TEL AVIV-YAFO

Predictive Maritime Analytics

An Interview with Ami Daniel,
Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Windward Ltd.

EDITORS' NOTE *Ami Daniel assumed his current post in April 2009. He has received many honors for his work including being selected as one of TheMarker 40 promising young managers in Israel under the age of 40 in 2013; as a BizTec (Israeli National Entrepreneurship Competition) Category Winner in 2010; the Ramon Award for Leadership and Excellence, awarded by Israeli Minister of Defense, in 2003; the German Education Minister Special Research Award in 2002; and the Israeli President Award for Extraordinary Social Leadership in 2002.*

Ami Daniel

COMPANY BRIEF *Founded in 2009 as a privately held global company, Windward (windward.eu) developed a groundbreaking technology for satellite based predictive maritime analytics.*

How did Windward come about?

We started Windward looking to tackle the issue of illegal fishing, only to discover that the problem of localized maritime monitoring was already solved through coastal sensors and maritime assets (ships, airplanes, and today even the limited and simple use of satellites). However, the latest advancements in satellite technologies, mainly prominent trends of satellite commercialization and minimization, only created new problems with Big Data, and turning raw data into actionable information. As we identified this emerging trend a few years back, we set out to develop the next step – the world's first fully automatic predictive maritime analytics system.

What value does a system of this type provide?

Windward's flagship product MarInt, the world's first commercial predictive maritime analytics system, is the analytical technology born from our understanding of both the challenges and potential of the existing data. MarInt maps global maritime traffic, and then applies complex analytics on all historical and current data. The system analyzes the behavior of all vessels worldwide automatically in order to pinpoint even the slightest anomalous behaviors and patterns, which may indicate involvement in illicit activities – and sometimes may be the only available indication of such involvement.

MarInt has been in operational use for the past 18 months, providing intelligence and defense customers with bottom-line risk assessment on specific ships or broader insightful understanding of their area of interest. While collecting millions of daily ship transmissions, Windward uses proprietary algorithms to research past ship behavior and deduce future risk assessment. Customers purchase a license to receive the highest quality "pointers" for their specific interests, distilled by MarInt's global view and constantly evolving algorithmic capabilities.

How are you positioned for growth?

In order to support our expansion into new markets, and after securing multiple clients in 2013, we announced recently that we had raised $5 million from Aleph VC, our first institutional round. This should help the company expand its leadership in the defense and Homeland security industries, and accelerate its rollout in commercial markets impacted by maritime activities.

In order to stay ahead of the pack, we have chosen to establish our R&D center in the heart of Tel Aviv, acknowledging the unique culture of innovation in the city.

Finally, we are always on the lookout for the right partners that share our vision and can leverage our networks in the commercial market, in order to explore new opportunities with commodity traders and oil and gas companies. ●

A Fun, New, Real-Time Communication Tool

An Interview with Dany Fishel,
Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Rounds

EDITORS' NOTE *A vanguard in Internet business development and online marketing, Dany Fishel previously co-founded the strategic web consulting practice KwaKwa, alongside Ilan Leibovich, his current co-founder at Rounds. His expertise includes developing new revenue models, forging strategic partnerships, and media landscape thought-leadership. Fishel received a bachelor's degree in Economics and Management from The Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Israel.*

Dany Fishel

COMPANY BRIEF *Rounds (rounds.com) is a free multi-platform video chat hangout application where users can interact and have fun with friends by playing games, browsing Facebook, watching YouTube videos together, listening to music, and taking snapshots. Rounds' webcam chat allows you to see friends' reactions in real time, making it the ultimate social experience. Rounds Hangout is available on Android and iPhone, as well as on the Web.*

What was your vision for Rounds when it was created?

The original concept was for it to be a speed-dating site and we called ourselves 6rounds. Anyone who has been at a speed-dating event knows how awkward and uncomfortable they can be – our idea was to provide activities and games as ice-breakers for would-be couples, so even if there is no romantic chemistry, during the five minutes they have to kill, they would at least have something to do together.

During the development process, we realized our vision and concept of hanging out around shared activities could be attractive to users outside of the speed-dating community.

So we moved to providing a fun, new real-time communication tool for everyone. We understood that the concept of hanging out with your friends and having the ability to share and create moments together offers a unique value proposition and is the selling point we're trying to promote to the end users.

What is the profile of your user?

The 13-24-year-old age range comprises the vast majority of our users. However, we have seen a lot of U.S. Marines and overseas soldiers using Rounds. We're trying to bring to the world a mimic of real-life encounters providing an opportunity to communicate when there is not the option to do so face-to-face.

What business model have you developed for Rounds?

What Rounds brings to the table is an added layer on top of the communication – an opportunity to create shared experiences while you communicate live with one another by providing additional layers of entertainment and fun interaction.

What Rounds brings to the world is a cross-platform agnostic environment that can be used on any Android or iOS device, Mac or PC, or via Facebook or Twitter. We want to be the added layer on top that helps you communicate with your friends, no matter where they are.

What drives the entrepreneurial culture within Tel Aviv?

Within the Tel Aviv municipality, there are hundreds of companies very connected to the high-tech scene.

The constant learning curve within this community makes it unique. A lot of people who are finishing their military service in Israel have gained considerable knowledge in computer science. They are very eager to do something meaningful.

That combination of great companies and the type of people who are both amazing engineers as well as open to new ideas on how to make things better, is what drives the power of entrepreneurship in Tel Aviv, and in Israel. ●