



Company Name

Cube Tech

Date of Interview

09/09/2021

Contact Person

Thomas Soulios

Site

<https://www.facebook.com/Cube-Tech-107703600810854>

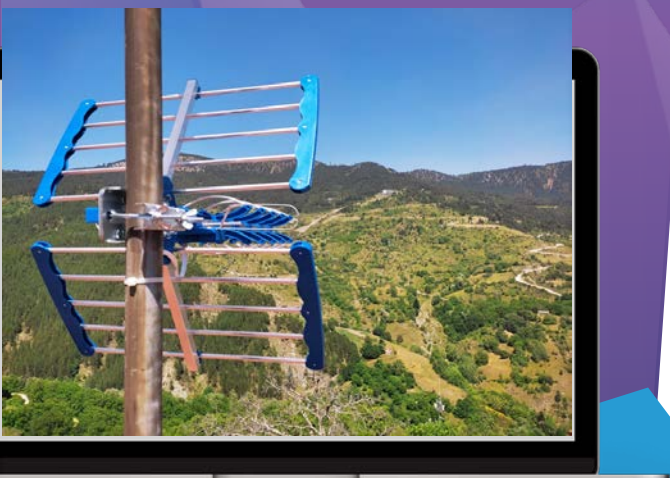
<https://www.facebook.com/soulios.thomas>



Location: town of Metsovo, Epirus.


Metsovo is located at 1,150m, in Pindos mountain.

Thomas is a 32 years old technician and owner of a shop with mobile phones, PCs etc.






“Nothing is done without hard work. You need to work very hard, on your own in order to succeed and be able to support yourself”

 Hi Thomas, can you please tell me a few things about you and your relation to Metsovo?

Hi Stella, thank you.

I was born and grew up in the village of Milia (it is about 20km from Metsovo). I was attending gymnasium and lyceum school in Metsovo and I studied in Kozani at a public Institute of Vocational Training. I followed technical studies (telecommunications etc.). I was awarded a scholarship then, and worked in a relative business in Kozani for one year. After that I came in Metsovo where I worked at a local relative business for some years. After that time, I decided to open my business in Metsovo.

 So, you are one of those young people who returned to mountains. How did you get this decision?

Yes, I came back and I like it. There are no regrets. But, I also liked living in Kozani. I had a good job there. But, the economic crisis began (in 2009-2010) and things became very difficult. So, I had to leave for economic reasons. Otherwise I may have stayed there. Now I am living in Metsovo, permanently. I opened my business just a week before the first lockdown. I worked for a week and then I closed it.

 Tell me, what triggered you in this business and describe me what you do?

I own a shop. I sell PCs, mobile phones, etc. Also, I work as a technician around here setting-up antennas or any other telecommunication services. My customers are from Metsovo, mainly, but also from all surrounding villages. I always wanted to start my own business. But wanting it is not enough. It also requires skills, experience and of course money. Before this, I was an employee working about 10-12 hours every day and still not earning enough to live. I also was working as a wedding photographer during weekends to support myself. So, I said to myself, it's now or never. I had all the experience, people knew me by then, they were aware of my work and my abilities so, I took the decision and I started it. The major difficulty was the economic issue. I didn't have almost any money. I borrowed money from friends and the very few I had on my own I invested it on necessary equipment.

 What was the initial capital you needed for the business?

I needed € 10,000. For equipment and initial merchandise. I rent the shop so I needed some extra money for the rents (I also rent my apartment here). I didn't get any funding because in order to get one I had to pre-pay the amount of money to several people (i.e. merchandise, equipment etc.), which I couldn't back then. To think, a friend of mine got a funding and he received his money 1,5 years later.



So this kind of funding isn't actually helpful, is it?

No. You have to have the money in order to get it back. So, no, it doesn't help at all.



Ok, so how did you proceed then?

Well, covid actually was in my favor. I had to close the shop so I wasn't obligated to have all running expenses but, at the same time, I was working all that time as a technician. I was allowed to receive any PCs or other devices for service, outside the shop and then take them back to the customer. So, I had all the time to have an income from service without having the expense of the shop. All earnings were then invested in buying merchandise. Initially, I began with only € 150 of merchandise. But, after a while I was able to fully equip my shop. So, when lockdown was over, I was ready to open the shop. And this is my only income source.



How things were with local people there?

oh, they were very supportive. They knew me, they actually encouraged me to start my business and they supported me as customers. I am very pleased with them all.



Did you get any help from local Municipality?

No, I didn't get any help. But, I am not sure that I would like to receive any because a possible collaboration with the Municipality would mean that any money I might get I would get it after a very long time. So, no I didn't ask for help but also they didn't raise any obstacles for me.



Any current problems, obstacles you face?

No, apart from the general economic situation which is difficult and, mainly, insecure. But, this is for all I think.



Yes, that's true. Tell me, have you attended any kind of seminars?

Yes, a lot and I continually attend seminars of all kinds. On line seminars or in person. Some companies invite us to attend events and I never miss any. Seminars on new products, new technical knowledge. And I read a lot. Everyday. I need to get in touch with what is happening on this business, otherwise I will lack relative knowledge. Also, I attended some marketing seminars, which were useful.



Is there a kind of seminar you would like to suggest to us to give in MIRC?

Well, yes actually I think you should organize –and I could help at it- a seminar about all possible dangers or threats regarding the use of internet for the children. Their internet safety. A seminar for children or parents also. I see many things through my work and it is also a sensitive issue- how to approach and educate the parents. But things are serious and children should be warned on these issues.



How do you promote your business?

I use facebook mainly. There was a funding programme into which I applied (I still wait the results) in order to open an e-shop, as well. If I get it I will have both shops running. I also have some contacts with some people in youtube who promote my shop and also some advertising through relevant webpages with key-words. If someone is looking for a technician in Metsovo my shop appears first.



Ok. Now how environmentally friendly do you consider your business to be? I know that sounds weird since you sell mobile phones, but still.

Well, yes I wouldn't say that all these electronic devices that I sell are environmentally friendly. But, I try to recycle anything I can. Although that didn't go very well so far. I placed a recycle bin outside the shop and you could find every rubbish in it, but devices. So, now I ask my customers to bring me their old devices, batteries etc. and I take them myself for recycling outside Metsovo. So, yes in this way I help the environment.



Well done! Would you hire someone from Metsovo in the future? Do you think you inspire young people there?

I would hire someone from here yes, why not? I don't know if I have inspired anyone, I hope so. I see that people have become more aware around many



Any regrets for starting the business?

No! I would have done it all over again if I had to!



How is your life there, in a mountain town?

Well, this depends on what someone is looking for. Metsovo is a small town that offers many things and also is close to Ioannina city so I can find there anything I want. I mean in terms of entertainment. I like it here. It all depends on what you want from your life.



Your future plans?

I want to expand my shop as much as I can. I have already established very good connections and collaborations with several people. I want to start and build a very good e-shop, regardless of whether I receive the funding or not. I will do it in the future, but I will have to be able to hire a second person in order for the e-shop to run.

I would like to add that nothing is done without hard work. And I say this for all young people who may be interested in something like this. You need to work very hard, on your own in order to succeed and be able to support yourself.



Yes I agree on this. Well, Thomas, thank you very much for this interesting talk. See you soon in Metsovo!

Thank you too!