

Humanising real estate with spaceOS

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Maciej Markowski, cofounder & co-CEO at spaceOS about how COVID-19 shook the world of real estate and how they are turning properties into human centric and sustainable workplaces.

There was an obvious and unmet need to digitise real estate – the industry needed information about their clients' satisfaction, ability to provide flexibility to their tenants and to give them proper technology to function in their buildings. It's bizarre that in a typical building it's easier to order food from across the town than from a canteen downstairs, it's easier to report a broken Amazon package than a door that is ajar or to find somebody specialising in AI on LinkedIn than in our own office.

Even innovative places like Factory Berlin were missing basic technology for meeting room booking or issue reporting – and it was for Factory Berlin, and later New Lab (an innovation centre in Brooklyn Navy Yard) that the first functionalities of spaceOS were developed.

Tell me about the business?

Our mission is to humanise real estate. Buildings should be friendly, every space, amenity, product or service should be accessible and reachable through technology. We help turning properties into human centric and sustainable workplaces people love.

How has the business evolved since its launch? When was this?

We started in 2015-16 focused primarily on the early adopters: co-working spaces, innovation centres. They were open to use technology to digitise their operations – leasing, booking, community. There were no legacy systems, spaceOS was (and is) one stop shop for running any flex space.

After that we focused on big office landlords – we work today with Allianz, Aroundtown, Commerz Real, DWS, Immofinanz, Munroe K, Tower 42 and many others – we provided a platform and tenant experience app allowing them to improve tenant attraction and retention, create new revenue streams, gather impactful data and streamline their operations.

And when COVID-19 hit we were on call adding social desk booking, parking space booking and analytics to help companies like Siemens Energy, United Utilities and Hitachi to transition to hybrid working.

How are you funded?

We went a pretty classic route of: Angels -> early VCs -> big game VCs. Of course by now revenue from our clients (we cover 30M sq ft of office space with our technology) is a significant part of how we're funded.

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

COVID-19 came like a sledgehammer, bankrupting some of our co-working clients, and freezing budgets of everyone else. We had to be very creative in shaping contracts, allowing long time to launch or offering "COVID-19 insurance" if buildings are empty – otherwise there was too much uncertainty for clients to make a decision.

How does spaceOS answer an unmet need?

I don't even know where to start. What we've built was and is quite revolutionary. Typical real estate landlords didn't want to be bogged down in the details of their tenants' lives. We turned smartphones of the tenants into

remote controls for the building – ease of access, ability to get a desk, get a parking space, get help at the tip of your finger is a need you didn't know you had.

From the landlord point of view we gave them actionable data on how to attract and keep their tenants – they're no longer flying blind. And we helped them automate inefficient processes like leasing, invoicing or access control management.

What's in store for the future?

We'll go much deeper into building infrastructure, ESG and providing tech tooling to tenants. It takes a lot to make buildings sustainable, but with good analytics, sensors and ability to predict attendance, there's a lot that can be accomplished!

What one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

If you want to be a successful founder, you need much more than one piece of advice! I'd pick a couple: spend as much time as you can hiring the first 10-20 people, they'll be the ones that will shape the culture of the firm and set the performance standard for the rest. Secondly, be patient and resilient, it's a marathon – things will go poorly, mistakes will be made, there will be times where funding will be hard to come by, just carry on, keep improving. And finally, maybe reiterating on the first point: think seriously who you start the business with, you'll spend more time with them than with your own family at times.

Maciej Markowski is cofounder & co-CEO at [spaceOS](#).