



Web: zenday-app.com
Blog: talkabouttime.com
Google Play: bit.ly/zenday
Video: bit.ly/zenday-video

ZenDay is a mobile app already used by thousands of people worldwide to help them make better decisions on what they should do next, and in the process improve their time management skills. By blending users' calendars with all their to-do lists in a beautiful 3D display, ZenDay is like a GPS for their time. The company behind ZenDay has started to get early revenues from very good freemium conversion rates, and has signed a deal with Samsung.

The Company

Philippe & Richard met in 2008, during the preparation of the winter olympic bid for their city, Annecy (France, 20 minutes south of Geneva). They discovered that they shared common values (ambition, honesty, teamwork) and at the same time were very different (see co-founders' bios below). Bringing Bruno into the team seemed natural: Philippe was Bruno's former student, and Bruno shared the same values and was eager to create something big from the diversity of the initial team.

The Idea

In retrospect, Time Management was an obvious area of focus for the new company. Richard, drawing from his experience as Program Director leading international teams under tight schedules, never found a suitable tool to help him prioritize his activities between all his action items, his meetings and the daily emergencies. Philippe, a successful entrepreneur in a service industry, knew by experience that people with poor time management were stressed, missed deadlines and ultimately hurt the performance of their colleagues and of the company. Bruno, as expert in the fields of Motivation and Human Resources management, also saw first-hand the needs of professionals, and understood the huge potential of an app that works.

A start-up in France?

France isn't well known for the success of its start-ups. Despite an environment and eco-system that is not as dense or powerful as in the Silicon Valley, the team started head-on to find funding, hire talent and develop the first concepts.

Despite the challenges, the co-founders attracted people from all backgrounds, ready to share the entrepreneurial risks and rewards to create something completely new. A veteran video game developer from Ubisoft, a senior developer who worked on the original PalmOS and the famous Palm Calendar, and a 3D animation film expert were the first ones to join the team.

Financing the early days required multiple applications to public and semi-public institutions, which would provide loans – the equivalent in France to maxing out all your credit cards.



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Launching the early product

Specialists believe that every 5 minutes, 3 new apps appear on Google Play. How can one new app get noticed?

ZenDay's smooth 3D display did get noticed, on January 7, 2013, by a technologist who wrote a long essay on "why he switched to Android" after being so faithful to Apple's products. Buried in that article, were 3 lines that mentioned ZenDay's "real UI magic".

From that point on, things changed dramatically for the unlikely start-up.

Google contacted the co-founders, and the discussions helped improve the app and prepare for wider distribution. Samsung liked the UI so much, they first featured the app in their "S Suggest" recommendation engine, then signed a contract with the developers on a still-confidential project that will be launched in early 2014. And even Xiaomi, the now-famous Chinese smartphone manufacturer, has featured ZenDay on their own app store. Chinese users now account for 40% of the total number of active users.

Blackbox Connect, Atherton, CA.

The app received even further validation when users started to pay for ZenDay's plug-ins. In the US alone, more than 6.5% of the free downloads convert into a paid download for one of the plug-ins.

After receiving seed funding from angel investors in France, the ZenDay team is now focused on crossing the Atlantic to accelerate and increase the distribution, adoption and product portfolio around ZenDay.

Blackbox seemed to offer exactly the right ingredients for their objectives. Two weeks of workshops, coaching and networking have changed how the co-founders think about their business, and dramatically expand the possibilities of meeting with the right people who can now help them. www.blackbox.vc

Looking into the future

What's next? One thing is for sure: ZenDay now thinks BIG. ZenDay will very soon exist through a US entity, and will create jobs in the US, while keeping the R&D team in France. Contacts are made, new ideas and projects will strengthen the product and company. Maybe one of the start-ups to watch?