The ZEO Story

The story of ZEO is one of genuine friendship, the embrace of challenge and an ongoing quest to create a positive impact in the world.

EARLY DAYS

Back in 2003, two like-minded students, Slava Kolomeichuk and Iurii Dvoinos, started hanging around together. "When we first met, Slava was wearing a t-shirt with a print What will be tomorrow? He was different. He seemed to be a deep thinker and very serious. We became friends fairly quickly – and he turned out to be a very open and cheerful dude", Iurii remembers with a chuckle.

While studying at the Technical University of Ukraine "KPI" in Kiev, these two students often found themselves observing various problems or frustrations around them and wondering how they might improve upon them. On campus, they relied upon an internal Internet network and started to imagine how a satellite broadcasting service could be created. They hatched the idea to build a solution that allowed thousands of students to watch various TV channels simultaneously, by using only one satellite antenna and one server. Slava and Iurii were freshmen when they decided to bring that idea to life.

Their first major challenge was funding. In order to get the necessary seed money, they worked various summer jobs, saving their money as they went. One memorable experience was working night shifts at a print house with poor air conditioning. "During one of our late shifts, Iurii was so exhausted that he fell asleep. I didn't want to wake him, so I just worked for both of us to complete the plan. Maybe that's where our teamwork really began. Now, it's just the way we do things – we always have each other's backs," recalls Slava.

Before long, they had earned enough money and created a prototype. What they needed next was a permit from campus administration, but for a variety of reasons, they couldn't get it. It was an early lesson – learned the hard way – that a good idea that solves a real problem is a small part of what it takes to be successful.

Continuing their friendship, the two decided to advance by getting more professional experience. They worked as developers at different IT companies and spent their evenings laying plans to start their own business. They explored ideas like founding a web-studio or writing a popular translator mobile app. The two were eager to find the right challenge to tackle and were inspired by the opportunity to create something of their own.

BLUE OCEAN

The quest continued as 22 year olds working to achieve Master's Degrees in Computer

Science. Being avid Apple enthusiasts, they realized there was no all-in-one platform utility for the MacOS. If you needed to clean or optimize your Mac, you had to be a true geek. Iurii describes, "We got the idea to create an app which would make digital life easier for average students and people like our parents." This is how the MacKeeper app was born. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Developed in 2009 and launched in 2010, MacKeeper quickly found a niche for itself and became a market breakthrough. Friends from the university became the first employees of the new company. Many of them are still with the company, rising to become startup tech angels and mentors. At the time, there was no recruitment or HR department. Every employee simply had one or two smart friends who joined the MacKeeper team. "From the beginning, we looked for guys who were ready to take on challenges. None of us had the benefit of past experience, so we had to solve multiple tasks on our own. Being passionate about solving problems and not shrinking from a challenge is now locked into our company DNA," Iurii explains.

Like most young companies, the team had hard knocks along the way. In the early stages, they tried to update the app as soon as possible, focused primarily on speed. Allowing a few bugs or product shortcomings seemed acceptable. They soon learned though that bugs and imperfections lead to negative feedback – which can stay on the Internet forever. These experiences sparked a commitment to always keep the balance between speed and quality, and to always think like a user.

USER-CENTRIC

As soon as MacKeeper was released, Slava and Iurii noticed users asking for an antivirus feature. So off they went to Germany – to the headquarters of Avira – one of the most successful producers of antivirus engine in Europe. The passion from the two young entrepreneurs helped persuade Avira management to issue them a license to use the Avira antivirus engine for free for one year.

As a result, MacKeeper integrated a Unix engine into MacOS faster than Avira. Fast-forward to 2016, MacKeeper now has over 25 million installs worldwide and its products and services are available in 18 languages.

Five years in, the two friends found themselves guiding hundreds of employees and serving thousands of customers around the world. Global connections had been made, new partnerships formed, and a unique culture built around teamwork and the acceptance of challenges was suddenly thriving out of a busy office in Kiev. The ability to spot an opportunity, develop a product and impact a market was extremely motivating to the two founders and their team. They spent countless hours discussing product ideas, technical challenges and new business ideas. Finding additional ways to make an impact became the company's growth strategy.

THE BIRTH OF ZEO

"You are more likely to make a significant impact on the market, if you have a dedicated team of people who share the same values as you do," Slava said. "This is how the idea of ZEO was born – a business model and a place – where people can share a passion for products, their technical expertise and their ideas, to create a portfolio of useful products."

A huge milestone for the maturing company was the founding of ZEO Alliance, a technology-inspired company dedicated to creating products and experiences that positively impact the world. Our founders were convinced that their innovative company could continue to find blue oceans of opportunity, attract top talent with a thirst for challenge, and operate successfully as an alliance of product and service companies.

They launched several new ideas. Failed fast. Learned the lessons. And tried again. And this is how new companies and products were created. As ZEO Alliance grew, it discovered several eye-opening new businesses opportunities. One in particular surprised everyone with how quickly it took off. Slava and Iurii wanted to establish a remote, personal IT assistance program. Staffed by young, super smart techies, it would be like Apple's Genius bar, only available to anyone, anytime, anywhere. At just the right time it seems, ZoomSupport with its unlimited 24/7 support, was born. The project was led by two employees who had joined the company two years prior as customer supporters. They'd worked in different roles, advancing steadily as they learned new professional skills and were eager for more responsibility. As the concept for the ZoomSupport business emerged, they volunteered to bring it to life.

Success was breathtaking. In just two years, the guys managed to grow the startup from a company of 2 to over 1,000 employees across 5 offices in different cities. ZoomSupport stands now as the textbook ZEO example of how the right idea, guided by the right talent and provided the resources to bloom, can create enormous impact.

SUCCESS ENGINE

Throughout the early years and as ZEO Alliance was formed, Slava and Iurii followed a loosely articulated philosophy based around creating opportunity, boldly tackling new challenges, and constantly pushing forward. In 2015, this crystallized into a clear vision that the founders expressed as 'Create a New Normal.' Iurii explains, "New Normal is not only about global products and exploring new markets, but also about constant personal growth, leaving your comfort zone and overcoming challenges."

Inspired by "new normal" the team also wanted to bring hardware products into their mix. During a team brainstorm, looking for new ways to improve computer security, the group realized that many of the tasks were best solved by hardware. That meeting concluded with an agreement to tackle the next big challenge – the IoT space (Internet of Things). Eventually, hardware team RnD64 joined ZEO as part of its group of companies, creating Hello Egg - AI Kitchen Voice

Assistant, and Jammy, portable electronic guitar. Both products are a combination of advanced technology and missions able to change the world in its way.

The main asset of ZEO Alliance has always been its staff and their find-the-way-to-get-it-done attitude. "Ambition and plans amount to nothing without the right people. We are constantly seeking extraordinary professionals who enjoy working in a challenging environment and can focus on complicated tasks," Slava explains. "In exchange, ZEO stands ready to provide them with interesting projects and endless opportunity for growth."

Slava and Iurii believe in their hearts that by building a team who share their passion for products, for challenges and the vision of creating a New Normal, they will create even more remarkable products, and impact ever greater numbers of people around the world. But that will be another story.