

New strategy leading to success

Toywheel reimagines Toys with Augmented Reality for present Digital Age

Berlin, 4th March 2014 – Teaching kids how to handle new media playfully and creating endless fun without overloading or leaving them in front of the game console for hours - this is the vision of Evgeni Kouris, founder and CEO of Toywheel. Initially started as a DIY-platform for children, the Berlin-based studio now develops Digital Toys which connect virtual and real worlds.

The team has been transformed to fit the new strategy: With two fathers Toywheel wants to add important know-how both on the development but also on a personal level. "I'm very happy to have Christian Bittler as co-founder and Marjan Plöderl as Head of Engineering on board. With our approach to Digital Toys and the current team we can combine the interactivity of video games with the creativity, diversity and the educational effect of physical toys. Digital Toys features are a lot about what *not* to do as many things technically possible are not necessary good for kids at young age", Kouris explains.

The focus of the founders is firmly on the central element of the app: The intuitive usage of Augmented Reality (AR) technology: "From our experience with the DIY platform we know: Children want to discover interactive worlds in the same way as they learn about physical world - they don't differentiate here. That's why we want to link both realities into one big, intuitive playground. Current AR technology is already quite powerful, but it evolves rapidly especially with new products like Google Glass", Kouris adds. His long-term vision is to reflect everything that can be seen, heard or felt - real objects, sounds or weather - in the virtual experience and make this process extremely simple.

Seed capital came from the first hi! Berlin Conference, which supported Toywheel subsequently as well as the Telekom Accelerator hub:raum. After bootstrapping the company for more than a half a year, more recently, the founders decided to get their first business angels on board, amongst others Brendan Donovan - father of three, IT entrepreneur and Augmented Reality expert - to be able to focus on the development and their global launch. He joins the current advisory board with well-known mentors and parents such as Jörg Rheinboldt (Axel Springer Plug and Play, M10), Prof. Dr. Werner Thole (University of Kassel), Béa Beste (Tollabox, Phorms School), Henriette Weber (The Next Web, Toothless Tiger) as well as Dylan Arena (Kidaptive).

The first App „Toy Car RC - Drive a Virtual Car in the Real World with Augmented Reality“ was specially created for kids from the age of six to eight years and is expected to be available for free in the App Store for iPad and iPhone by the end of march. The idea: To create one's individual playground by putting down simple targets, which can be printed with every standard printer, and placed wherever you want: Afterwards the virtual car can be driven in the childrens' room, the garden or the play ground. Unlike traditional games, Toywheel apps aren't goal or win-oriented and leave as much space as possible for the creative, personal contribution of each kid and especially try to maintain the enduring joy of playing. Fun, sustainability and security for kids comes first: "Toy Car RC" is a free app, but it already contains enough elements to have a long and playful experience and it doesn't require any in-app-purchases. Further Digital Toys will be introduced during 2014.

About Toywheel

Toywheel is a Berlin-based Digital Toys Studio that brings the intuitive play experience with toys into the present digital age. Specially created and designed for kids, the Toywheel apps link reality to interactive media. Behind the digital toymakers for kids are the two co-founders Evgeni Kouris and Christian Bittler. The company is financed by various Business Angels such as Brendan Donovan, IT-entrepreneur and himself a father of three.