Founding team	Larger, interdisciplinary and knowledgeable teams are seen to be more successful than smaller, homogenous teams.
F3	Business culture, strategy and the ambition to grow	The owner manager's growth ambition, a business culture of innovation and flexibility increases the chances for a start-up's fast growth. For young and smaller firms, a focussed strategy with a single, revenue driving product was found to be more successful.
F4	Venture capital	Two main groups of capital were identified: inside and outside funds. Inside funds consist of own resources (bootstrapping) and financial support from the three 'f' (typically smaller sums). Larger finance can be raised from outside financing, namely business angels (< CHF 500,000) or venture capitalists (generally > CHF 500,000). Bootstrapping methods take place in the first phase, then business angels start to invest and later, when risks are smaller and business models are proven, venture capitalists raise interests.
F5	Social skills and involvement in networks	Networking was identified as an important factor for new venture creation, since the social interaction leads to more recognition of business opportunities. Growers were distinguished from non-growers by their use of extensive private business networks.
F6	Characteristics of the industry	Emerging and growing industries or markets support growth of small businesses by offering new opportunities.
F7	Legal Form	The choice of the legal form influences taxation variations, statutory audit costs and public information obligation. Incorporation was found to be an indicator for future growth, which attracts / simplifies outside investments.
F8	Luck	Luck plays an important role in business. Beginners' luck and wrong associations with former successes lead to wrong estimation of the talent. This could be an explanation for the fact that many successful entrepreneurs are not able to build up a second

growing new venture.

On the basis of the factors shown Table 1 above, corresponding propositions arise. One factor can lead to multiple propositions, as listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Factors and corresponding propositions

Factor	Corresponding propositions
F1	→ P1 High level of education, prior industry experience and social skills represent attributes that support new venture growth.
F2	→ P2 Larger founding teams are more successful than smaller teams.
	→ P3 Interdisciplinary founding teams are more successful than homogenous teams.
	→ P4 Knowledgeable founding teams are more successful than unexperienced teams.
F3	→ P5 A business culture of innovation and flexibility as well as the entrepreneur's ambition to grow increase chances for a start-up's fast growth.
	→ P6 Young and smaller firms, with focussed strategies and a single revenue driving product, are more successful than those with multiple product strategies.
F4	→ P7 Financing methods depend on the growth stage of the firm. 1) Bootstrapping 2) Business angels 3) Venture capitalists
F5	→ P8 Entrepreneurs involved in networks recognise business opportunities better
	→ P9 Start-ups involved in networks succeed better than those not active in networks
F6	→ P10 Emerging and growing industries or markets support small business growth
F7	→ P11 Legal form of incorporation (AG) is an indicator for future growth and attracts / simplifies outside investment
F8	→ P12 Luck plays an important role in business

3 Methodology

The fundamental research question of this thesis is to examine factors that influence the likelihood of fast growth in Swiss technology start-ups. The question of why certain start-ups grow fast and others do not is strived to be answered. In order to find answers to this question and to gain deep insight to personal views and opinions, qualitative research method was applied. In-depth interviews were conducted with two groups of samples: experts and entrepreneurs. A total of 11 data sets were collected consisting of nine in-depth interviews and two questionnaire responses. One out of nine interviews was conducted over Skype, all others personally within the time frame of 50-80 minutes. Opposing to the literature review, this research is on a qualitative basis. On the one hand, the aim of the qualitative approach is to analyse the specific factors that concluded from empirical research in detail (covered in the second part of the applied questionnaire). On the other hand, the choice of this approach leverages the chances to recognise further factors that are relevant for the specific field of research (first part of the questionnaire). Positive aspects of the choice of interview data collection also are flexibility and controllability. Interviewees can speak freely about the topic, but when necessary also can be led into specific directions. Negative attributes of interviews is the dependency on the interviewees' willingness to provide answers and the transcript of spoken words into written form. However, qualitative methods provide deeper insight than quantitative techniques while representing the interviewees' and respondents' personal views that have to be rated as less reliable data. Overall, with the applied approach more detailed outcome is expected, confirming or disproving the theory. However, results are less broad and not representative, compared to studies applying qualitative methods.

In the first part of the interview, the interviewees were asked to autonomously name a maximum of 10 factors that influence growth rates of new ventures. The factors were ranked by priority and were explained, where necessary. The second part of the interview was conducted with the help of leading questions. The aim hereby was to direct the respondent into the direction of the factors that were found from the literature analysis. On the basis of the interviewee's arguments about the factors, the individual's personal view could be evaluated. Therefore, it has been focussed on each proposition in section "2 Foundations" of this thesis. However, with the effort to improve the questionnaire, it was slightly adapted throughout the interview rounds. Detailed transcripts of the interviews can be found in Appendices.

3.1 Selection of Samples

The interviews were held in two sample groups: the first group consists of five experts and the second group contains six start-up entrepreneurs. The selection samples of experts was made by their qualification as experts and their experience in terms of coaching start-ups, leading a number of start-ups or being involved in the Swiss start-up scene in other ways. The sample of entrepreneurs was selected by these two main criteria: 1) being the founder of a Swiss technology start-up 2) the growth rate of the company under consideration of having a mix of high-growing and non- or slow-growing start-ups.

3.2 Description of Data Collection

The in-depth interviews were held through the use of semi-structured questionnaires, functioning as interview guidance. In order to address dissimilarities between experts and entrepreneurs, different questionnaires were applied for each of the two sample groups. The expert's view of businesses

mainly directs from the outside on a broad perspective. Entrepreneurs usually have a narrower viewpoint, being in daily operational business. Therefore, differences in the viewpoint of the two groups were addressed in the corresponding questionnaire. The interviewer, explaining the background of the thesis and the goals of the interview in particular, opened dialogues. Subsequently, the interview consisting of two main parts was conducted. The interviewed person therefore lists a maximum of 10 factors that from his point of view are of high importance for achieving fast growth in new ventures. The second part was guided through the use of leading questions, by allocating the main part of the speaking time to the interviewee. The questions aspired to measure the factors that are reviewed in the foundation. All interviews were voice recorded with the allowance of the interviewees.

4 Analysis

In order to answer the research question of what factors influence the likelihood of fast growth in Swiss technology start-ups, this section presents the description of samples and the analyses of the collected data. The analysis is divided into two parts. The first part evaluates the factors listed by the interviewees and questionnaire respondents, when asked for the most important factors for start-up growth according to their experience. The second part examines the answers given, when asked for specific questions that were based on the findings from the literature review.

4.1 Description of samples

The research for this thesis contains a qualitative analysis of the results found by conducting in-depth interviews with two groups of samples. Group one consists of start-up experts (Table 3) and group two contains entrepreneurs as start-up founders (Table 4).

Table 3: Description of sample group 1 (experts)

Name	The interviewee's function and qualification as an expert
Mr Bernd Kuhlin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President of the board of directors and COO at Elmove AG • Former executive at Ascom AG and Geberit AG • Start-up consultant • Adjunct lecturer for product innovation and leadership at Lucerne UASA
Mr Jochen Gnädinger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 years of experience in the field of energy production, distribution and measurement • 10 years of responsibility for structuring and leading companies abroad for industry concerns (Landis & Gyr AG; Siemens AG) • Four years member of the executive board at MECOS Traxler AG • 50% mandate at Technopark Luzern, member of the executive board, responsibilities in business development • Perceiving tasks for <i>IFJ / CTI</i> and jury member at venture.ch • Founder and managing partner at MagicSticks GmbH • Member of the board at Mayoris AG
Mr Gian-Franco Salvato	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of the executive board at Colygon AG • Former founder of Aseantic AG • Co-founder of Netrics • Jury member at "venture kick"
Mr Claus Niedermann	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journalist and founder of Journalistenbüro Niedermann GmbH (JNB), specialised on start-ups, venture capital and other themes of small and medium businesses • Over the timespan of 15 years, JNB formerly maintained the section innovation and SMB for the business paper CASH. • Operator of startupticker.ch • Chief editor of "gründen" • Idea generator and together with IFJ responsible for the concept of Top 100 Start-ups Schweiz • 15 years of experience as jury member of the entrepreneur's

award “Swiss Economic Award”

- Member of the jury of “venture” and “venture kick”

Mr Pius Küng

- Managing partner and owner of Küng & Partner (management and marketing consulting)
- Founder of IFJ
- Trainer at “VentureLab”

Table 4: Description of sample group 2 (entrepreneurs as start-up founders)

Interviewee	Start-up name	Year of founding	No. of employees	Field of activity
Mr Michael Näf <i>CEO and co-founder</i>	Doodle AG www.doodle.com	2007	12*	<i>Web-Tech</i> Doodle radically simplifies the process of scheduling events: board or team meetings, dinner with friends, reunions, weekend trips, or anything else.
Mr Sadik Hafizovic <i>CEO and co-founder</i>	Zurich Instruments AG www.zhinst.com	2008	20-25*	<i>Sensoric High-Tech</i> Development and selling advanced test and measurement instruments for dynamic signal analysis, used in many fields of application by high-technology research laboratories and industrial development sites.
Mr Marcus Kuhn <i>CEO and co-founder</i>	connex.io AG www.connex.io	2010	6**	<i>Web-Tech</i> Connex.io is a address book management solution. It merges and updates contact details on PC and mobile phones.
Mr Pascal Mathis <i>COO and co-founder</i>	GetYourGuide AG www.getyourguide.com	2008	75*	<i>Web-Tech</i> A booking website for tours and activities all over the world.
Mrs Junjun Chen <i>CFO and co-founder</i>	HouseTrip AG www.housetrip.com	2009	130*	<i>Web-Tech</i> A website for holiday rentals. Rent and rent out private

				apartments.
Mr Sascha Sandi <i>CEO and co-founder</i>	Founded as Dynamic-NET AG today Host Europe Swiss www.hosteurope.ch	2003	10*	<i>Web-Hosting</i> Webhosting solutions and domain administration.

* by November 2012

** by the time of company closing in September 2012

4.2 Analysis part 1: Evaluation of the autonomously named factors by experts and entrepreneurs

Table 5 displays the 10 most frequently enumerated factors. A complete list of all 43 named influences can be found in Appendix A. However, the factors named by respondents and interviewees were ranked from most important to least important. Therefore count alone is not sufficient to evaluate the importance of the specific influence. In order to take importance and frequency into account, a more complex form of evaluation was developed (see Appendix A for details). This ranking, found by using a specifically developed formula, is shown in Table 6.

Table 5: Top 10 most frequently named factors influencing start-up growth

Rank	Factor	Count
1	Team	7
2	Focus	6
3	Venture Capital	4
4	Business Model	4
5	Quickness	4
6	Product	3
7	Location	3
8	Vision	3
9	Market	3
10	Persistence	3

Table 6: Top 10 after re-evaluation

Rank	Factor	Final mark
1	Team	364
2	Focus	246
3	Venture capital	210
4	Business Model	132
5	Product	87
6	Location	60
7	Vision	57
8	Quickness	52
9	Market	51
10	Persistence	33

4.2.1 Comparison of factors

In section “2 Foundations” of the thesis (see page 2), a number of books, papers and articles published in journals was reviewed. Table 7 displays how independently recorded factors by experts and entrepreneurs match to the factors found in the literature analysis.

Table 7: Consistent factors from literature and collected data

ID	Factors found in literature	Matching factors from data collection*
F1	Entrepreneur’s personality	Persistence (3); vision (3); passion (1); work of founder (1); personality and characteristics of the entrepreneur (1); think outside the box (1); ability to adapt; ability to process input (1)
F2	Founding team	Team (7); people (2); know-how (2); competency of sales / key account management (1); industry and market knowledge (1); execution(1); all-rounders (1)
F3	Business culture, strategy and the ambition to grow	Business model (4); market orientation (2); business culture (1); customer service (1); global positioning (1); multipliers (1); sustainable growth (1); economically sustainable marketing methods (1); public awareness (1); quality (1); early risk elimination → increasing company value (1)
F4	Venture capital	Venture capital (5);
F5	Social skills and involvement in networks	Involvement of other persons (1); relationships and social networks (1)
F6	Characteristics of the industry	Market (3)
F7	Legal form	-
F8	Luck	-

*number of experts and entrepreneurs supporting this factor

Five out of the eight factors identified in the literature, find relatively strong support from the interview data: F1, F2, F3, F4 and F6. Whereas F5 is backed weakly, F7 and F8 are not covered at all. Furthermore, there were factors named by the interviewees, which do not fit into the scope of the factors considered by the literature analysis, as shown in Table 8. An interpretation of Table 7 and Table 8 is provided in section “5.1, Results from comparison of factors”.

Table 8: Findings from interview data not fitting the scope of the literature analysis

Additional factors from data collection*
Focus (6)
Quickness (4)
Product (3), inherent <i>virality</i> (1)
Timing (2)
Sociocultural conditions (1)
Simplicity (1)
Public funding and support (1)
Politics (1)
Cost awareness (1)
Trade barriers (1)
Location, Technopark (1)

*number of experts and entrepreneurs backing this factor

This denomination of influences on fast start-up growth does not fully correspond with the factors concluded from the literature review. Nevertheless, assignment could be done on meaning of the factors. Table 9 provides a description of the top 10 factors for better understanding.

Table 9: Explanation of the meaning of the named factors

Factor	Explanation
Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Founding team • Founding team, employees and partners
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To focus on what shall be done • To focus on the low hanging fruits • To focus on one product • Focus especially in the first years on the initial idea
Venture capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financing methods • Financing strategy fitting business strategy • Solvation management • Access to venture capital
Business model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition and flexibility • Scalability of business model • <i>USP</i> • Securing cash flow
Product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality • Scalability • Satisfying a real need • <i>USP</i>

Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economic / political environment• Governmental support and funding depending on location• Costs depending on location
Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clearly expressed vision and goals• Willingness for growth
Quickness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quickly increasing level of awareness• Time-to-market as short as possible• Ability of quick adaption to changing market needs• Quickly closing first projects / acquiring first customers
Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Market development• Choosing the right market• Size of market
Persistence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being diligent

4.3 Analysis part 2: examination of collected data in association with literature findings

This part analyses statements made and opinions of the interviewees. An overview of the respondent's answers is displayed in Table 10 and Table 11 below. A deep analysis in context of the factors is provided in sections 4.3.1 to 4.3.8.

Table 10: Overview of statements and opinions of the experts in context of the factors

	G.-F. Salvato	B. Kuhlin	J. Gnädinger	C. Niedermann	P. Küng
F1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry experience is suggestive • Working experience in general is helpful to understand business processes • Entrepreneurial experience is of high value, knowing how to start a company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since investors not only invest in the product but also in the team, know-how is crucial and almost more important than industry experience and education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know-how is 90% of success • Industry experience is often not available but actually very important • Experienced people should be taken on board as manager or member of the board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry experience and know-how are very important. If necessary, taking on board experienced people with know-how or gain experience by working in the industry • These days, education is more important than before. In earlier times much less start-ups were founded by the <i>ETH</i> than today 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The experience needed by entrepreneurs depends on the business model • If the team does not understand its business and lacks experience in sales, it will fail
F2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideally 2 or 3 co-founders • Interdisciplinary teams typically are more successful • Team consisting of introverted, extroverted, analytical, designer, self-starting persons • Team consisting of known people, at least their manner of working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many co-founders tend to conflicts • Single entrepreneurs tend to dictatorships • 2 or 3 co-founders seem to be ideal: execution / planning / rest of the work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation of success: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - team 90% - business model 9% - other 1% • Single entrepreneurs entail high risk • Minimal approach: entrepreneur (extroverted marketer) and technician • Providing the start-up seniority by electing an experienced person to the board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single entrepreneurs typically are not growth drivers • Responsibilities have to be clearly assigned to the team members • Simple and clear regulations must be set • Large teams tend to conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The composition of the team depends on the business model and the pursued strategy • If e.g. sales and marketing are specifically challenged, the team should have fitting people • There is no general rule for founding team sizes

F3	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a strategy is of high importance • Specifically because of having mutual goals and measuring the achievements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a growth strategy is important • E.g. at Facebook, growth only happened when Mark Zuckerberg got marketing experts and other people with focus on growth on board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a growth strategy is inevitable and has to be implemented in the business model • “When no growth strategy can be demonstrated, fast growth can absolutely not be achieved” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The vision of growth must be given • Ability to react flexible on market changes is crucial • Growth must comply liquidity • Exploiting market penetration as far as possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on business model and targets, sales processes and the infrastructure must be considered • Executing and strategic leadership should be separated in start-ups
	Ambition to grow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on market penetration • Premature diversification leads to disintegration • Diversification should be approached only after a complete life cycle of the first product 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1) Planning 2) recognising risks and opportunities 3) eliminating highest risks first and exploiting opportunities leads quicker to higher company valuation 	Ambition to grow	Ambition to grow
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneur’s ambitions are vital • Persuasion for success without being arrogant • The entrepreneur’s belief in success is a crucial characteristic of successful entrepreneurs • The own belief can be felt in others 	<p>Ambition to grow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Without commitment and the belief in growth, a start-up perishes like a primrose” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth by market penetration should be strived first 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive commitment is imperative • High commitment through lots of work and travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful teams have one thing in common: they are extremely hardworking (60-70 hours a week) and are pursuing their goals stubborn while staying flexible, though.”
	Business culture (flexibility and innovation)	Business culture (flexibility and innovation)	Ambition to grow	Business culture (flexibility and innovation)	Business culture (flexibility and innovation)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick and simple decision making processes are essential for surviving • Sticking to certain decisions is important in order to give the company a character • Early role allocation is vital for quick decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining a CEO In early stage is crucial in order to decide quickly • Innovation can be ensured by specific personalities or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If not available, everything is lost • Blind belief in success is not healthy, it should be reasoned • Involvement of external parties in order to clarify the real odds for success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision making process must be defined and short • Good communication in general and particularly within the team is vital • One product companies face high risks and encounter difficulties gaining new ideas • Prove if product could be assigned to different market niches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It needs clever corporate governance and controlling, where the founding team and the members of the board agree • A start-up’s products or services need to be innovative, otherwise it does not attract investors

<p>process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation in form of improvement of the first product • Further innovation only needed after the success of the first product 	<p>in cooperation with <i>CTI</i> and universities for research and development</p>	<p>and innovation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A decision making process could be helpful because young entrepreneurs often lack maturity in decision making • It is suggestive to involve board directors, the management board in order to make decisions • Innovation management not vital in the first 2 or 3 years → concentrate on the first product 	<p>or would possibly fail</p>
<p>F4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% bootstrapping is a rocky road • With outside funding it is easier to grow. Hereby it is important to only have as much financial capital as needed – more is unhealthy and creates need and costs for unnecessary things • Ideally staggered financing with several rounds to finance the planned growth rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The question of the proper financing method highly depends on the growth stage of the firm • Seed-funding: friends, family and fools • Early growth: Business Angels • Later growth: Venture capitalists or perhaps <i>IPO</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bootstrapping as long as possible (could inhibit growth but is healthy for sustainable growth) • External financing accelerates growth • When start-up was financed by own capital for a longer time, fairer financial contribution can be achieved when raising external capital • Not giving up more than 50% of the ownership; investors often do not share the same vision of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crowd funding is not a good choice for start-up capital since often slow and sums provided are small • Investors with market and industry experience offer more capital and provide knowledge and connections that are of high importance especially in the beginning • “Rapid growth not only means having money but also having connections” • Investors may function • Ideal financing method depends on the vision of the founding team • For fast growth, business angels and venture capitalists should be involved. This is just possible with a scalable business model

how to run the business here as door openers

- Giving up too many shares impairs the motivation of the owner manager
- In Switzerland less risk capital is available than in the USA
- Swiss investors tend to analyse things deeply

F5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement in on- and offline networks as a combination • Online networks represent a sound contact basis and allow fast viral spreading • Offline networks are adequate for active networking • Every start-up has to fiddle with social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being involved in networks can lead to benefits only when done properly • Twitter, Facebook, Xing or LinkedIn are not of high importance • CTI provides sound opportunities to connect to other start-ups or potential board members • Universities can be helpful too 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social networks are important for all entrepreneurs, no matter whether it is a young or an experienced entrepreneur • The main question is to find out, which people are imperative for the venture. Networking should be selectively done with these persons. • Key persons could be: connectors to science, connectors to key customers or suppliers, connectors to potential employees or generally to economics and politics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every start-up needs a network of not only virtual but also physical contacts • Showing competency e.g. through making speeches • Talking to customers at exhibitions and fairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When concentrating on OEM or key account customers, social networks are not very important • Whereas when maintaining a web portal, social networks may be vital
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F6	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
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F7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AG allows easier external financing • Start-up should choose AG or at time of founding due to limited liability • If GmbH, transforming into AG when raising external capital due to simpler ownership distribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AG best for external financing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid growth (as long as important and suggestive) needs external (and internal) investors, which requires the legal form of AG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AG is suitable for external funding • In GmbHs everybody has the right to a say 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basically, the legal form of a start-up is not critical to success • If striving for external financing, AG would be the proper legal form
F8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Luck and success result from diligence” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60% expertise / know-how • 40% luck 	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plays an important role, luck is needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every company had luck at some point in the firm’s history • Active and persevering teams have better odds to be lucky

Table 11: Overview of statements and opinions of the entrepreneurs

	P. Mathis	S. Hafizovic	M. Kuhn	M. Näf	J. Chen	S. Sandi
F1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry experience is very important. Without, it is difficult to find the 'sweet spot' where opportunities lie 	-	-	-	-
F2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The founding team consists of 5 engineers with different skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The founding team consists of 3 co-founders: S. Hafizovic (CEO) and F. Heer (CTO) know each other from studies. B. Hofstetter (CSA) was an intern at the same university. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The founding team consists of two co-founders: CEO: M. Kuhn CTO: A. Hezretkuliyev 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The founding team consists of two co-founders: CEO: M. Näf CTO: P. E. Sevinç 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The founding team consists of two co-founders: CEO: A. Bertrand CFO: J. Chen The two founders met when studying hospitality management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The founding team consists of two co-founders: CEO: S. Sandi CTO: E. Jasiqi E. Jasiqi was S. Sandi's training officer in an IT company
F3	<p>Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note of the author: the offered service was highly innovative Central theme was to have all excursion and tour operators on our platform Focus on market penetration to gain additional market shares 	<p>Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note of the author: the offered product was highly innovative Bootstrapping, putting every cent into company growth 30-40% company growth by market penetration The second product (product 	<p>Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note of the author: the offered product was innovative Growth strategy and key figures were defined and coordinated with investors Continuous adaptations of strategy took place Many plans existed, 	<p>Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note of the author: the offered product was highly innovative A growth strategy was defined (M. Näf named no more details) Gaining more market shares through market penetration 	<p>Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note of the author: the offered service was highly innovative Focussed strategy by offering one service Progressive market development, starting in 3 major European cities, then developing into further strategic 	<p>Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note of the author: the offered product's level of innovation was moderate Sustainable grow without external capital Acquiring resellers to leverage revenue <p>Ambition to grow</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market development through entering additional countries and cities <p>Ambition to grow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing as fast as possible (currently 700 new offers each month) • Working hours per week: 51 - 60 <p>Business culture (flexibility and innovation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a business culture and also write the values down is vital • Areas of authority were assigned when the company had 10-12 employees. This led to a greater degree of order and decisions could be done quicker • The CEO has the final word • Sometimes, decisions must be adapted. The 	<p>development), contributes approximately 30% to total revenue</p> <p>Ambition to grow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convinced of the product but only knew it will work after selling first device • Strongly striving for rapid growth • Working hours per week: more than 60 <p>Business culture (flexibility and innovation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEO often has final word • Marketing / Sales democratically makes decisions within the team • Innovations are very important • Leader of Research and Development division is responsible for innovations 	<p>however reality was different (e.g. a B2B product was planned)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing through market penetration <p>Ambition to grow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convinced of the need for the product and the business idea • After shutting down the company, M. Kuhn concludes that the market niche is not large enough and also has changed during the last 2.5 years • Working hours per week: more than 60 <p>Business culture (flexibility and innovation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEO has final word • “Every start-up must be a dictatorship” • Geographical distance between the co-founders located in Switzerland and the team members 	<p>Ambition to grow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working hours per week: more than 60 <p>Business culture (flexibility and innovation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note of the author: Clear allocation of roles in the company provides flexibility 	<p>locations</p> <p>Ambition to grow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of conviction • Working hours per week: 51-60 <p>Business culture (flexibility and innovation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At first, both founders were deciding together • Today, the CEO has the final word • Executive board holds weekly meetings for making decisions • Innovation by offering what the client wants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High conviction of success • Working hours per week: at first 41-50 at night and weekends besides working for the company. Then, working more than 60 hours per week for Dynamic-NET <p>Business culture (flexibility and innovation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of responsibility were not defined very clearly, therefore decisions could not be made very flexible • Weekly meeting was held for decision making • External persons were involved when making decisions in order to prevent tunnel view • At first off-the-shelf (standard) products were offered, later more innovative
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<p>difficulty is to recognise if and when</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation management did not exist in the beginning. Nowadays, fortnightly meetings are held, which allows prioritising ideas and projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “No matter what you do, there must be room for innovations” 	<p>located in the Ukraine led to cultural diversities concerning commitment and working hours.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The distance also impaired flexibility • Striving for innovative product slowed down time-to-market 			<p>products were developed to add value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation management by trend and market analysis
<p>F4 Available venture capital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Bootstrapping ✓ Friends, family, fools ✓ Business angels ✓ 1 venture capitalist (2012) ✓ CTI-Project ✓ Support from the initiative ‘Pionier’ from Zürcher Kantonalbank • All co-founders hold the same amount of shares 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bootstrapping means freedom • Freedom in exchange for time: external financing accelerates growth <p>Available venture capital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Bootstrapping ✓ Friends, family, fools ✓ Development of the product within the scope of CTI-Project ✓ CHF 300,000 from business competitions • All shares owned by the co-founders and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Bootstrapping and friends, family, fools for the first 18 months ✓ 6 business angels ✓ “venture kick” (CHF 10,000) • The two co-founders kept 2/3 of the ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Bootstrapping ✓ Venture capitalists (30% ownership in 2008) ✓ Partial exit (49%) through Tamedia in 2011 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Friends, family, fools (CHF 235,000 seed funding) ✓ 10 business angels ✓ 3 venture capitalists (2012) ✓ “venture kick” (CHF 10,000) • Business angels and venture capitalists hold together the majority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Bootstrapping ✓ Exit through Host Europe Group in 2012

employees in key positions

<p>F5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ University networks ✓ Networking with other start-ups ✓ Social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ University networks ✓ Networking with other start-ups ✓ Social media ✓ Blogs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ University networks ✓ Networking with other start-ups ✓ Regional corporate networks ✓ Social media • Carefully choosing networking events, allotting time well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Networking with other start-ups ✓ Social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ No networking activities • Note from the author: Since the two co-founders have raised over CHF 200,000 seed funding from friends, family and fools they seem to have high social capital without being actively involved in particular networks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ University networks (cooperation with University of Münster for recruiting process) ✓ Networking with other start-ups ✓ Social media
<p>F6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For GetYourGuide, timing of market entry was crucial. Earlier the market would not have been ready and later the window would have been closed • The emerging market of online platforms offering tours from various operators was vital in the success of GetYourGuide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zurich Instruments entered the market of digital meters in early stage. According to S. Hafizovic, this was crucial for success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other companies developed and offered similar products simultaneously • Market niche already was saturated 	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dynamic-NET entered the market in the emerging market of IT hosting solutions

<p>F7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially founded as GmbH When external investors were acquired, the company was transformed into AG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AG is the simplest Only the starting capital of CHF 100,000 would be a hurdle but since Zurich Instruments needed this amount of capital anyways, the decision was easy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially founded as GmbH, since only CHF 20,000 start-up capital could be afforded When external investors were acquired, the company was transformed into AG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially founded as GmbH When external investors were acquired, the company was transformed into AG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The start-up was founded as AG for financial reasons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially founded as partnership without limited liability Later, transforming the company into AG in order to appear more professional and limit liability
<p>F8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/3 of success is luck 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Luck is not really important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50% of success is luck 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Luck was very important in the history of Doodle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Luck played an important role in having the initial idea 2% of success is luck 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/3 of success can be allocated to luck

4.3.1 F1: The entrepreneur's personality

The literature review in section "2 Foundations" (see page 2) has revealed that prior education, industry experience and social capital are regarded to be highly supportive attributes of business entrepreneurs for achieving fast growth in their start-up companies. These characteristics include traits such as recognising business opportunities, being educated and risk taking as well as having industry experience. The in-depth expert interviews that were held within the scope of this study have not only fundamentally confirmed these findings, but have also brought some new insights. P. Küng (questionnaire, November 21, 2012 – see Appendix B for transcript) for instance, states that the experience an entrepreneur or the entrepreneurial team should have, is dependent on the business model. He further argues that in case basic understanding for the specific industry and experience in sales is missing, the start-up would fail. However, B. Kuhlin (interview, October 31, 2012 – see Appendix C for transcript) indicates 'know-how' as an additional important attribute for business success and growth. B. Kuhlin further argues that know-how in terms of a general understanding of corporate governance and management is inevitable and of high importance for start-ups. This statement is confirmed by J. Gnädinger (interview, November 2, 2012 – see Appendix D for transcript), claiming that 90 per cent of new venture success depends on know-how. As G.-F. Salvato (interview, November 2, 2012 – see Appendix E for transcript) emphasises, former experience in launching new businesses, regardless if it is successful or not, might be a reasonable way of gaining such know-how. This only applies to entrepreneurs being able to convert the experience into know-how. Both, J. Gnädinger and C. Niedermann (interview, November 14, 2012 – see Appendix F for transcript) agree, that in case a founding teams lacks know-how or experience, extra people might be added either to the team, the executive board or to the board of directors. Concluding it can be said, not only the achieved level of education and former business experience are crucial for new venture success and fast growth, but also know-how in terms of being experienced in starting new ventures (or involving experienced people), corporate governance and knowledge about operating business are relevant factors.

4.3.2 F2: The founding team

The findings based on the reviewed literature have shown that larger, interdisciplinary and knowledge based teams are regarded to be more successful than smaller, homogenous teams. G.-F. Salvato confirms the literature findings by perceiving interdisciplinary teams to be more successful. He further argues that persons known to the founder should be chosen as co-founders as their way of working is already well known. Concerning the size of founding teams, P. Küng argues that there is no universal rule for team sizes and the arrangement of it depends on the business model and the strategy. However, he stresses that the composition of founders ought to cover fitting personalities in each requested field of functions. Interviewees generally agreed that single entrepreneurs entail high risk due to the difficulty of representing all talents needed by the business in one single person. Moreover they generally agreed that the founding team should not consist of more than five persons. B. Kuhlin goes along with C. Niedermann by stating that large sized founding teams tend to have disputes and disagreements. However, C. Niedermann further explains that simple and clear regulations must be established in order to avoid difficulties and everyone should know what his or her responsibilities are. This proposition goes along with P Matthis' statement: "When the company had around 10 to 12 employees, we had to organise ourselves by allocating fields of responsibility among the founding team. After doing so, our collaboration improved and we were much better organised." G.-F. Salvato and B. Kuhlin regard a group consisting of two to three members as ideal for

the team: “The tasks of ‘doing’, ‘planning’ and ‘all the rest’ could be perfectly allocated to three co-founders”, as B. Kuhlin notes. J. Gnädinger adds: “As a minimum, the founding team needs an extroverted person as the marketer and a technical guy – a prudent person could complete the team for example to settle financing tasks, this could also be fulfilled as a member of the board.” He further explains: “To be taken serious, the company needs seniority. This could be achieved by electing an elder, experienced person to the Board of Directors or as the CEO.” Thus, it can be summarised that the experts do not agree with the finding of larger teams being more successful. However, heterogeneity is seen to be important. One specific new finding is that in order to be recognised as a serious business, the start-up needs seniority.

4.3.3 F3 Business culture, strategy and the ambition to grow

A business culture of innovation and flexibility increases a start-up’s chances for fast growth. This was proven by the literature review. P. Küng underlines the importance of entering the market with innovative products or services. Otherwise, he further clarifies, the start-up would encounter difficulties raising funds or would fail in other means on the market. G.-F. Salvato argues, that once an innovative product or service was launched successfully, the focus should lie on further innovations by improving the product or service. This is where flexibility plays an important role. Since the market needs could have changed in the time span between designing and launching the product, continuous market analysis should be undertaken and the product or service should be adapted to new needs and expectations. P. Mathis (interview, November 20, 2012 – see Appendix G for transcript) claims that one of the greatest challenges in doing business is to find out when it is necessary to adapt the business model to meet the customer’s needs and when to stick to the current business model: “Sometimes, the business model has to be changed, but only if the influencing factors are important enough. Otherwise one has to be stubborn. Now, the difficulty lies in spotting out, in which contract negotiations it is cleverer to concede and in which not. Each of these decisions might decide on success or failure of the company.”

Referring to literature, for young and smaller firms, a focussed strategy with a single, revenue driving product leads to more success. This finding correlates with the companies GetYourGuide, HouseTrip, Doodle and Zurich Instruments. Each of these companies has achieved high growth with one single product and a very focused strategy. Only in a second step, new products were brought to the market (Doodle and Zurich Instruments). This partially contradicts to the proposition of C. Niedermann, who claims that the strategy of single product companies is highly risky and the founders often face difficulties to find new ideas. He explains: “If a company has only one product to start, it is suggestive to prove whether the same product could not be adapted to open-up additional market segments.” Still, it could be that these single product strategy start-ups belong to the few lucky start-ups amongst many unsuccessful ones. GetYourGuide and HouseTrip represent the two fastest growing start-ups within the scope of this study. Both firms offer highly innovative web platforms, operating in different markets, though. While GetYourGuide connects tour operators and travelling people, HouseTrip offers a platform, where private people can rent and rent out private apartments. Their strategy is to develop their services globally in international markets (limited entrepreneurial growth, see Figure 1, page 3).

According to P. Küng successful entrepreneurial teams work between 60-70 hours per week and are stubbornly pursuing their goals while staying flexible. Interestingly enough, all respondents confirmed this statement by declaring 51-60 working hours a week (HouseTrip and GetYourGuide) or

even more than 60 hours of labour per week (Doodle, Zurich Instruments, connex.io and Dynamic-NET). Whereas S. Sandi (interview, November 29, 2012 – see Appendix H for transcript) the co-founder of Dynamic-NET explained: “The office turned to hour home. There are so many things that will be done...in the beginning we entered the office at 9 am and left at 12 am. Nowadays we might say this is not very productive, the limit may be at around 10 hours a day.” Nevertheless, the founder’s motivation and ambition to grow is essential for the success and the resulting fast growth of start-up companies.

Consequently, the conclusion is that start-up companies achieve highest growth rates when launching innovative products on the market and focussing on market penetration and market development at first.

4.3.4 F4: Venture capital

Two main types of venture capital could be identified in the literature review: inside and outside funds. Whether one or the other variant of venture capital is raised is dependent on the ideology and strategy of the entrepreneurial team. S. Sandi for instance emphasises the fact that he and his co-founder never had the intention to raise outside funds. They started as partnership (Kollektivgesellschaft) and only when they had earned the capital needed to form an incorporate company (Aktiengesellschaft), which is CHF 100,000 in Switzerland, they changed the legal form of the company. The question may arise, whether large funds leverage the odds for fast growth of start-up companies. Within the scope of this study, no clear picture could be drawn regarding this question. Connex.io could find financial support from friends, family and fools for the first 18 months. Then the product and the company had matured sufficiently to attract six business angels. Still, only a few months later the company was shut down due to lacking growth and missing customers. This example shows that for a start-up offering a promising product and finding strong financial support, sometimes is not sufficient for company survival.

Another impression make Zurich Instruments and Dynamic-NET, both have bootstrapped the companies and conduct sound businesses. Nevertheless, while Zurich Instruments could record sound growth rates (growing from 3 co-founders up to 25 employees in 4 years), Dynamic-NET never grew big in terms of employees (growing from 2 co-founders to 6 employees in 8 years). However, the company serves today more than 20,000 Swiss clients and the firm was sold successfully to Host Europe Group, a large web-hosting company in Europe. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that from a financial perspective, Dynamic-NET did grow big. Zurich Instruments as well as Dynamic-NET have both shown that with limited capital and bootstrapping methods, very successful business can be done when each Swiss Franc or Dollar of profit is invested into the company. However, this approach could be time intense and difficult to implement as time is short. If the time-to-market is too long, the right market entering moment could be missed. As S. Hafizovic (interview, November 9, 2012 – see Appendix I for transcript) says: “Time is the price you pay in exchange for freedom through bootstrapping and financing growth by internal capital.” meaning that raising outside capital can speed up the business and shorten the time-to-market. However, the received money is in exchange for equity shares and granting a say to shareholders.

HouseTrip, GetYourGuide and Doodle all have raised money from venture capitalists. Doodle announced a partial exit by selling 49 per cent of its shares to the Swiss publisher Tamedia. While HouseTrip recently raised investments of USD 40 Million in October 2012. GetYourGuide raised USD 2 Million earlier in 2012.

The status of government supporting organisations and funds, foundations and business competitions was widely discussed among the interviewees. The possibilities of raising funds for new ventures in Switzerland are diverse. Appendix M provides a list of the most important supporting organisations, business competitions and foundations. Nonetheless, competing against other start-up ventures in a business competition or applying for funds from government and foundations is time consuming. Start-ups carefully have to assess where the focus should lie on.

As a summary, the samples of this study represent a mix of bootstrapping and money raising start-ups and growing new ventures exist in both groups. The question of how fast growth happens arises: Large outside funds can leverage the business as shown in the case of HouseTrip and GetYourGuide. Further, there are broad possibilities of raising capital from competitions, foundations and government supporting organisations.

4.3.5 F5: Social skills and involvement in networks

It was found in the literature review that growing start-ups could be distinguished from non-growing new ventures by their use of extensive private business networks. G.-F. Salvato and C. Niedermann both discuss the importance of networking in on- and offline communities in combination. G.-F. Salvato hereby stresses that these days every start-up must be active in social media platforms. B. Kuhlin differentiates at this point and mentions that networking activities will only be beneficial if it is done correctly. He personally doubts about the convenience of social media communities and rather regards offline networks as essential growth factors. M. Kuhn (interview, November 9, 2012 – see Appendix J for transcript) cites numerous networking events, where entrepreneurs meet for a day or a whole weekend with the aim of networking and exchange of experiences. B. Kuhlin notes the relevancy of CTI, where technology start-ups interconnect and make contact with other young companies and potential members of the board. Interestingly, J. Chen (interview, November 20, 2012 – see Appendix K for transcript) mentions that she and the co-founder of HouseTrip, Arnaud Bertrand, are not involved in any noteworthy network. However, the fact that they could raise CHF 235,000 from friends and family with only having the business plan in place but no product, represents their outgoing and social personalities.

Another finding of the literature review was the importance of networking for new venture creation. GetYourGuide serves as an excellent example and confirms the importance of networking for new venture creation. J. Reck and P. Mathis, two of the five founders of GetYourGuide, have met each other at the Venture Challenge training. Venture Challenge is a course, where persons interested in entrepreneurship meet, to develop business ideas and to complete business plans. J. Reck has brought up the initial idea of GetYourGuide, when P. Mathis joined him. The business plan for the future start-up was then developed in the context of the training.

Online and offline, networking and social skills seem to play essential roles in new venture creation and success rates of start-ups. Experts and entrepreneurs principally confirmed this proposition from the literature review. Each start-up, however, has to find its individual variant of networking depending on the specific business model.

4.3.6 F6: Characteristics of the industry

According to the literature, emerging and growing industries or markets foster small business growth. Dynamic-NET represents a sound example and supports this finding. When S. Sandi and his co-founder decided to enter the market and to found the company, the web hosting market was just

about to break through. They managed to build services and products with limited resources and to sell them on a *blue ocean market*. Although Dynamic-NET was a small player in the market at first, business went well as the need for the product was great. Zurich Instruments also experienced this benefit from being early in the market. As S. Hafizovic states: “We recognised the need for digital instruments, while researching in the laboratory ourselves. We knew exactly how it could be done much better, but there was no product available on the market. So we decided to build our own instrument that fulfils our needs.” By saying this, S. Hafizovic indicates that the market of measuring instruments was long time still dominated by analogue meters. When S. Hafizovic and his co-founders spotted out the market niche of digital meters, there were actually no other producers on the market. Being early in the market definitely was a great advantage for Zurich Instruments.

Experts speak of ‘the open window’. This expression refers to the time gap between the moment when a market for specific products or services arises and the moment when the market is glutted. Dynamic-NET started with a *VoIP* product in 2005, just before the market was ready for it. The start-up had to draw the conclusions from this cognition and adapted the strategy. GetYourGuide hit the open window just in time. As P. Mathis narrates: “Timing has played an important role in the success of our company. If we entered the market a little earlier, the market would not have been ready yet. Entering a moment later, we would have missed the open window.”

Reviewing the literature findings and the entrepreneur’s experiences, it can be concluded that emerging or growing markets represent sound opportunities for young companies. However, hitting the right time spot, the so called open window, is crucial.

4.3.7 F7: Legal form

The choice of the legal form influences taxation variations, statutory audit costs and public information obligation. Further, incorporation was found to attract investment from banks. Particularly, the latter finding seems to be the driver for start-ups to form stock corporations (Aktiengesellschaften) or to transform the company after founding, when funding is done. GetYourGuide, connex.io and Doodle were originally founded as GmbH (Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung: limited liability company) companies and only transformed into AG at the time of financing, as M. Näf (questionnaire, November 1, 2012 – see Appendix L for transcript) states: “At first, Doodle was a GmbH and was only converted into an AG when outside capital was raised.” The same reason was named at the sites of GetYourGuide and connex.io. An explanation for this behaviour might be the excessively larger start-up capital needed to found AGs compared to GmbHs in Switzerland (see Table 12).

Table 12: Comparison of start-up capital needed for AG vs. GmbH in Switzerland

Legal Form	GmbH	AG
Start-up capital needed	CHF 20,000	CHF 100,000

Source: (admin.ch, 2012)

Beside the factor start-up capital, there is a second aspect that influences the choice for the legal form. S. Sandi argues, that in order to appear more professional on the market, the company was transformed into an AG: “An AG emits a more professional picture to the public and limited liability protects the owners of the company.” However, Dynamic-NET was founded as a partnership, where founders are not protected by limited liability. As a third and probably most important driver for

choosing an AG as legal form is the fact that it is easier to deploy shares between owners. Also, there is no obligation for an AG to inform the public about the ownership of the company.

Consequently, due to much lower start-up capital needed, in Switzerland GmbHs often represent the preferred legal form at the time of founding. When financing rounds are started to find investors, the legal form is transformed into AG. Reasons for the transformation are easier deployment of shares and the more professional appearance of AGs.

4.3.8 F8: Luck

Another result from the literature review was that in business, luck plays an important role. Beginners luck and wrong associations with former successes lead to wrong estimation of the talent. This was found to be a reason for the fact that many successful entrepreneurs are not able to build up a second thriving new venture. Asked what role luck played in the history of their ventures, the responses of the interviewees differed. They varied in the estimated amount of how much of success can be assigned to luck and what exactly luck actually means. J. Chen associates luck with being lucky of having the venture idea and that raising money went well, too. Nevertheless, she guesses that as little as 2 per cent of their success was luck and the rest was hard work. S. Hafizovic is convinced that luck is not influencing business success. However, he notes that the choice of location (Technopark Zürich) was of centrality and highly important for Zurich Instruments. S. Sandi and P. Mathis both allocate one third of their achievements to luck, while B. Kuhlin names 40 per cent and M. Kuhn even 50 per cent. Moreover, M. Näf, C. Niedermann, P. Küng and G.-F. Salvato agreed to the extent that it is essentially for every start-up to have a good portion of luck. Additionally, P. Küng adds that active and persistent teams use to have more luck than others, which perfectly corresponds with the argument from G.-F. Salvato who notes: "Luck can be acquired by hard work."

4.4 Further analyses

Furthermore, the entrepreneurs were asked what is most important for start-up founders, when founding the start-up and what they would do different from today's perspective. Table 13 provides an overview of the answers given. The results are discussed in section "5.3 Further results".

Table 13: Further analyses

	P. Mathis	S. Hafizovic	J. Chen	M. Näf	M. Kuhn	S. Sandi
What is most important at time of founding?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spread the word for the venture idea as much as possible, talk to people and potential customers • Do not worry about the possibility of the idea getting stolen • Simply try and see if it works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Industry experience is of very high importance. One should do what is known, otherwise the ‘sweet-spot’ cannot be detected.” • Keeping an eye on the liquidity • Keeping time-to-market short → launching a minimalistic product on the market • Weighing up external vs. internal financing methods • “Time is the price you pay in exchange for freedom through bootstrapping and financing growth by internal capital.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having many ideas • Focussing on one specific market • Improving the prototype to make sure it will work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying to act iterative and close to the market • Start-ups should define and verify hypothesis to market / product / business model as soon as possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not to worry • Being fast and quickly on the market • Talking to customers in early phase → improving the product and prove marketability • Following the principles of Eric Ries “The lean startup” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing GmbH or AG as legal form • Testing the market • Defining USP • Satisfying a real need • Not to re-invent the wheel • Being aware of costs • Being able to discard ideas that not work

What would you do different today?

- Employing qualified staff (not university students)
 - Raising venture capital earlier
 - Nothing. Choice of location (Technopark Zürich) was perfect and because of bootstrapping the company we are independent
 - However, one or the other detour could have been saved
 - Doing fewer things in one go
 - Initially, HouseTrip was planned to include social networking and auction features. It is just not possible to do everything from the start
 - Almost everything. Just to find out what would happen when things are done differently
 - Being quicker
 - Reducing complexity of the product drastically
 - Raising venture capital earlier and shorten the time-to-market
 - Acting down-the-line
 - Launching VoIP in 2005 was too early
 - Giving away majority of shares in order to have clarity
 - Fasten up decisions by defining clear contracts
 - Deploying area of responsibility earlier
-

4.5 Interim conclusion

The analysis of the collected data, together with the propositions developed on basis of the literature review, leads to deeper understanding and contains supplementary information. The analysis shows that not only education and former business experience are crucial for new venture success and fast growth, but also know-how in terms of being experienced in starting new ventures, corporate governance and knowing how to run a business are of significance. In contrast to the literature conclusions, the interviewed experts do not agree with the definition of larger teams being more successful. Still, heterogeneity is regarded as important and a specific new finding of the data collection is that in order to be recognised as a serious business, the start-up needs seniority. Further, start-up companies selling innovative products and focussing on market penetration and market development at first achieve highest growth rates. Subsequently, it is examined that within the sample group, fast growing new ventures exist on the side of bootstrapping and on the side of money raising start-ups. Online and offline networking as well as social skills appear to play important roles in new venture creation and success rates of start-ups. Experts and entrepreneurs principally confirmed this proposition of the literature review. Still, depending on the specific venture, the proper alternative of how to network has to be adopted. Next, emerging or growing markets signify decent opportunities for young companies. Then, at the time of founding, in Switzerland GmbH often represent the preferred legal form. This could be due to much lower start-up capital needed compared to founding an AG. Also, when investors buy shares of the start-up, the legal form often is transformed into an AG. Possible reasons for this transformation are easier deployment of shares and the more professional presence of AGs. Then, luck was found to be influencing start-up success and growth to a certain amount. Further, developing a simple product, early talking to potential customers and keeping time-to-market short was suggested to be important when founding a company. Finally, raising money earlier, doing fewer things at once and reducing the complexity of products were points that interviewed entrepreneurs would do different, when they could turn back the time.

5 Results and discussion

In this section, results of the thesis are presented and discussed in two parts. First, factors listed by experts and entrepreneurs are compared with factors found in the literature. Second, results from findings in the literature are presented and debated in contrast to conclusions from the analysis of data collection.

5.1 Results from comparison of factors

It appears that legal form is not considered to influence growth in Swiss start-ups to great extent. It remains unclear why the legal form has not been mentioned autonomously by interviewees. For experts and entrepreneurs it is clear that the legal form of AG has to be chosen, in order to attract investors. Nevertheless, legal form of companies might play a more important role abroad. However, this is data from the autonomously named factors alone, when questions were led into direction of the propositions in the second part of the interview, the picture changed. This is especially true, when interviewees were asked about the influence of luck (see Table 10 and Table 11).

Attention has to be paid especially to focus, quickness, product and timing. More than half of the respondents and interviewees have stressed the fact that entrepreneurs have to keep focus when starting new ventures. Time, financial resources and energy are wasted, when business is not done focussed enough and / or the strategy gets out of focus. Four respondents regarded quickness as being crucial. In this context, quickness particularly refers to the time-to-market and prompt reactions on changing market conditions. Opposed to the topics discussed in the interviews, the aspects of “focus” and “quickness” have not been particularly mentioned in the literature review. These aspects are up-to-date and nowadays faced by many start-ups. The literature reviewed, however, was also dating back some years, this could be an indication why it does not contain these factors. Furthermore, the product was discussed broadly as well. The importance of selling a product to the market that satisfies a real need was underlined a number of times. Also, inherent virality of products was seen to influence growth rates of start-ups. Finally, timing was rated as a further key factor in success. Hereby, it is significant to consider that good timing cannot always be steered and the right time for market entry sometimes is not predictable. Also, luck may be the element that tips the scale.

5.2 Findings from literature in contrast to conclusions of collected data

Table 14 presents a discussion about the propositions made based on the literature review and knowledge acquired from the qualitative data collection. It shows which propositions can be supported and lists additional findings.

Table 14: Opposition of propositions and collected data

Factor	Proposition	Findings from literature	Support from interview data	Additional interview data
F1	P1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High level of education, prior industry experience and social skills represent attributes that support new venture growth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ J. Gnädinger ○ B. Kuhlin ○ C. Niedermann ○ G.-F. Salvato 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of required entrepreneur's experience depends on the business model A start-up fails, if basic understanding for specific industry and sales experience is missing A general understanding of corporate governance and management benefits new venture success Former entrepreneurial experience supports new venture growth
F2	P2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Larger founding teams are more successful than smaller teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Not supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideally 2 or 3 co-founders Single entrepreneurs entail higher risk to fail since not all talents needed can be covered in one person Small businesses benefit from experienced people joining the team or the board Familiar team members are seen to be more effective Clear allocation of responsibilities within the founding team leads to higher success rates and quickness Teams consisting of extroverted and introverted persons are more successful Start-ups that emit a certain degree of seniority are apprehended as more serious ventures
	P3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interdisciplinary founding teams are more successful than homogenous teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ J. Gnädinger ○ G.-F. Salvato ○ B. Kuhlin 	
	P4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledgeable founding teams are more successful than unexperienced teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ B. Kuhlin ○ P. Küng ○ C. Niedermann ○ G.-F. Salvato 	

F3	P5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A business culture of innovation and flexibility as well as the entrepreneur's ambition to grow increase chances for a start-up's fast growth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ C. Niedermann ○ P. Küng ○ P. Mathis ○ G.-F. Salvato ○ B. Kuhlin ○ S. Hafizovic ○ M. Kuhn ○ M. Näf ○ S. Sandi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entering the market with a highly innovative product leverages the odds when raising funds • One product may be sold in different market segments in order to distribute risks • Success is the result of hard work: successful entrepreneurs are extremely ambitious and work round about 60 hours per week • Keeping focus on strategy and growth is inevitable to achieve fast growth • Single product strategies bind all risks to one product
	P6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young and smaller firms, with focussed strategies and a single revenue driving product, are more successful than those with multiple product strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ J. Gnädinger ○ J. Chen ○ G.-F. Salvato 	
F4	P7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financing methods depend on the growth stage of the firm. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Bootstrapping 2) Business angels 3) Venture capitalists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ M. Kuhn ○ J. Chen ○ B. Kuhlin ○ P. Mathis ○ G.-F. Salvato 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results are controversial • Bootstrapping start-ups: • Zurich Instruments has achieved sound growth rates without outside funding • Dynamic-NET did not grow big in terms of employees. No information is available on financial growth rates. However, a lucrative exit was made by selling the company to Host Europe Group in 2011. • Start-ups with external funds: • HouseTrip, GetYourGuide grew fast • Doodle grew moderate with partial exit • Connex.io failed • Exceptional situation in Switzerland: • Broad variety of government funds, business competitions and private foundations that provide start-up capital to new ventures (e.g. "venture kick")

				and CTI-Project)
F5	P8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurs involved in networks recognise business opportunities better 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear → The initial idea of GetYourGuide, for instance, was spotted at the Venture Challenge course, where entrepreneurs meet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experts agreed that networking and high social skills of entrepreneurs are crucial • All entrepreneur with exception of J. Chen from HouseTrips confirmed activity in on- and offline networks • The start-up and its products must be widely known • On- and offline networking activities should be done in combination • Networking is only of benefit, if done correctly • Swiss technology start-ups can connect through CTI
	P9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start-ups involved in networks succeed better than those not active in networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ C. Niedermann ○ G.-F. Salvato ○ B. Kuhlin • Note: HouseTrip as a very successful start-up claimed not to be active in networks 	
F6	P10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerging and growing industries or markets support small business growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ S. Hafizovic ○ P. Mathis ○ S. Sandi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zurich Instruments and Dynamic-NET succeeded in emerging markets • Good timing for market entry and hitting the moment of the open window is crucial
F7	P11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal form of incorporation (AG) is an indicator for future growth and attracts / simplifies outside investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ P. Küng ○ B. Kuhlin ○ C. Niedermann ○ G.-F. Salvato ○ P. Mathis ○ M. Kuhn ○ M. Näf 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AG allows easier deployment of shares compared to GmbH and no obligation for registration of ownership exist in Switzerland. • Due to significantly less start-up capital needed for GmbHs in Switzerland (CHF 20,000 vs. CHF 100,000), GmbH is often favoured over AG at the time of founding. Later, when investors join, GmbHs often are transformed into AGs. • AG companies appear more professional and solvent compared to GmbHs

F8	P12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Luck plays an important role in business	✓ Supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ C. Niedermann○ B. Kuhlín○ G.-F. Salvato○ P. Küng○ M. Näf○ M. Kuhn○ J. Chen○ P. Mathis○ S. Sandi	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The factor 'luck' was never mentioned spontaneously• Each entrepreneur agreed that fortune played a certain role in the success story of the venture• 2% up to 50% stake of business success is allocated to luck, according to the collected data
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5.3 Further results

In this section, results from the analysis in Table 13 are discussed. Entrepreneurs were asked what is important at the time of founding and what they would do different in today's perspective. Interestingly, the factor time was named repeatedly in the context of: keeping time-to-market short; raising money earlier; defining areas of responsibility earlier and timely spreading the word by talking to customers. Also, analysing the market and keeping the product simple are arguments that were made. Interesting in contrast are the answers of S. Hafizovic and M. Näf, when asked what they would do different. S. Hafizovic argues he would change nothing, whereas M. Näf explains he would do everything different just so see what would happen. Further, S. Hafizovic stated, the choice of having the company office located in the Technopark Zürich was crucial.

5.4 Interim conclusion

Concluding, it has to be noted that most propositions from the literature review found considerable support in the collected data. Noteworthy at this point seems especially, where concepts differ between literature and interview data, or where Switzerland is in a special position. In the view of experts, larger teams were not found to be more successful, as divergences may arise more likely between greater numbers of founders. Two to three co-founders are seen to be ideal to cover the necessary functions. Then, when venture capital is raised, Switzerland offers a number of sound possibilities for accessing funds, seed capital and business competitions. Government support is also provided by CTI. CTI-Start-up label, for instance, provides start-ups a quality seal that signals positive reputation and proved quality standard to potential investors. CTI-Coaching is offered to start-ups that lack entrepreneurial experience and provides coaching with experienced entrepreneurs in the first years. However, some start-up entrepreneurs regard this coaching as not very helpful and only use this opportunity in the very beginning. Finally, CTI supports every year over 300 research projects in cooperation with Swiss universities by covering up to 50 per cent of the costs for research and development (CTI grant funding). For instance, Zurich Instruments and GetYourGuide have been started as CTI-Projects.

6 Recommendations for entrepreneurs

The list of advices below serves as a guideline for entrepreneurs seeking fast growth with new ventures in the field of technology. The following step-by-step recommendations have been derived for new start-up companies:

- 1. Start the business in an industry and market familiar to you**
Without market or industry knowledge it is very hard to start a business. Lack of experience can be compensated by collecting working experience within a view months of practice in the particular industry. Hire an experienced CEO or elect an experienced person to the board of directors.
- 2. Engage persons familiar to you as co-founders**
Leverage the odds for fast growth by compiling a harmonic team with co-founders well known to you.
- 3. Assemble the founding team with a maximum of two additional persons having complementary characters and education to you**
Heterogeneous founding teams succeed better than homogenous ones. Incorporate with co-founders having different skills from you.
- 4. Found the company as AG if possible**
AGs appear more professional. This legal form allows simple distribution of ownership. If capital is scarce choose GmbH as legal form, as it provides at least limited liability. It still can be transformed into an AG later.
- 5. Clearly allocate responsibilities and roles within the company**
This leads to higher success rates and quickness to fast adapt to changing market conditions.
- 6. Keep time-to-market short**
Hitting the open window is crucial. Do not miss it!
- 7. Enter the market with a simple and innovative product**
- 8. Do market research and ask the customer early in the process of R&D**
It is essential to sell a product that satisfies a real need.
- 9. Check if the product could also be adapted to other market segments**
This distributes risks and provides multiple revenue.
- 10. Be ambitious and work extremely hard**
Success is the result of hard work and diligence.
- 11. Focus on important things**
Focussing on strategy and growth.
- 12. Raise capital early**
Whether bootstrapping or raising external capital – it will probably take more time than expected.
- 13. Apply for grants and funds and compete with other start-ups in business competitions**
Numerous supporting organisations, foundations and business plan competitions exist. Choosing the right ones carefully will be of financial advantage and connects the start-up with important people of the industry.
- 14. Maintain a broad network of social contacts**
On- and offline networks support start-up success and help spreading the word for your product.
- 15. Do not underestimate the power of luck**
When working hard, fortune can be forced. But still, do not let yourself be blinded by early success, as it might have simply been luck.

7 Final considerations and outlook

The importance of this thesis highly depends on the quality and reliability of the data. 11 interview partners were chosen carefully as samples. Samples include leading Swiss technology start-up entrepreneurs and experts of the Swiss start-up scene. Therefore, it can reasonably be concluded that data quality is fairly high. Entrepreneurs can leverage the likelihood of fast growth in their start-up companies, if they implement the insights gained by this thesis.

7.1 Future need for research

Further research is required to gain a deeper understanding of the influences of the factors discussed in this thesis. It would be interesting, for instance, to empirically investigate if start-ups funded by CTI-Projects have greater chances for survival than those without.

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Appendix A –Ranking of independently listed factors

The ranking of all named factors by the interview and questionnaire respondents cannot be done simply by counting how many times each factor was named. Since the factors were ranked by each respondent independently, this ranking has to be taken into account, when concluding the final rank. Therefore, each rank resulted in a mark, as shown in Table 15.

Table 15: Description of distribution of marks

Rank	Resulting marks
1	10
2	9
3	8
4	7
5	6
6	5
7	4
8	3
9	2
10	1

Table 16 shows how the calculation of marks on the example of the factor 'team'. This factor was named by seven respondents with varying importance.

Table 16: Example of marks allocation for factor 'team'

Respondent	Individual rank	Marks allocated
G.-F. Salvato	1	10
P. Küng	1	10
M. Näf	8	3
S. Sandi	2	9
P. Mathis	1	10
J. Gnädinger	1	10
M. Kuhn	Factor named without rank	No marks allocated
No. respondents [count]	7	
Total marks		52

The achieved marks were then multiplied by the number of times the specific factor was named (the count). In other words: the sum of all individual rankings (the factor 'team' received a total of 52 marks) is multiplied by the count (in this case 7), which leads to the following calculation:

$$364 = 7 * 52$$

The general form of this formula is as followed:

$$final\ mark = count * [sum\ of\ marks]$$

A calculation based on this formula leads to the final ranking as shown in Table 17.

Table 17: Complete list of named factors

Final rank	Uniquely named factors (43 in total)	no. respondents [count]	Sum of marks	Final mark
1 st	Team	7	52	364
2 nd	Focus	6	41	246
3 rd	Venture capital	5	42	210
4 th	Business Model	4	33	132
5 th	Product	3	29	87
6 th	Location	3	20	60
7 th	Vision	3	19	57
8 th	Quickness	4	13	52
9 th	Market	3	17	51
10 th	Persistence	3	11	33
11 th	Know-how	2	14	28
12 th	People	2	13	26
13 th	Market orientation	2	12	24
14 th	Timing	2	6	12
15 th	Customer Service	1	9	9
15 th	Passion	1	9	9
16 th	Work of founder	1	8	8
16 th	Global positioning	1	8	8
16 th	Involvement of other persons	1	8	8
16 th	Competency of sales / key account management	1	8	8
16 th	Multipliers	1	8	8
17 th	Industry and market knowledge	1	7	7
17 th	Sociocultural conditions	1	7	7

18 th	Execution	1	6	6
18 th	Inherent virality	1	6	6
18 th	Relationships and social networks	1	6	6
18 th	Simplicity	1	6	6
18 th	Sustainable growth	1	6	6
18 th	Public funding and support	1	6	6
19 th	Politics	1	5	5
19 th	Economically sustainable marketing methods	1	5	5
19 th	Cost awareness	1	5	5
19 th	All-rounders	1	5	5
20 th	Business Culture	1	4	4
20 th	Technopark	1	4	4
20 th	Quality	1	4	4
20 th	Personality and characteristics of the entrepreneur	1	4	4
20 th	Trade barriers	1	4	4
21 st	Think outside the box	1	3	3
21 st	Ability to adapt	1	3	3
21 st	Early risks elimination → increasing company value	1	3	3
22 nd	Ability to process input	1	2	2
22 nd	Public awareness	1	2	2

Appendix B - Transcript of the questionnaire sent to Pius Küng by email

Respondent: Mr Pius Küng
In function as: Expert
Date: 21.11.2012

Role and experience of the interviewee

Pius Küng is owner of the business and marketing consultancy Küng & Partner.

Experience regarding start-ups and entrepreneurship

He is founder of the Institut für Jungunternehmen (IFJ) and trainer at Venturelab.

Was sind Ihrer Meinung nach die wichtigsten Faktoren für Wachstum in Startup Unternehmen?

- **Team** (Ein gutes Team)
- **Business model** (Ein möglichst skalierbares Geschäftsmodell)
- Ein kompetenter Verkauf resp. ein kompetentes Key Account Management
- **Venture capital** (Strategiekonforme Finanzierung)

Ihre Empfehlungen im Zusammenhang mit den Erfolgsfaktoren

- Im Zusammenhang mit den Erfolgsfaktoren sollte man den Businessplan so gestalten, dass diesen Punkten ein spezielles Gewicht beigemessen wird.
- Im Übrigen verweise ich hierzu auf die Inhaltspunkte beim Business Navigator und ebenfalls auf die Slides aus dem Venture Plan sowie auf die Toolbox etc.

Branchenerfahrung und Ausbildung des Unternehmers resp. des Teams

- Es ist abhängig vom Businessmodell, welche Erfahrungen ein Unternehmer mitbringen muss.
- Versteht das Team nichts von der Sache und hat es keine Erfahrungen im Sales, dann wird es scheitern.

Kombination von Teams / Grösse von Gründerteams

- Die Zusammensetzung des Teams ist abhängig vom Geschäftsmodell und der zu verfolgenden Strategie.
- Ist das Sales und Marketing z.B. speziell gefordert, dann sollten im Team auch geeignete Leute vorhanden sein. Die Venture Kapitalisten werden einem den Vertrieb nie übernehmen.
- Bezüglich Grösse des Gründerteams gibt es keine allgemeinen Regeln.

Wachstumsstrategie

- Bei der Wachstumsstrategie gilt es zu beachten, dass man in Ableitung zum Geschäftsmodell und zu den Zielen auch die Prozesse im Verkauf und in der Infrastruktur im Griff hat sowie die entsprechenden finanziellen Konsequenzen.

Motivation, Engagement von Gründern und Wachstum bei Startups

- Erfolgreiche Gründerteams haben eine gemeinsame Eigenschaft: Sie sind extrem fleissig (60 - 70 Stunden pro Woche) und verfolgen hartnäckig ihre Ziele, bleiben aber dennoch flexibel.

Unternehmensfinanzierung

- Die Optimale Finanzierung des Unternehmens hängt von der Vision des Gründerteams ab.
- Für ein schnelles Wachstum ist der Beizug von Venture Kapitalisten und Business Angels sinnvoll, wobei das nur möglich ist, wenn ein skalierbares Businessmodell vorliegt.
- Die gleichen Überlegungen stellen auch z.B. die Kantonalbanken an.

KTI / Venturelab

- Je nach Qualifikation des Teams kann das kostenlose KTI-Coaching äusserst wertvoll sein.
- Das Gleiche gilt auch für die Kurse, welche das IFJ anbietet.

Innovationen

- Wenn ein Startup nicht mit einer Innovation bezüglich Produkt, Prozesse etc. auf dem Markt auftritt, dann wird er kaum eine Finanzierung finden und/oder nicht Erfolg haben auf dem Markt.

Marktdurchdringungen und/oder Produktentwicklung / Diversifikation

- Hier kann ich keine anderen Antworten geben wie bei den verschiedenen Forschungen (Ansoff, Prahalad etc.).
- Die Frage ist m.E. nicht optimal gestellt.

Entscheidungsprozess für junge Unternehmen

- Bei jungen Unternehmen ist es sinnvoll, die operative Führung und die strategische Führung zu trennen.
- Es braucht eine kluge Corporate Governance und ein gutes Controlling, wo das Gründerteam und der Verwaltungsrat Konsens haben müssen.

Soziale Netze

- Diese Frage kann man nicht beantworten.
- Wenn sich z.B. jemand auf OEM's oder Key Accounts fokussiert, dann spielen die sozialen Netzwerke keine grosse Rolle.
- Hat man auf der anderen Seite eine breit angelegte Internetplattform, dann können die sozialen Netzwerke zentral sein.

Rechtsform

- Die Rechtsform eines Unternehmens ist grundsätzlich nicht erfolgsentscheidend.
- Wenn ich jedoch Finanzierungspartner suche, dann drängt sich eine AG auf.
- Grundsätzlich kann aber ein Unternehmen in jeder beliebigen Rechtsform Erfolg haben, wobei selbstverständlich die Risiken zu beachten sind.

Welche Rolle spielt Glück im Erfolg von Unternehmen?

- Ich habe noch nie ein Unternehmen gesehen, dass im Rahmen seiner Entwicklungsgeschichte nicht auch eine gute Portion Glück hatte.
- Aktive, beharrliche Teams haben aber mehr Chancen, Glück zu haben wie andere.

Appendix C - Transcript of the interview with Bernd Kuhlin

Interviewee: Mr Bernd Kuhlin
In function as: Expert
Date: 31.10.2012
Interviewer: Tamino Fuchs

Role and experience of the interviewee

Bernd Kuhlin, born 1959 in Germany, holds a diploma in electrical engineering and has over 25 years of experience in managing positions. Currently, he is president of the board of directors and COO of the start-up Elmove AG. He is former member of the management board at Ascom AG and Geberit AG. Before, he worked more than 20 years at Siemens AG.

Experience regarding start-ups and entrepreneurship

Besides being involved in the above named activities, B. Kuhlin also supports start-ups with consulting and is adjunct lecturer for product innovation and leadership at Lucerne UASA.

Was sind Ihrer Meinung nach die 10 wichtigsten Faktoren für Wachstum in Startup Unternehmen? (nach Wichtigkeit geordnet)

1. **Standort**
Wirtschaftliche / politische Umgebung als wichtiger Faktor.
2. **Venture capital** (Finanzierungsmöglichkeiten: Zugang zu Kapital)
In der Schweiz wird es Startups relativ leicht gemacht sich zu finanzieren und auch Wachstum zu finanzieren. Die Schweiz liegt weit vor Deutschland wenn es um Startup-Finanzierung geht, jedoch hinter USA (Silicon Valley), wo viel Risikokapital verfügbar ist.
3. **Leute** (Personal)
Die Schweiz gilt als gutes Ausbildungsland; tendenziell mehr Arbeit als qualifizierte Arbeitskräfte.
4. **Soziokulturelle Gegebenheiten**
Erfolglose unternehmerische Aktivitäten und Konkurse werden in der Schweiz nicht derart negativ gewertet wie z.B. in Deutschland, es kann sogar als positiver Erfahrungswert gelten.
5. **Öffentliche Förderung und Unterstützung durch z.B. KTI / CTI**
Am Standort Schweiz stehen viele Fördergelder und Unterstützungsleitungen für Startups und zur Forschung zur Verfügung → diese nutzen!
6. **Fokus**
Sich wirklich auf das zu konzentrieren, was man tun will.

7. Handelsbarrieren

Hoher administrativer Aufwand mit Handels- und Zollpapieren, sowie Risiken durch Wechselkurse.

Worauf sollte Ihrer Meinung nach am meisten Wert/Gewicht gelegt werden zum Zeitpunkt der Unternehmensgründung, was sind Ihre Empfehlungen an Startups? Warum?

- Die Aktiengesellschaft als Rechtsform wählen.
Da bei Fremdfinanzierung einfacher realisierbar als z.B. bei einer GmbH.
- Möglichst früh Kapital aufnehmen oder zumindest Kontakt zu Investoren aufnehmen.
Weil oft sehr schnell Kapital benötigt wird; wenn dann die Kontakte bereits bestehen geht alles schneller.
- Zitat: „Fokussiere auf das, was du tun willst“.
- Rapid Prototyping um Kunden zum Produkt befragen zu können und gegebenenfalls das Produkt rechtzeitig anzupassen.

Welche Rolle spielt Ihrer Meinung nach die Branchenerfahrung und Ausbildung des Gründers / Gründerteams?

Diese Frage muss mit „Know-How“ ergänzt werden, da Investoren nicht nur in das Produkt, sondern auch sehr stark in das Team investieren. Know-How ist neben Branchenerfahrung und Ausbildung fast wichtiger, dazu gehört auch die Unternehmensführung.

Gibt es eine besonders erfolgreiche Kombination von Gründerteams?

- Zu grosse Teams neigen zu Streitigkeiten.
- Ein einzelner neigt zur Diktatur.
- 2-3 scheint eine gute Zahl zu sein: Umsetzung / Planung / restliche Arbeit.

Wie wichtig ist eine Wachstumsstrategie um schnelles Wachstum zu erlangen?

- Eine Wachstumsstrategie ist sehr wichtig!
- Bsp.: Facebook ist erst richtig gewachsen, als die Marketingfachfrau und andere Leute mit Fokus auf Wachstum und Strategie von Mark Zuckerberg an Bord geholt wurden.

Wie wichtig sind das eigene Engagement und der Glaube an Erfolg des Unternehmers in Bezug auf das Wachstum?

Zitat: „Ohne Engagement und den Glauben an Erfolg geht ein Startup ein wie ein Primchen.“

Welche Rolle spielt die Unternehmensfinanzierung? Welche Art der Unternehmensfinanzierung ist besonders günstig für schnelles Wachstum?

Die Frage, welche Finanzierung die richtige ist, hängt davon ab, in welcher Phase sich das Startup befindet.

- Seed-Funding: Friends / Family / Fools (FFF)
- Frühe Wachstumsphase: Business Angels
- Späte Wachstumsphase: Venture Capitalists oder auch IPO

Welche Rolle geben Sie den öffentlichen Förderprogrammen wie z.B. KTI?

- Sie sind ein wichtiger Baustein und helfen sowie unterstützen die Startups enorm.

Wie wichtig ist Innovationsmanagement für schnelles Wachstum und wie kann ein Startup das Innovationsmanagement sicherstellen?

- Ein Innovationsmanagement oder -prozess kann es eigentlich nicht geben, da in einem Startup nicht genügend Ressourcen vorhanden sind. Der „Innovationsprozess“ findet implizit im Kopf des Unternehmers statt.
- Innovationen können jedoch sichergestellt werden durch Persönlichkeiten, die über diese Fähigkeit verfügen, oder aber extern in Zusammenarbeit mit z.B. KTI und Hochschulen für Forschung und Entwicklung.

Welche Wachstumsstrategie erachten Sie als effektiver im Hinblick auf schnelles Wachstum: Marktdurchdringung oder Produktentwicklung/Diversifikation?

- Zitat: „Bis zum Geht-nicht-mehr auf Marktdurchdringung fokussieren.“
- Verfrühte Diversifikation führt zu Zerflatterung. Produktentwicklung oder Diversifikation kann und muss erst nach einem kompletten Lebenszyklus des ersten Produkts stattfinden.

Welche Rolle spielt der Entscheidungsprozess für junge Unternehmen?

(betont) Es muss unbedingt in früher Phase ein Geschäftsführer definiert werden, der die Entscheidungen trifft.

Wie wichtig ist es für den Unternehmer, sich in sozialen Netzen zu engagieren? Gibt es besonders wichtige?

- Kann zu Vorteilen führen, aber nur wenn das Networking richtig angewandt wird.
- Hält nicht viel von Twitter, Facebook und Xing oder LinkedIn.
- Netzwerke, über die man z.B. über KTI Zutritt findet, können jedoch sehr wertvoll sein im Hinblick auf Kontakte zu potentiellen Verwaltungsräten o.Ä.
- Auch Universitäten können hilfreich sein, können aber auch zu Vorurteilen von aussen führen. (zögert, ist sich nicht ganz sicher bei universitären Netzwerken)

Welche Rechtsform ist besonders geeignet für schnelles Wachstum von Jungunternehmen in der Schweiz?

- AG, da am günstigsten bei Fremdfinanzierung

Ist es zu guter Letzt Glück oder Können, das mehr Gewicht hat?

- 60% Können; 40% Glück

Appendix D – Transcript of the interview with Jochen Gnädinger

Interviewee: Mr Jochen Gnädinger
In function as: Expert
Date: 02.11.2012
Interviewer: Tamino Fuchs

Role and experience of the interviewee

Jochen Gnädinger, born in 1959, studied Dipl. Ing. FH / Executive MBA, University of St. Gallen (HSG). He has over 20 years of world wide experience in the fields of Energy production, metering and distribution as well as in mechatronics. For more than 10 years, he was in charge of structuring and leading several companies abroad in a global active industrial enterprise, e.g. Landis & Gyr AG and Siemens AG. Furthermore, he has more than four years of experience as member of the management board at the world wide leading mechatronic high-tech company MECOS Traxler AG (one of the first ETH spin-offs).

Experience regarding start-ups and entrepreneurship

Jochen Gnädinger is holding a 50% mandate at Technopark Luzern. He is member of the management board and concerned in business development. He is expert for IFJ and CTI and juror at “venture”. Further, Jochen Gnädinger is founder and managing partner at MagicSticks GmbH and Gnädinger Consulting. He also is president of the board of directors at Mayoris AG, a company in the Technopark Luzern.

Was sind Ihrer Meinung nach die 10 wichtigsten Faktoren für Wachstum in Startup Unternehmen? (nach Wichtigkeit)

- 1. Team (Team und Know-How)**
(betont) 90% macht das Team aus, 9% das Business Modell und 1% den Rest.
Gute Leute schaffen es, Fehler zu erkennen und das Business Modell zu korrigieren.
Schon x 100'000 CHF mussten abgeschrieben werden weil es mit dem Team und der Team-Dynamic nicht stimmig war, es menschlich nicht funktioniert hat.
- 2. Business Model (USPs)**
Ohne eindeutig definierbaren, im besten Fall quantifizierbaren, vom Kunden validierten (konkurrenzlosen) Kundennutzen, eingebettet in ein vollständiges Business Modell, sollte man das „Abenteuer“ Start-up nicht angehen.
- 3. Fokus**
Vor allem zu Beginn in den ersten 2, 3 oder 4 Jahren. Da ist die „Verzettelungsgefahr“ am grössten und zu wenig Wirkung am Ziel. Oft kombiniert mit „ausgebrannten“ Gründern im Jahre 2-3.
- 4. Einfachheit**
Vor allem im Marketing und bei der Kundensegmentierung. Nicht von Anfang an internationale Vermarktung anzielen. Overkill für eine (noch) junge Organisation.

5. **Marktorientierung** (Den Markt prüfen)
Bereits mit der Idee mit potentiellen Kunden sprechen und frühzeitig prüfen, ob das Produkt den Bedürfnissen entspricht. Nur so kann das Produkt / die Produktidee rechtzeitig den Kundenbedürfnissen angepasst werden.
6. **Schnelligkeit** (Früh an den Markt)
Nicht mit einem sehr komplexen Produkt, sondern mit einfachem Produkt in den Markt einsteigen.
7. **Risiken eliminieren / Unternehmenswert steigern**
Grosse Risiken schnell beseitigen, dadurch wird Zeit gewonnen und der Unternehmenswert früher und schneller gesteigert. Dies erleichtert die frühe Kapitalaufnahme, was zu schnellerem Wachstum führen kann.

Worauf sollte Ihrer Meinung nach am meisten Wert/Gewicht gelegt werden zum Zeitpunkt der Unternehmensgründung, was sind Ihre Empfehlungen an Startups? Warum?

- (1) Kundennutzen und die entsprechenden (2) Segmente definieren.
- Den richtigen Preis zum richtigen Produkt finden.
- Früh an den Markt gehen: Keine Angst vor Ideenklau haben, wenn möglich aber bereits patentieren.
- Früher Patentschutz, vor allem wenn Investoren im Spiel sind.
- Patent-Recherche, damit keine unerwarteten Probleme mit anderen Firmen auftauchen.
- Fokussieren.

Welche Rolle spielt Ihrer Meinung nach das Know-How, die Branchenerfahrung und Ausbildung des Gründers / Gründerteams?

- (*betont*) Know-How: 90% des Erfolges, sehr wichtig.
- Branchenerfahrung: oft nicht gegeben, aber wichtig! Es sollte dafür gesorgt werden, dass frühzeitig branchenerfahrene Leute dabei sind, z.B. im VR oder als GL Mitglied.

Gibt es eine besonders erfolgreiche Kombination von Gründerteams?

- Grosse Risiken bei Einzelunternehmer (nicht empfehlenswert)
- Als Minimum: Unternehmer (extrovertiert, „Marketer“, Verkäufer) und Techniker
- Evtl. eine disziplinierte Vernunftperson mit an Board, z.B. ein Finanzspezialist als VR
- Dem Unternehmen eine gewisse Seniorität verleihen (durch VR oder gestandenen CEO)

Wie wichtig ist eine Wachstumsstrategie um schnelles Wachstum zu erlangen?

- Wachstumsstrategie ist unumgänglich und muss im Business Modell integriert sein.
- Zitat: „Wenn keine Wachstumsstrategie aufgezeigt werden kann, wird ganz bestimmt auch kein schnelles Wachstum erreicht.“
- Planen → Risiken und Chancen erkennen → richtige Reihenfolge definieren → Risiken minimieren und Chancen wahrnehmen und umsetzen.

Wie wichtig sind das eigene Engagement und der Glaube an Erfolg des Unternehmers in Bezug auf das Wachstum?

- Wenn nicht vorhanden, ist es schade um die Zeit und das Geld.

- Unternehmer mit ihrem ersten Produkt in den Händen sind wie verliebte mit ihrem ersten Kind: Sie leiden an Wahrnehmungsverschiebung.
 - → blinder Glaube an Erfolg ist auch nicht gut!
 - Darum ist es wichtig, dass externe Personen mit einbezogen werden um die Wahrnehmungsverschiebung zu korrigieren.

Welche Rolle spielt die Unternehmensfinanzierung? Welche Art der Unternehmensfinanzierung ist besonders günstig für schnelles Wachstum?

(Anmerkung Gnädinger: Dies sind eigentlich zwei verschiedene Fragen)

- So lange als möglich selbst finanzieren. Das kann wachstumshemmend sein, ist aber gesund für organisches Wachstum.
 - Durch eine längere Selbstfinanzierung ist es dem Unternehmen möglich, eine fairere Beteiligung zu erhalten. Besser nicht 50% der Firma aufgegeben um nötiges Startkapital zu erhalten.
 - Aktionäre haben selten die gleichen Vorstellungen, wie das Geschäft laufen soll, wie der Unternehmer.
- Wenn zu viel Firmenanteile weggeben werden, beeinträchtigt dies die Motivation des Unternehmers.
- Fremdfinanzierung kann das Wachstum beschleunigen
- In der Schweiz ist weniger Risikokapital vorhanden als in Amerika.
 - Tendenz zu Bank-artiger Analyse

Welche Rolle geben Sie den öffentlichen Förderprogrammen wie z.B. KTI?

- Sie bilden eine wichtige Unterstützung.
- Sie zeichnen den Wirtschaftsstandort Schweiz aus.
- Zitat „Nur wenige Länder sind besser aufgestellt als die Schweiz... ich denke wir sind diesbezüglich sogar besser aufgestellt als die USA.“

Wie wichtig ist Innovationsmanagement für schnelles Wachstum und wie kann ein Startup das Innovationsmanagement sicherstellen?

- In den ersten 2 bis 3 Jahren ist Innovationsmanagement nicht sehr zentral. Da sollte man sich auf das erste Produkt konzentrieren.
- In Phase 2 des Wachstums spielt es eine zunehmend grössere Rolle.

Welche Wachstumsstrategie erachten Sie als effektiver im Hinblick auf schnelles Wachstum: Marktdurchdringung oder Produktentwicklung/Diversifikation?

(betont) Marktdurchdringung ist wichtiger.

Welche Rolle spielt der Entscheidungsprozess für junge Unternehmen?

Da es Jungunternehmern oft an „Entscheidungsreife“ fehlt, ist ein Entscheidungsprozess eine Unterstützung „die richtigen Entscheidungen“ unter Beachtung aller relevanten Informationen zu treffen. Bestimmt ist es auch hilfreich, VR, GL, Beiräte im Vorfeld von wichtigen Entscheidungen beizuziehen.

Wie wichtig ist es für den Unternehmer, sich in sozialen Netzen zu engagieren? Gibt es besonders wichtige?

- Netzwerke sind für jeden Unternehmer eine sehr zentrale Angelegenheit; Unabhängig ob er Jungunternehmer ist oder schon viele Jahre eine Unternehmung führt.
- Soziale Netzwerke JA oder NEIN ist die falsche Frage. Primär muss man definieren welche Leute man im Netzwerk „zwingend“ für die Unternehmung benötigt.
- Danach „fischt“ man sich diese Personen aus dem grossen Topf. Falls sich „diese Zielpersonen“ „aktiv“ in sozialen Netzwerken aufhalten, sind die sozialen Netzwerke hilfreich (gegebenenfalls auch nur als „lebendige Businesscards“ in Ergänzung zu anderen Netzwerken).
- Wichtige „Fische“ im Netzwerk eines Jungunternehmers: Bezug zur Wissenschaft der Branche, Bezug zu Schlüsselkunden in der Branche, Bezug zu Schlüssellieferanten in der Branche, Bezug zu möglichen, zukünftigen Mitarbeitern aus der Branche, etc., Bezug zur allgemeinen Wirtschaft und relevanten Politik.

Welche Rechtsform ist besonders geeignet für schnelles Wachstum von Jungunternehmen in der Schweiz?

Schnelles Wachstum (sofern wirklich wichtig und sinnvoll) benötigt Fremdkapital, d.h. externe (und interne) Investoren.

Dies setzt jedoch die Rechtsform der AG voraus. GmbH etc. eignen sich nicht dazu.

Appendix E - Transcript of the interview with Gian-Franco Salvato

Interviewee: Mr Gian-Franco Salvato
In function as: Expert
Date: 02.11.2012
Interviewer: Tamino Fuchs

Role and experience of the interviewee

Gian-Franco Salvato, born in 1966, studied computer science until 1996. Today he is member of the management board at Colygon AG (IT-Systems spin-off).

Experience regarding start-ups and entrepreneurship

In 1995, Gian-Franco Salvato founded the internet start-up Aseantic and developed the company to 85 employees until the year 2000. In 2000 he sold the firm to the Swedish company Adcore. Further, he is co-founder of Netrics. Gian-Franco Salvato also is juror at "venture kick".

Was sind Ihrer Meinung nach die 10 wichtigsten Faktoren für Wachstum in Startup Unternehmen? (nach Wichtigkeit geordnet mit Beispiel)

1. **Team**
Vor allem die Softskills sind sehr wichtig.
2. **Business model**
Das GM muss initial definiert werden und stetig dynamisch angepasst werden.
3. **Durchhaltewillen**
4. **Marktorientierung**
5. **Schnelligkeit** (Rasch erste Projekte gewinnen)
Besser ein noch zu entwickelndes Produkt bereits verkauft haben, als ein bereits entwickeltes Produkt noch nicht verkauft zu haben.
6. **Kostenbewusstsein**
Begründung: Schlanke Mittel und minimale Infrastruktur. Geld erst dann ausgeben, wenn es eingenommen wurde.
7. **Fokus**
8. **Anpassungsfähigkeit**
Durch Wachstum.
9. **Fähigkeit Input von Externen zu verarbeiten**
Viele Unternehmer hören nicht richtig zu und meinen, das ideale Produkt bereits zu haben. Dabei verpassen sie es, den Markt richtig zu analysieren.

Worauf sollte Ihrer Meinung nach am meisten Wert/Gewicht gelegt werden zum Zeitpunkt der Unternehmensgründung, was sind Ihre Empfehlungen an Startups? Warum?

- Früh an den Markt gehen.
- Mit potentiellen Kunden reden.
- Ist es das richtige Produkt? → Feedback sammeln und Produkt anpassen, bevor es zu spät ist!
- Einfachheit, Zitat: „Es gibt nichts genialeres als eine einfache Idee.“
- *(betont)* Team: Das Team mit Leuten besetzen, die man beruflich bereits kennt und weiss, wie sie arbeiten. Dabei ist es wichtig, dass man dieselbe Einsatzbereitschaft hat, Stichwort Engagement.
- Die Firma als AG, oder allenfalls als GmbH starten und später zwecks einfacherer Fremdfinanzierung in AG umwandeln.

Welche Rolle spielt Ihrer Meinung nach das Know-How, die Branchenerfahrung und Ausbildung des Gründers / Gründerteams?

- Branchenerfahrung ist sinnvoll.
- Arbeitserfahrung, ganz allgemein, hilft Abläufe zu kennen.
- *(betont)* Erfahrung als Gründer ist ebenfalls sehr wertvoll (positiv als auch negativ, wenn die Lehren daraus gezogen wurden). Wenn jemand weiss, wie eine Firma aufgebaut werden muss.

Gibt es eine besonders erfolgreiche Kombination von Gründerteams?

- 2 oder besser 3 Personen sind ideal.
- Ein guter Mix mit introvertierten, extrovertierten, Analytiker, Künstlern, Machern.
- Leute die man gut kennt, vor allem auf beruflicher Ebene.
- Interdisziplinäre Teams sind typischerweise erfolgreicher.

Wie wichtig ist eine Wachstumsstrategie um schnelles Wachstum zu erlangen?

- Ist wichtig, vor allem wegen der gemeinsamen Zielsetzung, weniger wegen der Strategie.
- Wegen Reflexion und Standortbestimmung.

Wie wichtig sind das eigene Engagement und der Glaube an Erfolg des Unternehmers in Bezug auf das Wachstum?

- *(betont)* Ohne das funktioniert es nicht!
- Es braucht die felsenfeste Überzeugung an den Erfolg, ohne arrogant zu sein.
- Der Glaube an den Erfolg ist ein wesentliches Merkmal von erfolgreichen Unternehmern! Der eigene Glaube strahlt auf andere ab.

Welche Rolle spielt die Unternehmensfinanzierung? Welche Art der Unternehmensfinanzierung ist besonders günstig für schnelles Wachstum?

- 100% Eigenfinanzierung ist ein sehr harter und steiniger Weg.
- Mit Hilfe von Fremdfinanzierung geht es leichter, dabei aber wichtig, dass man „nur so viel Geld hat, wie man wirklich braucht.“ Wenn mehr Geld verfügbar ist, werden die Kosten unnötig in die Höhe getrieben (unnötige Zukäufe).
- Idealerweise gestaffelte Finanzierung mit mehreren Runden, die das geplante Wachstum finanzieren.

Welche Rolle geben Sie den öffentlichen Förderprogrammen wie z.B. KTI?

- (betont) Absolut top! Sollte unbedingt von allen, die die Möglichkeit haben, genutzt werden!
- Darüber können auch Kontakte geknüpft und der Grundstein für eine Finanzierung gelegt werden.

Wie wichtig ist Innovationsmanagement für schnelles Wachstum und wie kann ein Startup das Innovationsmanagement sicherstellen?

(nach kurzer Erläuterung der Frage)

- Spielt erst dann eine Rolle, wenn das 1. Produkt erfolgreich ist.
- Innovationen vielmehr innerhalb des Produkts anbringen, sprich neue Features und bessere Funktionalität mit einbringen, Fehler beheben → erst Marktentwicklung, dann erst Produktentwicklung.
- Durch zuhören beim Kunden Wünsche für neue Features erkennen, nicht durch Produkteverliebtheit irgendwelche Features entwickeln.

Welche Wachstumsstrategie erachten Sie als effektiver im Hinblick auf schnelles Wachstum: Marktdurchdringung oder Produktentwicklung/Diversifikation?

- Kommt auf die Situation an: Analyse notwendig um zu sehen, wodurch schneller gewachsen werden kann.
- Manchmal ist es einfacher die Early-adapters / Meinungsbildner zu gewinnen (durch Produktentwicklung oder Diversifikation) als die grosse Masse anzusprechen (Marktdurchdringung).
- Wichtig ist es, sich die beiden Szenarien vorzustellen und abzuwägen, welches die bessere Strategie ist.

Welche Rolle spielt der Entscheidungsprozess für junge Unternehmen?

- Schnell und schlank ist überlebenswichtig für Startups.
- (betont) Aber: Es muss nicht auf immer und ewig an Entscheiden festgehalten werden, aber eine gewisse Beständigkeit ist wichtig um als Firma Charakter zu bilden.
- In Startup rasch eine klare Rollenverteilung finden um Entscheidungswege kurz zu halten und ewige GL Sitzungen zu vermeiden.

Wie wichtig ist es für den Unternehmer, sich in sozialen Netzen zu engagieren? Gibt es besonders wichtige?

- Off- und Online Netzwerke in Kombination nutzen.
- Online Netze können gute Kontaktbasis bilden und ermöglichen sehr rasche virale Verbreitung.
- Offline Netze sind dabei für aktives Netzwerken geeignet.
- Jedes Startup muss sich mit Social-Media auseinandersetzen.

Welche Rechtsform ist besonders geeignet für schnelles Wachstum von Jungunternehmen in der Schweiz?

- AG, da Fremdfinanzierung einfacher (siehe 3.2).
- Und persönliche Haftung limitiert.

Ist es zu guter Letzt Glück oder Können, das mehr Gewicht hat?

- Zitat: „Glück und Erfolg kommt durch Fleiss“.
- Glück kommt durch Einsatz.
- Es ist auch ein grosser Unterschied zwischen ‚können‘ und ‚machen‘.

Appendix F - Transcript of the interview with Claus Niedermann

Interviewee: Mr Claus Niedermann
In function as: Expert
Date: 14.11.2012
Interviewer: Tamino Fuchs

Role and experience of the interviewee

Claus Niedermann is journalist and founder of Journalistenbüro Niedermann GmbH (JNB), which is specialised for start-up companies, venture business finance and other themes of innovation and small and medium enterprises (SME). In the course of 15 years, JNB supervised the part of innovation and SME for the business newspaper CASH. Other customers are BILANZ, Handelszeitung and other daily newspapers.

Experience regarding start-ups and entrepreneurship

JNB is operator of startupticker.ch and editor in chief of “gründen”, an entrepreneurial magazine. Further, JNB is together with Institut für Jungunternehmen (IFJ) in charge of the concept and realisation of the Top 100 start-ups of Switzerland. This rating was initiated in 2011 and was published for the second time in 2012 in cooperation with Handelszeitung.

During 15 years, Claus Niedermann was member of the main jury of the Swiss Economic Award. He is still active as expert and juror of the pre-jury. Also, Claus Niedermann is member of the jury of the business competition “venture” and the initiative “venture kick”.

Was sind Ihrer Meinung nach die 10 wichtigsten Faktoren für Wachstum in Startup Unternehmen? (nach Wichtigkeit geordnet mit Beispiel)

- 1. Vision**
Die Vision und die Bereitschaft für Wachstum des Unternehmers ist essentiell.
- 2. Venture capital** (Finanzen: gute finanzielle Basis und Liquiditätsmanagement)
- 3. Andere Personen mit einbeziehen**
Coaches, Business Angel, Vertreter von Beteiligungsgesellschaften und strategischen Partnern.
- 4. Industrie- und Marktkenntnisse**
Gute Marktabklärungen, Kenntnisse der Branche und des Marktes (auch geographisch).
- 5. Beziehungen und Netzwerk**
Aufbau und intensive Betreuung.
- 6. Know-How**
Selber einbringen, über Mitarbeiter oder durch Kooperationen mit anderen Unternehmen.

7. Persönlichkeit und Charakter des Unternehmers

Gute Kommunikationsfähigkeit und Ausstrahlung.

8. Bekanntheit

Das Produkt / die Firma schnell (counted as additional factor **Quickness**) bekannt machen. übers Internet, an Messen und Ausstellungen.

Worauf sollte Ihrer Meinung nach am meisten Wert/Gewicht gelegt werden zum Zeitpunkt der Unternehmensgründung, Ihre Empfehlungen an Startups? Warum?

- Die Rechtsform richtig wählen. Man setzt damit auch ein Zeichen. Um eine Vision von Wachstum zu signalisieren ist die AG die bessere Wahl als die GmbH.
- Business Plan ausarbeiten.
- Der/die Gründer muss wissen was er will, was das Ziel ist.

Welche Rolle spielt Ihrer Meinung nach die Branchenerfahrung und Ausbildung oder auch Know-How des Gründers / Gründerteams?

- Ist enorm wichtig, Know-How und Erfahrung müssen vorhanden sein. Nötigenfalls zusätzliche Leute mit an Board holen oder durch Arbeit in der Branche Erfahrung sammeln.
- Heute ist Ausbildung wohl wichtiger als früher, früher kaum Gründungen von ETHs, heute deutlich mehr.

Gibt es eine besonders erfolgreiche Kombination oder Grösse von Gründerteams?

- Einzelkämpfer typischerweise nicht ideal als Wachstumstreiber.
- Bei Teams: Zitat: „Einer muss den Karren ziehen“, es muss klar sein, wer macht was.
- Einfache und klare Regelungen müssen getroffen werden. Bei Veränderungen (z.B. Firmenausstieg) müssen die Besitzverhältnisse geregelt sein.
- Nicht zu grosse Teams, dies kann zu Uneinigkeiten führen.

Was können Sie zum Stichwort Wachstumsstrategie sagen?

- Die Vision von Wachstum muss vorhanden sein.
- Dennoch muss flexibel auf den Markt reagiert werden können, z.B. durch Zurückstufen, wenn nötig.
- Wachstum auch nach der Liquidität richten.

Sehen Sie Unterschiede bei Motivation / Engagement von Gründern und dem Wachstum deren Startups?

- Notwendigkeit, sich übermässig einzubringen.
- Hohes Engagement durch viel Arbeit und Reisebereitschaft.

Welche Art der Unternehmensfinanzierung begünstigt rapides Wachstum? Zu welchem Zeitpunkt?

- Crowd-funding ist als Startfinanzierung nicht geeignet, da meist zu langsam und oft zu wenig.
- Investoren mit Branchen-/Industrienerfahrung bringen 1. grössere Summen und 2. auch Erfahrung und Beziehungen, die enorm wichtig sind, vor allem zu Beginn.
- Zitat: „Schnelles Wachstum bedeutet nicht nur Geld, sondern auch Beziehungen zu haben.“
- Investoren können hierbei als Türöffner fungieren.

Welche Rolle geben Sie den öffentlichen Förderprogrammen wie z.B. KTI?

- KTI hat eine zentrale Funktion.
- Die meisten High-Tech Startups und ETH Spin-offs gehen durch die KTI-Schiene.
- KTI-Label dient der Glaubwürdigkeit und signalisiert die Bereitschaft des Unternehmens für Fremdfinanzierung.
- Durch KTI werden Startups Beziehungen zu Business Angels geknüpft.
- **Nebst KTI auch „venture kick“:** eine Initiative der Gebert RUF Stiftung. Management durch Beat Schillig (IFJ) und Jordi Montserrat (PSE-C) → ein super Programm um Ideen von den Hochschulen abzuholen.

Wie wichtig sind Innovationen für Jungunternehmen und wie kann ein Startup das Innovationsmanagement sicherstellen?

- Sich durch Verbesserungen und Innovationen am Markt profilieren.
- Mit nur einem Produkt sind die Risiken sehr hoch.
- Prüfen, ob mit dem selben Produkt auch andere Geschäftsfelder erschlossen werden können.
- 1-Produktfirmen haben oft Schwierigkeiten, schnell zu neuen Ideen zu kommen.

Erachten Sie Marktdurchdringung oder Produktentwicklung/Diversifikation als klügere Wachstumsstrategie von Startups?

- Marktdurchdringung so weit als möglich ausschöpfen.
- Es ist einfacher bestehenden Kunden neue Produkte zu verkaufen, als neue Kunden und Märkte zu erschliessen.

Welche Rolle spielt der Entscheidungsprozess für junge Unternehmen und wie ist er idealerweise gestaltet?

- Muss kurz und vor allem definiert sein.
- (*betont*) Kommunikation (auch im Team) ist enorm wichtig.

Sehen Sie Unterschiede im Engagement in sozialen Netzen bei erfolgreichen und weniger erfolgreichen Startups?

- Jedes Startup braucht ein Netzwerk von Kontakten, nicht nur virtuelle, aber auch physische
- Kompetenz zeigen, z.B durch Vorträge.
- Messebesuche und mit Kunden sprechen.

Welche Rechtsform ist besonders geeignet für schnelles Wachstum von Jungunternehmen in der Schweiz?

- AG ist geeignet, da Besitzverhältnisse flexibler geändert werden können
- Bei GmbH hat jeder Mitspracherecht.

Welche Rolle spielt Glück beim Erfolg von Startups?

- Spielt eine grosse Rolle, man braucht Glück.

Appendix G - Transcript of the interview with Pascal Mathis

Interviewee: Mr Pascal Mathis
In function as: Start-up founder
Date: 20.11.2012
Interviewer: Tamino Fuchs

Role and experience of the interviewee

Pascal Mathis, born in 1980, has studied electrical engineering at ETH Zürich. Still studying, he worked for ETH Juniors, a consulting company for students of ETH, where he could gain first entrepreneurial experience. In a start-up in the fields of robotics, he completed an internship and was employed as product manager at Siemens.

Characteristics of the start-up

Name: GetYourGuide
Year of founding: 2008/09 (ETH Spin-off)
Legal form: AG
Number of employees: 75

Was sind Ihrer Meinung nach die 10 wichtigsten Faktoren für Wachstum in Startup Unternehmen? (nach Wichtigkeit geordnet)

1. **Team**

2. **Passion**

3. **Fokus**

4. **Vision**

„Be a local everywhere you go.“

5. **Execution**

Die Herausforderung liegt darin, die richtigen Entscheidungen zu treffen, so z.B. muss der Business Plan zeitweise angepasst werden.

Zitat: „Manchmal muss das Businessmodell angepasst werden, aber nur dann wenn die Faktoren wichtig genug sind, sonst muss man stur sein.“ „Das schwierigste ist, herauszufinden bei welchen Vertragsverhandlungen nachgegeben werden muss und wann nicht. Jeder dieser Entscheide kann darüber entscheiden, ob es ein Erfolg wird oder nicht.“

6. **Politik**

Zitat: „Run your business on data. Oft meint man zu wissen, was der Kunde braucht, dabei entwickelt man das Produkt am Markt vorbei – besser ist es, den Kunden zu fragen.“

7. **Business culture**

Wie will man gemeinsam arbeiten? Was sind die Ideale? Die wichtigsten Werte schriftlich

festhalten und kommunizieren → Mitarbeiter entsprechend diesen Werten rekrutieren und auch für die Mitarbeiterentwicklung verwenden.

8. **„Think outside the box“**

Frech sein und auch mal Dinge hinterfragen und Prozesse entsprechend anpassen.

9. **Durchhaltewille**

Worauf sollte Ihrer Meinung nach am meisten Wert/Gewicht gelegt werden zum Zeitpunkt der Unternehmensgründung, was sind Ihre Empfehlungen an Startups und warum?

- Die Geschäftsidee früh bekannt machen und mit vielen Leuten und potentiellen Kunden reden. Zitat: „Möglichst breit bekannt geben, was man vor hat zu machen.“
- Keine Angst vor Ideenklau haben, der Mehrwert an Feedback lohnt sich.
- Die Geschäftsidee einfach probieren und herausfinden ob es funktioniert.

Was würden Sie heute anders machen?

- Von Beginn an gut qualifizierte Mitarbeiter einstellen. In Berlin wurden Studenten für Praktika eingestellt, was nicht die gewünschten/geforderten Leistungen gebracht hat.
- Früher Kapital aufnehmen.

Wie ist das Unternehmerteam zusammengestellt?

Johannes und Pascal haben beide unabhängig voneinander den Venture Challenge Kurs von VentureLab besucht. Johannes hat die Ursprungsidee von GetYourGuide damals hervorgebracht. Pascal fand es spannend und hat sich im Rahmen des Kurses darauf eingelassen. Die anderen Gründungsmitglieder sind Freunde und Bekannte von beiden Seiten. Die Idee wäre also ohne Networking nicht zustande gekommen.

CEO: Johannes Reck

COO/CFO: Pascal Mathis

CTO: Tobias Rein

Front-end Entwicklung, Designer: Martin Sieber

VP of Product: Tao Tao

Hatten Sie eine Wachstumsstrategie? Wie sah diese genau aus?

- Die Leitidee war es, alle Ausflugs- und Tourenanbieter auf einer Plattform zu haben.
- Möglichst viele Angebote neu aufschalten (z.Z. 700 neue Angebote/Monat).

Wie viele Wochenstunden haben Sie in den ersten Jahren für das Unternehmen aufgebracht?

1-20 21 bis 40 41 bis 50 51 bis 60 mehr als 60

Waren Sie von Beginn an zu 100% von Ihrer Geschäftsidee und dem Geschäftsmodell überzeugt?

- Die erste Version von GetYourGuide war noch bedeutend anders: Jeder und jede sollte über die Plattform die Möglichkeit erhalten, ein Guide zu sein. Als das Produkt fertiggestellt war, stellte man fest, dass es keinen Markt dafür gibt.
- Das neu erstellte Business Model wurde dann zum heutigen GetYourGuide.
- Nach dieser entscheidenden Anpassung war man sicher, dass es funktionieren wird.

Wie war die Unternehmensfinanzierung gesichert?

(Auch Kombinationen, je nach Wachstumsphase)

Bootstrap FFF Business Angels Venture Capitalists IPO

Andere: KTI-Projekt

- Die GmbH wurde mit eigenen finanziellen Mitteln gegründet.
- Das Programm Pionier der ZKB unterstützte GetYourGuide.
- 2012 stieg der erste VCs ein.

Hatten Sie Unterstützung/Coaching von KTI/CTI oder anderen Förder- Organisationen? Welche?

- KTI-Coaching → war nicht sehr hilfreich.
- Als ETH Spin-off konnte man Büroräumlichkeiten im Technopark Zürich zu günstigen Konditionen mieten.

Wie stellen Sie das Innovationsmanagement in Ihrem Startup sicher?

- Vor allem zu Beginn ziemlich ungeplant.
- Die Plattform wird laufend weiterentwickelt und neue Features implementiert.
- Zweiwöchentliches Meeting hilft Ideen und Projekte zu priorisieren.

Ist Ihr Unternehmen eher durch Marktdurchdringung oder Produkteentwicklung / Diversifikation gewachsen?

- Die Marktdurchdringung ist sehr wichtig momentan, mehr Marktanteile gewinnen.
- Neue Märkte werden laufend aufgeschaltet, so findet auch eine Marktentwicklung statt.

Wie ist der Entscheidungsprozess in Ihrer Firma gestaltet?

- Als die Firma ca. 10-12 Mitarbeiter zählte, sind Verantwortungsbereiche aufgeteilt worden, wodurch Ordnung einkehrte.
- Johannes und Pascal bilden die Geschäftsleitung.
- Entscheidungen wurden durch Aufteilung der Departments vereinfacht.
- CEO Johannes hat das letzte Wort, wenn jedoch keine Einigkeit gefunden wird, hilft der VR.

In welchen Netzwerken sind Sie aktiv?

Keine

Universitäre Netzwerke → wird auch aktiv zur Mitarbeiter Rekrutierung genutzt

Vernetzung mit anderen Startups

Regionale Unternehmensnetzwerke

Social Media (Facebook / Xing / LinkedIn / Twitter)

Andere: Der Technopark bietet eingeschränkt auch Möglichkeiten zur Vernetzung, es wäre jedoch mehr Austausch gewünscht.

Was waren die Beweggründe zur gewählten Rechtsform?

Sobald Investoren gewonnen wurden, wurde die GmbH in eine AG umgewandelt. Die AG ist besser geeignet bei Aufteilung von Anteilen.

Gab es eine Anpassung der Rechtsform im Verlauf der Unternehmensentwicklung?

GmbH → AG

Wie haben sich die Besitzverhältnisse der Firma seit der Gründung verändert?

- Alle 5 Gründungsmitglieder haben gleich viele Anteile.
- Die gleichmässige Aufteilung unter den Gründungsmitgliedern hat Einfachheit bei Verhandlungen geschaffen → jeder gibt gleichen Prozentsatz ab.

Würden Sie sagen, dass Glück in der Erfolgsgeschichte Ihres Unternehmens eine wichtige Rolle gespielt hat? Wie genau?

- 1/3 Glück (33.33%)
- Das Timing hat eine entscheidende Rolle gespielt → früher wäre der Markt noch nicht bereit gewesen und bei einem späteren Markteintritt hätte man das open Window verpasst gehabt.
- Die Zusammenstellung des Teams war ebenfalls ein Glückstreffer. Die verschiedenen Fähigkeitsbereiche (trotz dem, dass alle Ingenieure sind) sind gut aufgeteilt.

Appendix H - Transcript of the interview with Sascha Sandi

Interviewee: Mr Sascha Sandi
In function as: Start-up founder
Date: 29.11.2012
Interviewer: Tamino Fuchs

Role and experience of the interviewee

Sascha Sandi, born 1984, did his apprentice in system- and application development. While still being in the apprenticeship, he founded Dynamic-NET Sandi & Co., together with his training officer Enver Jasiqi. Sascha Sandi concentrated on company management, while his colleague took over the operative tasks. After selling the company to the German Host Europe Group in 2011, he was CEO and member of the board at the new formed company Host Europe Suisse AG. Today he is part time employee and member of the board in the fields of business development at Host Europe Suisse AG (former Dynamic-NET AG). He is also realising new projects at the time.

Characteristics of the start-up

Name: Dynamic-NET
Year of founding: 2003 als Kollektivgesellschaft
Legal form: AG (ab 2005)
Number of employees: 6 bis zum Verkauf, heute >10

Was sind Ihrer Meinung nach die 10 wichtigsten Faktoren für Wachstum in Startup Unternehmen? (nach Wichtigkeit geordnet mit Beispiel)

- 1. Produkt**
USP muss unbedingt vorhanden und definiert sein, mit dem Produkt muss ein wahres Bedürfnis der Kunden gestillt werden.
- 2. Team**
Das Team im Sinne von Gründern, Mitarbeitern und aber auch Kooperationspartnern.
- 3. Multiplikatoren**
Das Produkt auch als Whitelabel anzubieten und somit durch Wiederverkäufer zu verkaufen, bringt deutlich mehr Umsatz und minimiert den Aufwand.
- 4. Markt**
Marktentwicklung nicht aus den Augen verlieren, vor allem in DACH Region vorstossen, aber auch weitere Länder berücksichtigen.
- 5. Organisches Wachstum**
Beständigkeit durch organisches Wachstum bringt Stabilität ins Unternehmen.
- 6. Allrounder**
Allrounder sind ein wichtiger Bestandteil von Teams, da sie über den Tellerrand ihres spezifischen Aufgabenbereichs hinausschauen und Personalkosten sparen.

Worauf sollte Ihrer Meinung nach am meisten Wert/Gewicht gelegt werden zum Zeitpunkt der Unternehmensgründung, was sind Ihre Empfehlungen an Startups und warum?

- Bei Gründung GmbH als Rechtsform wählen, oder sogar AG.
- Markt prüfen, USP definieren und Bedürfnis stillen.
- Das Rad nicht neu erfinden.
- Kosten beachten und klares Budget setzen.
- Sich auch von Ideen lösen können, wenn es nicht funktioniert.

Was würden Sie heute anders machen?

- Wir hatten Glück und gute Partner.
- VoIP war zu früh (im 2005).
- Jemandem die Aktienmehrheit überlassen, damit die Regeln klar sind.
- Verträge so auslegen, dass Entscheide schneller möglich sind.
- Strukturen früher definieren, damit jedem ein Zuständigkeitsbereich klar zugeordnet ist wo dieser auch die Verantwortung zu tragen hat.

Wie ist das Unternehmerteam zusammengestellt?

- CEO: Sascha Sandi
- CTO: Enver Jasiqi, ehemaliger Ausbildungsleiter von Herrn Sandi

Hatten Sie eine Wachstumsstrategie? Wie sah diese genau aus?

- Wachstumsstrategie ohne Fremdfinanzierung.
- Eigenfinanzierung und organisches Wachstum.
- Wiederverkäufer akquirieren um Whitelabel zu vertreiben.
 - Multiplikator mit rel. geringem Aufwand, da nur 1 Kontakt pro Wiederverkäufer; es fällt nur 2nd Level Support an.
 - Marktbekanntheit und Umsatz wird so gesteigert.
 - Multiplikatoren müssen einen Setupkosten bezahlen und die Schulung besuchen. Damit wird das wirkliche Interesse am Produkt festgestellt.

Wie viele Wochenstunden haben Sie in den ersten Jahren für das Unternehmen aufgebracht?

1-20 21 bis 40 41 bis 50 51 bis 60 mehr als 60

Während der Lehre bereits über 40 Stunden/Woche abends und nachts, sowie an den Wochenenden, dann zwischen 80-100h, wobei Privatleben und Arbeitswelt zusammenfließen.

Waren Sie von Beginn an zu 100% von Ihrer Geschäftsidee und dem Geschäftsmodell überzeugt?

- Ja, das Risiko war auch minimal.
- Bezüglich des Geschäftsmodells ist es wichtig, dass man der Firma ein klares Gesicht gibt.
- Produkte, Zielgruppe und Zeitpunkt klar definieren → wenn es nicht klappt, ist eines der drei Kriterien falsch.

Wie war die Unternehmensfinanzierung gesichert?

(Auch Kombinationen, je nach Wachstumsphase)

Bootstrap FFF Business Angels Venture Capitalists IPO

Andere: _____

Hatten Sie Unterstützung/Coaching von KTI/CTI oder anderen Förder- Organisationen? Welche?

- Nein. Waren bekannt, wurden aber nicht genutzt.

Wie stellen Sie das Innovationsmanagement in Ihrem Startup sicher?

- Trend- und Marktanalyse.
- Neue Lösungen wurden oft erst in DE getestet, mit gemieteten Lösungen bevor eigene Hardware angeschafft und in der Schweiz betrieben wurde.

Ist Ihr Unternehmen eher durch Marktdurchdringung oder Produkteentwicklung / Diversifikation gewachsen?

- Zu Beginn mit Standardlösung auf den Markt.
- Später Produkte mit Innovationen und selbstentwickelten Lösungen um Mehrwert zu schaffen.

Wie ist der Entscheidungsprozess in Ihrer Firma gestaltet?

- Wöchentliches Meeting wurde abgehalten um Entscheide zu diskutieren.
- Es wurden auch externe Drittpersonen teilweise dazu hinzugezogen um den Tunnelblick zu erweitern.

In welchen Netzwerken sind Sie aktiv?

Keine

Universitäre Netzwerke → Zusammenarbeit mit Uni Münster zu Rekrutierungszwecken

Vernetzung mit anderen Startups → Durch Technopark

Regionale Unternehmensnetzwerke

Social Media (Facebook / Xing / LinkedIn / Twitter)

Andere: _____

Was waren die Beweggründe zur gewählten Rechtsform?

Gab es eine Anpassung der Rechtsform im Verlauf der Unternehmensentwicklung?

- Gegründet wurde als Kollektivgesellschaft, im Jahr 2005 wurde das Unternehmen in eine AG umgewandelt. Mit einer AG wird ein anderes (professionelleres) Bild nach aussen vermittelt und die persönliche Haftung ist limitiert.

Wie haben sich die Besitzverhältnisse der Firma seit der Gründung verändert?

- Gleichmässig verteiltes Aktienkapital zwischen den Gründern.
- 2011 Verkauf an Host Europe GmbH.

Würden Sie sagen, dass Glück in der Erfolgsgeschichte Ihres Unternehmens eine wichtige Rolle gespielt hat? Wie genau?

Das Glück kann durchaus 1/3 des Erfolges ausmachen.

Appendix I - Transcript of the interview with Sadik Hafizovic

Interviewee: Mr Sadik Hafizovic
In function as: Start-up founder
Date: 09.11.2012
Interviewer: Tamino Fuchs

Role and experience of the interviewee

Sadik Hafizovic is German American citizen, born in 1977. He wrote his doctoral dissertation in the fields of Physics at ETH Zürich and has devoted several years to his postdoctoral research. Before, he studied microsystems engineering in Germany and wrote his Master thesis in Japan. Sadik Hafizovic has founded a service offering company before founding Zurich Instruments.

Characteristics of the start-up

Name: Zurich Instruments
Year of founding: 2008
Legal form: AG
Number of employees: 20-25
4 Jahre lang jährlich verdoppelt, jetzt 30-40%
jährliches Wachstum

Was sind Ihrer Meinung nach die 10 wichtigsten Faktoren für Wachstum in Startup Unternehmen? (nach Wichtigkeit geordnet)

- 1. Standort**
Der Standort Zürich, Schweiz hat für Zurich Instruments eine bedeutende Rolle gespielt, insbesondere wegen den öffentlichen Unterstützungsprogrammen wie z.B. KTI Projekt.
- 2. Venture capital**
Besonders zu Beginn ist die Frage der Finanzierung ein sehr entscheidender Faktor.
- 3. Globale Positionierung**
(betont) Als Anbieter von Produkten eines Nischenmarktes war es enorm wichtig von Anfang an global aufgestellt zu sein. Ein Grossteil des Umsatzes wird im Ausland, insbesondere in den USA gemacht.
- 4. Fokus**
Auf die low-hanging Fruits konzentrieren.
- 5. Timing**
Die Wirtschaftskrise als Chance genutzt. Es konnten gute Leute akquiriert werden, die sonst nicht verfügbar gewesen wären.
- 6. Leute**
Direkten Zugriff auf gute potentielle Mitarbeiter.

7. Technopark

Die Nähe zu anderen Technologie Firmen.

Worauf sollte Ihrer Meinung nach am meisten Wert/Gewicht gelegt werden zum Zeitpunkt der Unternehmensgründung, was sind Ihre Empfehlungen an Startups und warum?

- Zitat: „Branchenerfahrung ist ganz wichtig. Jeder sollte das machen was er kennt, sonst findet man den Sweet-Spot nicht.“
- Liquidität
- Time-to-market kurz halten → mit minimalem Produkt schnell an den Markt.
- Sich nicht auf bekannte Kontakte als Kunden verlassen.
- Abwägen ob Eigenfinanzierung oder Fremdfinanzierung der bessere Weg ist.
Zitat: „Durch die Eigenfinanzierung erkaufte man sich Freiheit durch Zeit.“

Was würden Sie heute anders machen?

- Nichts. Der Standort hat sich als ideal erwiesen und durch die Selbstfinanzierung sind wir frei.
- Klar hätte man sich den einen oder anderen Umweg sparen können...

Wie ist das Unternehmerteam zusammengestellt?

CEO: Sadik Hafizovic

CTO: Flavio Heer

CSA: Beat Hofstetter

Sadik und Flavio kennen sich vom Studium (von der Doktorarbeit). Beat hat ein Praktikum bei ihnen gemacht.

Zitat: „Das Team ist dann am besten, wenn jeder das macht, was er am besten kann.“

Hatten Sie eine Wachstumsstrategie? Wie sah diese genau aus?

- Extrem auf Wachstum aus, hart am Wind. Liquidität am Minimum und immer Vollgas.
- Ein Teamleader von extern eingestellt. Diese Situation war intern nicht einfach.

Wie viele Wochenstunden haben Sie in den ersten Jahren für das Unternehmen aufgebracht?

1-20 21 bis 40 41 bis 50 51 bis 60 mehr als 60

Waren Sie von Beginn an zu 100% von Ihrer Geschäftsidee und dem Geschäftsmodell überzeugt?

Zitat: „Überzeugt war ich schon, aber ‚gewusst‘ habe ich es erst, als wir das erste Gerät verkauft hatten.“

Wie war die Unternehmensfinanzierung gesichert?

(Auch Kombinationen, je nach Wachstumsphase)

Bootstrap FFF Business Angels Venture Capitalists
IPO

X Andere: Entwicklung des Produkts im KTI Projekt und durch Business competitions CHF 300'000

Hatten Sie Unterstützung/Coaching von KTI/CTI oder anderen Förder- Organisationen? Welche?

- KTI Coaching hat nicht so viel gebracht.
- KTI-Label hat zu Geldern verholfen.

Wie stellen Sie das Innovationsmanagement in Ihrem Startup sicher?

- (betont) **Innovationen sind extrem wichtig.**
- Zitat: „Der Entwicklungsleiter hat die Verantwortung über die Innovationen, da kommen die Innovationen her, weniger vom Marketing/Sales.“
- Zitat: „Egal was wir aufsetzen, die Luft für Innovation muss bleiben.“
Die Zeit für Innovationen muss geplant werden.

Ist Ihr Unternehmen eher durch Marktdurchdringung oder Produkteentwicklung / Diversifikation gewachsen?

- 30-40% Firmenwachstum durch Marktdurchdringung.
- ZH Instruments hat ein zweites Produkt lanciert, was ca. 30% des Umsatzes ausmacht.

Wie ist der Entscheidungsprozess in Ihrer Firma gestaltet?

- Marketing Sales bestimmt demokratisch, sie wünschen sich aber eigentlich oft Entscheidungen von oben.
- Schlussendlich ist es sehr oft der CEO, der entscheidet, auch Detailsachen (was als negativ empfunden wird).

In welchen Netzwerken sind Sie aktiv?

Keine

X (betont, sehr wichtig) Universitäre Netzwerke

X Vernetzung mit anderen Startups (durch den Standort Technopark)

Regionale Unternehmensnetzwerke

X Social Media (Facebook / Xing / LinkedIn / Twitter)

X Andere: Blogs

Was waren die Beweggründe zur gewählten Rechtsform?

- AG ist am einfachsten. Einzig das Kapital von CHF 100'000 wäre ein Hinderungsgrund, aber soviel wurde sowieso gebraucht.

Gab es eine Anpassung der Rechtsform im Verlauf der Unternehmensentwicklung?

- Nein

Wie haben sich die Besitzverhältnisse der Firma seit der Gründung verändert?

- Nein, das Aktienkapital liegt bei den 3 Gründern und 2 Mitarbeitern in Schlüsselpositionen.

Würden Sie sagen, dass Glück in der Erfolgsgeschichte Ihres Unternehmens eine wichtige Rolle gespielt hat? Wie genau?

- *(erst bestimmt, dann zögerlich)* Nein... schwer zu sagen. Die Standortwahl Technopark war zentral und enorm wichtig.

Appendix J - Transcript of the interview with Marcus Kuhn

Interviewee: Mr Marcus Kuhn
In function as: Start-up founder
Date: 09.11.2012
Interviewer: Tamino Fuchs

Role and experience of the interviewee

Marcus Kuhn, born 1984, studied economics at University of St. Gallen (HSG) and has completed his MBA in Singapore. He is co-founder and former CEO of the recently shut down start-up connex.io AG (active between 2010 and 2012).

Characteristics of the start-up

Name: connex.io
Year of founding: 2010
Legal form: AG
Number of employees: 6

Was sind Ihrer Meinung nach die 10 wichtigsten Faktoren für Wachstum in Startup Unternehmen?

1. **Produkt**

Begründung: hohe Qualität und integrierte Wachstumsmechanismen bestimmen den Erfolg und damit das Wachstum des Startups.

• **Timing**

Begründung: Zum richtigen Zeitpunkt am Markt sein.

• **Markt**

Begründung: Der Markt, in welchem sich das Startup sich befindet ist sehr wichtig.

• **Team**

• **Schnelligkeit**

Begründung: Sich rasch an Markt und Bedürfnisse anpassen zu können ist essentiell.

• **Standort**

Wo ist der Heimmarkt? Kostenfaktoren hängen vom Standort ab.

- Bemerkung: Das Produkt ist der wichtigste Faktor, die anderen stehen nicht in Rangordnung der Wichtigkeit geordnet. Sie sind alle stark voneinander abhängig.

Worauf sollte Ihrer Meinung nach am meisten Wert/Gewicht gelegt werden zum Zeitpunkt der Unternehmensgründung, was sind Ihre Empfehlungen an Startups und warum?

- Sich keine Sorgen machen.
- Schnell sein, auch schnell am Markt sein.
- Kundengespräche in früher Phase führen. Dadurch das Produkt verbessern und Markttauglichkeit prüfen.
- Nach dem Prinzip von Eric Ries „The Lean Startup“ vorgehen.

Was würden Sie heute anders machen?

- Schneller vorgehen.
- Komplexität im Produkt drastisch reduzieren.
- Time-to-Market höher gewichten.
- Keine Kompromisse mehr eingehen.
- Früher Investoren ins Boot nehmen (dadurch time-to-market verkürzen).

Wie ist das Unternehmerteam zusammengestellt?

CEO: Marcus Kuhn

CTO (co-founder)

3 Programmierer (in der Ukraine)

1 Marketer

Hatten Sie eine Wachstumsstrategie? Wie sah diese genau aus?

- Selbstverständlich werden eine Strategie und Kennzahlen definiert und mit den Investoren abgesprochen.
- Diese werden stetig angepasst.
- Es waren viele Pläne vorhanden, in der Realität sieht es aber oft anders aus.
- Z.B. hatte man geplant auch ein B2B Produkt anzubieten.

Wie viele Wochenstunden haben Sie in den ersten Jahren für das Unternehmen aufgebracht?

1-20 21 bis 40 41 bis 50 51 bis 60 mehr als 60

- Marcus Kuhn und der Mitgründer haben jeweils 80 Stunden/Woche gearbeitet, die MA in der Ukraine tendenziell weniger (50-60 evtl. 70).
- Die Vorstellungen von wie viel gearbeitet werden muss, sind verschieden hier und in der Ukraine.
- Schlussendlich wird so viel gearbeitet wie es braucht.

Waren Sie von Beginn an zu 100% von Ihrer Geschäftsidee und dem Geschäftsmodell überzeugt?

- Definitiv vom Need und der Geschäftsidee überzeugt gewesen.
- Der Markt ist jedoch zurzeit nicht gross genug für das Produkt (dies hat sich in den letzten 2.5 Jahren verändert).

**Wie war die Unternehmensfinanzierung gesichert?
(Auch Kombinationen, je nach Wachstumsphase)**

Bootstrap FFF(FF) Business Angels Venture Capitalists IPO

Andere: „venture kick“ (1. Runde CHF 10'000)

Ersten 18 Monate Bootstrap mit Hilfe von FFF, dann sind 6 Business Angels eingestiegen.

Hatten Sie Unterstützung/Coaching von KTI/CTI oder anderen Förder- Organisationen? Welche?

- Ja, KTI Label; KTI Coaching; „venture kick“ und Venture Leaders.
- KTI Coaching hat keinen Nutzen gebracht.
- Hingegen war „venture kick“ und „venture leaders“ sehr hilfreich.
- Zitat: „In der Schweiz wird zu viel gecoacht. Startup Gründer sollten sich besser auf die Produktentwicklung konzentrieren.“

Wie stellen Sie das Innovationsmanagement in Ihrem Startup sicher?

- Produkt und Bedürfnis getrieben.
- Wenn es ein Bedürfnis gegeben hat, wurde versucht eine innovative Lösung anzustreben.
- Innovation geht oft auf Kosten der Geschwindigkeit.

Ist Ihr Unternehmen eher durch Marktdurchdringung oder Produkteentwicklung / Diversifikation gewachsen?

Connex.io hat auf Marktdurchdringung gesetzt. Das Produkt wurde weiter entwickelt.

Wie ist der Entscheidungsprozess in Ihrer Firma gestaltet?

- In einem Startup muss eine Diktatur herrschen.
- Entscheidungen müssen schnell getroffen.
- Ein Zitat von jemand anderem, inhaltlich in etwa so: Startup Gründer sind sehr gut darin, rasch Entscheidungen zu treffen und dabei 60% richtig zu liegen. Dadurch haben sie Geschwindigkeit als Wettbewerbsvorteil.

In welchen Netzwerken sind Sie aktiv?

Networking ja, aber nicht zu viel. Anlässe sorgfältig auswählen.

Keine

Universitäre Netzwerke

Vernetzung mit anderen Startups: CEO Day (Bern); Web Monday (Business); Web Tuesday (Technisch); Startup Weekend; Sandbox Network (Global)

Regionale Unternehmensnetzwerke

Social Media (Facebook / Xing / LinkedIn / Twitter)

Andere: _____

Was waren die Beweggründe zur gewählten Rechtsform?

Finanzielle: zu Beginn konnten nur CHF 20'000 aufgebracht werden.

Gab es eine Anpassung der Rechtsform im Verlauf der Unternehmensentwicklung?

- GmbH zu Beginn, dann bei Einstieg von Investoren Umwandlung in AG.

Wie haben sich die Besitzverhältnisse der Firma seit der Gründung verändert?

- 2/3 Mehrheit blieb im Unternehmen.

Würden Sie sagen, dass Glück in der Erfolgsgeschichte Ihres Unternehmens eine wichtige Rolle gespielt hat? Wie genau?

Glück spielt bei allen Startups eine grosse Rolle → 50%

Appendix K - Transcript of the interview with Junjun Chen

Interviewee: Mrs Junjun Chen
In function as: Start-up founder
Date: 20.11.2012
Interviewer: Tamino Fuchs

Role and experience of the interviewee

Function in the start-up: CFO
Studies: Hotel Management School Lausanne (EHL)
Working experience: 2 internships

Characteristics of the start-up

Name: HouseTrip
Year of founding: 2009
Legal form: AG
Number of employees: 130

What are the 10 most important factors for start-up growth in your opinion?

1. Focus

2. Customer service

3. Work of founders

Persist on everything and get as many information from the client as possible. Change and adapt quickly to the changing environment.

In your experience, what are the most important things that must be considered at the time of founding? What are your recommendations for start-up founders?

- Having many ideas.
- Focus on one type of clients, on specific market.
- Improve the prototype to make sure it works.

If you could go back, what would you do different?

- Tried to do too many things in one go from the beginning.
- Initially HouseTrip was planned to include social network features, auction features and many other things. It is just not possible to do everything from the start.

How is the founding team composed?

CEO: Arnaud Bertrand
CFO: Junjun Chen

The two founders were classmates from study

What are the qualifications of the founders?

Arnaud and Junjun studied together at the Hotel Management School Lausanne (EHL).

Did you have a strategy for growth? How was it defined?

- Being focused on one type of the product (rent out properties and other people rent).
- Started in 3 cities:
 - Berlin, Paris and London.
 - Then expanding to other European cities (Barcelona, Lisbon and Rome)
 - Later other smaller cities (Edinburgh, Lion)
 - USA

How many hours did you work every week in the first years?

1 - 20 21 - 40 41 - 50 51 - 60 more than 60

Have you been a 100% convinced of the business idea and business model from the beginning?

- Both founders were very convinced from the idea and the business plan/model.

How was the venture funding in each evolution step?

Bootstrap FFF Business Angels 3 Venture Capitalists IPO

Other: “venture kick”, 1st round (CHF 10'000)

Raised CHF 235,000 investment funds initially before having the product just with the business plan. CHF 200,000 were raised from classmates and their families.

Have you had support or coaching from KTI / CTI or any other organisations?

- CTI Coach → It was quite interesting in the beginning, as the two founders haven't had much experience in running or founding a business.
- CTI Start-up Label.

How do you ensure innovation in your company?

- Make sure to do what the clients want → serve the clients well.

How did the start-up grow?

(market penetration, market development, ~~product development, diversification~~)

- By employing people for further developing of the website housetrip.com.
- Growing by serving more clients and having more offers.
- There are no other products than the initial at the moment.

How is the decision process designed in your company?

- In the beginning both founders were deciding together.
- Arnaud as the CEO is having the final decision now.
- The executive board is holding weekly meetings.

- Example: adding new features is defined by the product director and the executive team makes the decision in which direction the company should go.

Are you active in social networks or did they play an important role at the time of founding?

None

University Networks

Networking with other start-ups

Regional professional networks

Social media (Facebook / Xing / LinkedIn / Twitter)

Other: "venture kick"

What were the drivers for the choice of the company's legal form?

- Financially driven.

Has it been a different legal form at the time of founding?

- No.

Who are the owners of the company? Did the ownership change since the founding?

- The two founders do not own the majority of the company anymore.
- 10 business angels and 3 major VCs hold together the majority.

Do you think luck played an important role in the evolution of the start-up? If yes, how exactly?

- Yes, because of having the idea.
- Raising money worked well.
- 2% Luck, the rest is hard work.

Appendix L - Transcript of the questionnaire sent to Michael Näf by email

Respondent: Mr Michael Näf
In function as: Start-up founder
Date: 01.11.2012

Role and experience of the interviewee

Michael Näf is co-founder and CEO at Doodle AG. Before, he has studied computer science at the ETH Zürich and worked as independent consultant. Together with three colleagues he founded the start-up Zeeder, a company who promotes web technology start-ups.

Characteristics of the start-up

Name: Doodle
Year of founding: 2007
Legal form: AG
Number of employees: 12

Was sind Ihrer Meinung nach die 10 wichtigsten Faktoren für Wachstum in Startup Unternehmen? (nach Wichtigkeit geordnet mit Beispiel)

- 1. Markt**
- 2. Produkt**
Echtes Bedürfnis (Pain) lösen.
- 3. Venture capital**
- 4. Business model**
Funktionierendes Business Model (Cashflow) und/oder externe Finanzierung.
- 5. Inhärente Viralität des Produkts**
- 6. Ökonomisch nachhaltige Marketingmethoden**
Z.B. Google Adwords mit Customer Acquisition Cost < Customer Lifetime Value.
- 7. Qualität**
Produktqualität, Usability, User Experience.
- 8. Team**
- 9. Vision**
- 10. Durchhaltewillen (Wille)**

Worauf sollte Ihrer Meinung nach am meisten Wert/Gewicht gelegt werden zum Zeitpunkt der Unternehmensgründung, was sind Ihre Empfehlungen an Startups und warum?

- Möglichst marktnah und *iterativ vorgehen*. Startups müssen möglichst schnell Hypothesen zu Markt/Produkt/Geschäftsmodell aufstellen und verifizieren/falsifizieren.

Was würden Sie heute anders machen?

- Fast alles; einfach um herauszufinden, was passiert, wenn man Dinge anders macht.

Wie ist das Unternehmerteam zusammengestellt?

CEO: Michael Näf

CTO: Paul E. Sevinç

Hatten Sie eine Wachstumsstrategie? Wie sah diese genau aus?

Ja.

Wie viele Wochenstunden haben Sie im ersten Jahr für das Unternehmen aufgebracht?

1-20 21 bis 40 41 bis 50 51 bis 60 mehr als 60

Waren Sie von Beginn an zu 100% von Ihrer Geschäftsidee und dem Geschäftsmodell überzeugt?

--

Wie war die Unternehmensfinanzierung gesichert?

(Auch Kombinationen, je nach Wachstumsphase)

Bootstrap FFF Business Angels Venture Capitalists IPO

Andere: Eigener Cashflow

Hatten Sie Unterstützung/Coaching von KTI/CTI oder anderen Förder- Organisationen? Welche?

- Ja, CTI Startup.

Wie stellen Sie das Innovationsmanagement in Ihrem Startup sicher?

--

Ist Ihr Unternehmen eher durch Marktdurchdringung oder Produkteentwicklung / Diversifikation gewachsen?

- Eher Marktdurchdringung.

Wie ist der Entscheidungsprozess in Ihrer Firma gestaltet?

In welchen Netzwerken sind Sie aktiv?

- Keine
- Universitäre Netzwerke
- Vernetzung mit anderen Startups
- Regionale Unternehmensnetzwerke
- Social Media (Facebook / Xing / LinkedIn / Twitter)
- Andere: _____

Was waren die Beweggründe zur gewählten Rechtsform?

- Formellere Berücksichtigung von Shareholdern (Investoren).

Gab es eine Anpassung der Rechtsform im Verlauf der Unternehmensentwicklung?

- Ja, wir waren zu Beginn eine GmbH und haben bei der Finanzierung zu einer AG gewechselt.

Wie haben sich die Besitzverhältnisse der Firma seit der Gründung verändert?

- 2008 haben die Investoren 30% der Aktien gekriegt.
- 2011 hat Tamedia 49% der Aktien gekauft.

Würden Sie sagen, dass Glück in der Erfolgsgeschichte Ihres Unternehmens eine wichtige Rolle gespielt hat? Wie genau?

Ja!

Appendix M – Start-up support organisations, foundations and business competitions

Table 18, Table 19 and Table 20 provide overviews of the most important support organisations, business competitions and foundations available in Switzerland for technology start-ups.

Table 18: Grants and support organisations

KTI/CTI	Kommission für Technologie und Innovation http://www.bbt.admin.ch/kti/projektfoerderung
EU-Research	http://www.euresearch.ch
Economic Promotions (Kanton/Canton)	Basel: http://www.baselarea.ch Bern: http://www.wfb.ch Zürich: http://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/wirtschaft

Table 19: Business competitions

Foundation W.A. de Vigier	CHF 100,000 per project (a maximum of 5 times CHF 100,000 p.a.) http://www.devigier.ch
Venture kick	Venture kick provides “free” seed funding up to CHF 130,000 in three competition rounds (10,000 – 20,000 – 100,000) http://www.venturekick.ch
Venture	»venture« is an initiative of McKinsey & Company, Switzerland, the ETH Zurich, the innovation promotion agency CTI and Knecht Holding http://www.venture.ch
Innovation Network EPFL	http://vpiv.epfl.ch/page-22998-en.html

Table 20: Foundations

Eidgenössische Stiftung zur Förderung schweizerischer Volkswirtschaft durch wissenschaftliche Forschung	CHF 150,000 loan (a maximum of CHF 300,000 in combination with KTI/CTI-Project) http://www.volkswirtschaft-stiftung.ch
FIT	A CHF 100,000 loan mechanism (each project can get up to 3 times CHF 100,000) http://www.fondation-fit.ch
STI Stiftung für technologische Innovation	Loans of CHF 100,000 to 500,000 to founders http://www.sti-stiftung.ch
Swiss Foundations	http://www.swissfoundations.ch/de/mitgliederliste
Swiss Government Register of foundations	http://esv2000.edi.admin.ch