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# Podcast start-up Awesound wins Silicon Valley backing



Elaine O'Regan

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Mark Moriarty, founder of Awesound Picture: Clare Keogh

His passion for podcasts has netted Cork-based software developer Mark Moriarty \$20,000 in funding from YCombinator, the Silicon Valley seed accelerator programme established by Viaweb co-founder Paul Graham.

Moriarty has developed a software platform that aims to improve the lot of podcasters of all persuasions by helping them to make more money. In securing funding from YCombinator, his start-up, Awesound, has joined the ranks of Dropbox, Airbnb and Stripe.

“It made me a lot more focused on what matters. When you set up a start-up, you can settle into this acceptance that you need to do 20 things every week, because that’s your job as founder,” he said.

“Funders ask you to define your metric. My metric is the number of publishers using the platform. If my aim at the start of the week is to sign up two new publishers, that’s what they want from me, not ‘oh, I designed this new feature for the website’. The focus is on growth.”

Awesound aims to help podcasters sell their shows and earn more money by targeting advertising to relevant listeners.

“It’s a back-end platform that works with existing apps, like pre-installed iOS podcasts app,” said Moriarty. “We’ve developed patent-pending technology to mine the most granular podcast statistics in the world, and we’ve signed up 500 publishers so far. Our peak so far has been 221 listener requests per second.”

Moriarty studied physics and applied maths at Berkeley University in California, and worked in robotics research at Harvard University before joining Claritics, a big data start-up in Silicon Valley. It was in his subsequent role as a management consultant with McKinsey and Co in London, that he came up with the idea for Awesounds.

“In a job like that you’re working long hours and travelling a lot. Your schedule is fairly irregular, so I started listening to podcasts and found that I was depending on them, both for catching up on news and for entertainment,” he said.

Awesound has just been named best start-up business in south Co Cork in the regional phase of Ireland’s best young entrepreneur competition, hosted annually by the Local Enterprise Offices.

Its clients include iTunes top charts podcasts. “Our main competitor here is Audible, which charges 60 to 75 per cent commission on each audiobook sold. We charge 10 per cent commission,” said Moriarty.



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