

Crowdfunding for a better planet

02.05.2018

In 2016 Pascal Brunner won Venture Kick stage 3 with his technology to fight the Varroa mite in bees. He is currently running a crowdfunding campaign with his technology and we spoke to him about what drives him and how to plan a successful crowdfunding campaign.



Tell me a little bit about your technology? What made you decide to market it?

My father has been a beekeeper for more than 50 years. He was facing the problem of the Varroa mite, the biggest enemy of the bees, and the constraints with chemical treatments against this parasite. So, he came up

with the idea to treat the Varroa mites chemical-free, using the natural principle of heat. I joined the project as a scientist. Startup trainings and business courses then lit my entrepreneurial fire.

Your technology has a clear ecological goal but less of an obvious financial one, have you found that you have come across barriers when dealing with businesses?

People normally recognize the ecological value first. In some situations, this helps, in others it can be a negative point. It happens that – speaking to business partners – I must explain first that we have both an ecological impact as well as economic goals.

Given your recent success with crowdfunding (The Save the Bees campaign on wemakeit has currently raised nearly CHF 90,000 with 24 days left to go), are you thinking of expanding your plans?

Crowdfunding has always been part of our plan so it doesn't affect our long-term goals. But we are very happy to have overachieved our crowdfunding goal – that's why we share the success with our existing and future customers. Beekeepers now can apply for a free **Vatorex-System**. This will help us to gain more happy customers.

Save the Bees - Crowdfunding by Vatorex



Crowdfunding is notoriously hard to do well, you have clearly mastered the art! What made you decide to raise funds this way and what advice would you have for someone else who is setting out down the same path?

Thank you. As one third of food depends on honey bee pollination and the bee's vitality is very important for a broad public audience, we knew that it could work out. Plus, we waited more over three years to start our campaign to ensure that we have a great

product ready. This helped to make the best out of it. My advice for other crowdfunders: Take your time to develop a clear storyline and shoot a great video – and start with your closest contacts to have initial supporters.

How do you feel about the EU's recent decision to ban the harmful neonicotinoid pesticides?

I am very happy about the EU decision to **ban neonicotinoids** from the fields as it will help to save the bees and other pollinators. I hope it won't affect agriculture and food production in a negative way. Although pesticides are not the biggest problem in beekeeping, this political decision will help to remove another stress factor from the bees.

You have gone into business with your father, do you think that having that family connection makes life easier or more complex?

In this specific arrangement, it makes our lives easier, as we can fully rely on each other. In the beginning, we invested quite some time in finding appropriate communication and separating private and business affairs. Looking back, I think this is the foundation of successful co-working.

You won Venture Kick back in 2016, what help did the Venture Kick process give you?

I was very happy to get kicked in the kicker's camps. It really helped having a very straight-forward and honest feedback on our business case and its weaknesses back then. Knowing that we must deliver to pass the following stage supported me in setting a clear focus. The victory of stage 3 gave us some media coverage and helps us to be perceived as a serious business. I think Switzerland needs more hands-on initiatives like Venture Kick.