

Garage48, Estonia

What is Garage48?

About Garage 48

People are often afraid to start their own project or business. Common problems include lack of know-how and co-founders, lack of money, unknown risks etc. Garage48 is here to change that mindset and show that it's all about positive "let's do it" attitude, creative team members and a motivating deadline. Less talk, more action!

Garage48 event series started in Estonia in April 2010 and have expanded to other countries in Eastern Europe and Africa since then. So far Garage48 has organized around 50 events in 25 cities, that have been joined by 3400+ participants who have come up with 870+ ideas of which 430+ have been built into working prototypes during the 48 hour period. Garage48 partners up with global brands (Microsoft, TransferWise, Google, Skype, Nokia, Blackberry, Yandex etc) and startup accelerators (Seedcamp, Startup Sauna, Startup Wise Guys, etc) to promote entrepreneurship and startup culture.

Additionally to organizing events, Garage48 runs two community led coworking spaces (HUBs) for startups, creative, tech and entrepreneurial people in Tallinn & Tartu, Estonia. It's a community reflecting the creativity and global outlook of ambitious startups.

How does it work?

Garage48 events usually start at 5pm on a Friday evening. All participants gather together in a big room and pitch about 30 to 40 ideas on stage. Each idea is put on the wall and everyone can choose their favourite idea and team. Usually about 12-15 ideas will be selected and teams start working.

We provide facilities, mentors, food and drinks over the weekend, while teams are working on their projects. Sunday night 5pm is the deadline to step on the stage again and live-demo your project or prototype. We have the jury and audience to vote for their favourites and choose the winners.

Goals of Garage48

- Organize useful, international and fun startup events with a really lean budget
- Show that teams can turn an idea into a working service or prototype within just 48 hours
- Prove that new web and mobile projects can be started with a good team and lean budget
- Promote entrepreneurship and startup culture in Estonia, Eastern Europe and Africa

- Teach people to work under a tough deadline - you need to focus on the core of the project
- Meet new people from other industries, roles and countries
- Less talk, more action and fun!

Awards and media coverage:

Garage48 events have got lot's of media coverage - starting from well-know tech blogs like TechCruch, ReadWriteWeb and ArcticStartup to numerous articles in newspapers, blogs, TV and radio.

- Finalist of Europas Awards "Best Ongoing Startup Program of 2011" by TechCrunch Europe
- Finalist of Europas Awards "Best Ongoing Startup Program of 2010" by TechCrunch Europe
- "Pioneer of the Year 2010" by Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations
- "Best Organization of the Year 2010" by Estonian Association of Information Technology & Telecommunications (ITL).

Interview of Garage48 team

Pärnumaa Vocational Education Centre students has attend also Garage48 event and Garage48 has taken place in our school rooms. Garage48 team answered to our questions to share their success, concerns and joys with IncuVET project partners and cooperation partners.

What Garage48 means for your team and what is it's peculiarity?

Garage48 is a series of hackathons, which have a mission to create new startups. Although our goal is to create startups that have the potential of becoming real companies, we also welcome participants who just want to build "fun" products during the event.

The 48-hour long hackathon gathers people with various skill-sets to develop working prototypes. At the hackathon participants pitch ideas, form teams and work until the very last hours in order to get the working prototypes and business concept ready! The teams are set up of at least one back-end developers, front-end developer, designer, marketer and visionary project manager. We believe this is winning combination in order to create products or services for the market, which are functional, innovative and in demand.

Why Garage48 activities important for your team?

The world is changing very fast and constantly evolving towards a smarter and more dynamic market. Many big companies find it difficult to respond and adapt to these

changes, as it takes lots of their resources and new way of thinking. At the same, the market is ruthless, meaning if the companies cannot give the customers what they need, they will go somewhere else. As the market is very volatile, it is a great opportunity for startups to develop products what the other companies cannot and what the customers actually want. This is an opportunity for the startups to act and fill a certain gap in the market with innovations, or why not create something completely new and exciting for the world?

Additionally, many people feel at some point in their life that they have ideas that they could now execute. But as soon as they start “working on their dreams”, they realize it is actually very hard to find team members, validate the idea for the market, build the actual product, get feedback, mentoring etc. This is why a lot of entrepreneurs turn to Garage48 to pitch their idea, find a team and work with experienced mentors, who help them to build the MVP.

How Garage48 Estonia was founded?

Garage48 was founded by 6 amazing co-founders, who are passionate about technology, startups and people. The idea came, when they were tired of talking and dreaming of their own companies, but as many entrepreneurs spent too much time on talking, thinking and doing irrelevant things. They thought “there must be a faster way to build a product!”. Which is why they decided to organize a hackathon with some hackers to finally deliver the first prototype. The hackathon was inspired by the Silicon Valley IT entrepreneurs, who have all started out in a garage. The rest is history.

What were the difficulties when you started and how you overcome them?

In the beginning it was difficult to get sponsors that would finance the event. It is very expensive to host an almost 3-day event so that all the participants are fed, informed and happy. As the event became more popular, it was easier to find sponsors and more people to participate, which really helped to grow the community. Now we have partners, sponsors, mentors and participants all around the world, which is the result of many years of hard work and dedication.

What has been the most valuable lesson that you've been developing your business?

You need to work with people that you can trust. As a hackathon involves lots of people, the most crucial thing is to have people around that you can trust and “go through water and fire with”.

What is your experience of internationalization? Do you consider entering foreign markets is difficult for Garage48? What would make this easier?

Garage48 now organizes events in 4 continents and 14+ countries, which is a real dream come true. At Garage48 we want to inspire people to make more with their life, to become better at what they do and build amazing startups for the global market!

Being global also gives just a little idea how the difference in cultures in each country can be. We would recommend to find a trustworthy local partner with a proven track

record. As you cannot organize a large-scale event from home if you don't know the language and the local way of operating. Which is why you need to rely on partners that you can work with and trust them to bits.

Let's talk a little bit of Estonian start-up environment. Estonia has investments in start-ups clearly more than southern neighbors. Given our small size, which is in your opinion Estonian start-up climatic features?

Estonians by nature are very hard-working. Estonians haven't had much resources to rely on throughout history. However, families needed to be taken care of and the economy started off somehow.

Estonians needed to figure out how with limited resources build an economy. A thorough planning and smart management of resources has enabled Estonians to survive. This is why smart thinking, planning ahead and working with limited resources has helped to instil innovative thinking. Estonia's main resource is knowledge, which is also why technology-based startup entrepreneurship is a perfect fit for the knowledge-led Estonians.

More information: <http://garage48.org/>

Thank you Garage48 team!