New IT Developers Focus on Vision Rather Than Profits

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In an ocean of new ideas, only a few are destined to succeed in the end. On the market, everything must coincide: time, market demands and chances for funding. The idea of global social networks may be past its sell-by date, but still can be profitable. At the same time, startups that are aimed at saving lives can be axed for years until their opportune time comes. The market is unstable, and the best new things can come out spontaneously.

Russian startup founders strive not only to ape successful foreign trends but to set their own ones as well. For this reason, they associate themselves with the international IT community adapting their projects for Russian users first.

The founders of the Indigo Kids project prove that with a tablet computer, studying can become an exciting, playful and compelling process for kids. Its interactive playground is designed as an entire developmental planet with game zones located in woods, farms or city blocks. They all contain creative tasks, songs, poetry and comics. Moreover, kids who use it

can get familiar with games and development activities that they will encounter in real life, like playing music instruments and studying arithmetic. Seven new games have been already uploaded to the Google Play platform and can be downloaded free of charge. New computer applications offered with the project package are aimed at improving children's readiness and logical skills as well. "The founders do not encourage addiction to electronics.
The applications should be used for an hour or two, so adults can regulate the time that kids spend playing," says Irina Bokova, marketing director at Indigo Kids. The tablet sales will hugely increase in Russia by 2016, she says.

During the recent Russian Internet Week festival, the project was awarded with a special diploma as the leading project on the so-called "Innovation Alley." The goal of its founders is to launch the fully funded project in Russia and develop it in the U.S. and Europe — with games translated into English, Spanish and French — later on. An early angel investor for the project was Alan Cullison, The Wall Street Journal's Moscow bureau chief. Such a project has a future, says small-business consultant Rodion Chepalov, though the competition in this market segment will get stiffer with the time. In his opinion, it is important for the founders to keep working with parents — through seminars, for example — to illuminate the significance of these types of products for kids.

The crucial elements in successful Internet startups are the idea and the team. The issue of "which comes first" is a controversial one, as there are good examples in which ideas came first and a team was put together later. There are also examples where a fully formed team found a particular demand in the marketplace and then created a product to fulfill it, says Olga Lyutova, the head of the Internet industry management department of the RMA business school.

A highly marketed project called Travolver was aimed primarily at creating a flexible individual tour scenario and then ordering airline tickets and hotel packages to fit. While this project is on hold, a new one named Piiine has been kicked off by the same group of developers. Piiine is intended for Russian car drivers and is supposed to offer travel "wish lists" with sightseeing spots and hotels rankings that take into account comments on social networks, including Facebook, Instagram and Foursquare. Moreover, the program offers directions and advice for visiting small villages and towns that are difficult to reach by car. In 2012, 450,000 Russians rented cars in Europe for a week or more, says Nikolai Kukushkin, one of the project's founders. He believes that this is a good niche market that wealthier companies are not interested in pursuing. Internet users are primarily interested in approaches to practical problems such as where to get cheap gas or food, so this project is not expected to pay off quickly, says Chepalov. "But as a person who salutes nice and unpragmatic things, I would register for their application because it is definitely more oriented towards the future than the present," he adds.

 The "People on the Plate," or "Lyudi na Blyude," project has become a prominent example of an incubator for social initiatives, or at least for its founders. Two young media specialists, Maria Tretyakova and Yekaterina Makayeva, decided to join forces in order to create a kind of content that they themselves would be interested in reading. Finally they came up with a concept of "stories of energetic and dashing people striving to make the world better." The main goal of the project is to encourage readers to become more active and socially responsible. The coverage is provided not by a question and answer format but as community

topics with discussion boards. The challenges for the founders remain the same, says Maria Tretyakova. Attracting readers for long–form content is not an easy task, but the passion of these two young journalists for this project still keeps them going.

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