

## Diary of a student entrepreneur 2020, part 3

**This summer 10 start-ups from Trinity are taking part in the LaunchBox accelerator programme. This is their story.**

[LaunchBox](#), in partnership with [Bank of Ireland](#), and managed by experts in Tangent, Trinity's Ideas Workspace at Trinity College Dublin, provides mentorship, funding, access to alumni and investors, and the ideal collaborative environment to launch new startup ventures.

This is the eighth year of LaunchBox, but the first year that the programme is running online.

To get a sense of the calibre of these start-ups, check out their [video pitches](#).

**Lauren O'Reilly, co-founder of ProMotion, Pharmacy student**



Since starting the LaunchBox programme, I have been amazed at how connected and supportive the Irish start-up ecosystem is.

I have connected with not only this year's and previous years' LaunchBox teams, but also with startups from UCC and NUIG through LinkedIn.

I have found that as a start-up in Ireland, you are only ever one connection away from the person you need to get in front of. On top of that, people in general are so willing to help. They want to connect us with the right people and help us along our journey. In this ecosystem, I have experienced a sense of camaraderie, like a common recognition that it takes a village to raise a startup.

They say it's an ill wind that blows no one any good. For society, during Covid-19, and continuing into the uncertain future, cycling has become increasingly important in returning to some form of normality. With new cycling infrastructure finally being implemented in Dublin, and commuters living within cycling distance of their workplace being encouraged to cycle, this is a pivotal time for our startup, ProMotion, to take a foothold, and to be honest, we are excited about it.

I really think our company will help with incentivising cycling, and contribute to public health measures in that way.

If I were speaking to someone beginning their start-up journey now, having had the experience I have had so far, I would say keep it simple, set bi-weekly goals, and be willing to pivot when it's obvious that you need to.

**David Weitbrecht, co-founder of Rezero, Creative Thinking & Entrepreneurship graduate**



What does it mean to be an entrepreneur? I think it's about taking calculated risks. It's about risking your time, money and energy for something you believe in. It's about skin in the game, where the success or failure of your enterprise depends on your decisions and input.

The main challenge to us has been the pandemic. Covid-19 has meant that we have had to delay our launch plans by a number of months, given our product will be rolled out in partnership with restaurants.

As the virus initially struck, there was ambiguity around whether the virus was transmitted via packaging and if reusables were safe. This led many businesses to ban reusables and individuals to resort to single-use items. As the virus progressed and it was further researched, we have learned that reusables are safe and hygienic to use once the correct protocols are followed.

Sentiment is slowly shifting back in favour of reusables and taking action on single-use. This has created an additional challenge for our business to communicate that reusables are safe and to reassure the public that the relevant health and safety guidelines are being adhered to.

Since I started my journey with Rezero I have learned the Irish start-up ecosystem is small, interconnected, and supportive. Everyone seems to know everyone else and is more than happy to lend you 30 minutes of their time to help out. As an environmental and sustainability-related startup, there are a range of supports, grants and programs available to fund, support and grow your idea from concept to reality.

I've learned that lack of market need is the top reason for startup failure which can be a product of poor timing. I would advise anyone starting a business to test your product-market fit and your assumptions about timing. Ask yourself, are you "solutionising"? Could your product/service be altered to achieve a better product-market fit? Is the timing right to launch your solution? Be honest!

**Liam Lysaght, co-founder FiltraCycle, Engineering student**



To me, being an entrepreneur means having an unlimited capacity for failure. It requires the ability to fail over and over and over again, and to keep getting back up.

You need to take a perverse pride in persisting long after any reasonable person would have given up and gone home (apparently, this attitude is also why my injured knee has never healed).

To my mind, entrepreneurs are people who are pathologically unable to surrender, but who can also sense when an idea has run its course and pivot without a moment's hesitation.

Ireland is undoubtedly the one of the best countries to become this kind of entrepreneur. No matter how developed your business is, there's an accelerator programme tailored for you. The network of mentors, the supports, and the funding available here have allowed my start-up FiltraCycle to grow at a rate that wouldn't be possible anywhere else.

Covid-19 forced FiltraCycle out of the nest (read: our makeshift-garden-lab) and into the real world. Instead of a slow progression of lab tests, we've spent the summer building a small factory to test our recycling method at scale. It's been brutally difficult, and has made me miss the relaxed days of college exams, but it has also forced us to exceed our own expectations.

The best advice I can offer someone starting their own business is to apply for a start-up accelerator, and do it yesterday. The biggest mistake I made with FiltraCycle was not seeking support sooner. If all you have is an idea and some grit, there are plenty of organisations in Ireland eager to hear about your idea and help you make it a reality.

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