

The ZHAW Startup Challenge again Promotes Entrepreneurship in Winterthur in 2018

Out of 15 teams, Roman Züsli and Filippo Giovannetti have won with their startup WOBLER and are now representing ZHAW at the upcoming Virginia Tech Global Challenge, where they have the chance to win USD 25,000.

Versatile business ideas and a worthy winning team

On Thursday, 17 May 2018, the final pitches of the fourth ZHAW Startup Challenge were made at Technopark Winterthur. A total of 15 teams had registered, of which nine qualified for the semi-finals, and five made it into the final pitches.

The startup teams had come up with a variety of business ideas. Gabriela Lutz and Kamal Azizov, for example, want to launch sugar-free bakery products with their startup Goodbads. Their opinion of the ZHAW Startup Challenge: "We found it extremely helpful that experienced practitioners answered our questions and gave us tips on how to master the next challenges. Whether we win or not, thanks to the ZHAW Startup Challenge we are much closer to starting our own business than we were a few weeks ago." Other exciting business cases included the FinTech and sharing economy sectors.

The decision was not easy for the five-member jury, but in the end they chose the startup WOBLER as the worthy winner. During their pitch, the founders Roman Züsli and Filippo Giovannetti demonstrated in a practical way how their app will help private individuals to place smaller orders and find people for short-term assignments. Second place went to teildo.ch, an impact startup that takes up the idea of sharing, and third place to Team Blockflyer with their concept of converting air miles into a cryptocurrency using Bitcoin technology.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank our partners, without whose support the ZHAW Startup Challenge would not be possible in this format:



ZHAW Startup Challenge as a springboard to a successful company foundation

The two winners first had to be motivated before they agreed to participate: "We'd been thinking about setting up a startup together for some time. During our business studies at ZHAW, we presented our business idea in a module on entrepreneurship. The lecturer, Christian Hertach, then encouraged us to take part in the ZHAW Startup Challenge." Their efforts paid off: "This was exactly the right thing for us. The challenge gave us the necessary extra motivation to persist. It was also an ideal environment in which to gain initial experience in our new role as a young entrepreneurs. Especially the inputs and feedback from the various experts involved were extremely valuable for us. We are pleased that the ZHAW Startup Challenge exists, and we do not take it for granted at all that ZHAW should offer such an event." The project manager, Yasemin

Sharityar, concurs: "It's a great opportunity for participants to get a first taste of startup life and learn exciting lessons. And best of all, there are no losers. Either you win or you learn!"

As the winning team, the founders of WOBLER get to fly to the US in mid-August to compete internationally with other startups at the Virginia Tech Global Challenge. Their incentive: USD 25,000 in prize money. In addition, all three winning teams will be admitted to ZHAW's RUNWAY Startup Incubator to further develop their ideas there. Last year's ZHAW Startup Challenge winners, Nexenic, won the USD 5,000 People's Choice Award for their self-heating lunchbox in Virginia and continue to be successful. The Nexenic team has recently secured further support from both the Swiss Agency for Innovation Promotion (Innosuisse) and the European Institute of Innovation & Technology. Of course, Züsli and Giovannetti also want to do their best in the US and are looking forward to this next challenge.

In his closing statement, private start-up investor and jury member Pern Hui Chia told the young entrepreneurs: "Setting up a startup is a big challenge. This makes it all the more important to enjoy the journey. Money cannot be the driving force. Rather, an entrepreneur needs the necessary passion and must pursue an overriding goal. To overcome all the hurdles you face when setting up a startup, you have to know *why* you are doing the whole thing."