

Interview with Frederik van Deurs, Green Tech Challenge's Co-Founder and Managing Partner, during TBLI NORDIC FORUM 2016

Guest Blog Post written by Ariadna Archer for TBLI NORDIC FORUM 2016. Views and opinions are that of the writer and are not the official views of TBLI CONFERENCE™.

Can you briefly describe what Green Tech Challenge is?

Frederik van Deurs: Yes, the Green Tech Challenge is essentially a five day growth program where we are selecting 16 promising start-ups that are looking for capital in the range from 1 million euros to 5 million euros. During our program, we put them in charge with relevant partners—meaning advisors like *PWC* or like *Kroman Reumert* and industry mentors such as *Microsoft*. And at the end of the program, we're putting them onstage in front of a big range of investors and capital providers—some thirty five to a hundred capital providers are present at our Investor Day and hopefully they'll be encouraged to actually invest in these companies. So, we're addressing companies that have gone through markets to some degree, they have a minimal viable product out there, a prototype or beta test. And preferably they also will have their first handful of paying clients.



If a company doesn't make it to the next round, are they allowed to come back a second time and pitch their idea to investors or is it a one-time opportunity?

Frederik van Deurs: Of course, we're always looking for promising companies so, if the company is too early then we'll usually contact them the next time we're around in their town. We're currently in Copenhagen, we're about to expand to a whole range of countries next year and then return annually.

And one of these countries is Argentina, which seems like a wild card, because your expansion strategy is mainly targeted to Europe: Copenhagen, Germany, Sweden, Portugal...so, why Argentina?

Frederick van Deurs: That's actually a really good question, the choice of Argentina is loosely based on the network we have over there. I think that the most obvious place from a start-up perspective to go in Latin America would be Chile. It could also make sense to go to Mexico...so these are more ideas than they are plans for our expansion in 2018. It all comes down to where we can find the best network and if someone will pay us to come and do a program there. Right now we have a threshold of forty thousand euros from one partner to have us come and do a program in his city. So, we have a range of different areas where people are interested in having us come...and that will definitely be the deciding factor. So, we're looking for areas of interest and empowering green innovation.

So, are you a non-profit or for profit company?

Frederik van Deurs: We're officially a for-profit company, it's not like a company is selling our stocks...it's a consultancy house. So, in order to make Green Tech Challenge work, partners pay to participate in the challenge, start-ups participate for free and investors participate for free. We have three different kinds of partnerships—Gold, Silver and Bronze range— at forty, sixteen and eight thousand euros.

Everyone congratulated you on your presentation skills... so, what advice would you give a graduate student like me if one day I have to make an investment pitch?

Frederik van Deurs: Why—first. Always explain why you're doing what you're doing. And that correlates on a personal level. Let those to whom you're presenting know who you are so it's easy to relate to you as a person. And let them know why what you're doing is important. I think that is one of the structures that I try to replicate into anything I do. So, in Green Tech Challenge we're making green business good business in order to actually empower green innovation because we see that if we want to change the world for the better and we want our children and grandchildren to have a healthy planet, we'll actually need to leave the planet in a better state than they found it in, we need to create business incentives to do good. And that is essentially our "why".

Is there a phrase that you live by?

Frederik van Deurs: "Lead by Example". No matter if it is in your personal relationships or personal development leading by example is always the path to take as a source of inspiration to your surroundings and then your surroundings can become sources of inspiration as well.