

Let's do launch

We chat with the founder of an Atlantic Canadian startup to learn how they launched and what's next



JOSHUA GREEN (29)

CEO and co-founder of MYSA. They invented a smart thermostat for electric baseboard heaters.

Hometown: St. John's, N.L. & Halifax, N.S.

Alma mater: Dalhousie (B Eng. Mechanical Engineering)

Favourite food: "I'm vegan for the environment, so curries are probably my favourite."

Headquarters: St. John's, N.L.

Founded: 2014

Employees: 37 (expected to hit 50 by year end)

All in the family

"My father was also an engineer. He wasn't entrepreneurial in his career but his father was an entrepreneur and my dad really encouraged me and my co-founder, who is actually my brother Zach. He's also a mechanical engineer, three years younger than me."

Green-minded

Initially, the Greens had an energy efficiency consulting company called Empowered Homes: "It helped us discover the potential and opportunity in the market for a particular type of smart thermostat for electric baseboard heating. That's the birth of MYSA; finding out that...one in three homes in Canada had baseboard heating but no smart thermostat to buy. Zach and I are both really into technology so we have been plugged into that space our whole lives, which also helped us to a large degree. When I was doing the consulting, it was five projects in a row where people were looking for a smart thermostat for their baseboards, or people didn't even know about smart thermostats."

Fake it, then make it

In 2015, the brothers progressed through Memorial University's Genesis Centre incubator program, honing their business plan and market research. "Genesis was great at helping us connect with some Angel Investors in St. John's.... They pushed us to prove we had customer traction. We pre-launched our campaign on our website where we purchased Google Ads to market our pre-order website and we were able to get \$700,000 in pre-orders for a product that didn't even exist."

Heating up

March 2017 saw MYSA receive their first private investment, which enabled them to hire staff to help build the product. They did \$3 million in sales their first year, selling their smart thermostat across Canada and the United States.

Where do you plan to be in five years?

"We are hiring more salespeople, more marketing people, more support to grow that side of the business. Parallel to that, we're also developing new products, additional ones that don't exist... We want to continue to build products that help customers save energy and be more environmentally-friendly."

What's with the name?

"MYSA is the Swedish word for being cozy."

If you weren't running MYSA, where would you be?

"Working for Tesla."

Another Atlantic Canadian startup you admire

"Verafin, even though they aren't a startup anymore. They're hugely inspirational and we've been working closely with them. They volunteer their time with a whole bunch of startups."

Office bucket list item

"We're about to get a second floor, so we're like 'we should put in a fireman's pole so we can go from one floor to the other.' That likely won't happen. The landlord's not going to like that."