

The brilliant app that helps you park your car

Garret Flower's company [Parkpnp](#) may just solve the crisis of finding available places to park your car.

Background

I'm from Longford originally and I moved up to Dublin 11 years ago to go to Dublin Business School where I studied accountancy and finance. Initially I was apprehensive, but I ended up loving Dublin and studying accountancy gave me a strong foundation for starting a business.

It became clear what avenue I was going to take. My parents set up a business when I was young and I grew up in that environment and they were quite open to the idea of doing things differently. In secondary school, I took my first steps into business, where I started a noodle business. I attended boarding school in Westmeath and at night everyone would be starving in the dorms. Me and my friend Mike would buy loads of Koka noodles and cook them at night and get the smell out around the dorms so that people would want some. We bought them at 12c and sold them for €2.

In college, it became clear that I wasn't a great employee. I was fired from three jobs and it made me realise I didn't want to work for someone else. So I went and started a bakery business called [Krüst](#), which is still going seven years on. I then went onto [Parkpnp](#) with my business partner Daniel Paul, who is the tech genius behind our product, and we went out and raised €500k and this helped us build the team.

[Parkpnp](#)

I was seeing a girl at the time and she lived in Rathfarmham, and she used to pick me up from the bus, but she eventually convinced me to get a car. Then I was driving through Ranelagh going to a party one evening and I couldn't find anywhere to park. I ended up finding a free space but it was for a resident in the area so I knocked on the door and asked could I use the parking space. The lady who lived there allowed this and later that evening I came back to her with €10, some chocolates and a new business idea.

I used Airbnb a lot and it made me realise that something similar could be used to find parking with people renting out their spaces. To date, we've raised €1.5 million and the product is now in Ireland, Belgium and the Netherlands. We've just rolled out our new product called Park Office which is solely business to business and focuses on office parking for large companies.

In terms of the market place, anyone can go online and rent out their space and with [Park Office](#), businesses can reach out to us and we can manage all their spaces online and can get up to 25pc more people using their spaces.

Challenges

The most challenging thing in business is finding the right people. You need to have people who are willing to go on a journey with you, especially now in Ireland where there are so many big companies offering huge salaries. It's very hard for a start-up to be competitive but we have a good team with 15 staff. We were nominated by Jobbio for being in the top 100 places to work and we won the Irish Times innovation award for sustainability so retaining staff has been something we've been good at.

Change anything?

If I could go back, I would look to try build my investor network sooner and I would focus on getting customers to say 'I love this product' before selling. I'd get a small group of customers to use the product first, before going out and fully selling it. I think a lot of companies make the mistake of launching too quickly and don't focus on improving the product after it launches. Their focus turns to fixing the product so the customer stays.

Inspirations

The people who inspire me are other entrepreneurs who are at a similar stage to where I am now. It's a real grind and people have to overcome a lot of struggle in order to grow and reach their goals. They are the real inspirational people to me.

Advice

The advice I'd give someone is to focus on building products that people will love, not just a functional product. I think too many people build functional products that just do a certain job, and it's just too safe. Why do that when you can do something more exciting that will drive you to be ambitious.