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THE EDITORIAL

A Generation of EdTech Founders Who Disrupt by Designing to the Learner of Today!

Education stands at a pivotal moment. A new generation of EdTech entrepreneurs is fundamentally suggesting solutions to new ways of learning, moving beyond traditional models to create experiences that transform students and teachers from recipients into active architects of education.

These visionary companies understand that today's learners demand more than lectures, textbooks, and digitized versions of systems that merely transplant outdated pedagogical approaches into sleek new interfaces. They crave interaction, personalization, and the power to shape their educational journey. By integrating artificial intelligence and immersive technologies, these startups are crafting learning environments where curiosity drives interest and discovery - and engagement flourishes.

The most compelling innovations aren't just about adopting new technologies - they're about understanding today's learners. Whether through AI-powered systems that adapt to individual learning styles and enable relevant educational assessments, collaborative solutions that break down classroom settings, accessible platforms that provide opportunities beyond school walls, or coding environments, such as vibecoding, that make programming accessible - these companies are building bridges between education as it exists and education as it could be.

These EdTech pioneers are preparing students not merely to navigate an uncertain future, but to actively construct it. They're fostering agency, creative problem-solving, and digital literacy—skills that will define success in an increasingly complex world.

MindCET continues to champion this movement, supporting innovators through comprehensive programs designed to accelerate breakthrough solutions. From early-stage research and development to funding and global recognition, we're committed to nurturing ideas that can truly meet the needs of the learner of today.

This annual edition of EdTech Mindset showcases the remarkable companies within MindCET's ecosystem this year. Through our R&D Studio, Accelerator program, investment fund, and Global EdTech Startup Awards, we're witnessing firsthand how passionate entrepreneurs are reshaping education for generations to come.

The future isn't just approaching—it's being written by these remarkable innovators today.

I hope you feel inspired,
Cecilia Waismann
ceciliaw@cet.ac.il





COMPANIES

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GESAWARDS





















RIDING THE DRAGON:

The Startups Changing Education

Avi Warshavsky, CEO MindCET

An ancient Zen tale tells of a monk named Yeh Gong who deeply loved dragons. He read about them in books, studied ancient illustrations, and even covered the walls of his room with dragon paintings he created himself. Everyone who visited the monastery knew: this was the monk who loved dragons.

One day, a real dragon, having heard of the monk's devotion, decided to visit him. The dragon peered through the window of the monk's room. But when Yeh Gong saw a real dragon, he was so terrified that he screamed and fled.

This story serves as a metaphor for the development of the EdTech world in general, and of the startup scene within it. For decades, the promise of technology saving education has loomed large. This promise has taken different forms over time, evolving with the broader tech culture—from personalization and adaptivity, to engagement and motivation, to closing equity gaps. Like the elusive dragon, this technology remained out of reach. It took years of development and millions—sometimes hundreds of millions—of dollars to create tech that might live up to that promise. In most cases, however, the technology failed to achieve meaningful presence or meet expectations. The dragon, in Zen terms, never really appeared. It remained in books, dreams, and illustrations.

Then, one day, the dragon's head appeared at the window. It wasn't summoned by EdTech veterans, policymakers, or governments. It arrived on the wave of generative AI's breakthrough.

Education is one of the first verticals where this technological miracle has the potential to manifest meaningfully. New tools allow for real-time feedback, which, in turn, clearly improves student performance. Research shows that students who received immediate feedback from AI models improved their test scores by 22% compared to those who didn't receive AI-based support.

These tools open up major opportunities in language learning. Language—written and spoken—is the most important predictor of student achievement gaps. Generative AI models are, first and foremost, "word machines," built to work effectively with language. This potential is reinforced by research conducted with underserved populations. Some studies show significant improvements in writing skills, thanks to systematic feedback and access to quick examples of quality writing. One study showed that students who received AI-based feedback on their writing improved sentence structure and writing fluency by 25% compared to peers who received feedback only from teachers.

This linguistic potential is even greater in the latest generation of models released in the second half of

2024. These newer models have significantly stronger reasoning and argumentative abilities, further boosting their potential in language and discourse education. Encouragingly, this is especially true for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Research monitoring the implementation of these tools in under-resourced settings shows student performance improving by 15–20% compared to traditional instruction. Similarly, a study from China on an AI-driven personalized learning platform reported an 18% increase in math scores among students from rural and minority regions.

This technological breakthrough also drastically lowers the entry barrier for new entrepreneurs. In the past, successful EdTech startup founders were often required to have strong tech backgrounds. Today, that dependence is shrinking. Product managers or educators now play more critical roles than technologists.

And yet, when the dragon appeared at the window, what happened wasn't quite what we expected. Unlike the Zen story, we didn't run away screaming—but neither did we fully embrace the dragon's presence. Instead, we continued to draw dragons and long for them, as if the real one wasn't already here beside us. Global surveys and studies among teachers repeatedly point to three core insights:

1. Adoption of these new capabilities is occurring on an individual level—not at a systemic level.
2. Where adoption does occur, it often reinforces old paradigms—tools for test question creation or lesson planning remain the most common uses.
3. The rate of adoption hasn't changed significantly in the past year.

This paralyzed gaze at the dragon in the window is understandable. Real-time integration of tools that require a redefinition of habits, roles, and skills is

hard. When there's such a vast gap between available capabilities and the human and institutional infrastructure, startups have a crucial role to play.

The Startups Changing Education

Startups are not needed in this era for their technological prowess, but for their social and cultural characteristics. Four main attributes position startups as key change agents in the education sector:

1. **Organizational Structure**
2. **User Orientation**
3. **Connection to Networked Culture**
4. **Potential for Disruptive Innovation**

Organizational Structure

Startups are lean, flat, and agile. They can quickly respond to changing needs and adapt to dynamic environments. Unlike traditional education systems, they can pivot swiftly when something doesn't work. Steve Blank defines a startup as "a temporary organization designed to search for a repeatable and scalable business model." This now widely accepted definition highlights three key traits:

- **Temporariness** – Startups aren't meant to maintain their original form indefinitely. Their mission isn't organizational upkeep, but discovery.
- **Exploration** – Startups are built to seek new, viable business models, in contrast to corporations focused on executing known ones.
- **Repeatability** – Their solution must be replicable and scalable, not anecdotal or one-off.

User Orientation

While startups don't follow instruction manuals, methodologies like those described by Steve Blank and Eric Ries—such as the Lean Startup approach—have become the standard in startup development.



Avi Warshavsky hosting an EdTech Startup event

Startups begin with assumptions and hypotheses about a problem or market need. They test these through a Minimal Viable Product (MVP)—a simple, early version of the product meant to gather user feedback. Based on real-world interaction, they iterate, improve, and evolve the product.

Network Culture

Startups have the potential to address the relevance gap in education systems. As technological and social change accelerates, schools struggle to stay aligned with the realities students live in.

Startups are often led by young entrepreneurs who have personally experienced this disconnect during their own education. Immersed in networked culture, they can speak both the language of institutions and of users. They know the needs, preferences, and challenges of learners—and can design better-fitting solutions.

Disruptive Potential

Startups often bring a worldview that challenges conventional assumptions. Like Uber or Airbnb, EdTech startups can question the norms of traditional systems and shift the center of gravity.

As Clayton Christensen's theory of disruptive innovation describes, startups typically begin at the market's fringes—serving small or underserved audiences. This freedom enables innovation unburdened by regulation or institutional habits. Projects like Khan Academy or ClassDojo began



Avi Warshavsky

as simple tools and evolved into central players in education.

Meaningful pedagogical innovation is hard. It requires deep systemic change—redefining teacher roles, evaluation methods, and curricula. Educational systems, with their rigid structures, often struggle to bridge the gap between classroom practice and the outside world. In this context, startups can serve as agents of renewal.

The Startups Helping Us Ride the Dragon

This issue is dedicated to a special group of startups from the MindCET ecosystem.

MindCET specializes in early-stage startups. Our sweet spot is from the "problem and idea" phase to product-market fit. The featured companies span four MindCET activity areas:

- 1. Venture Studio** – Products that began within MindCET from the challenge or idea stage, underwent pilots with thousands of users, and are ready for the next step. Some have become independent companies, others assets of partnering organizations.
- 2. Accelerator** – MindCET's accelerator supports around 10 companies per year, mostly through individualized mentoring and some group work. All participating companies already have products and users, and the accelerator helps propel them to the next stage.
- 3. GESAwards** – A global startup competition and vibrant community. The competition involves about 40 partners worldwide and is managed by MindCET. Each year, it engages around 1,000 startups from 134 countries. This issue showcases winners in various categories.
- 4. MindCET Capital** – An investment fund co-founded by MindCET, CET, East Wind Advisors, and Ronnie Kenneth. The fund invests in seed and pre-seed companies and has made five investments to date.

Nearly all the companies in this issue incorporate generative AI into their products—but that's not what defines them. What unites them is a desire to solve significant learning challenges and to ride the dragon's back toward a better horizon.

Q&A

Nejma Belkhdim
CEO & Co-Founder of Nolej

From Serendipity to Success

In this exclusive interview, we speak with the CEO and co-founder of Nolej, a trailblazing edtech company from France, about her unconventional path into entrepreneurship, the impact of winning a global award, and the personal transformation that followed. Her story is one of ambition, humility, and resilience—proof that sometimes, the best journeys are the ones we never planned for.

Q: Could you tell us about Nolej and how the company was founded?

N.B.: Nolej is a French company we established five years ago. It's a tool that allows teachers to transform their content into learning materials like an assistant, an AI copilot for teachers. We started developing that way before OpenAI came on the market to the big public. We developed this because we saw the need from teachers to be able to generate content that is adapted to the learner.

How I ended up in this, to be honest, it was kind of accidental. I like to call myself an "accidental entrepreneur". I met my co-founder Philippe at a learning tech event in Paris while researching for a potential PhD opportunity focused on AI's impact on cognitive engagement. I was specifically looking for a tool that could generate quizzes automatically at scale. Among all the VR demonstrations and crowded booths, I noticed a small stand with a tall gentleman. He demonstrated a browser extension that transformed a article into ten automatically generated questions within seconds. That was my definitive "aha moment"—I was completely amazed by this technology that seemed revolutionary at the time. He had trained his own models, which was exceptionally advanced for that period.

I left with his business card, called him back, and began researching alongside him for six months. Eventually, I proposed we develop together as a commercial venture, and that's how Nolej was born.

Q: That's quite different from typical founder stories where entrepreneurs deliberately seek funding rounds and search for the perfect co-founder. Yours was truly a serendipitous discovery.

N.B.: Exactly, pure serendipity. This pattern has been consistent throughout my life: pivotal encounters with people who alter my trajectory and present unexpected opportunities. I don't have the conventional background—no business school or Ivy League education, no technical expertise. In fact, I struggled academically and lacked clear direction for quite some time. What has consistently driven me, however, is the desire to create meaningful impact. Looking back at my educational journey, I dropped out numerous times, but always because I wasn't fulfilling my need to make a tangible difference. I never consciously recognized this pattern until during an interview when someone observed, "Your background seems disconnected, but I notice you've consistently moved closer to directly helping people." She articulated something I'd been doing instinctively.

This focus on impact deeply informs my values and vision, which is crucial when selecting a co-founder. Philippe and I have significant differences—he's twice my age, from northern France, highly technical, with successful previous exits. Despite our contrasting backgrounds, we share vision and commitment to creating positive change in education.

Q: What would you identify as the key changes in your life since taking on the CEO position?

N.B.: While I've always been a quick learner, this role demands an accelerated learning curve. It's taught me profound lessons about resilience—understanding that mistakes are inevitable, and what matters is acknowledging them and persevering.

In French, we have a concept about the difficulty of stepping back from something you've heavily invested in. As CEO, you're constantly investing—in people, time, initiatives—which can make it challenging to objectively evaluate situations. I've had to develop the ability to acknowledge when something isn't working and pivot accordingly, even after significant investment.

Another critical evolution has been establishing a support system based on strong values. I've come to appreciate that inspiration and guidance can come from unexpected sources beyond my immediate industry. Every person I encounter offers valuable perspective or feedback. This has transformed me from being somewhat insular to much more open-minded.

This openness has been particularly valuable as a young woman in leadership, as I recognize there's substantial knowledge to gain from experience. For instance, our head of sales came from retirement to join us, and the expertise he brings is invaluable. I've embraced acknowledging when I don't know something and actively seeking guidance.

Q: As the CEO and co-founder of Nolej, what's something about you that might surprise people?

N.B.: While many perceive me as an extrovert, I'm actually what you might call a "loud introvert." We conducted personality assessments for management development where both I and my colleagues evaluated each other's traits. Surprisingly, I registered strongly on the introvert spectrum despite my outward demeanor. People see me confidently presenting on stage and assume public speaking comes naturally, but I used to experience intense anxiety—literally shaking before presentations. I've gradually acclimated, but I remain fundamentally introverted.

For professional requirements, I've learned to enter rooms with energy and presence despite it not being my natural inclination. It requires significant effort, but I've developed this capacity over time. It consumes considerable energy, but I believe it's important to recognize that leadership doesn't require a single personality type. There's a misconception that CEOs must fit specific character templates, but the reality is we're all adaptably human.



Nejma Belkhdim

"The first skill taught in judo is how to fall properly -you're thrown, you fall, you rise, you bow respectfully to your opponent, and continue. This practice instills profound values that support me today professionally. It teaches resilience—you fall, get up, maintain respect regardless of circumstances, and channel frustration into improvement rather than resentment."

Q: What practices help you maintain your energy and achieve balance?

N.B.: I've learned to derive energy from interactions in ways I previously didn't. Rather than merely expending energy in conversations, I now consciously focus on the positive impact I might be having. When I see someone leaving a discussion with new insights or positive feelings, I recognize that as energizing. This human dimension is critically important in business, yet often undervalued.

I've also returned to practicing judo, which I was required to do as a child by my father. Back then, I resisted it, but now I deeply appreciate its value. My father explained that in judo, I would learn respect, competitive spirit with sportsmanship, and self-confidence without arrogance. The first skill taught in judo is how to fall properly -you're thrown, you fall, you rise, you bow respectfully to your opponent, and continue. This practice instills profound values that support me today professionally. It teaches resilience—you fall, get up, maintain respect regardless of circumstances, and channel frustration into improvement rather than resentment.

This philosophy aligns perfectly with education and the values we promote at Nolej. In judo, hierarchy and respect are paramount; when the instructor speaks, everyone listens attentively. We compete vigorously but ultimately progress together.

This discipline has also helped me develop a healthier relationship with competition. Previously, I would readily accept defeat—not from sportsmanship but from lack of confidence. If I invested minimal effort, failure was justifiable rather than disappointing. This defensive mechanism is common but rarely discussed openly. Through entrepreneurship, I've learned to value struggle and failure for their educational potential. Now I almost eagerly anticipate challenges as accelerated learning opportunities, sometimes needing to moderate my enthusiasm for tackling difficulties.

While this perspective on failure as a growth catalyst is frequently discussed, experiencing it firsthand—enduring repeated rejections and challenges before witnessing results—confirms its truth. This recognition has transformed my approach to competition with myself: persisting through setbacks because consistent effort eventually yields progress.



Q: Nolej recently won as the Most Promising EdTech Startup at the Global EdTech Startup Awards, competing against thousands of applicants worldwide. Could you share your experience part?

N.B.: It was extraordinary—the last time I won any recognition was probably in sports when I was around twelve. This competition was different; I approached it strategically, knowing the visibility would benefit our company significantly. Winning has been transformative both professionally and personally. I sometimes catch myself saying, "Nolej is the best EdTech in the world," and it still feels surreal when audiences applaud enthusiastically. The recognition has built tremendous credibility with our users and created national pride within France—we're characteristically self-critical but enthusiastically celebrate our successes. The award has opened numerous doors - we had several deals under negotiation that closed rapidly after our win. It creates this powerful sense of participating in something larger than ourselves, comparable to supporting your country in the Olympics—suddenly you're invested in sports you'd never normally watch simply because your nation is represented.

We've observed this same phenomenon with our client base. Journalists incorporate it into their coverage, recognizing the significance of a French company achieving global recognition in educational technology.

The professional impact has been tremendous. Our brand awareness increased dramatically in just one year following the GESAwards win—reaching about 90% recognition in key markets. We've gained natural ambassadors as people want to associate with our journey and narrative. While our product was strong but still in MVP stage, the award created this compelling story: a company from northern France selected to represent the country internationally, then winning the prestigious global title. It generates genuine enthusiasm.

The business impact has been equally significant. When I met with President Macron's minister, my opening statement was, "You may not know us, but we won the prize for best EdTech in the world." Initially, he seemed skeptical—assuming typical startup hyperbole—until I assured him it was genuine. Imagine having that credential when meeting your country's leadership—we brought home international recognition in educational innovation. It's been an exceptional conversation starter across political, journalistic, and corporate contexts. It's remarkably effective, particularly in EdTech, because this sector recognition carries special weight. While there are awards for countless categories, succeeding in educational technology specifically demonstrates your ability to convince educators—notoriously demanding

stakeholders. As medical professionals often note, teachers make the most discerning patients due to their critical thinking and complex needs.

Education presents multifaceted challenges with numerous considerations. When you provide meaningful value in this space and convince educational professionals of your solution's merit, you've accomplished something substantial. That's why the GESAward carries such significance, and why I'm profoundly grateful for this recognition.

Q: Beyond the professional and business success that followed the award, how did winning affect you personally?

N.B.: The impact was profound. The competition required me to deliver my first public pitch in English—something I'd never done before. I remember focusing intensely, thinking, "I absolutely must win this." Something in my mind seemed to shift fundamentally. I meticulously prepared my three-minute presentation, which was unusual for me as I typically prefer spontaneity. During the event, I maintained this unwavering determination.

The experience of setting this ambitious goal and achieving it transformed my self-confidence. It unlocked something that had been dormant for years—the realization that I truly can accomplish significant things, a capacity I had gradually forgotten. We often lose sight of our potential over time. This success reminded me that if I could achieve this, other possibilities would open as well.

When life presents opportunities for personal growth and mental expansion, embracing them is essential. This competition exemplified that principle—participating was imperative both professionally and personally, regardless of outcome. Whether you succeed or not, you gain invaluable insights and growth. For me, it instilled confidence I previously lacked and expanded my perspective on what's possible. I realized we can indeed achieve excellence despite our imperfections.

The experience also connected me with remarkable individuals. GESAwards brings together a community of sharp, innovative minds united by their desire to create meaningful impact. Meeting with the other finalists, we learned about each other's ventures—projects from across the globe addressing educational challenges through diverse approaches based on regional

contexts. I'm still in contact with several participants, including an Israeli company that also received recognition. Their founders are exceptionally intelligent and insightful, and maintaining these connections has been professionally enriching.

Q: What advice would you offer to other founders?

N.B.: The experience of taking part of a global award like this one is a game-changer. The workshops were invaluable. The speakers provide excellent insights that both expand your knowledge and help alleviate competition anxiety. Regarding pitch strategy, I'd emphasize differentiation. At a certain level, many companies will have technically strong products with similar value propositions. What I observed from previous competitions is that while product features receive substantial focus, business strategy is equally important. Aim for a clear, bold, impactful presentation without unnecessary complexity. When pitching Nolej, I emphasized simplicity and accessibility. With just a few minutes to communicate your concept, clarity becomes essential. Carefully select your core message and focus on making it immediately comprehensible. Remember that while we're all mission-driven, sustainable impact requires viable business models. Don't neglect the commercial aspects of your venture.

Essentially, bring authentic energy to your presentation. Even if you're naturally introverted like me or concerned about language barriers—many participants, myself included, speak English with strong accents—don't let this inhibit you.

The international diversity is part of what makes GESAwards special. The judging panel represents various cultures and backgrounds, so keep your sentences concise, use straightforward vocabulary, and deliver your message with genuine enthusiasm. That's what truly matters.



Nejma Belkhdim

NOLEJ



GESAWARDS



Founders:

Nejma Beldkhim, Philippe Decottignies

Country: France

Funds raised: 3,250,000

Headcount: 14



www.nolej.io

Product:

Nolej is an AI-powered authoring tool that instantly transforms any content—text, audio, or video—into engaging, interactive, and inclusive learning activities, enabling educators and trainers to create at scale.

Nolej is a generative AI startup revolutionizing the way we create learning content. Our platform instantly transforms any document—text, audio, or video—into a wide range of interactive learning activities such as quizzes, flashcards, summaries, chatbots, and more.

Designed to be inclusive, sovereign, and energy-efficient, Nolej helps educators and organizations scale high-quality learning experiences without compromising on ethics or accessibility. With Nolej, anyone can create rich, engaging educational content in seconds—no technical skills required.

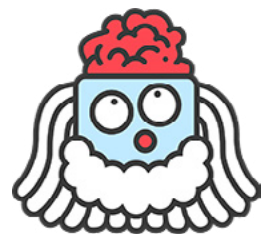
Mission:

Our approach combines cognitive science—through a deep understanding of how people learn—with generative AI, to empower teaching and learning across all contexts.

BRIAN



GESAWARDS



Brian

Founders: Ralph Forsbach

Country: Switzerland

Funds raised: 500,000

Headcount: 10



www.brian.study

Product:

Brian is an AI tutor that helps teachers create fully adaptive learning environments. Brian provides 1:1 support for learners, promotes self-directed learning, and reduces the teacher's workload—while ensuring they maintain full insight and control at all times.

Mission:

We make every teacher the best teacher in the world.

ELDES



GESAWARDS



Founders: Martin Curzio, Fabian Curzio

Country: Uruguay

Funds raised: 140,000

Headcount: 2

Arr (\$) 2024: 80,000



www.somoseldes.com

Product:

AI-powered interactive platform for learning Sign Language with real-time feedback, designed for schools, companies, and governments.

Eldes is an AI-powered platform that teaches Sign Language interactively and at scale. Users learn through tutorial videos and receive real-time feedback using computer vision, as if they had a personal tutor 24/7. The content is co-created with Deaf educators and adapted to each country's Sign Language. With over 10,000 users, Eldes is used by schools, companies and public institutions. For every license sold, we donate another one to a public school, ensuring inclusive and equitable access.

Mission:

Our mission is to break communication barriers by making Sign Language education accessible, interactive, and scalable through technology, empowering a more inclusive world where everyone can be understood, regardless of their language or hearing ability.

DRAZER



ACCELERATOR



Founders:

Ido Frumer, Ran Levi, Or Saf

Year Founded: 2022

Country: Israel

Headcount: 5



drazer1.com/en

Product:

Drazer in a Box - Drone-Based Learning Lab.

Power Skills such as teamwork, decision-making, and adaptability. Initially launched in Israel, Drazer has successfully conducted over 50 workshops for more than 1,000 participants. Leveraging advanced technology, analytics, and a user-friendly platform, we're positioned for significant international growth in 2025 and beyond.

Mission:

Our mission is to empower individuals and teams by combining immersive drone technology with experiential learning methodologies, fostering Power skills critical for navigating real-world challenges effectively.

Q&A

Martín Curzio Co-Founder of Eldes

Bridging Silence: How a Uruguayan Startup Is Revolutionizing Sign Language Education with AI

Eldes is a powerful example of how meaningful technology can break barriers, foster empathy, and create inclusive societies. As Martín Curzio and his team continue to scale, their story reminds us that innovation occurs anywhere, we just need to look for the opportunities that make the world more equitable - one sign at a time.

Q: Can you tell us what Eldes does, and why is it unique?

M.Z.: At Eldes, we've built an AI-powered learning platform that makes sign language education accessible, engaging, and interactive. What sets us apart is that our platform provides real-time feedback using a webcam. When users attempt a sign, our AI engine analyzes the hand movements and immediately lets them know whether they've performed it correctly. This immediate feedback loop is a game-changer.

We're proud to be working with a range of organizations—from banks like Santander, which has trained thousands of employees to better serve deaf customers, to governments and schools. For example, the Uruguayan government is currently using Eldes to train teachers nationwide—something that had never been done before. It's a major milestone for us, especially considering we launched our product just two years ago, after several years of development.



Fabian Curzio and Martin Curzio

Q: That's incredibly impactful. Where did you start, and how has your reach grown since then?

M.Z.: We're based in Uruguay, a small country with just over 3 million people. While the market size is a limitation in terms of sales, it was ideal for testing and refining our product. When we launched in March 2023, we thought we had something ready—but we quickly learned otherwise. For instance, users would try a sign slightly incorrectly, and the platform wouldn't offer any feedback. It only recognized the correct gesture, which was a huge limitation. One user sent us a video saying, "It doesn't work," and when we reviewed it, we realized the sign was close, but not exact. That kind of user feedback was invaluable. We improved the platform so that now, the AI can detect not only whether a sign is right, but also why it might be wrong—whether it's a hand shape, position, or orientation issue.

We expanded to Argentina in late 2024 and entered the Spanish market earlier this year. Each country has its own unique sign language, even if the spoken language is the same. So we've had to adapt everything—from AI training to course content—to each region.

Currently, we have around 10,000 users, a mix of B2B and B2C. And the feedback today is dramatically better than when we began.



Q: That's quite a journey. What were you doing before Eldes, and what inspired you to start working in this space?

M.Z.: Surprisingly, I'm not from a tech or education background—I'm actually an architect. My brother and co-founder, Fabián, was trying to learn sign language in 2020 and kept running into obstacles: limited course availability, inconvenient schedules, long travel distances. He was close to giving up. Around the same time, I saw a deaf child struggle to order ice cream at

a fast-food chain. The communication breakdown was difficult for everyone involved, and I remember thinking: why is this still happening? That led us to explore how we could solve this. We discovered that sign language is fundamentally different from spoken languages—there's no written or audible form—so traditional language-learning platforms didn't work. We wondered: could AI help?

Back then, in 2020, the idea of AI analyzing hand movements in real time seemed almost impossible. We spoke to several tech teams, and most said it couldn't be done. Eventually, one team said, "We can try. No promises." So we hired them, using our personal savings, in the middle of the pandemic—with no job security and, in my case, a baby on the way. Miraculously, they managed to train a basic system that could recognize a few hand gestures. That was enough for us to apply for and receive government funding, which helped us develop the first version of Eldes. It was a huge leap of faith—and, thankfully, the right one.

"You don't need millions in funding or massive traction to make an impact. Focus on your innovation, your mission, and the change you want to create."

Q: A bold move that clearly paid off. Eldes was recently one of the 2024 winners of the prestigious Global EdTech Startup Awards. What was that experience like? Has the award led to new connections or collaborations?

M.Z.: It was surreal. We've always looked up to the big players from the U.S. and Europe—startups with far more resources. So to win as a small, bootstrapped team from Uruguay was deeply meaningful.

We were the first Latin American startup to receive this recognition, and it has already opened many doors. We're in conversations with Google, other large tech companies, and even more governments. This kind of recognition validates our mission and gives us a platform to reach new partners and users.

We've joined various educator and EdTech networks that emerged from the GES Awards community. We've also been approached by several venture capital firms since the award. One of them is now seriously considering an investment. So yes, the ripple effect has been significant.

Q: Can you share a story that illustrates the real-world impact of Eldes?

M.Z.: One of our favorite examples comes from a school in Uruguay, Ivy Thomas Memorial School. For the past three years, children as young as 10 have been learning sign language with Eldes. What surprised everyone—the teachers, the administration, and us—was how much more the students were learning than just sign language. They were developing resilience, patience, and a deeper understanding of communication. They even organized a year-end event to welcome their parents entirely in sign language. These were children with no deaf peers in their school, but now they have the confidence and empathy to engage with the community. That's the kind of impact that stays with you.

Q: Looking ahead, what is your vision for Eldes?

M.Z.: I envision a world where a deaf person can walk into a restaurant, a school, or a hospital and be

understood—without needing an interpreter. Hearing individuals don't need to be fluent, but we should all be able to greet someone, ask if they need help, and communicate basic information.

In Uruguay, we've already tripled national access to sign language in less than a year—more than all the traditional centers combined. And now, we're piloting a new use of our AI in self-service kiosks—so deaf users can interact using sign language rather than navigating text-based menus, which aren't always accessible to them. Imagine walking into a bank and being understood at the kiosk—that's the future we're building.

Q: What are the next steps for Eldes growth?

M.Z.: Spain is a major focus. It's a large and promising market, and we want to establish a strong foundation there. If we secure funding, we plan to expand into three additional countries next year.


Q: Finally, do you have any advice for startups applying to the next GES Awards?

M.Z.: Go for it. You don't need millions in funding or massive traction to make an impact. Focus on your innovation, your mission, and the change you want to create. Awards like GES Awards recognize potential and purpose, not just numbers. So trust in your work—because great things can happen when you do.



MATH LEGACY

GESAWARDS



Product:
A video game to make K-12 students learn and love math.

Imagine a world where learning any subject is as engaging and enjoyable as playing video games. This is the future we, at Educade, are creating. Our journey begins with Math Legacy, a mobile video game that seamlessly integrates Game Design and Learning Science to make learning math easier, more effective, and more enjoyable. We chose math as our starting point because it is universal (everywhere, in the world, $2+2=4$), and +1B students struggle with it worldwide. Following the launch of v1.0 in 30 schools, engaging +7k students, we saw remarkable results. In just one month of use, students' performance improved by an average of 22.6%.


Mission:
Creating a world where learning whatever topic feels as simple and fun as playing video games.

Founders:
Fausto Capriotti, Christian Pulieri

Country: Italy

Funds raised: 150,000


Headcount: 5



mathlegacy.com

GB LEARNING

GESAWARDS



Product:
Online game-based learning facilitation service utilizing commercial gaming software.

Meeting the societal demands of the AGI era begins with equipping individuals—starting as early as elementary school—with the essential skills for the 21st century. But this is no easy task. gbl, inc is tackling this challenge head-on by offering services designed to cultivate future-ready individuals—those who can identify problems, think critically, take initiative, and lead the way in creating solutions. These are the foundational skills needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

Mission:
Leverage the power of games to nurture children's futures.

Founders: Duke Syudo

Year Founded: 2022


Country: Japan

Funds raised: 100,000

Headcount: 2

Arr (\$) 2024: 0

Arr (\$) 2025: 22,000



gb-learning.com/en

SCHUBU

GESAWARDS

SchüBu
Das interaktive Schulbuch

Founders: Hagen Wieshofer

Year Founded: 2020

Country: Austria

Funds raised: 1,100,000

Headcount: 16

Arr (\$) 2024: 350,000

Arr (\$) 2025: 450,000



www.schubu.org/

Product:

Fully enriched, gamified and AI supported learning and teaching content for STEM for K12.

SchuBu Systems provides an AI-supported, gamified STEM learning platform for K-12 students, integrating curriculum-aligned content with interactive simulations, collaborative activities, and adaptive feedback to create an engaging and effective learning environment. It enhances knowledge retention and confidence through play-based learning while offering teachers seamless digital tools to support instruction, bridging traditional and digital classrooms with intuitive, impactful technology.

Mission:

SchuBu's mission is to empower educators with intuitive digital tools and high-quality, curriculum-aligned content that makes teaching easier and more impactful. We are committed to fostering a love for learning through gamification, adaptive feedback, and interactive experiences that resonate with today's students. Our approach supports teachers in managing diverse classrooms and helps learners build skills for the future. Collaboration with schools, researchers, and students drives our innovation and ensures pedagogical integrity. We believe education should be engaging, inclusive, and accessible - everywhere and for everyone.

MORAI

MINDCET STUDIO

MORAI

Founders: MindCET Studio

Country: Israel



morai.mindcet.org/en

Product:

Built by educators for educators, Morai equip teachers with the tools to seamlessly integrate AI into their teaching practices. It offers a marketplace of pedagogically aligned prompts tailored for lesson planning, activity design, and assessments. Teachers can find, adapt, and create prompts to suit their classroom needs, fostering a professional ecosystem that promotes AI literacy while prioritizing educators' values and creativity.

Mission:

MorAI aims to foster educators' agency by empowering them to confidently harness cutting-edge technology, enhancing their teaching practices with innovative, user-driven solutions.

Q&A

Ori Nurieli

Co-Founder of Studywise

Revolutionizing Educational Assessments

Ori Nurieli, co-founder of StudyWise, offers a compelling glimpse into the journey of an Israeli startup born from personal conviction and unexpected circumstances. He provides us with a candid reflection about his bold entrepreneurial leap, fuelled by a lifelong frustration with traditional exams, leading to this AI-driven assessment solution he created with friends Chen Berger and Guy Aronson. Studywise emphasis is on deep teacher engagement and rapid global expansion - the nimble approach to integrating cutting-edge AI underscores the startup's innovative spirit and its mission to empower educators worldwide.

Q: Can you tell us about StudyWise.

O.N.: StudyWise is an AI-powered platform that transforms how educational assessments are created, graded, and analysed. We empower schools, teachers, and educational platforms to design high-quality exams, automate grading, and gain actionable insights into student performance. We have we've personally engaged with hundreds of teachers to deeply understand their challenges, ensuring our solution addresses their real-world needs.

Q: What's the personal story behind founding StudyWise, and what drove you to start it?

O.N.: The idea for StudyWise took root after October 7, 2023, during my reserve duty in the army. My co-founder, Guy, and I spent weeks reflecting on how we could make a meaningful impact in our society. I've always struggled with traditional exams, despite being a strong student—they never felt like a fair measure of my abilities. This frustration, combined with our desire

to create something impactful, inspired us to build StudyWise, a platform that reimagines assessments to better align with how students learn and think.

The reserve duty was a complete pause in my regular life—away from my routine, home, and job. It gave me space to reflect deeply: Was I making the impact I'd always envisioned? Conversations with friends during this time reignited my entrepreneurial dreams. I had always wanted to start a company, but the war and reserve duty were the catalysts that pushed me to take the leap. Instead of returning to a job I wasn't passionate about, I saw it as the perfect moment to found StudyWise and pursue a vision of meaningful change.

Q: You mentioned wanting to make an impact. Who do you hope to impact, and how does your entrepreneurial drive play into this?

O.N.: The impact is about transforming education globally. I've always had an entrepreneurial spirit; even

at 18, I told Guy we'd start a company together someday. My experiences in hackathons and side projects fuelled this drive. With StudyWise, we aim to empower every teacher worldwide, helping them focus on inspiring students rather than being bogged down by grading.

I had no formal startup experience before StudyWise. My knowledge came from listening to podcasts, talking to CEO friends, and participating in hackathons during college. Hackathons gave me a taste of entrepreneurship—building something from scratch in 24 hours was exhilarating and confirmed this was the path I wanted to pursue full-time.

Q: You co-founded StudyWise with close friends. Can you share more about your relationship with your co-founders?

O.N.: Starting a company with my best friends, Guy and Han, is unconventional but incredibly rewarding. Guy and I met eight years ago during our army service, where we worked closely together in a platoon, building

trust. We later collaborated on university projects and hackathons, which solidified our partnership. Han, my best friend from university, brought complementary skills. Our long-standing friendship and shared experiences gave us the confidence to create StudyWise together.



Q: How has being part of the MindCET Accelerator impacted StudyWise?

O.N.: The MindCET Accelerator was a game-changer for us. It provided structure, mentorship, and a mission-driven community that sharpened our vision and accelerated our growth. The workshops and feedback helped us refine our product and strategy, enabling us to expand globally faster than we ever imagined. Within a year, we secured paying customers outside Israel,



Ori Nurieli and Chen Berger

gained significant traction, and built lasting connections with mentors and fellow founders. The mentorship we received evolved into an advisory role, and his guidance has been instrumental in our growth. We also connected with CET, an organization that validated our approach and opened doors to new opportunities. Additionally, founders from other companies such as Storywizard, have become close collaborators. We talk daily, learning from their experience to fuel our own growth.

"By combining cutting-edge AI with real-time user feedback, we continuously enhance our platform to deliver value to educators and students."

Q: What came first—the decision to start a company or to solve a challenge?

O.N.: To solve a challenge came first. I initially built StudyWise to help myself prepare for final exams during my last semester. I shared it with friends, and within a month, we had 10,000 users. When we made our first sale, we realized we had something big. That market validation prompted us to turn StudyWise into a full-fledged business, addressing a clear need in education.

Q: What was the biggest challenge in turning StudyWise into a company?

O.N.: The biggest hurdle was navigating the sales process in the EdTech space, especially in Israel. Selling to schools involves bureaucracy, security approvals, and data sensitivity, which is daunting for a small team of developers with no sales or marketing expertise. We overcame this by adopting a B2B2C go-to-market strategy, integrating our AI capabilities into existing educational platforms, which then upsell our solution to their customers. This approach allowed us to scale efficiently.

Q: Where is StudyWise today as a company?

O.N.: StudyWise is a leader in AI-driven personalized assessments. We're thriving in the Israeli market and expanding globally, with a recent major agreement in Asia

and paid pilots worldwide. Our product evolves constantly based on user feedback, and we're poised for significant growth in the coming quarter as pilots convert to paying customers. Both our product and business momentum are strong, and we're excited for what's ahead.

Q: Since StudyWise has been AI-based from day one, how is the fast pace of AI development and market affecting it?

O.N.: AI's rapid evolution is an opportunity for StudyWise. Unlike larger, slower-moving publishers, we're a nimble team of three developers deeply versed in AI for years. We stay ahead by integrating new AI tools and models almost immediately—often within a day of their release. By combining cutting-edge AI with real-time user feedback, we continuously enhance our platform to deliver value to educators and students.

Q: What's your vision for StudyWise's future impact?

O.N.: Our dream is for every teacher worldwide to use StudyWise, allowing them to focus on inspiring and guiding students while we handle the assessment workload. Research shows one in three U.S. teachers considers leaving the profession due to grading burdens, which is heartbreaking. We want to change that by automating grading and providing insights that empower educators. By partnering with key players in various markets and leveraging our multilingual platform, we aim to replicate our Israeli success globally.

Q: As an Israeli startup, how do you view starting in a small market like Israel?

O.N.: Israel is an ideal testing ground due to its diverse cultural and linguistic communities. If you succeed here, you're ready for the world. However, you can't linger too long, or your solution risks becoming too tailored to the local ecosystem. Our strategy was to validate in Israel and then go global quickly, which has worked well for us, thanks to MindCET's support.

Q: Any advice for other founders?

O.N.: Stay open, curious, and above all, listen. Engaging with mentors, users, and your community is key to success - accelerators like MindCET provide a unique opportunity to challenge your assumptions and build something impactful. Listen to feedback, act on it, and use the support around you to drive your vision forward.

STUDYWISE



ACCELERATOR



Founders: Ori Nurieli, Chen Berger, Guy Aronson

Year Founded: 2023

Country: Israel

Funds raised: 0

Headcount: 3

Arr (\$) 2024: 3,100

Arr (\$) 2025: 115,000



studywise.io

Product:


StudyWise uses AI to deliver adaptive learning assessments that personalize exams and streamline grading.

StudyWise is an AI-driven platform that transforms how exams are created, graded, and analyzed. It offers adaptive assessments that tailor questions to each learner's level in real time. Educators save time with automated grading and gain insights from detailed performance analytics. StudyWise enhances both teaching efficiency and student learning outcomes.


Mission:

Our mission is to make assessments smarter and more personalized through AI, helping educators save time and students succeed.

KITA



ACCELERATOR



Founders: Heather Lyon, Nathan Varughese

Year founded: 2024


Country: United Kingdom

Funds raised: 300,000

Headcount: 3

Arr (\$) 2024: 0

Arr (\$) 2025: 80,000



getkita.com

Product:

Kita is an all-in-one K–12 computer science education platform that integrates personalized lesson planning, coding environments, and AI-driven formative assessment to streamline teaching and learning. By replacing fragmented, time-consuming workflows with a unified solution, Kita reduces teacher workload and provides students with timely, actionable feedback to build real-world digital skills. It enhances accessibility through a multiplayer code editor designed for classroom collaboration.

Kita makes Computer Science more accessible by building a multiplayer code editor for the classroom.

Mission:

Our mission is to empower generations of students to become digital makers and deeply literate in the fundamentals of computer science and the technologies it underlies including AI.

Q&A

Dr. Glen Low

Co-founder & COO of HeyHi

EdTech Mission to enable true impact for learners

This interview presents how HeyHi, a Singapore company born from a merger of two EdTech startups, stands out for its human-centric approach. Its name, a nod to AI and approachability, reflects its mission to personalize learning and boost student engagement, proving HeyHi’s transformative impact on education.

Q: What is something that not many people know about HeyHi?

G.L.: Not many people know that HeyHi was formed from the merger of two EdTech startups, founded by Yueh Mei, a seasoned education leader with 25+ years in MOE and curriculum design, and I. I am a serial entrepreneur with a PhD in Engineering and over a decade of experience in private education.

opportunity to combine my technical background and domain knowledge to found HeyHi, a platform created not just to digitise learning but to personalise it at scale. Today, we focus on building tools that empower both learners and educators, supported by smart automation, adaptive assessments, and AI-powered tools. My goal is to help every student reach their full potential, and it’s a privilege to work toward that with a passionate, mission-driven team.

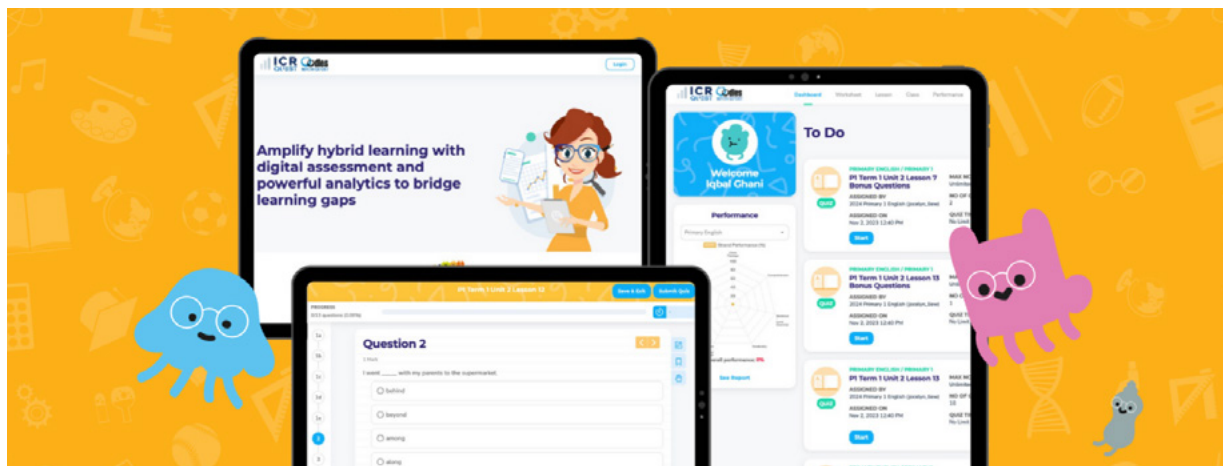
As to our naming history, we wanted our name to be light, friendly, and easy to remember, something that feels human and approachable, just like how learning should be. That’s how “HeyHi” came about. The name “HeyHi” is also a subtle nod to “AI,” reflecting our mission to power education with intelligent, human-centric technology. Fun fact: when people first hear about HeyHi, many think it’s a dating app!

Q: What is your personal story - what led you to HeyHi?

G.L.: I was pursuing my PhD in engineering when, like many others, I got involved in the private education sector. What started as a side involvement gradually turned into something deeper. Over time, I began to notice recurring challenges in education, the inefficiencies, rigid systems, and lack of personalisation. I felt it could be addressed with technology and that’s when my interest in the field really grew. I saw an



Glen Low



Q: Share a few words about your experience of participating in a global initiative, like GESAWards, and what it meant for you.

G.L.: Participating in the GESAWards was a valuable opportunity to connect with other passionate EdTech innovators around the world. It gave us the space to reflect on our journey and share how we're addressing real challenges in education. Being recognised as one of the winners meant a lot, not just as validation, but as encouragement to keep improving and listening to the needs of educators and learners. It reminded us that there's still a lot of work to do—and a community to learn from along the way.

I think it's crucial to focus on the real impact—show how your product makes learning better, not just how advanced your tech is. Strong pedagogy, measurable benefits in learning outcomes, and educator empowerment are what truly resonate. Let your innovation be human-first.

Q: What do you think is the strongest value HeyHi provides?

G.L.: One of the strongest values HeyHi has delivered to educators and institutions is measurable productivity enhancement and cost savings. We've seen this through our AI-powered Assessment Accelerator Programme, which we offered to selected schools at no cost. The programme helped streamline everything from marking and assessment workflows to performance analysis, saving educators valuable time and reducing operational overhead. In the past 12 months alone, 136 teachers across 9 schools collectively saved 15,194 hours, thanks to the automation of over 75,000 questions, with each question saving an average of 12 minutes. This translates to a productivity gain of more

"My goal is to help every student reach their full potential, and it's a privilege to work toward that with a passionate, mission-driven team."

than \$130,000. By removing the burden of repetitive tasks, HeyHi enables educators to focus on what truly matters—engaging students, improving learning outcomes, and innovating their teaching practices.

One story that stays with us is our collaboration with I Can Read and Oodles Learning. Together, we digitised and scaled their assessment process across centres, integrating with their LMS to enhance productivity, automate grading, and deliver real-time insights. This freed up teachers' time and made standardised, personalised learning at scale possible. Each student received adaptive worksheets tailored to their learning gaps, while administrators gained macro-level performance analytics. What stood out most was seeing their student engagement spike within just two weeks, gathering thousands of student logins in the platform, proving that technology, when grounded in strong pedagogy, can truly transform teaching and learning.

HEYHI



GESAWARDS



HeyHi

Founders: Glen Low, Yueh Mei Liu, Dzung Cao

Year Founded: 2021

Country: Singapore

Funds raised: 1,500,000

Headcount: 10



www.heyhi.sg


Product:

HeyHi is an AI-powered platform for schools, offering personalized adaptive learning and e-assessment. It uses a Knowledge Base to create conversational, generative AI-driven learning experiences with bite-sized content like flashcards, e-books, videos, and quizzes. An AI Learning Buddy provides 24/7 personalized feedback to support self-directed learning. Educators can easily create assessments, automate marking and reporting, and access detailed learning data for student profiling. HeyHi supports flexible content options, including ready-to-use, custom, or partner-curated materials, making learning engaging and efficient.


Mission:

Our mission is to empower educators with intelligent, tutor-centric tools that streamline workflows, enable scalable personalization, and support effective, self-directed learning. By addressing the limitations of traditional LMS platforms, we aim to transform education into a more efficient, data-informed, and student-centered experience—helping educators teach better and learners thrive.

VOOVO



ACCELERATOR



Founders: Benedek Herman, Benedek Szilagyi

Year Founded: 2024


Country: Hungary

Funds raised: 550,000

Headcount: 5

Arr (\$) 2024: 0

Arr (\$) 2025: 100,000



www.voovostudy.com

Product:

Voovo is a learning platform that enhances student understanding and retention of course material through active recall and spaced repetition, integrated into the curriculum to prevent cramming. Implemented at Semmelweis University, 93% of students used it daily within two weeks, and 91% reported higher grades by semester's end. Voovo has since expanded to 17 institutions and 70 courses in six months.

Mission:

To bring the scientifically proven best learning methods to all students, not just the top performers.

AIKREATE



ACCELERATOR



Founders: Mireia Torello, Marc Oliveras

Year Founded: 2022

Country: USA

Funds raised: 280,000

Headcount: 4



aikreate.com

Product:

Aikreate is a blended AI education platform combining a no-code generative AI tool, standards-aligned curriculum, and educator training for K-12, higher education, and corporate learning.

Aikreate offers AI literacy programs for students, educators, and professionals through an interactive platform featuring hands-on curricula, real-world projects, and its no-code AI builder, KreatePrompt. The company supports K-12 schools in integrating AI into classrooms, helps universities embed AI across disciplines, and trains corporate teams in ethical, effective AI use. All content is standards-aligned and adaptable to various learning environments. With deployments across the U.S., Latin America, and Europe, Aikreate empowers users to actively create with AI rather than passively consume it.

Mission:

To democratize access to AI education by giving learners and leaders the tools to understand, build, and apply AI with creativity, ethics, and purpose.

STEMPEDIA



GESAWARDS



Founders:

Pankaj Kumar Verma, Abhishek Sharm, Dhruval R Shah

Year Founded: 2017

Country: India

Funds raised: 200,000

Headcount: 135

Arr (\$) 2024: 286227

5Arr (\$) 2025: 4252874



www.vocatooki.com

Product:

Coding, AI, AR-VR and Robotics Environment for K12 Education.

STEMpedia also supports educators with targeted training and resources, enhancing their ability to deliver effective STEM education. STEMpedia is preparing students to be innovators and problem solvers of tomorrow through these innovations.

Mission:

STEMpedia makes coding, AI, ML, and robotics fun and accessible for kids, with a vision to empower 100 million young minds to become innovators.

Q&A

Tom Gale

CEO Solfeg.io

From Music Passion to Global EdTech Impact

Tom Gale's music-fuelled vision led to Solfeg.io, a game-changing EdTech platform that's rocking the world of music education! Born from a Latvian music school, it is reaching the global stage with a sharp rise of demo requests. Boasting Eurovision-finalist song producers and bold plans for localization and instrument distribution, Solfeg.io is on a mission to make music as accessible as a killer playlist, igniting creativity and slashing aggression by 30% for students everywhere!



Q: Can you tell us about Solfeg.io and what led you to create it?

T.G.: The idea for Solfeg.io was born while co-founding the first private music school for adults in Latvia. My mother is a music teacher, so music was always a part of my life. I wanted to learn guitar myself, and that's how I met Llama, my co-founder. While teaching and learning in that school, we realized how difficult and inefficient it could be to learn music and play together. Solfeg.io emerged as a practical solution to those challenges.

At first, we thought we were solving a problem just for ourselves and maybe a few other small schools or individual learners. But what we didn't expect was how much demand there would be from schools. While

selling directly to individuals was tough, schools were actually begging for a solution like this—and that's where our traction started to build rapidly.

Q: What were you doing before founding the music school?

T.G.: I worked as a product manager and built a streaming platform that competed with Netflix in the Baltic region, scaling it to over half a million users. My background was in technology, but I also had a strong connection to music—I had attended music school and played in a band with Llama. So, I was always looking for a way to merge my passion for music with my skills in technology. Solfeg.io turned out to be the perfect intersection of the two.

Q: What's something most people don't know about your company?

T.G.: One fun fact is that some of our song producers—who've created a majority of the content in Solfeg.io—also produced songs that made it to the Eurovision finals. One of those songs even finished in the top six. There's serious talent in our team!

Q: Recently, Solfeg.io won the prestigious GES Awards 2024 Best EdTech Startup in the world. What was that experience like?

T.G.: It was honestly overwhelming and probably one of the highlights of my life. The opportunities that followed—like an award from the Latvian Ministry of Culture and increased international attention—have been incredible. I stayed to watch all the finalist pitches and was genuinely impressed by the level of competition. I had no idea we were going to win, so it was a huge surprise.

After we won, we saw a big increase in interest—more investor calls, more distribution opportunities. But what's most exciting to me is that the number of demo requests from schools and districts has doubled. That kind of impact is directly linked to winning the award.

Q: What was it like pitching to an international panel of more than 50 judges including the most important leaders in EdTech investment and industry?



T.G.: I prepared intensively for several days, and I felt confident going into it. But immediately after I finished my pitch, my laptop completely crashed. It shut down just seconds after I wrapped up! I remember thinking, "If that had happened one minute earlier, it could've been a disaster." Thankfully, the timing was perfect, and I was able to watch the other pitches afterward. It was fascinating to see the different business models and innovations.

Q: You met many founders, investors, and organizations during the event week. Any interesting connections or moments?

T.G.: Absolutely. The networking event after the GES Awards ceremony was a major highlight. I

connected with many fantastic founders, especially from Israel—they were incredibly helpful. My lead VC had just landed in London that day, and I managed to sneak him into the event. We ended up meeting a lot of key people together, which was great for business.

Q: Can you share a story that illustrates the impact Solfeg.io has on students or schools?

T.G.: Some of our long-term users, especially schools in the U.S. and Latvia, have been with us for over five years. They tell us they started using Solfeg.io when we had just a few features and songs—and that even then, they knew it was what they needed. Those stories are deeply meaningful.

Another example: a school recently shared that their students formed a band after using Solfeg.io. They even sent us videos of their performances. That kind of inspiration is exactly what we hope to spark.

"If music learning becomes as easy and accessible as putting on sneakers and going for a run, we can truly transform society—for the better."

Q: What's on the horizon for Solfeg.io in terms of product development and growth?

T.G.: We're actively working on localization, which is our next big step. Currently, the platform is only in English, but there's huge demand in other languages. We're also working on something ambitious: instrument distribution. The idea is to allow students to order instruments directly through our platform. It's been more complex than expected—there's probably a reason no one else does it in this space—but we're close to launching. The goal is to close the gap between students who are inspired to play and those who actually do. Statistics show that 75% of students who use Solfeg.io want to play an instrument, but only 10–20% actually follow through, often because they don't have access to one. We want to fix that.

Q: If Solfeg.io succeeds in reaching every school globally, how do you think the world would change?

T.G.: Playing music improves academic performance, boosts graduation rates, enhances cognitive and creative skills, and even reduces aggression by up to 30%. Yet only about 10% of people engage in music, compared to 80% who participate in sports.

Music education today is where sports were decades ago—something reserved for elites or professionals. We're working to change that, starting with schools. If music learning becomes as easy and accessible as putting on sneakers and going for a run, we can truly transform society—for the better.

Q: That's a powerful vision. What advice would you give startups thinking of applying for this year's GES Awards?

T.G.: First of all, don't give up. We applied several times before being selected. Just keep going. Second, focus on building the best possible product. Know your users, work closely with them, and make something truly great. If you do that, you'll eventually win—awards and beyond.

The support, the stage, and the exposure GES Awards provide is truly impactful. It boosts founders' confidence and shines a light on great solutions. You're making a real difference in edtech.




Tom Gale




Tom Gale

IMPRO



GESAWARDS



Product:
Human and AI-driven performance guidance platform to enhance organizational efficiency and growth.

Impro.AI is a platform designed to enhance organizational performance through AI-driven insights and human guidance. It helps leaders make informed decisions to improve team results and achieve targets efficiently. By blending advanced technology with practical support, Impro.AI empowers employees with tools to work better and boost their value. The ultimate goal is to drive measurable growth and success for organizations.

Mission:
Our mission is to empower educators with intelligent, tutor-centric tools that streamline workflows, enable scalable personalization, and support effective, self-directed learning. By addressing the limitations of traditional LMS platforms, we aim to transform education into a more efficient, data-informed, and student-centered experience—helping educators teach better and learners thrive.

Founders: Josh Blair, Opher Brayer, Maya Liberman


Country: Canada

Funds raised: 3,000,000

Headcount: 18

Arr (\$) 2024: 1,080,000

Arr (\$) 2025: 2,000,000



impro.ai

SOLFEG.IO



GESAWARDS



Product:
A K12 music education platform that inspires students to learn music also at home

A B2B2C music education platform that helps schools and students learn music through popular songs, AI-personalized content, and research-based methods. Used by 23,000+ schools and 70,000 self-learners, it bridges traditional and modern music education and inspires a lifelong love of music.

Mission:
Solfeg’s mission is to make music a joyful, everyday activity for young people, promoting fun, self-expression, and emotional well-being. Music education enhances grades, cognitive skills, and reduces aggression, akin to sports. Solfeg.io provides simple, accessible, and motivating music education to make this possible.

Founders: Tom Gale, Lauma Kazaka

Country: USA / Latvia

Funds raised: 1,200,000

Headcount: 9



solfeg.io

SKILLSCET



MINDCET STUDIO



Product:
SkillCET is an AI assistant that enables educators to design lesson plans that seamlessly embed critical 21st-century skills into curriculum subjects. It aligns skill objectives with curriculum content and offers a suite of resources, including lesson chatbots, interactive presentations, glossaries, and assessment tools, to enhance learning outcomes.

Mission:
Empowering teachers to deliver future-ready, personalized lessons that seamlessly build the essential skills students need to thrive in tomorrow’s world.

Founders: MindCET Studio & CET

Country: Israel



www.zicklearn.com

LINKYTHINKS



ACCELERATOR



Product:
LinkyThinks is an online English-language tutoring platform for children aged 5–13, integrating live tuition with an AI-enabled library of adaptive digital learning resources. Designed for parents and teachers, it offers a user-friendly experience with progress tracking, exam preparation (e.g., 11+), and skill-building in communication and critical thinking. The platform streamlines scheduling, lesson access, and resource downloads, creating a seamless digital ecosystem that supports meaningful learning beyond the classroom.

Mission:
LinkyThinks is dedicated to helping children aged 5–13 develop language skills, confidence, and critical thinking for exams and lifelong success. It combines expert-led online tutoring with AI-driven adaptive learning resources to provide personalized education. Supporting parents and educators, the platform fosters curiosity, resilience, and communication, redefining English-language learning as a holistic, skills-focused journey.

Founders: Dan Rosenberg

Year Founded: 2021

Country: United Kingdom

Funds raised: 440,000

Headcount: 40



www.linkythinks.com

Q&A

Jessica Hicklin

Founder of Unlocked Labs

Transforming Criminal Justice Through Education

After Unlocked Labs was recognized as a global leader in social impact, we spoke with Jessica Hicklin to uncover the passion behind her nonprofit EdTech venture, which is transforming criminal justice reform through secure educational platforms for incarcerated individuals. With \$8 million raised, Hicklin's open-source model is empowering communities to reshape justice systems worldwide.

Q: Can you start with a quick introduction and tell us about Unlocked Labs?

J.H.: I'm Jessica Hicklin, founder and co-executive director at Unlocked Labs. We're a tech company focused on criminal justice reform through education, technology, and innovative ideas. Our work aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4, which emphasizes increasing access to educational opportunities. We believe education has positive benefits across all segments of society. That's the short version of what we do.

Q: Can you give some examples of how you work today, who you're working with, and where you're making the biggest impact?

J.H.: We currently operate in four states—Missouri, New York, Maine, and Alaska—with plans to expand to New Hampshire and discussions with additional states. Our work has two main components. First, we act as technology strategists, helping Departments of Corrections build educational networks and provide limited, secure internet access for incarcerated individuals. This enables access to everything from



Jessica Hicklin with team and users

vocational training and adult basic education to post-secondary degrees. We collaborate with justice professionals to ensure safety while maximizing educational access, including developing device management plans and platforms so educators and justice professionals can focus on their core roles.

Second, we address the carceral learning experience, which includes skills-based and competency-based education, life skills, and mental health support. Most platforms don't fully enable this holistic approach, especially when learners interact with 10 to 15 different systems, resulting in fragmented data. We've designed a platform that provides a comprehensive learner and employability record using identity tokens, allowing seamless access across platforms. This helps justice professionals make data-driven decisions about educational investments and correlate outcomes with public safety, such as reducing recidivism. Half of our team consists of formerly incarcerated individuals, contributing lived experience to build this platform and supporting workforce development.

"Half of our team consists of formerly incarcerated individuals, contributing lived experience to build this platform and supporting workforce development."

Q: You're taking a very holistic approach, not just focusing on the learning journey but also enabling people to contribute to their future. That's unique for a startup. I know you have a personal story that informs your work. Can you share it?

J.H.: My story highlights the problem we're trying to solve. I went to prison in the United States at 16 with a life-without-parole sentence, meaning I wasn't supposed to come home. Over time, laws changed, and I faced the reality of preparing to return to society. The U.S. spends \$187 billion annually on the penal system, yet the recidivism rate is 83%. For me, the state spent \$1 million incarcerating me but nothing on education or workforce preparation. Living this problem, I became



Jessica Hicklin



deeply concerned and started addressing it while still incarcerated. I volunteered as a GED instructor, helped build a TV station for educational content, and was inspired by Khan Academy. I taught myself to code without internet access, building prototypes for a "Khan Academy for prison." That seed grew into Unlocked Labs, now operating in four states with 25 employees and expanding internationally, including partnerships in the UK.

Q: It's incredible that your first professional experience started in prison, and now you're meeting with senior leaders and addressing a global problem. Do you have concrete aspirations to expand outside the U.S.?

J.H.: Yes, as a nonprofit, our approach is open-source. We share our code, usage manuals, and policy frameworks to help others implement our tools. In the UK, for example, we've met organizations that can adopt our toolset to address local challenges, like the UK's 90% recidivism rate among its 90,000 incarcerated individuals. Our goal is to empower communities globally to solve these problems, acting as consulting partners rather than working directly on the ground.

Q: You plan to remain a nonprofit. How do you fund your activities?

J.H.: Our business model is philanthropy as a catalyst. We leverage philanthropic dollars to build and refine our solutions, then transition to a B2G (business-to-government) model, where our tools become public infrastructure. Over three years, we've raised \$7.2 million—\$6.3 million in philanthropic capital and \$1.5

million in government revenues, totaling nearly \$8 million. We currently hold five government contracts, and this model is proving sustainable as we move from startup to growth phase.

Q: You recently received the Social Impact Award from the Global EdTech Startup Awards 2024. What was that experience like?

J.H.: It was amazing for several reasons. It's global recognition for our work to change the world for the better. Often, we're seen solely as a criminal justice reform organization, but this award recognized us as an EdTech startup with broader social impact, aligned with SDG 4. I cried a lot because I'm so proud of my team and the future this award indicates. It's the only award displayed on our office shelf, symbolizing our commitment to social impact.

Moreover, at the School World Forum in Oxford, people recognized me from the GESAWards, leading to unexpected conversations. One person approached me about partnering on restorative practices to prepare people for education. Another, whom I'd met briefly a year earlier, reconnected about education in Sudan. Five such encounters that week alone have grown into a network of joint practitioners, with ongoing meetings and collaborations.

Q: What are you excited about for Unlocked Labs this year, and what are your plans?

J.H.: We've hit a critical systems' change lever with potential for national and global impact. As a vertically integrated EdTech company, we provide end-to-end solutions—internet connectivity, devices, security, and education providers. Using Alaska as an example, we're setting a model for other states. This year, we aim to secure contracts and funding for five states to demonstrate what connected educational communities look like. We have two state contracts in hand and funders discussing a \$25 million initiative to transform justice system education. I'm excited about the traction and potential to achieve our mission.

Q: Any advice for entrepreneurs considering applying for the GESAWards?

J.H.: Do it. The quality of your idea and research is fundamental, but connection to a community is a deciding factor for success. The GESAWards community

provides communal learning, diverse perspectives, and support for resourcing. I still engage with this community, with 15 related emails in my inbox right now. Get connected and talk to your community.

Q: Is there a message you want to share with other entrepreneurs?

J.H.: Start something now. Don't think you're unqualified or your idea isn't good enough. I had limited world experience, yet here we are. If you believe the world needs something it doesn't have, do it. It'll be hard, but it's worth it.

Q: When you started, did you know your life would be dedicated to this mission?

J.H.: Not at all. I wrote a 115-page design document on how technology could change the broken system, but I was focused on solving the problem in my immediate community. It evolved from a single institution to a state solution, then grew into what it is now. I didn't imagine this scale, but it's been a natural progression.

Q: Thank you, Jessica, for sharing your journey and the incredible impact of Unlocked Labs. We're excited to see your continued progress.

J.H.: Thank you for connecting me to this community. I'm proud to be part of it.



Founders: Jessica Hicklin, Chris Santillan

Country: United States

Funds raised: 6,200,000

Headcount: 25

Arr (\$) 2024: 2,500,000

Arr (\$) 2025: 300,000



unlockedlabs.org

Product:

UnlockEd is a platform that enables competency based education in a consortia model, providing comprehensive learner and employability records across that consortia experience.

Unlocked Labs is building and implementing a model of the justice system that invests in justice impacted individuals as a pathway to effective, evidence based and data driven approaches to community safety. Through our efforts, we are increasing access to educational opportunities in prisons throughout the US while demonstrating that this approach is in the best interest of all stakeholders including the general public.

Mission:

A better justice system, built from the inside out.



Founders: Adam A. Duma

Year Founded: 2019

Country: Tanzania

Funds raised: 600,000



www.edusense.com.br

Product:

Silabu tackles unemployment and limited access to quality education in Tanzania and Kenya by connecting trained teachers to local job opportunities in the private and public sectors through a digital platform and offline services, including a call center for non-smartphone users. Over 12,000 teachers and tutors have joined for online and offline tutoring.

Mission:

Silabu aims to bridge the education-employment gap by connecting teachers to meaningful job opportunities and students to affordable, high-quality learning. Using innovative technology and inclusive offline solutions, it fosters an equitable, impactful education community across Tanzania, Kenya, and beyond.

NICK ACADEMY



GESAWARDS



Founders: Shmulik Ashkenazy

Country: Israel

Funds raised: 2,000,000

Headcount: 10

Arr (\$) 2024: 100



nick.academy/

Product:

Gamified learning app for kids ages 6-12 with loved Nickelodeon characters.

Nick Academy is a gamified learning app designed for kids ages 6–12, making education fun, exciting, and truly engaging. We combine premium educational content with the most popular gaming mechanics to teach essential skills and knowledge. At Nick Academy, we believe in FUNctionality — the perfect balance between fun and function — creating a virtual School of Fun where every door opens into a new world of adventure. Through narrative-based virtual escape rooms and innovative use of AI, Nick Academy sparks imagination and transforms learning into an unforgettable experience.

Mission:

At Nick Academy, we are on a mission to turn learning into an adventure — using games, storytelling, and AI to spark curiosity, build skills, and inspire a lifelong love of learning.

VARNO.IO



ACCELERATOR



Founders: Islam Mansour

Year Founded: 2020

Country: Israel

Funds raised: 0

Headcount: 4



www.varno.io

Product:

Varno leverages AI agents in childcare centers to tackle staffing challenges and automate repetitive administrative tasks. By reducing paperwork, Varno's AI solutions free up educators to focus on meaningful engagement, building relationships, and supporting each child's unique developmental needs. The technology enhances, rather than replaces, human interaction, fostering a more nurturing and effective learning environment for children and educators.

Mission:

To bring balance back to child care. We believe in a future where educators have the time to build meaningful connections, families feel deeply involved, and every child receives the attention they deserve. Through thoughtful technology, we strive to make this a reality.

Q&A

Shmulik Ashkenazy
CEO of Nick Academy

Empowering Kids Through Play

Nick Academy is redefining how children learn by combining education with entertainment. In this exclusive interview, we sit down with Shmulik Ashkenazy, its CEO, to understand the company's mission, its unique partnership model, and its exciting path forward in the world of edtech.

Q: Can you tell us about Nick Academy?

S.A.: Nick Academy is a gamified learning app for kids ages 6 to 12. It's essentially a "School of Fun," where every door opens to a new game covering subjects like math, language, geography, science, and more — all presented with beloved Nickelodeon characters. It's not just educational; it's deeply engaging. Nick Academy is part of a larger company was founded by a group of young entrepreneurs, educators, and game developers who came together with a mission: to change how kids learn by making learning fun. It's a fusion of education and play, driven by a real passion for improving the learning experience.

Q: That sounds like a powerful combination. Can you tell us about the company's ownership structure?

S.A.: Absolutely. The ownership is split 50/50. Half is held by Paramount Global — which, of course, includes CBS, Showtime, Paramount Pictures, MTV, and Nickelodeon — making us a Paramount subsidiary. This gives us direct access to Nickelodeon's incredible IP and characters.

The other half is held by Udi Miron, a trailblazing Israeli entrepreneur who pioneered multi-channel TV in Israel in the 1990s, including the creation of the Kids Channel, which remained Israel's top children's network for

decades.

So, we have a mission-driven team, top-tier brand access, and deep experience in communicating with young audiences.

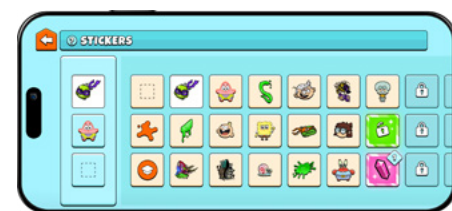
Q: That's a compelling mix. Can you share a bit about your personal journey — how did you end up in this space?

S.A.: Interestingly, I started out as an accountant. But even as a kid, I was fascinated by media —



Alon Avrahami and Shmulik Ashkenazy

always glued to newspapers and the TV. I pursued business management and became a CPA. During my internship, I audited a media company called Ananey Communications, and when my internship ended, they asked me to join. That's how I stepped into this world. Eventually, I became the CFO of Ananey and helped lead it through some major milestones, including producing original content for both local and international markets — even for Netflix. Our biggest milestone came in 2020, when we sold Ananey to Paramount. I stayed on for a few more years, and then in 2023, Udi Miron invited me to lead Nick Academy. Once I saw the product, the mission, and the opportunity — I didn't hesitate.



Q: What key milestones has the company hit since you joined? Where is Nick Academy today?

S.A.: Nick Academy was founded in 2020, and the first few years were dedicated to building the product. We partnered with one of Israel's leading publishers to release a free version of the app to kids across the country — this allowed us to gather feedback and refine the product in real time. In 2025, we're launching commercially. This is the first time the app will be available to the public on the App Store and Google Play, with a paid model. It's a huge moment — we'll finally get real-world feedback from paying users.

Q: Are you launching with a B2C model?

S.A.: We're approaching it from both angles — B2C and B2B2C. We've secured two major partnerships, one in the U.S. and one in Israel, which I can't reveal just yet, but they'll expose Nick Academy to millions of users. The B2B2C model is particularly exciting because it allows us to scale rapidly and reach our audience in meaningful ways.

"The most rewarding part was connecting with the ecosystem — understanding other entrepreneurs' perspectives, approaches, and seeing how we're all working to reshape education."

Q: Have you seen any impactful feedback from users so far?

S.A.: Yes, absolutely. Every week, we review feedback from kids using the app in Israel. It's so gratifying to see how excited they are — they'll ask for more English games, more math adventures. They're engaged and committed, which is exactly what we hoped for.



Q: Nick Academy recently won the People's Choice Award at the Global EdTech Startup Awards 2025. What was that experience like?

S.A.: It was our first time engaging face-to-face with the global education ecosystem. First, we competed locally in Israel, where we received amazing feedback that validated our vision. Then we went to the international stage in London, and again, we were able to convince the judges that our product is meaningful and impactful.

The most rewarding part was connecting with the ecosystem — understanding other entrepreneurs' perspectives, approaches, and seeing how we're all working to reshape education.

Q: Were there any standout connections or collaborations that came from the awards?

S.A.: Definitely — though I won't name names. We met three key groups: global investors, vendors and distributors, and fellow entrepreneurs. The last group was the most meaningful to me personally. Talking to other startups on the same journey was incredibly valuable. The networking opportunities were truly priceless.

Q: As an alumni and winner of the GES Awards, what advice would you give to early-stage startups applying this year?

S.A.: Leverage the power of the community. Be open. Share your vision widely — you never know where the best advice will come from. And invest in building meaningful connections. Above all, enjoy the journey. It's a one-of-a-kind experience.

Q: What are your priorities for 2025?

S.A.: Our top priority is launching our go-to-market strategy. For the first time, we'll see how users respond when they're asked to subscribe. Our aim is to show parents that Nick Academy offers positive, meaningful screen time for their kids — something they'll feel good about.

This year is all about scale, both in the U.S. and in Israel. We're on the verge of truly meeting our audience.

Q: With the rise of AI and new content creation tools, how are you adapting to this rapidly changing landscape?

S.A.: That's a question I keep asking myself.

With content creation becoming so accessible, trust becomes the differentiator. People will turn to trusted brands — brands that consistently deliver safe, high-quality, effective content. We're uniquely positioned with both a strong brand and a high-quality product. In fact, we've already added four new learning experiences powered by generative AI — all interactive, open-ended, and highly engaging. The kids never know exactly how the experience will unfold — and neither do we. But that's what makes it so powerful. We're excited to be at the forefront of this wave.

Q: It sounds like an exciting — and maybe a little daunting — journey ahead.

S.A.: Definitely. But we're riding the wave. We know where the experience begins, but we don't always know where it'll lead. That's the beauty of innovation.



KIPIN

GESAWARDS



Founders: Steffina Yuli

Year Founded: 2016

Country: Indonesia

Funds raised: 2,000,000

Headcount: 45



www.kipin.id

Product:

Offline-first digital learning platform for K-12 students in underserved areas, delivering books, videos, quizzes, and literacy tools without needing internet access.

Kipin Edutech is an Indonesian education technology company transforming how rural students access digital learning. Our smart IoT device, Kipin, brings an entire offline digital library—complete with school textbooks, video lessons, practice quizzes, and comics—directly to schools without relying on internet connectivity. With over 3,000 school deployments across 20+ provinces, Kipin empowers students and teachers in remote areas to access quality education anytime. We work closely with government, schools, and CSR partners to scale impact sustainably across Indonesia.

Mission:

To make quality digital education accessible to every child, regardless of location, affordability or connectivity.

AMAUTAS

GESAWARDS



Founders: Jorge Pérez Melián

Year Founded: 2021

Country: Spain

Headcount: 4

Arr (\$) 2024: 130,000

Arr (\$) 2024: 150,000



Amautas LinkedIn

Product:

Expert-led online science learning platform, sparking curiosity and potential.

Elevate Science in Your School, Instantly! Seamlessly integrate Amautas and explore over 2,000 engaging science resources and masterclasses, making learning exciting within your current LMS.

Mission:

Making science accessible to all, especially schools, by breaking down its complexities.

ZICK LEARN

GESAWARDS



Founders:

Matteo Penzo, Andrea Goggi, Pietro Stracquadanio

Country: Ireland

Funds raised: 1,200,000

Headcount: 5

Arr (\$) 2024: 30,000

Arr (\$) 2025: 600,000



www.zicklearn.com

Product:

AI-powered microlearning platform that delivers 2-minute interactive training sessions directly in chat apps like WhatsApp, Teams, and Slack for corporate learners.

Our lessons are text-based, interactive, and take less than 2 minutes to complete, with proven completion rates above 85%. Designed for time-poor employees, zick learn transforms traditional training into bite-sized, mobile-first experiences that fit seamlessly into the workday. We serve large and mid-market enterprises across Europe, helping them reduce training time, boost engagement, and scale L&D effortlessly.

Mission:

To make corporate learning simple, fast, and effective by delivering training directly where employees already are—inside their messaging apps. zick learn transforms learning from a disruptive task into a seamless daily habit, using interactive 2-minute microlessons designed to fit naturally into the modern workday.

EDUSENSE

GESAWARDS



Founders: Vinicius Arakaki

Country: Brazil

Funds raised: 0

Headcount: 40

Arr (\$) 2024: 2,200,000

Arr (\$) 2025: 3,000,000



www.edusense.com.br

Product:

Edusense Learning Experience Platform.

With a powerful blend of technology, data, and user-centric design, Edusense empowers organizations to create meaningful learning journeys that drive real growth and measurable results.

Mission:

Empower people and organizations through technology, innovation, and data-driven learning experiences that foster continuous growth and real results.

Q&A

Mohammad Owesat Founder of VocaTooki

Making Language Learning Fun

From his early days at the Technion Institute of Technology to becoming a pioneering entrepreneur, Mohammad Owesat and his three co-founders have created VocaTooki, a language learning platform offering an innovative dual-method approach - supporting native-language instruction, such as Arabic, or immersive second-language learning. VocaTooki meets diverse needs, fueling its rapid expansion from Israel to vibrant markets like Turkey or Brazil.

Q: Can you describe VocaTooki and the solution it provides?

M.O.: VocaTooki is a language learning platform we've been developing for four years, currently in the Israeli market. It's a game for pupils, with over 500 different activities. Using AI, we learn about the pupil and provide games tailored to the book they use in class. This way, they learn vocabulary, grammar, and all aspects of English according to the Ministry of Education's curriculum. They learn while playing, not realizing they're learning. Kids today are addicted to mobile phones and games, so we bring gaming features like avatars, coins, and multiplayer modes. We also incorporate different pedagogical aspects—reading, writing, speaking, and listening, into VocaTooki. On the teacher's side, there's a system with analytics and insights, showing progress, strengths, weaknesses, and areas for development. Teachers can organize competitions or school tournaments, making it a holistic system for language learning.

Q: Where is VocaTooki being implemented and how does it fit the different systems?

M.O.: In Israel, it depends on the curriculum. We use VocaTooki for English and Hebrew learning, starting from grade 3, as per the Ministry of Education's

guidelines, because that's when English learning begins. In Ramallah, we start from kindergarten, as their curriculum allows. The game is built on top of the curriculum, matching books and infrastructure for grades from kindergarten to grade 9. In Ramallah, for the 2024–2025 school year, our first year there, 10 schools are using it, and we're entering the next sales season to expand further. We also have a contract with a big publisher in Turkey with 160 agents across cities like Ankara, Istanbul, and Antalya, selling VocaTooki for English, Spanish, and German learning. We're also starting in Brazil, building relationships in Singapore, and talking with publishers in Panama, Venezuela, Costa Rica, and Colombia—places with a hunger for language learning systems.



VOCA TOOKI



Mohammad Owesat

"Our dream is to make VocaTooki a global system for learning any language, transforming education through gaming and AI."

Q: How does VocaTooki support students learning a second language, especially for your current main target audience, whose first language is Arabic?

M.O.: Good question. There are two methods for language learning. One says you learn a second language using your native language, like Arabic, with instructions and translations to help. That's what we use in Israel. The other method, used in places like Ramallah, Brazil, or Turkey, is learning the second language—like English—without any native language words. For example, in Turkey, they don't want Turkish words; in Brazil, no Portuguese words. VocaTooki supports both approaches. When you open a class, you define whether it uses the native language or not, and the system behaves accordingly.

Q: That's very versatile. Can you share your journey as an entrepreneur and what led you to create VocaTooki?

M.O.: My journey with computers started in grade 2 when my family got our first PC. I was fascinated by games like Sonic and Digger, wondering how typing on a keyboard made characters move on the screen. That's when I decided I wanted to learn this. In high school, I studied computers, and went to the Technion Institute of Technology for Computer Science. In 2004, I started at Converse as a QA engineer. I commuted an hour from my hometown, Baqa al-Gharbiyye, to Tel Aviv working for a very low salary, but it was the opportunity of my life. I set milestones: in three years, I wanted a certain level. I reached the technical milestone but not the salary, so I moved to Intel as a software developer, hitting my salary goal. I became a technical leader, owning post-silicon validation tools. My co-founders and I, whom I met at the Technion and Intel, started Kideo, building 120 educational games for preschoolers, reaching 300 million users worldwide. But the ad-based model wasn't profitable, so we used our experience to create VocaTooki. Around the end of COVID, we worked with a

leading teacher from Baqa al-Gharbiyye, built a proof of concept, and pitched it to 80 schools. By September, we released VocaTooki, and schools loved it.

Q: What an incredible journey! What's your next milestone and dream for VocaTooki?

M.O.: We've succeeded in Israel, now, we want to scale to Latin America, South Asia, Europe, and the USA, where there's demand for Portuguese and Spanish learning. We're adding more languages and features, especially for the teacher agent to manage classes better. As a bootstrapped company, we're seeking our first investment, attend global conferences, and hire more staff. Our dream is to make VocaTooki a global system for learning any language, transforming education through gaming and AI.

Q: Expanding internationally is tough. How did you connect with global markets?

M.O.: Locally, we built trust with the Ministry of Education and for international markets, we solidified our brand by attending edtech conferences. Winning the GES Awards was huge—it gave us credibility, so when we approach publishers or customers, they trust us immediately. It saves time convincing them and proves our product's value, opening doors to new markets.

Q: That's a great point about credibility. What's next?

M.O.: We're four founders, two of us from the Technion and Intel. We're building an advisory board with leaders from education, universities, and business to help us enter new markets and stay competitive with AI and new players. We're also in partnerships, like with Mindset, to support our growth.



VocaTooki founders and team, Ibtikar team

VOCA TOOKI



GESAWARDS



Founders: Mahmoud Kinana, Mohammad Owasat

Country: Israel

Funds raised: 0

Headcount: 18

Arr (\$) 2024: 1,000,000

Arr (\$) 2025: 1,600,000



www.vocatooki.com

Product:

AI-powered, game-based language learning platform for children aged 3–12, combining interactive activities with personalized, curriculum-aligned content for schools.

Voca Tooki is an AI-powered, game-based language learning platform for children aged 3–12. It combines engaging educational games with adaptive technology to personalize each child's learning journey. With over 450 interactive activities and real-time insights for teachers, it's already trusted by 500+ schools and 200,000+ paid students. Voca Tooki aligns with school curricula, supports multiple languages, and helps children learn through fun, measurable progress.

Mission:

We make learning a new language an exciting adventure for every child. Through AI-powered, interactive, and game-based experiences, we ensure that language education is fun, effective, and accessible—breaking barriers and empowering young learners worldwide.

CODDY



FUND



Founders: Nethanel Bar, Barak Glanz, Kevin Spekto

Year Founded: 2022

Country: Israel

Funds raised: 1,000,000

Headcount: 7

Arr (\$) 2024: 1,000,000



cuddy.tech

Product:

AI-enhanced, gamified and practice-driven code learning platform.

Cuddy is an AI-enhanced, gamified coding platform designed to make learning programming as engaging and accessible as using Duolingo—but for software languages. With over 1 million learners and \$1 million in annual recurring revenue, Cuddy offers a proven, practice-driven approach to mastering code. The platform delivers short, interactive exercises that make coding fun, effective, and easy to incorporate into daily routines. Cuddy's mission is to turn learning to code into a consistent, enjoyable habit—redefining how people build programming skills online.

Mission:

We are on a mission to make coding accessible as a skill (not a professional skill) to every person in the world!

Q&A

Netanel Bar
Founder of Cody

Understanding Users Is the New Disruption

Netanel shares the uniqueness of Cody with its B2C focus, accessible for curious beginners, not just career-driven learners - a practical, hands-on platform that grew from a bootstrapped Technion student project to USD \$1M in revenue and 1M users by early 2025. Cody stands out by offering a unique opportunity for curious beginners - a growing trend - who actively try coding rather than just hearing about it.

Q: Can you introduce Cody and share its vision?

rather than pursuing traditional B2B sales like many competitors.

N.B.: Cody in one sentence is the Duolingo of coding—a simple way to describe our mission to make coding accessible to everyone. We're building an online platform, starting with a website and now expanding to a mobile app, to teach coding as a universal skill, not just a professional one. What sets us apart is our focus on the B2C market, targeting curious beginners

We see a very high trend currently - people are more and more engaged with AI and, with that, also with coding. We see terms like "vibe coding", which takes people from hearing about coding to also trying it. This is where we enter, where we open this skill for everyone, and we believe that this skill will also be the kind of future skill people will learn, as you learn math or as you learn singing or anything else to improve yourself and to create new things.



Nethanel Bar

Our commitment to B2C is unusual in the coding education space. While competitors often focus on safer B2B sales to companies or schools, we're dedicated to reaching individuals directly. This allows us to make coding fun and approachable, targeting a broad audience of beginners who are curious about coding without necessarily wanting a career in it. We are doing some B2B sales, but it's more opportunistic and without changing the main product. The market that we are going to is a bit untapped. No one really knows how much people are there that are curious about coding and not interested in pursuing a career in this, they want to learn coding as a skill. I believe that if it will be fun and easy enough, people will engage more and more.



Q: How did your personal journey lead you to start Cody?

N.B.: My journey started with a lot of interest and self-taught coding when I was very young and carried on throughout my time in the Navy. Later on, I built and published mobile apps, some of which gained over half a million downloads and generated significant revenue—one still earns money nearly a decade later! This is the first time that I discovered entrepreneurship—that you can make something, put it up there, start marketing, and start generating revenue. Then, I started studying computer science at the Technion. I also worked briefly at Intel but found it unfulfilling. It was too slow, not interesting; you're a small nail in the big system, and I didn't like it. I noticed many students struggled to apply theoretical knowledge practically, which inspired me to create Cody. I started it as a side project with two friends, Barak and Kevin, and it evolved into a full-fledged startup. We didn't know that it will be a startup or anything; we just thought it will be a small side hobby. I added Kevin, which was my childhood friend from Haifa, and we also did a lot of apps together, so he is a coder like me. And Barak, who I was in the army with and also known from childhood, and he was with me at the Technion. We started three, iterated over the product; in the start, we didn't sell anything. We didn't know really what we were doing. We went to an accelerator, and quit our jobs. It took us a lot of time to understand really what it takes. We started trying to sell to B2B, but in the end, after everyone told us don't do B2C, we decided we will do B2C. So, we opened the platform, and then it just started to roll. We started selling; we got the first customer at the end of 2022, while being students at the Technion. We finished our studies at the end of 2023, and at this point, we had annual revenue of almost \$100,000, totally bootstrapped, just scaling really slow with creativity. Then, at the start of 2024, we managed to raise funds. At the end of 2024, we also raised from MindCET Capital, and now, at the start of 2025, we raised the majority of the money. Total up to date, we raised \$1 million, and we just reached also \$1 million in annual revenue. It took us one year to go from \$100,000 to \$1 million, which is good.

"Follow your passion and focus on solving real problems for real people."

Q: Who are Cody's users, and how do you reach them?

N.B.: We started really broad. We have on our system 10 programming languages that we teach, and we started to sell to everyone. We were selling through influencer marketing - we've been going to influencers from the coding niche but also from lifestyle, from wellness, so you get a very broad kind of audience, and it works for us. That was the first step. The next step was for us to start paid acquisition. So, we went to Meta, and there we are advertising for 18-plus USA, so again, very broad, and we're giving the algorithm of Meta to optimize on that. But at the start of this year, we are focusing on beginners, mainly 18 to 35, who are curious about coding. Curious about coding can mean a lot, it can be people who are looking for a job or people who heard about coding and want to try. The commonality for everyone is that they're all beginners. So, our core users are beginners, people that are curious, and young adults.

Q: How has your journey been in terms of targeting different countries?

N.B.: As a B2C company, we faced no barriers selling worldwide from Israel. We incorporated as a US company to simplify global payments, but we're based in Israel. From day one, we targeted the US audience, which proved to be our biggest market, and later expanded to other English-speaking countries. Now, we're focusing on paid acquisition in English-speaking countries like the US, UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and Singapore, optimizing for beginners who want to explore coding.

Q: Can you share your experience working with Mindset Capital and being part of their network?

N.B.: MindCET Capital has been incredible. We started talks with them in late 2023, and they invested in 2024. Ronnie Kenneth, in particular, has been a personal mentor, offering fresh perspectives in our meetings every few months. Their events, like MindCET for

Founders, have also been valuable for networking with peers like StudyWise.

Q: What motivates you as an entrepreneur?

N.B.: What drives me to be an entrepreneur isn't the idea of getting rich or building a huge company—though many people say that. For me, it's always been about reaching as many people as possible. That's my mission in life. You can do that through both B2B and B2C, but over time I've come to realize that B2C is especially rewarding because you're directly impacting individuals with your product. That's what excites me the most. Even when I started building apps seven or eight years ago, I didn't fully realize it then, but this desire to reach people was already pushing me. It still is.

Recently, we passed 1 million users on Cody—which is incredible. And now, what motivates me is going even further: 10 million, 100 million, even 1 billion users. That's the vision that keeps me going - impacting lives through coding as a universal skill.

Q: What's next for Cody?

N.B.: We're focused on scaling. Our web platform is live, and we're developing a mobile app to boost retention and accessibility, as many users prefer mobile. We'll continue targeting beginners and expanding our reach, making coding as approachable and widespread as possible.

Q: Any final thoughts or advice for aspiring entrepreneurs?

N.B.: Follow your passion and focus on solving real problems for real people. For us, it was making coding accessible and fun for everyone. Don't be afraid to go against the grain—like choosing B2C when everyone said B2B was safer. Surround yourself with good people, like mentors and friends in the ecosystem, and keep iterating with creativity and persistence.



Barak Glanz, Kevin Spekto, Netanel Bar

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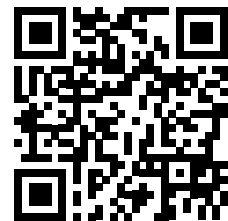
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