

# CASE STUDY

Described for the project: "The Hexagonal Leader"

## Name of the organization

Genially

## Website of the organization

<https://www.genial.ly/es>

## Logotype of the organization



## Type of organization

- Business organization
- Public administration
- NGO's
- Others (what kind?) .....

## Size of the organization

- Small
- Medium
- Large

## Economic sector

Service company: technology

## Brief description of the organization

Genially is a Spanish company founded in 2015. It is an all-in-one design software that allows users to create and share engaging, interactive and animated content online (computer graphics, presentations, microsites, CVS, catalogues, etc.) without that the user needs programming knowledge. In just one year, the number of users had reached 200,000 and by 2016 it will be over 300,000.

Genially becomes a startup from Cordoba with a multidisciplinary team where you can find from designers and programmers to biologists, publicists or engineers. The public to which the tool is addressed is very wide as its uses range from education to news communication or customer attraction. The idea behind this is the revolution in the way we communicate as Genially allows simple office users to access interactivity. The slogan with which Genially was created follows this philosophy: "Genially, and feel like a Genius".

The mission of this start up, according to their own website, is that anyone can make spectacular, interactive and animated content. Their motivation is to help improve the way they present, communicate, disseminate and teach. To this day, they already have some 750,000 users in more than 190 countries.

The decalogue that defines them is the following:

- We are creative by nature
- We are social beings, communicating beings
- In view of content saturation: innovation
- We are visual beings
- We are explorers
- Life is not one-dimensional, nor is communication
- Communication is an experience
- We remember the stories, and we love them
- No creativity without fun
- No success without innovation

## Case study description (situation / the problem they are facing) [max 2000 characters]

The founders of Genially came from the communication agency business and dedicated themselves to the digital business. They designed a revenue stream that works, providing a free service. The main problem is that they have to finance out of their own pockets, with investors or with profits from their other businesses. They have what investors call traction but not a business model that makes them money and with a lot of risk.

According to Genially's founders, they found the difficulties more because of their business model than anything else. The reason? According to Juan and Luis: "A freemium model is not common in Spain and this generated aversion among investors. Our business model is not typical in Spain, it is focused on a

global market and combines free access and subscription. In addition, we are working in Cordoba and that clashed with investors in Spain who used to be used to companies in Madrid or Barcelona.

In Spain it seems that people are more used to marketplace or e-commerce models and they expect that kind of metrics. They are not used to product startups and, in fact, in Spain there are not as many purely SaaS (software as a service) product startups.”

Another problem they had to face from the beginning was comparing this tool as a digital product with some of their competitors such as Prezi, Powerpoint or Canvas. One of the things that has always attracted attention with Genially is that it was complicated to locate what they were and who they were competing against. Is Genially an alternative to Prezi? An alternative to PowerPoint and Keynote? Is it a container like SlideShare? Does it compete with Canva or Adobe Photoshop? Is it all of the above? In Luis’ words: “The most complicated part is everything: differentiation, finding a market niche, selecting the ideal team for the moment you are... Many times, you can have great ideas, but if the market is not at the ideal moment, nothing works”

One of the most critical phases has been their plan to grow and expand without dying in the attempt and to face this phase they needed a great investment. The United States was within the company's next stop, or at least that is what Juan Rubio pointed out in 2018: “We have to make our jump to the United States, create structure and, surely, count on investors from there. By 2019 we will open an international round with European investors, but we want the United States capital to enter that round and, for the future, the United States will take over”

### Suggested solutions (added pros and cons)

#### 1. Build a sales funnel.

The first way to quickly grow your business is by building a sales funnel. If you don't have a sales funnel, you're making a monumental mistake. Sales funnels can help to automate your business. It helps you to scale and grow quickly and easily. Sure, there's some front-end work involved. Obviously. But, once those processes are in place, it's smooth sailing from there.

#### 2. Research the competition.

When going to market, and you're really looking to get your offer to the masses, you need to research the competition. Evaluating the comparative advantages of the closest competitors will allow a brand to know its movements and progress, and then make a comparison. Some of the advantages that this analysis will give you are:

- Knowing the strengths and opportunities of your brand, with respect to those of the competition
- Improve various aspects such as management systems, products, services and marketing strategies.
- Establish a difference between what your brand offers and what your competition does, in order to increase your brand values.
- It is a thermometer that will be very useful for guidance and decision making.

#### 3. Create a customer loyalty program.

Loyalty programs are great ways to increase sales. It costs up to three times more money to acquire new customers than it does to sell something to an existing customer. However, any way that you slice it, acquiring new customers is expensive.

#### 4. Identify new opportunities.

Analyze new opportunities in your business. Understand everything from distribution channels to your direct competitors, and even an analysis of foreign markets and other potential industries.

#### 5. International expansion.

Can you expand internationally? Can you take your existing offers and scale them internationally? If you have a converting offer, international expansion could be a quick way to grow. You'll incur some costs. Sure. But, the potential for profits could be massive.

#### 6. Form strategic partnerships.

Strategic partnerships with the right companies can truly make a world of difference. It could allow you to reach a wide swath of customers quickly. Identifying those partnerships might be easier said than done. But, look out for companies that are complementary to your own. Contact them and propose opportunities for working together.

#### 7. Embrace Change

Today's disruptive changes are forcing companies and leaders to rethink their methods and adapt to a new reality: The status quo is no longer an option. Businesses need to embrace change as a dynamic, ongoing process to face the future. Those companies that don't change can stagnate and not develop. Our current world is constantly evolving in terms of technology and many other challenging but innovative ways. Having the ability to face these new challenges head-on will not only develop the company as a whole but also those who work within it. Without change, companies may soon find themselves falling behind the curve and losing ground compared to competitors. They need to be able to change and adapt to keep up with our ever increasingly more technological and developing times. Moreover, the ability to embrace change will continually help businesses to find and nurture new business ideas and opportunities. Having stellar change strategies will help any business to move forward into new areas brought about by the new ways of working.

#### 8. Become self-aware

Self-awareness is an essential trait of a great leader. By knowing your values, personality, needs, habits and emotions, and how they affect your actions and the actions of others, you'll be better able to manage your stress, make better decisions and ultimately lead others to do the same. Self-awareness is empowering because it arms you with knowledge and enables you to make better choices — to change or grow.

#### 9. Disrupt Yourself

Once you become self-aware, you are ready to disrupt yourself. Leaders need to disrupt themselves before someone or something else does it for you. If change hits you from some other source — say, a disruptive technology — you'll find yourself struggling to catch up and adapt. But if you become the one driving innovation, that makes you the game-changer.

#### 10. Recognize and reward the value of learning in failure

Taking risks does not always guarantee a positive outcome so leaders like everyone else must live with

failure. Failures are an inherent part of a leader's journey, but they should not always be perceived as negative. Failure is an important part of personal growth and plays an important role in making a person an effective leader and should therefore be seen as a process that can produce enormous growth and development on a personal and professional level.

#### 11. Focus on the process as an ongoing project

The process is infinitely more valuable and important than the result. When you commit to the process — never giving up, creatively overcoming setbacks and obstacles, trying new strategies — a powerful metamorphosis happens. You literally transform in the process.

#### 12. Practice perseverance

Perseverance and persistence are equally crucial in the work required to turn a business into a viable enterprise, given the challenges and roadblocks thrown up along the way. In fact, in a 1995 interview, Steve Jobs said, "I'm convinced that about half of what separates the successful entrepreneurs from the non-successful ones is pure perseverance. It is so hard and you pour so much of your life into this thing, there are such rough moments in time that most people give up. And I don't blame them, it's really tough."

### Chosen solution

They have chosen the number 2,4, 5 ,6,7, 8,9,10,11,12

#### - Research the competition (Number 2)

Their idea arises from a need: how to make traditional PowerPoint presentations attractive? In the case of the biologist, related to the environment. "We worked for large corporations creating communication campaigns related to climate change, responsible consumption or sustainable mobility. Concepts that are difficult to communicate effectively and that are attractive to the average citizen", explains Rubio, the company's CEO.

With this question in mind, they began to work on a tool, in the form of a content management system, with which anyone without any idea of programming language or design could create interactive microsites.

As Juan Rubio explained: "We have many descriptions. Imagine adding all the power of today's web technology to PowerPoint. In that way, you create a type of content that until now was more within the reach of developers than office people. What does that mean? Imagine a presentation that is interactive, that you click, that pop-ups appear, that you can animate it but not with the typical PowerPoint animations but with the most typical ones of the web world. Or that you can integrate a Twitter timeline. It is to mix something more typical of a web page with more typical concepts of office automation such as a poster, a presentation or a dossier to end up creating a great content. In the end, it is a tool for creating all kinds of content but integrating the web and office world" Luis García, co-founder added: "We are usually told that we are a vitamin-packed PowerPoint. A PowerPoint for today's needs, but not for those of 20 years ago"

#### - Identify new opportunities (Number 4)

Genially managed to identify the market needs and found in them a business opportunity. As its co-



founder pointed out: “Genially originally emerged from Ecoavantis, a company specialised in the communication of something as complex as sustainability or corporate social responsibility. I am a partner and former CEO of Ecoavantis. There we created interactive content for large public and private corporations linked to these issues which are very difficult to explain and unattractive to the general public. We realised that the only way to get there was by making spectacular content. We realised that the key was to use audiovisual communication, that the contents entered through the eyes and interactivity. That is, that the receiver who obtained the information had the capacity to interact with those contents: click here and more information comes out... Let things happen! What we have tried is to make communication an experience. We were very comfortable because they were big clients, big accounts, who started to want to modify contents. If they didn't know how to program, it was impossible for them to touch them. As that question became more and more recurrent, we said, hey, if people love what they create, it wouldn't be a bad idea to make a tool for people in general to create content and apply it to any field. So we jumped into the mud as we saw a market opportunity. We were aware that a new generation of content was needed. People were tired of static content and PowerPoint. We provided a solution that was proven in terms of the type of content. Now we had to create the medium to do it. We realised that the problem was that the way to create these contents, which took many hours of programming and programmers, was expensive. Normally people, not even big corporations, could make their day-to-day life that kind of content and that kind of communication. It was only for the launch of big products, strategic memories... That is, very specific things. So we thought that this could be a day-to-day communication, that it could be done by an SME, a blogger, or teachers and students, which is our reality. Today, one and a half million people from all walks of life and all over the world are creating content that until recently could only be created by large teams of designers”

- International expansion. (Number 5)

In only 4 years, the Spanish startup has offices in Cordoba, Madrid, Malaga and New York and clients in more than 100 countries, exceeding 3 million registered users worldwide. Well, the company has just closed a financing round of 4.4 million euros, which will be used for growth in key markets such as the United States, as well as for expanding the team and improving the product. "This new capital injection reinforces our ambitious expansion plan for the coming months. We are very satisfied to have successfully closed this round, and above all to have funds of great prestige and international presence", said Juan Rubio, co-founder and CEO of Genially.

- Form strategic partnerships. (Number 6)

The platform, which has experienced special growth in the field of education, marketing and media, has clients with many different profiles, from major brands such as Michelin, Porsche, Banco Santander, AON, Santillana and Telefónica, to educational institutions such as the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos and the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, and the media Europa Press, Grupo Vocento, Clarín, La Sexta, Grupo Prisa or the sports newspapers Marca and the French newspaper L'Equipe.

- Embrace Change (Number 7)

The firm purpose of this company since its inception has been to revolutionize the world of communication and education through a system that makes available to any user the possibility of

generating interactive content. Its aim was to set up a complete and easy-to-use online platform, with which anyone could generate quality interactive and animated content (computer graphics, interactive designs, presentations, maps, microsities, among others) without the need for programming skills.

- Become self-aware (Number 8)

In genially they are aware of their limitations and needs to keep growing, as Juan Rubio has pointed out in different interviews: “We are condemned to growth. The point of stagnation is not sustainable. I don't know how we will be in three years' time. I have no idea. We do know what we would like. But where it might lead us, I have no idea. We want to be an influential company, a global company. We are already rubbing shoulders with our competition. We want to be a real alternative in specific markets. We have a strong presence in American countries, in Spain and France. We are lacking a lot of growth in the United States, in Brazil, in eastern countries...” “What makes you evolve is the demand, to look forward and not back. I don't think our success is in the number of hours we've worked, but in that degree of obsession.

Working in a web company forces them to be constantly updated with all the news that apply to the digital sector.

- Disrupt Yourself (Number 9)

Genially is a true reflection of a company led by disruptive leaders. They are always looking for better solutions and ways to establish new processes and wants to make an impact on the business as a whole, without worrying about shaking up things or altering the paths to obtain the necessary results. They include their team members in the processes, maintaining transparency and allowing for more convenient decision-making. For them, “Genius comes from mixing obsession with work and creativity. Each one of them can contribute a little of these three things, from the most to the least” “On a personal level, the fact of working from the first hour with a team of close and creative people makes our work much easier and marks the way for new incorporations. Today we are more than 40 people working and, in the near future, we will be many more, all with the same objective that does not stop dreaming”

- Recognize and reward the value of learning in failure (Number 10)

As Oscar Wilde quoted: “Experience is simply the name we give our mistakes”, that means when you make a mistake, take a moment to recognize what it is you did wrong, how to fix it, and how to avoid repeating your mistake in the future. If you got something out of your mistake, it's not failure—it's a learning experience.

When you learn from failure, it forces you to think creatively, to fight, to find new ways to motivate your team or explore solutions you hadn't considered before. Conversely, staying in failure mode only invites more failure.

As Juan Rubio, one of the co-founders, remarked: “It is clear that the balance between what you do wrong and what you do right is much more positive. Precisely, one of the things we emphasize most is being aware that being wrong is part of the process”

- Focus on the process as an ongoing project (Number 11)

Focusing on outcomes instead of the process is a mistake many leaders make. Leaders need to learn how to maintain focus on the “controllables” — the things they can actually impact. These are also

called lagging or leading indicators. Lagging outcomes are the results that occur as a result of leading indicators. Leaders need to focus on the leading indicators and not the lagging indicators if they want to achieve the best results.

- Practice perseverance (Number 12)

More than simply trying hard, perseverance is a gut-generated determination to not give in and never give up. It comes from a spirit that refuses to accept the failure of quitting. A leader who perseveres stands ready to endure for the long haul.

Successful accomplishers are always chasing something greater: goals that are difficult to achieve. They feel they have something to prove—to themselves and/or others. They have direction, know what they want and hate falling short of it.

According to Juan: “We are not satisfied with being more than 40 people, we want more. That number will be very short at the end of this year; and more than a year from now...

That motivation, that desire to improve ourselves and to continue improving the platform to reach more people, that is the key. That is the essence of us and that is the basis of our future. We want to generate that same illusion in all the people who use us and, of course, in all the people who work with us.

### Rationale of the decision taken

Achieving growth means increasing revenues and expanding the company's performance without affecting the profit margin and profitability. It is necessary to measure strengths and weaknesses, calculate risks and organise finances. In this sense, they identified their competitors through a competitive analysis. This analysis is not only about understanding how your rivals manage their business, but also about knowing the mistakes they make so that you can proactively avoid them and save your company from potential setbacks.

This analysis helped them to get an accurate picture of trends in the market that they might not otherwise have been able to see, to better understand customer behaviour in how their product is going to improve their lives and provide them with a closer look at their competitors' strategies, and above all to identify market gaps, such as some potential places that no competitor has yet bothered to address by seizing the opportunity, filling in the gaps and thus exploring a new market for their brand.

On the other hand, Genially are a clear example of growth mindset. From their beginnings, they have tried new things, experimented, made mistakes and corrected them along the way. Rejecting what didn't work after trying to see what might.

At the same time, the founders of genially have seen the challenges as opportunities by enjoying the opportunities for self-improvement and learning more about how to fail well. For this purpose, they have tried different learning tactics because there is no single model for learning, what works for one person may not work for you and have been aware of their mistakes, replacing the word "failing" with the word "learning". When you make a mistake or fall short of a goal, you have not failed; you have learned.

They have learned from their mistakes and considered where they went wrong in a given situation and what could have been done differently, so the next time you are presented with the opportunity to decide on a similar matter, the right choice will be evident.

On the other side, they have not given in to any unexpected obstacles or difficulties that have threatened the team members but have examined the circumstances of the difficulty, found a possible



solution and put in place implementation methods that will enable their team to persevere through the obstacle and continue on the path to successfully achieve the objectives and, all thanks to the perseverance of the team leader.

### Solution implemented in practice

Solution implemented in practice

One of the partners went through an incubation programme at Founders Institute, an American business incubator, entrepreneur training and startup launch program.

Quoting his words: "it was interesting to go through Founders, as this company organised a worldwide event in San Francisco with the 40 best startups incubated in the different franchises of the programme and they selected us to participate and show our product. By the end of 2015, companies started to approach us to contract the service and have us remove the watermark with the Genially logo. Over time we have designed several packages of features and prices that are aimed at designers and freelancers and, of course, we have also designed options for large companies. One of the advantages of having gone through the Founders Institute is the connection with investors and many of the mentors come from this sector"

The Spanish company set itself the goal of closing 2020 with greater growth in Anglo-Saxon countries, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom. For this reason, they have added a delegation in New York to those already existing in Cordoba, Malaga and Madrid. It can be said that Genially is a "born global" type start-up since the project was born with international aspirations. However, the current objective is to increase the turnover in the United States. In parallel, the company is considering its penetration of other markets with high population and digitalization rates such as the German case.

Although there is a potential threat from Genially's main competitors (among others: Visme, Canva, Prezi, Piktochart, Powtoon or the Power Point itself), this tool seeks to differentiate itself through interactivity, the versatility of types of creations and the style of templates.

### Lesson learned

- Decision making is an on-going process in every business.
- Having critical thinking skills allows one to ascertain the problem and come up with a solution that is beneficial to the company and its employees.
- Managers have to make decisions every day, and the process used in making a decision is important to their bottom line.
- A "growth mindset," thrives on challenge and sees failure not as evidence of unintelligence but as a heartening springboard for growth and for stretching our existing abilities.
- When you have a growth mindset – you are open to learn and try out new things which promotes innovation and risk-taking at the workplace.

### Connection to the six skills depicted in the project

- Decision making
- Mindset

