



STARTUP OF THE MONTH: STUDIO GAUNTLET

BY [RASMUS KVAAL](#) | NOV 1, 2018

Studio Gauntlet is the story about what happens when you let yourself be inspired by having fun and learn from your experiences.

Their story about success and self-development is the reason why they are startup of the month for November. We had a talk with the founders, Christer Rebni and Alexander Jonassen about their journey, challenges and path forward.

— Studio Gauntlet started as a master project in industrial design, with a lot of hard work. We designed a game about an old man who was rediscovering his memories, Chris tells us.

–It turned out to be really good, so we registered it for the Norwegian Game Awards (NGA), and we won concept of the year! That gave us the motivation and push to start a game studio.



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— the prize for concept of the year included a small sum of money and two office seats at local co-working space, Work-Work. So, we moved down there and tried to dream up a new game concept. We were inspired by our love for games where you can sit and have fun together.



The studio at Gründerbrakka: Christer Rebni (left) and Alexander Jonasson (right) in their office space in Gründerbrakka. Photo: Studio Gauntlet

-We decided to make a game studio

The resulting game was Bonkies, a game about space monkeys working together to build varying structures on Mars. The game is out on the Steam game-store, although as a beta-version. Nonetheless it has already won two awards.

— After making Bonkies, and getting a lot of positive attention for it, we decided that our master project should be to make a game studio, and release not just one game, but seven games, all in fourteen weeks, Alex says with a smile.

— We quickly realized we were a bit too ambitious, Chris continues.

— We were burned out, and couldn't make games fast enough without compromising on quality. Furthermore making different games all the time left little room for learning. We couldn't bring the knowledge from one experience over to the next, so we had to limit ourselves to the four games we had made.

This left them room to focus solely on Bonkies, which was their biggest success.

-We figured out what we wanted to do

Chris and Alex emphasize the importance of having a supportive tutor. They attribute a

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longer had the safety and security of their university at NTNU. Naturally, spreading their wings and leaving the nest seemed to be a big challenge.

The following summer Studio Gauntlet worked hard to keep the project alive, taking summer jobs to earn money during the day, and coding and designing games during the evening and night.

— We were so exhausted, Chris tells us.

— Our sensor told us to take it easy, and remember the work life balance, but we just enjoyed making Bonkies so much.

Work and play: Alexander Jonasson (left) and Christer Rebni (right) showing off, and playing their own game, Bonkies. Photo: Studio Gauntlet

— It's like they say, when you have a job you love, you never have to work a day in your life, Alex follows up.

— But, yeah, it was exhausting, Chris admits.

— At least we figured out that making games was what we really wanted to do.

-Making a company is more than making games

When summer was over, Studio Gauntlet still needed a place to work, and with their temporary office seats at Work-Work long gone they had to seek refuge elsewhere. Thanks to their mentor at Spark*, Jonas Hyllseth Ryen, Alex and Chris were lucky enough to get an office at Gründerbrakka NTNU.

— We feel that Gründerbrakka in a way marks the start of Studio Gauntlet. Earlier it had been exclusively tied to the university and to our master project, Chris explains.

— Now we were free to really go ahead and make our company a reality.

Teamwork: Bonkies, just as making a startup, depends on the co-operation of the players.
Photo: Screenshot from Bonkies

Gründerbrakka is a co-working space sponsored by NTNU, giving local entrepreneurs and innovators a possibility to get their business up and going. The office spaces are free of charge, given that you contribute to the working environment. As a startup you apply for a period of typically one year. ^

But making a company turned out to involve more than just making games.

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things.

-We met Lise at Join a Startup-night here at Spark*, and we immediately clicked. Not only was she interested in our games, but she wanted to do all the boring stuff we didn't, Chris jokes. So we invited her over to Gründerbrakka, and the rest is history. It feels as if she's always been here.

— We don't know what to do without her, Alex exclaims.

Join a Startup-night is a monthly event by Spark* which aims at coupling startups that need an extra set of hands, and people who want contribute with their expertise and knowledge. Anyone who feels they have something to offer, and a wish to build and develop a business can attend free of charge.

Studio Gauntlet just came back from the Norwegian games expo, and have a lot of positive feedback to grow on. Their goal for now is to get Bonkies done and released on Nintendo Switch.

-After that, Chris says, we'll see how far this three-person army can take us.

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