Alumni Feature

Jan 2018

Q & A with MICHAL DYKAS
Entrepreneurship

Michal, *from Poland, graduated from NGS in Jan 2016. During his Ph.D. studies, he found a niche in the field of microscopy and decided to create a new product and commercialize it under his startup CORRESCOPY. His product solves the problem of correlative microscopy by allowing researchers using any available microscope to get correlated data.*

1. Why did you start your own company?
Correscopy is not my first startup. I co-founded one during my studies at NUS. While working on that startup I learned a lot and I wanted to continue working in a business environment. My dad is also an entrepreneur. Hence I had a good example and support on how to run a company. Being an entrepreneur is a very challenging and interesting way of life, especially when you have the time and money to take the risk of uncertainty.

2.What are the challenges you faced from the start till now?
There are a few major challenges. The first challenge is to move from a prototype to a sellable product, then to set the supply chain so I could deliver a ready product on time. The second challenge is to scale up my business. In the field of microscopy where customers are mostly universities or research institutes, making a sale is an extremely long process. From my experience, it takes from 6 to 18 months after the customer is interested in purchase, to make it actually happened. That waiting time was very difficult, as there was no income for a long time. Moreover, convincing a potential customer is also a difficult task as people are generally very careful when purchasing startup products.

The third challenge is the money. Money greatly limited the promotion of my young startup. Therefore in the meantime I started a part-time job in the university at the electron imaging facility which can cover the startup basic expenses. This job also didn't take much of my time, so I could still focus on my startup work. The final challenge is to reach out to potential customers. Doing it by myself was a bit difficult because no one recognizes neither me nor my company. My and my friends' connections were crucial in approaching potential customers. It is much easier when you have a recommendation. At this moment, I have decided to use distributors and their network to make sales. That helps me to minimize costs involved in product promotion and maximizes chances of sales. Although it will come at a cost of lower company profit on each sale, it should pay off at the end.

If you work for your own startup, you work 24/7.

3. What are the advantages and disadvantages to be an entrepreneur as a Ph.D.?
I am not sure if there are any particular advantages. I think the entrepreneur spirit is in a person's character. It all depends on what kind of startup you want to do. The Ph.D. experience could be an advantage in more science/technology-oriented fields, while it could be useless in e.g. trades, I think. In my field, being a Ph.D. gives me extra credibility, which is a big advantage while talking to customers.

4. What do you think is the most important quality to be an entrepreneur?
Self-motivation, you need a lot of it. It is not an easy way, especially when you start only from an idea. The way from the idea to a sellable product is long and bumpy. I spent at least 1 year on the product R&D before it was ready for sale.

Confidence in a product you have developed.

Willingness to listen and evolve is also essential. Each potential customer you have a conversation with will provide 10 ideas about how you should improve your product, and some of them may be actually worth implementing. Remember, your product is never perfect. You start your sales with your Minimum Viable Product (MVP) so there is a lot of space for improvement.

5. How do you think we can encourage more PhDs to be entrepreneurs?
I think NGS could provide some opportunities to work with startups. Personally, I took part in a few initiatives in NUS, which somehow encouraged me to go this way. The NUS - Institute for Engineering Leadership provides an opportunity for NUS students to work on innovative ideas with the potential for commercialization. NGS could make some arrangements to allow its alumni to work together with startup teams. I think the NGS alumni with some professional experience and exposure to the industry would be very valuable to the startups. Extra funds from NGS wouldn't be bad too :)

6. Do you have other things to tell our NGS alumni?
I hope all of you will find your own way of life. Not everyone wants to be an entrepreneur, so don't feel the pressure. I really enjoy being an entrepreneur, especially the times when researchers are happily using my products and producing high-quality results. These priceless moments give me the power to move forward.

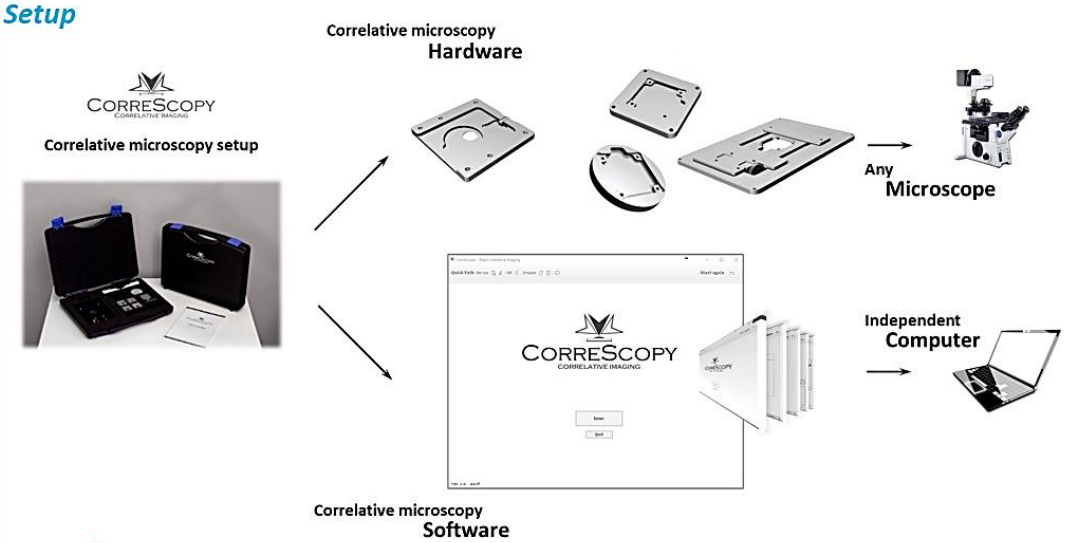
--- NGS Publicity Team

Would you like to do correlative imaging?
But you don't have a correlative microscope?

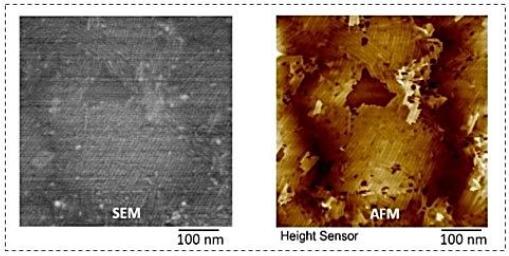
CORRESCOPY
CORRELATIVE IMAGING

Our revolutionary system lets you use any microscope to do correlative imaging!

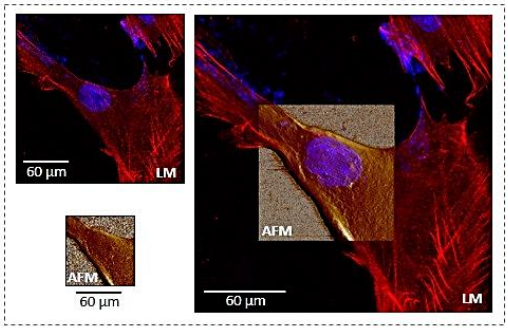
Setup



Examples



Scanning Electron Microscopy– FEI Quanta
Atomic Force Microscopy *– Bruker Icon*



Light Microscopy *- Carl Zeiss LSM 880*
Atomic Force Microscopy *- Bruker Catalyst*

Testimonials

„Simply brilliant! Locating my region of interest used to consume most of my time in a typical imaging session. Now I let Correscopy find my sample instantly, so I can spend a 100% of my time acquiring images and pushing the boundaries of science."

dr Abhijeet Patra
Research Fellow
National University of Singapore, Singapore

„Image correlation made by Correscopy is unbelievably simple and effective. No matter what type and age of the microscope is, the same structure can be imaged by an obsolete light microscope and a top-notch scanning electron microscope. Besides, it takes only a few extra seconds of work„

dr hab. Grzegorz Tylko
Assistant Professor
Jagiellonian University, Poland

Visit us at www.correscopy.com
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CORRESCOPY
CORRELATIVE IMAGING

We correlated
10 imaging techniques &
tested almost 50 microscopes