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GoFar – Helping you drive smarter

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Danny Adams describes himself as an ‘eco-petrolhead’ and it appears the environment and motorists have much to thank him for. Adams has invented an affordable, user-friendly, driver feedback device named GoFar, which helps drivers significantly reduce their fuel consumption and carbon emissions.

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Danny Adams had a passion for both the environment and motor vehicles from a young age. The aerospace engineer, was always destined for big things, since winning a place at NASA space camp while at school, has invented an intelligent driving feedback device with the potential to make a positive global environmental impact.

“There are three components: a dongle that plugs into the car’s diagnostic board, a mobile application, and a beautiful dash mounted display that we call ‘Ray’,” says Adams “Ray glows blue, when you’re driving in a fuel efficient way that minimises carbon emissions. Drivers can view their emissions on their mobile at various stages of their trip journey. The data collected is synced to the cloud, where it can be viewed via a website or web portal.”

Research suggests that using GoFar can help cut users fuel consumption by up to 22 per cent. That means a US\$149 device could save motorists hundreds of dollars a year and save millions of tonnes of carbon from entering the atmosphere.

Lots more on that shortly but first a little background.

Adams grew up on a farm on the mid-north coast of New South Wales. It's a region famed for its pristine beaches, majestic forests and lush farmland. Like most Australian farm kids, he learnt driving skills and resourcefulness at a young age. "By 12 I was riding motorbikes and driving cars around the farm," he says. "If a motorbike broke down, I had to figure out how to fix it or I couldn't ride it any more. That's when I started tinkering with machines."

While Adams' early education was a long way from any prestigious educational institutions, his talent was recognised early. As a high school student he was one of 120 young Australians chosen to attend an Australian International Space School in Sydney. He impressed the teachers so much he was picked to go on to NASA Space Camp in the US. "It was a lot of fun. We got to do things such as simulated space station missions," says Adams. "It was inevitable I would end up studying aerospace engineering."

Adams credits his studies at The University of New South Wales (UNSW) for providing him with "a certain way of looking at the world". He notes, "Engineering helps people become problem solvers. UNSW is one of the top engineering schools in Australia going there encouraged me to concentrate on coming up with new ideas and working out how to implement them."

A late-night inventor

After completing his degree, Adams spent almost a decade working at technology company 3M "I was in a customer-facing role, which taught me how to speak to customers, understand their needs and create saleable products to meet those needs. That was a valuable experience and I began working on what became GoFar at night and on weekends."

GoFar arose out of Adams' desire to reduce carbon emissions created by cars. "It's not acceptable to drive down the road throwing rubbish out of your car but that's what people do. We dump rubbish through our exhaust pipes without really being conscious of it."

Drawing on three-dimensional rocket-tracking, machine learning algorithms and displays deployed in Formula One vehicles, Adams set about developing a device that would make cars emissions visible and, motivate drivers to reduce them.

He would realise his vision but it would be a long and bumpy road.

For around three years Adams worked alone on GoFar in his spare time. It became clear he'd either have to abandon his well-paid and promising career at 3M or his side project. "By 2013, I was 32, I'd developed a prototype for GoFar and I'd been granted two patents by the US Patent Office he says. I decided to quit my job and to give GoFar a proper crack," he says.

Joining the startup community

"The advice I'd now give any other tech entrepreneur is to be aware of the startup ecosystem in their city and take full advantage of it from early on,"

Launching out on his own, Adams discovered Australia's thriving startup scene. "I was unaware there was a community of people doing similar things to me. I started thinking there must be others who were a few steps further down the path. People who could provide the advice I needed to get things moving faster."

Based in the heart of Sydney, Fishburners is Australia's largest co-working startup space, home to over 100 tech startups.

“I was blown away by what I found. There were lots more people like me, with a diverse range of skills and knowledge and they were only too willing to help”

Several Fishburners members were so excited by the potential of GoFar they decided to partner and work with Adams.

“The advice I'd now give any other tech entrepreneur is to be aware of the startup ecosystem in their city and take full advantage of it from early on,” he says.

In addition to joining Fishburners, Adams was accepted into a four-month course run by the Sydney chapter of The Founders Institute, the world's largest tech entrepreneur training and startup launch program. “It's boot camp for startups,” says Adams.

“There were 120 applicants, 30 entrepreneurs admitted and seven who made it to the end. It's a tough program because business is tough. I learnt so many things but the most important was how to pitch my business. You had to do that every week in front of a panel of experts, business leaders and startup founders. If you didn't do it well, you were out. That pressure forces you to make sure you have a viable idea and fine-tune your message.”

How far can GoFar go?

All that pitching practice has paid off. After emerging as the highest-ranked graduate in his program, Adams raised \$450,000 from high-net-worth investors. A subsequent Kickstarter campaign, “Awesome car computer. Better mileage. Lower emissions. A beautiful device that improves your driving” – was hugely oversubscribed, raising US\$160,000 (\$220,000) rather than the intended US\$50,000. According to The Australian even Australia's Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, took out his credit card and ordered a GoFar when he toured the Fishburners facility.

After developing five prototypes in as many years, Adams was delighted to launch the first production run of GoFars manufactured in Taiwan in October of 2015 with plans to start selling them in February 2016.

“Considering the amount of complicated technology involved it's been a mostly smooth process ,” he says.

“Of the 1,300 units sold through the Kickstarter campaign, about a third were bought by Australians, a third by North Americans and a third by Europeans, with a few sales from Asia as well. We've already set up a subsidiary company in the US and we're negotiating with a car fleet in Germany that wants to bulk-buy GoFars.”

So what's next for Adams?

“The technology can be adapted for use in heavy vehicles and also to detect things such as driver fatigue,” he says. “Plus, it turns out that many of the same things that reduce carbon emissions, such as avoiding sudden acceleration or braking, also result in safer driving. We're looking to get insurance companies interested. There are a billion cars in the world and GoFar is something we can sell everywhere.”

For more information on GoFar visit www.gofar.co

