

The floragunn Story

Claudia Kressin · 2022-11-21



The Very Beginning

Ten years ago, towards the end of 2012, it was our time to get serious. After countless discussions and thorough thinking, we took the step on the 15th of November to start our own company. We had many ideas for what we wanted to do, but we had no idea what we would have to consider and all that comes with founding our own company!

Lacking focus on which idea to implement first, Jochen and I initially offered our experience and knowledge on a service basis working as consultants. I ended up in QA on various projects for Deutsche Telekom and Jochen worked as Technical Director for a range of companies from a small start-up to an established publishing company.



Work and Travel

As we settled into offering our services externally, we tackled the next big change, work and travel. We had been continuously writing blog articles on our Laos trip whilst imagining how nice it would be to just be able to do all the work on the road. In 2015, we went to Iceland and dared to do just that, inspired by stories of other digital nomads. There was always a lot to do, working remotely for others was very diversified and presented its own challenges, which kept us from creating something of our own for now.

The Unexpected

There were other aspects of having a company that came surprisingly. Our longtime friend and former roommate wanted to 'park' his GitHub project with us, as he couldn't find a buyer and he himself had to stop working on it for personal reasons. Of course, we accepted and step by step Jochen became more and more involved in the project.

By March 2015, we had seen plenty of potential showing this project could provide a needed solution and we decided to buy the project for our company. Encouragingly more and more requests for the software solution kept coming with emails asking for release dates, documentation, and support. At this time we were working on this project that was now ours, alongside our full-time consulting positions.

A Warmer Winter

On November 20th, 2015, we turned our backs on home for four months to spend the winter in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. Unfortunately, Jochen had to insert a short break to finish the fiscal end of the year with the tax office in good old cold Germany. During our South American tour, we tried to sell the software product including the trademark, as there had been a respective request from America. Fortunately, as we look back now, this sale did not occur. We still do not know the reason the deal fell through, it was very unlikely to be the price so we trust the universe simply left the project in our hands.

The Two-Track Road

Our journey continued to be turbulent throughout 2016, as we continued with our main jobs and side project. We were being driven by progress and the software product was increasingly taking shape. At the beginning of the year, we did a survey asking which features were needed and what users would pay money for. Again, it was amazing how many people participated and sent us feedback. It seemed we were really onto something that could work. We were slowly scaling down our consulting involvement and giving more and more attention to the product.

In May, Excelerate Systems wrote to us from the USA and offered us a distribution partnership. And this would be very necessary because Jochen told me: "if we give away licenses for free all the time, we will never earn any money and we will have to close the company." He was referring to my enthusiasm for our Academic License Model where schools, universities, research institutes, etc. can get licenses for free. This is our contribution to help make the world a little better and to give something back to the community, it is still going strong in 2022.

Time for the Real Deal

We dedicated the next summer to product design, alongside following the soccer matches of the European Championship. Another contact appeared in terms of distribution, Siren Solutions got in touch with a request to incorporate our product into their product. This was a real eye-opener for us; An idea, technical expertise and a nice logo are not even half the battle of getting something out there. We had to negotiate contracts, set margins and percentages, in short dive deep into legal and economic issues, unprepared, without oxygen tanks or diving suits. At least this is true for me, Jochen had luckily gained experience in his previous position and has a degree in Business Administration additionally to being an Engineer for Information Technology.

Of course, our digital nomadism was not neglected and in 2016 we bought an expedition vehicle. But first we travelled north with one of the masterminds without whom nothing works at floragunn. In Helsinki and Tallinn we were inspired by food, weather and art. Cyprus was next on the list where we participated in a workshop to learn the different tax conditions of the countries of the world.

In the last quarter of the year, floragunn became a GmbH, a german limited company. From here on out, we put all our eggs in one basket. The transition into 2017 was marked by a tough struggle for a decent pricing model and by saying goodbye to our consulting clients. We were excited and scared as we delved full-time into the quest of our own software company.



Our Distribution Friends

Our first stop was in Paris where we exhibited our product for the first time at a fair, as guests at the booth of our distribution partners. Finally we met in person. Having been told repeatedly that a distribution network of external partners will not work, we are still waiting for that rule to be proven.

From spring 2017 we worked exclusively on the product. We received inquiries from all over the world and settled in with our distribution partners. By autumn 2017 floragunn GmbH is on the road again - en route to Sweden, in the expedition vehicle. The goal was to travel, see many exciting sights, eat, and drink well whilst selling licenses like burgers from the truck. But then reality hits once again, we had inquiries and big ones from the USA. They wanted to talk to us in person, so we turned around, went back and parked our travel vehicle once again. With the end of the year, it was time to slow down and rest as we plan the next chapter for our little company.

The conferences continue in 2018, in spring we were exhibitors at the RSA Conference in San Francisco, with a small DIY booth. The week was intense! The conversations at the booth were impressive. We celebrated the successful exhibitor appearance with a road trip to Silicon Valley and then from California to Nevada.



Team floragunn

Afterwards, for the very first time, all those who make floragunn so successful came together near Berlin; Sales teams from the USA and France, the sales manager from Mexico, two colleagues from our German sales partner and the developers who supported us at that time. We celebrated, made plans and arranged a promotional tour to Mexico. Two months later we were on our way and we visited potential customers and held interviews with local papers and the Spanish edition of a software security magazine.

No Looking Back

No sooner were we back than the next trip was on the agenda, BBoost in Bordeaux, a trade show specifically for open source software solutions in the fall of 2018. At this time I managed to convince Mechthild, my colleague from Telecom times, to join our team. As soon as she started, she was impressed by what happens here at floragunn. A small company, with its own capital, and colleagues that are mostly freelancers or partner companies and it is successful worldwide. Time passed quickly as we planned how to continue with the company, and attended the next RSA Conference.

In 2019 we went to San Francisco as one of the exhibitors at the German Pavilion. For the first time we had the booth professionally built, we met all our sales colleagues and we planned the future together with them after the conference. However, there were many recurring factors; Pizza at Uncle Vito's, Anchorsteam beer, staying at Alice's, and a trip to Silicon Valley at the end of our visit.

The summer of 2019 was filled with events. We had a booth at Info Security in London where we also met with former colleagues from our time before floragunn. We went to Rome from there to meet part of our sales representatives. We had another offsite on a pretty german lake and attended Chaos Communication Camp. One more booth was set up at it-sa the IT Security event in Bavaria from where we headed towards Latin America again. We were supposed to represent our product in Chile but unfortunately the political situation did not allow this to go forward. We used the time to meet again with friends and colleagues in Argentina and Uruguay, sharing happy memories from the early days of floragunn.



Here to Stay

2020 and 2021 were unfortunately marked by bad news and unpleasant decisions. Still, there were also highlights to report and we continued on. Despite legal disputes and financial losses, worldwide economic restrictions and measures, we are still here!

As I look back I see what an eventful ten years it has been. We do not regret a minute of the leap into self-employment and we can highly recommend work and travel.

We are again planning where to take our company next, so keep your eyes open for comments from the road.

Here's to the next ten, Claudia

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