Entrepreneur developing accessibility mapping app

November 17 2015, by Will Sloan

Maayan Ziv graduated from Ryerson's Master of Digital Media program. Credit: Lucas Oleniuk/Get Stock

For Maayan Ziv, a recent graduate of Ryerson's Master of Digital Media program and current DMZ-based entrepreneur, getting around isn't always easy. "I'm someone who uses a wheelchair, and there are a lot of places that are not accessible. Sometimes I'm trying for hours even just to find out if I can get into a location – if it's actually accessible to me, and if I'm okay when I get there. The kind of information that I'm looking for is not easily available, and when I do find good information, it's often very unreliable.

"So the idea was: Why don't we just build a map that would allow anyone who has experience with accessibility to add their own [information](#) so we can start to collect places – not only in Toronto, but all over the world."

The result: [AccessNow](#), a new mobile app launched in August. The technology allows users to find information on disability-accessible buildings, and contribute information to the app's database.

The idea was hatched during Ziv's time at the MDM program, where profs encouraged students to work on projects related to problems in their own lives. She quickly realized that there was little, if any, precedent for an app like Access Now.

"The initial step was seeing if we could find a database that perhaps the government would have or an organization would supply," she said. "What I realized was, this data just didn't exist. So that's really where the first pivot came in: instead of taking information and plugging it in, we decided: let's crowdsource so we could create our own database."

Though Ziv had minimal business experience, she jumped into Access Now with confidence. "Often I faced challenges in which I didn't always know the answers," she said. "The biggest lesson I learned was: even if I don't know the answer, often I will say yes to an opportunity and learn my way through it. Rather than saying, 'Oh, I'm not a technical developer, I'm not a coder,' I just said, 'Yes I can,' and found really cool opportunities to connect me with the people who could help make that happen."

She also found help at DMZ, Ryerson's startup incubator. "It's a great place to be able to connect with other founders, resources and events. There's a lot of buzz happening all the time at the DMZ, and being there and being situated right in the heart of it is great for networking with the

right people and getting to the next step."

November 16-20 is Global Entrepreneurship Week, and Ryerson is hosting a range of events and activities, including idea consultation sessions, an SEO workshop, and a traction startup simulation game. For a full listing of events and times, go to www.ryerson.ca/entrepreneurship.

Provided by Ryerson University

Citation: Entrepreneur developing accessibility mapping app (2015, November 17) retrieved 10 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2015-11-entrepreneur-accessibility-app.html