



The parallel lives of our IPs

Running a shellfish breeding and aquaculture business in Portugal

In this new series, we speak to the a-connect IPs who are running exciting ventures outside of their consultancy work. From part-time journalists and B&B owners to music writers and health app creators, our entrepreneurial IPs tell us just what it takes to have a dual-track career!

Today, Bernardo Carvalho, who has been an IP with a-connect for more than seven years, shares with us his experiences of founding and building up a shellfish breeding and aquaculture business in Portugal.

1) *When you're not working as an IP, what do you do?*

I run a shellfish breeding and aquaculture business called Oceano Fresco, which is based in Portugal (www.oceano-fresco.pt). Our aim is to be the world leader in the introduction of innovative shellfish varieties with the most relevant traits for the production and consumption chain, while respecting environmental sustainability and consumer safety.

I started Oceano Fresco in late 2015. We employ four people (three professionals with PhDs and one technician), each of whom has breeding, genetics and cultivation skills. We have an advisory board of three people with extensive experience in plant, finfish and shellfish breeding. The intention is to apply tried-and-tested breeding approaches for plants and finfish to shellfish.

2) *How did you come up with the idea of starting a shellfish breeding business?*

The idea came to me gradually and unexpectedly. In actual fact, what it ended up becoming is somewhat different from my initial idea. I had become acquainted with the business of breeding and selling seeds to growers during an a-connect project at Syngenta. The notion that we could feed an ever-increasing population by mixing genes in different ways really appealed to me.

However, since land-based farming and livestock breeding is a mature business, I looked to the sea for opportunities. I decided on shellfish because the sector is large but relatively primitive, and a significant difference can be made by applying science and technology in a systematic way. In addition, a shellfish is one of the most sustainable sources of human protein because it does not require any antibiotics, chemicals or artificial foods (it eats plankton), and it contributes to water quality by filtering it. Breeding shellfish offers the perfect combination of a strong business opportunity and something that is good for our planet.

3) *What are the challenges of your dual-track career?*

The most obvious one is time. Being an IP is already a time-consuming activity and combining it with the notoriously demanding role of entrepreneur is extra challenging. In addition, it requires a lot of mental effort to constantly switch between two completely different topics and be on top of both.

4) *What are the rewards of your dual-track career?*

It's great to have the flexibility to have a dual-track career. This is simply not possible in a standard career. Without the flexibility that being an IP offers, I would probably not have managed to launch my shellfish company. It's also very useful to apply what I learn from working with leading global companies as an IP to my work as an entrepreneur, and vice versa. Finally, it's a flexible way of generating income.

5) *Do you have any words of wisdom for IPs considering starting an entrepreneurial venture?*

It's a marathon, not a sprint. Resilience and adaptability are key, but it's worth it if you believe in the vision. However, you have to be prepared to pull the plug if it does not work (it's not easy and I did not manage to do it with my first startup).



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