

Entrepreneurial ID «venture leaders» 2012



Name: Thibaut Weise
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Project/ Company name: faceshift



Short description: *faceshift* allows users to drive virtual characters with their own facial expressions. The technology is used for rapid content production in the animation industry and as a novel communication metaphor in virtual worlds.

Web site: www.faceshift.com

Industry: ICT

The Start-up	
<i>True emotions in virtual worlds.</i>	
Status : Company will be founded in April/May 2011	Company / team size: 2 (+3 part time)
Product: We offer facial animation software for professional animation studios and freelancers. In the long run we provide an SDK that is integrated into consumer products for compelling and emotional communication using virtual avatars in games, teleconferencing, and social networks.	
Market Opportunity / Target customers: Customers are professional animation studios and freelancers for movies, games, TV, and visual effects. The facial animation SDK is targeted at game studios and serious game developers that will integrate virtual avatars into their products.	
Competition and competitive advantage: There are various other solutions to create facial animations. The faceshift technology is the only performance-based marker-less animation solution that can generate high quality facial animations in real-time. Compared to other cumbersome hardware setups, faceshift is based on commercially available 3D cameras (Microsoft Kinect, Asus Xtion Pro), making faceshift a painless solution for everyone.	
Financing: faceshift is currently self-financed. Given some initial customers, we will do a first financing round (\$300K) based on convertible loans and/or BAs to build the team for the professional animation market. We envisage a larger financing round in 2013/2014 to release the facial animation SDK.	
Growth objectives: \$10Mio in revenue with 18 FTEs.	
US objectives: - networking with fellow venture leaders and other US startups to share experiences and ideas. - strengthening of the business case with the support by experts and coaches - contacts to US business angels and VCs who ideally have connections to the animation and game industry.	
Description: Digital Content Creation is a major cost factor of computer games, animated movies, and TV programs. <i>faceshift</i> offers an automatic solution to produce live facial animations. Our proprietary technology allows an actor, without any special training, to use his facial expressions to animate in real-time any virtual character. Our solution enables new forms of communication. Instead of using chat and audio for in-game communication, users can impersonate in-situ their favorite virtual characters. For example, a player can become a fantasy hero character and express his or her emotions during battles in <i>World of Warcraft</i> . We believe that immersive communication using expressive virtual characters has huge commercial potential in teleconferencing (e.g. Skype), social networks (e.g. facebook), serious games, and edutainment.	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> user human character game character </div>	

The team
Thibaut Weise , PhD, and future CEO. Master degree in Computer Engineering at Imperial College London (2005), and PhD in Electrical Engineering at ETZ Zurich (2009). Despite his technical background, Thibaut always focused on creating solutions for practical problems relevant for the market. Parts of the underlying technology of <i>faceshift</i> were developed during his PhD and were already used for other domains such as dental scanning. Thibaut has co-founded <i>mosaickr.com</i> , a Web 2.0 service that allows users to create photo mosaics from large image collections. His main driving force is to make true emotional and immersive communication via avatars in virtual worlds a reality. Brian Amberg , PhD, co-founder and future CTO. Brian is expert in facial performance capture based on 2D and 3D video and works full-time for faceshift since April 2012.