

Isidoros Sideridis of Pobuca

Speaker1: [00:00:04.75] This is the Investor Connect podcast program. I'm Hall Martin. I'm the host of the show in which we interview angel investors, venture capital, family offices, private equity, many other investors for early stage and growth companies. I hope you enjoy this episode. Hello, this is Hall Martin with Investor Connect, they were here Isidoros Sideridis CEO and co-founder of Pobuca. Pobuca offers a go to market platform for brands and retailers that have some boost their customer experiences booka. You can engage your customers and empower your people in sales, marketing and customer service. Isidoros thank you for joining us.

Speaker2: [00:00:43.45] Thank you, Hal. Nice meeting you.

Speaker1: [00:00:46.33] Nice meeting you as well. So tell us more about your background before cofounding Publico. What did you do before this?

Speaker2: [00:00:53.20] Yeah, actually we started our business while being students back in 2000. We were four co-founders starting at the technical university English, and we loved it. And we decided to start a company just that and conquer the world, you know, dreams without actually having the business plan. Back then, in 2000, everything was Web related. And however, it turned out that CRM was our expertise. We started winning projects in Greece, mostly in the CRM. So to answer directly your question, I have only worked for booka and actually Zevin, which was our formally named until 2016. For 16 years we have been leaders with She'arim in Greece and in 2016 we took the leap to pivot our business model in order to scale globally. We moved our headquarters in London and by investing eight million dollars, we became a software as a service company specializing in customer experience. And we do have our own software now, the platform.

Speaker1: [00:02:00.16] And so what led you to start work in this space?

Speaker2: [00:02:03.07] We decided so because of our expertise in customer experience, technology and CRM and the fact the fact that was quite easy for us to package our experience

in software intellectual property. Moreover, CRM is the biggest software market and there is lots and lots of room to live, which is our technology expertise.

Speaker1: [00:02:25.66] And so what's your advice for people investing in this sector? What do you tell them to do before they write that check?

Speaker2: [00:02:32.26] Yeah, so I think but it's quite easy to monetize our value as entrepreneurs and companies with actual sales. My advice to potential investors is to invest in companies that are bootstrapped but have already gained some customers and want to raise money to improve their product and further go to market. Actually, the CRM in the customer experience market is so big that you can have traction without raising money unless you are developing in that.

Speaker1: [00:03:05.05] Great. So let's talk about the investing in this sector. How do you see this industry evolving? Where do you see it going?

Speaker2: [00:03:11.62] It's evolving fast and it's driven, mostly driven by the omnichannel customer experience. But it's very, very hot topic because of the pandemic. So I would say that technologies that are driven by A.I. and has to do with the omni channel experience that the consumer is expecting and this was accelerated by the pandemic is the hottest, let's say, 016 topic right now.

Speaker1: [00:03:41.44] And so what is the growth rate of the sector with Omni Channel and so forth driving it?

Speaker2: [00:03:46.24] Yeah, so customer experience is not only a huge market, but also a very fast growing market with 20 percent year over year growth. In fact, the whole she had an ecosystem and customer experience is a part of it is the biggest and at the same time the fastest growing software market globally. This has this has happened only once before in the nineties with ERP system and now it's happening with CRM customer experience to be at the same time the biggest and the fastest growing market is.

Speaker1: [00:04:19.18] So how many companies are engaged in this process?

Speaker2: [00:04:22.24] Yeah, so that brought the competition is big. There are more than 300 companies globally that specialize in customer experience. However, if we want to narrow down our competition for booka companies that specialize in brands and retailers customer loyalty and engagement, then there are around 200.

Speaker1: [00:04:43.48] Very good. And so what are the challenges in operating in this space?

Speaker2: [00:04:48.17] Yeah, the biggest challenge is that 73 percent of all consumers demand better and personalized experiences. And this is quite hard in the case of brands and retailers that have big numbers of anonymous consumers. The only way for them, for a bunch of retailers to achieve it is by using technology and data in particular that will help them identify their customers. The challenge is to use new technology with a purpose to make the overall experience more human and without creating frustrations or. And through empowering employees to bring out the best, so we have to use technology in a way that it seems to be more human, not of technology.

Speaker1: [00:05:35.77] But what's the challenge in moving to omni channel when someone says I need to move into omni channel? What exactly do they have to do to make that work?

Speaker2: [00:05:45.19] Yeah, so actually there are two things that they have to do. The first thing is that they have to make the proper touchpoint, physical or digital touch points in order for their customers to interact with their brand or the retailer. So the first thing is to build a proper touchpoint. And the second thing is to have a backoffice, a platform for their employees to serve those customers. Imagine now that a typical customer service of a retailer receives around 2000, 3000 messages per day and they have five or six times like emails, chat, phone calls, social media, all these kind of things. So they need to have a platform like Facebook to integrate all these different touch points to one family. And with the help of claytie to empower the customer service agent to offer a proper customer service experience to their customers.

Speaker1: [00:06:47.08] And so how does it fit into this landscape for customer experiences?

Speaker2: [00:06:52.84] So we have a bigger platform. We engage your customers and empower your people to offer better experiences. In Hooka, we aspire to create the next global leader that will disrupt customer experience for brands and retailers. We believe that customers generate revenue. However, employees are they want to drive the overall experience. We also believe that technology isn't the final solution. Rather than an enabler, companies won't be able to solve the customer experience problems if technology alone is just the means to make it happen. The focus is on experience to realign priorities accordingly. Great employee tools and experience to bring stronger, smarter, more innovative ideas which will drive future business and software. Customer experience along this line of work platform offers two group of solutions those that engage customers and tell our clients to increase their revenues with campaigns or their loyalty systems. Digital touch points for customer service and solutions that empower their people in sales, marketing and customer service with a proper business plan to increase their productivity and offer better experiences. So if I wanted to summarize, our USP is that we provide the turnkey customer experience offering that also includes state of the art A.I. based software. We offer design consulting, a software and technical implementation of the sales support and marketing managed services that we can unlock through this area. Real business by. So, yeah, this is this is where we stand.

Speaker1: [00:08:34.65] So who is your ideal customer? What size company benefits the most from it in Europe?

Speaker2: [00:08:39.99] I would say enterprise customers, but in the U.S. it's mid-market, actually. Companies that have two to three thousand employees, brands and retailers with two or three thousand employees.

Speaker1: [00:08:52.00] Good. And what's the next step for you guys with this solution? Where do you plan to take it?

Speaker2: [00:08:57.57] Yeah, so our plan is to embed more and more technology and make it possible. I mean, for customer experience, although we already have a software, you say, and and the customer service agents or the marketing people are hit by a state, they have to do some boring and repetitive tasks. I mean, they have to campaign. So they have to segment customers and target the right messages. I strongly believe that in the next year, sometime

within the next five to 10 years, all these boring tasks will be the boring, repetitive tasks will be replaced by. And let me give you an example. For instance, let's say that you have a supermarket and Thanksgiving is coming. And I will suggest a campaign about Turkey and the Omni Channel campaign with communicated through to the customers. Is it going to be a text message, email, WhatsApp, message, social media or whatever? And the only thing that the human will have to do is to put their creativity back, the right message, how we are going to communicate, how we are going to communicate our brand and our offering and all the execution is going to be done by software. So this is where we draw the R&D investments in Facebook in order to try to automate all the boring tasks, simply the creativity for humans.

Speaker1: [00:10:32.13] Ok, that's great. Well, in the last few years that we have here, what else should we cover that we have?

Speaker2: [00:10:36.63] Yeah, so I think that it's clear that customer experience is evolving into a dominant competitive advantage, 90 percent of companies expecting in the coming years to try to differentiate on this basis. The pandemic was a huge accelerator for this trend. So A the head for the dominance in the market for those retail and consumer products companies that will better catch the pulse of the post covid data and then just offer the personalized experience that the customer seek across every available channel and say, this is this is a core message. This is what I want to communicate to all the consumer brands and retailers out there that make them understand that customer experience is a dominant topic. It's not a luxury anymore.

Speaker1: [00:11:30.78] Right. How best for listeners to get back in touch with you

Speaker2: [00:11:34.20] So they may connect with me through my blog at Facebook dot com slash Ishimaru, and they will find a link to my LinkedIn page there. And I urge them to connect with me and discuss more about technology and CRM customer experience.

Speaker1: [00:11:51.84] Well, that's great. We'll put that in the show notes. Want to thank you for joining us today. And Ottery back for a follow up soon

Speaker2: [00:11:58.23] And click on

Speaker1: [00:11:59.79] Investor Contact helps investors interested in startup funding. In this podcast series, experienced investors share their experience and advice. You can learn more at Investor Connect, Doug. Alti Martin is the director of Envestra Connect, which is a fiber one C three nonprofit dedicated to the education of investors for early stage funding of opinions expressed by hall and podcast guests are solely their own opinions and do not reflect the opinions of investors. Connect. This podcast is for informational purposes only. Should not be relied upon for the basis of investment decisions.