



# Smartly.io Culture Handbook

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Culture and values are the bedrock we've built Smartly.io, they define us as a company. We believe that our values and culture, which aim to maximize product development speed, lead to long-term growth and success.

# Our culture is why our customers and great talents choose us and stay with us.



Living by our values helps us to produce value for the right customers at the right time, which in turn leads to our long-term growth and success. We believe nurturing and developing our culture constantly is at the core of how we can be successful in the future.

In the next pages, we open up the philosophy that has helped us grow from 2 founders to a global company of 250+ people in 5 years, and the challenges we believe are crucial to overcome to scale successfully and sustainably in the future. We hope it helps you understand how we work and if Smartly.io is a company you'd like to work with.

**Cheers,  
Humble Hungry Hunters a.k.a. the Smartly.io team**

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# Our Vision

This image distills our vision. Our North Star is to make online advertising easy, effective, and enjoyable across platforms.

## EASY

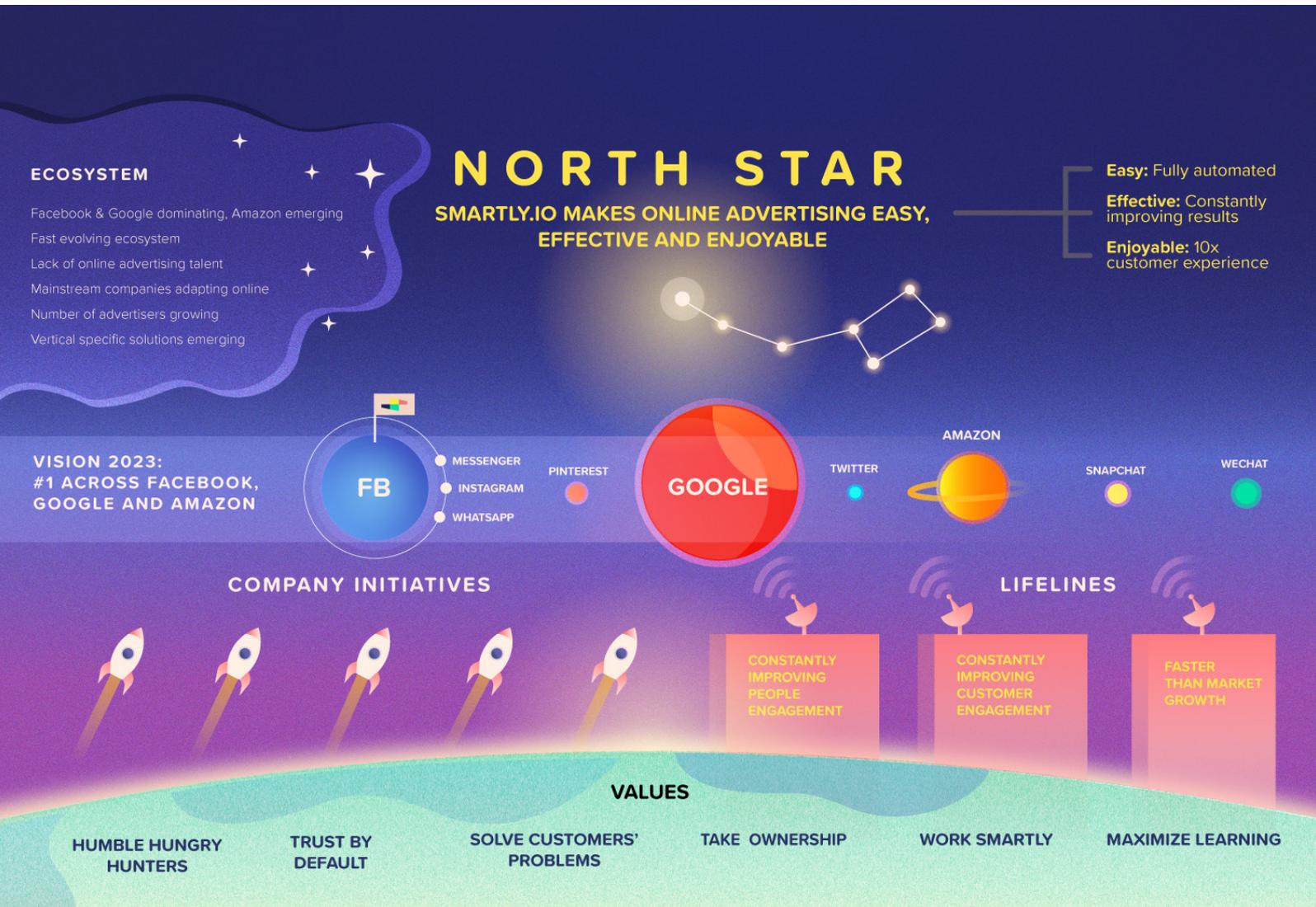
Automating all manual work for our customers

## EFFECTIVE

Constantly improving the performance of online advertising for our customers

## ENJOYABLE

Offering the fastest, most reliable and nicest service in the market



# Our North Star is where we are heading and acts as a guiding principle for everything we do. The following three lifelines are what keep us alive and thriving while reaching for our North Star.

● We constantly improve our people engagement. We believe that happy and engaged people are the core in building a successful company.

● We constantly improve our customer engagement. We partner closely with our customers and prioritize their feedback in product development. Customer engagement drives financial results more than anything else.

● We grow faster than the market to stay independent and to be able to invest in our people and customers.

The ecosystem is evolving at a very high speed. Our values enable us to fast develop our product and service to meet the evolving needs of our customers. Our values define how we work as a team, how we build our product, how we work with our customers, and ultimately what makes us successful in the long term.

The sunrise in our strategy visualization is there to remind us that there is always the whole day ahead of us. We're just getting started with the journey towards our vision and mission.

# Our Values

Our values aren't something we write on our website and then forget about. They drive how we work every day with our customers and as a team, how we build our product, who we hire, and how we'll reach our vision.



# Humble Hungry Hunters

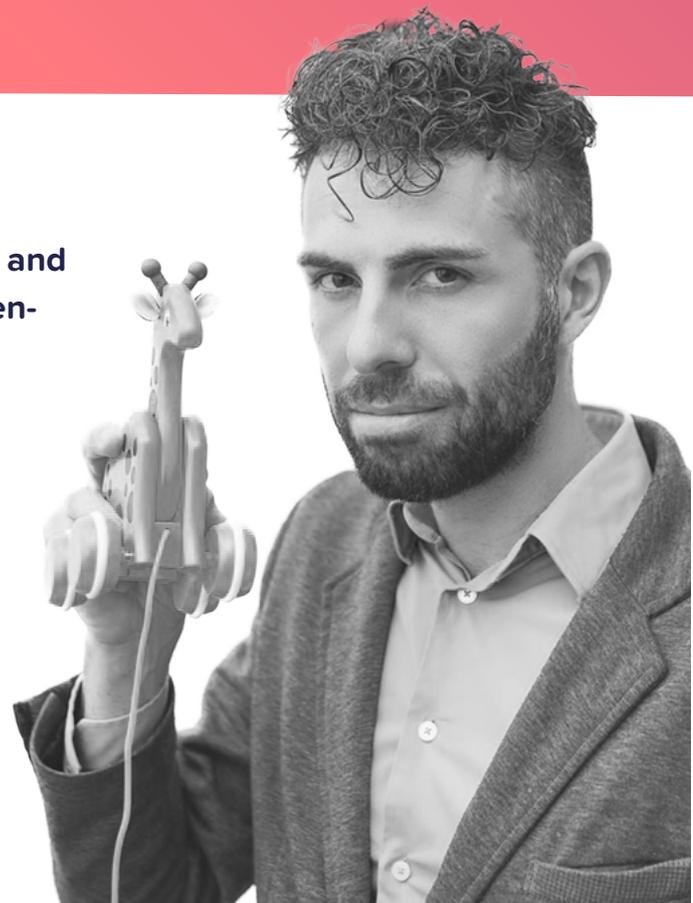


We're humble yet ambitious to become the best in what we do. We're hungry to win—we experiment relentlessly and make bold decisions to stay ahead of the curve.

“These three core elements in our culture: Humble, Hungry, and Hunter resonate so well with who I am and how I work. Being humble towards customers—listening and truly understanding what their challenges are, and helping them succeed. At the same time, being hungry for learning, growth, and improving all the time.”

**Claudio Santori**

Senior Account Executive, New York



# Trust by Default



We trust each other with ownership, freedom, and responsibility. Trust is a must for transparency, self-organization, and fast decision-making: if trust is broken, we go out of our way to restore it.

“I know implicitly that all of us Smartlies share a singular vision of consistently striving to be better—by improving our product, service, culture or ourselves. I trust without question that the team will be there to support me to achieve success, but also to have my back if I struggle. It’s a pretty rare and beautiful thing and I’m honored to have, and to give this trust to the team.”

**Tegan Kerr**

Head of Middle East and Africa, Dubai



# Take Ownership

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Nothing is someone else's problem—we act as owners and work towards common goals as one big team. We optimize for the success of the whole company, not just our own.

“At Smartly.io, anyone can take initiative to improve our shared ways of working. I have started a cross-team knowledge sharing session and a new onboarding practice for Customer Success Managers, which have brought a variety of new, exciting challenges to my job. Taking ownership of fixing things outside your own day-to-day work is valued highly in the company, because it helps everyone work smarter.”

**Evelina Sauruseviciute**  
Lead for Account Management  
Function, San Francisco



# Work Smartly



We make decisions nimbly, automate manual work, and execute with speed as a habit. Working smarter, not harder, allows us to take care of our wellbeing and productivity in the long run.

“Smartly.io’s automation enabled us just to ‘turn on’ USA, without growing the team. Smartly.io’s service is essential for lean in-house teams looking for maximum efficiency in their marketing efforts.”

**Andrew Shakespeare**  
Business Intelligence Manager,  
Finery London



# Maximize Learning



We learn fastest by boldly going for the biggest challenges—if we fail, we make sure to learn from it, teach others, and set the bar even higher on the next try. We champion radically candid feedback to help each other improve.

“Right from the start, we’ve gone for the most challenging and advanced customers, markets and verticals, who we learn the most from. In the beginning, we got beat up pretty badly, and lost many of the prospects. It was essential to never back down after a loss, but to learn from it, fix things fast, and go for an even more challenging customer next.

This is how we’ve been able to build the best product and service in the market. It’s crucial that we continue to challenge ourselves, and improve our tool and service together with our most advanced customers.”

**Kristo Ovaska**  
Founder & CEO



# Solve Customers' Problems

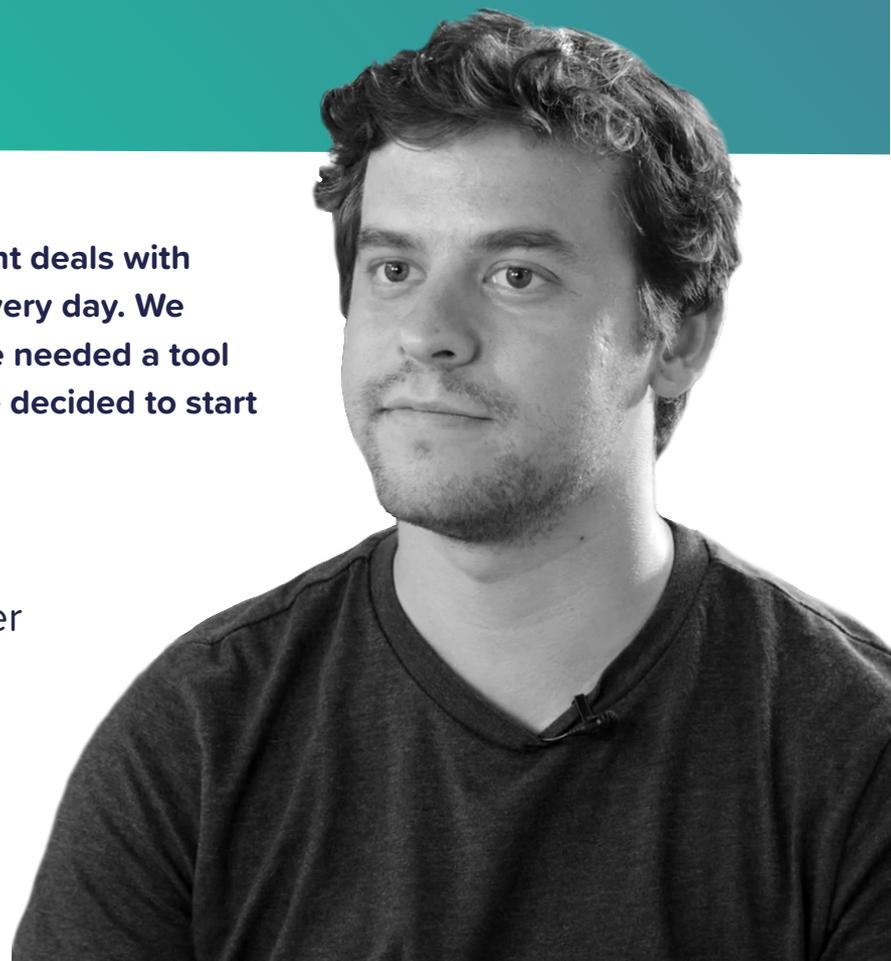


All decisions we take are made to provide long-term value to our customers. We understand their needs by working closely with them, and collaborate across teams and functions to solve their trickiest problems.

“Our campaigns have hundreds of flight deals with custom images and prices changing every day. We couldn’t manage them manually, so we needed a tool to automate them. And that’s when we decided to start using Smartly.io. ”

**Simon Lejeune**

Head of User Acquisition, Hopper



# Our Team



**We're a team of 250+ Humble Hungry Hunters, working together to build both a great tool and service for our customers, and a company we all enjoy working in.**

**Smartly.io is a respectful & safe workplace with equal opportunities for all, regardless of background, age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, family status or any other attribute.**

**We're committed to building and maintaining a culture free of harassment and discrimination.**

## **This means we:**

- are respectful and considerate towards each other
- take the lead to constantly develop our ways of working together
- hire, reward and promote based on merit and ability
- value diversity, practice empathy and disagree gracefully
- take ownership of fixing things that don't work, instead of just complaining about them
- don't stomach demeaning, discriminatory, or harassing behavior or speech including cursing or inappropriate jokes
- don't talk behind people's back, instead share feedback directly

# How We Work with Our Customers



**We're a customer-first company.** As strategic partners, we measure our success in the long-term value we bring to our customers through automating their manual work, improving their results, and helping them grow through online customer acquisition.

**Engineers at Smartly.io are customer-focused.** Understanding the greater context (how our customers use our tool to drive business results) helps our engineers build a product that our customers love to use, and transform learnings from the market into value-adding features very quickly. We fly some of our most advanced customers to work directly with our developers in Helsinki.

**Our account managers and salespeople master the product.** As our customer-facing people are highly technical, we don't pingpong customers from one team to another to fix their problems. Our account managers can solve a large part of the customers' technical issues, like setting up tracking pixels, hunting down bugs, and finding workarounds to get the customer back on track as quickly as possible.

**We develop our tool in close cooperation with our customers.** We don't pretend to know what our customers need from our tool—we ask them. [Features are validated with customers](#) to make sure we only build things that truly benefit them. We interview customers to help us pinpoint which features to build to make their work easier and help them get great results.

**Everyone does customer support at Smartly.io**—including our CEO and lawyers. We haven't outsourced our technical customer support, or dedicated a specific team to do it. Nor will we. Instead, each and every Smartlie sits in support regularly, helping customers with their ad hoc issues, and advising them about how to use our tool in the most effective way. We've scaled our technical support to cover all time zones and help our customers globally 24/5.



## ANNE THOUAS

**Head of Awareness Marketing at Wonderbly**

“From the first person we talked to at Smartly.io, we felt like we were getting the right answers—versus ‘ok, I’ll have a conversation with someone and then they’re going to go to talk to another person to get me the answer because they don’t know’. Everyone at Smartly.io seemed to have the answers which has been fantastic.”



## LAURA JOUKOVSKI

**SVP Media + Analytics at TechStyle Fashion Group**

“Our relationship with Smartly has been wonderful. I rarely fall in love with a partner, but the speed and quality of your work has been outstanding. The responsiveness — you guys show up, you do what you say, you listen closely & try to solve our problems. It’s very, very enjoyable to work with people who are able to deliver the value that you’ve been able to deliver for TechStyle.”



# How We Build Our Product



**Automated workflow and first-class usability are significant competitive factors for us in the long term.** We aim to automate all repetitive manual work in acquiring and growing customers online. An efficient user experience and an explorable tool are keystones of serving advertisers of varying levels of tech-savviness in the best way. Our goal is that our users could learn to become world-class online advertisers through using our tool.

**We prototype and develop features with customers for a speedy feedback loop.** At Smartly.io, engineers work closely with the most advanced customers: they workshop with the customers at our Smartly.io Connect events, and develop features in close cooperation with the customers and their account managers. Our product development team is based in Helsinki, but our engineers rotate flexibly between the offices to meet customers globally.

**As the complexity of our product grows, it's crucial to maintain our ability to keep ahead of the curve.** We're [extracting microservices from a monolithic code base](#) to serve Facebook's latest features with the fastest time-to-market. Refactoring to a more agile product also allows us to test tackling new advertising platforms.

**Self-organizing developer teams own the product roadmap.** We believe that decisions should be made by the people who have the most knowledge on the subject. That's why our [engineering teams have full ownership of their focus areas in the tool](#), and they're empowered to make decisions about which features to prioritize.

**We're lean and transparent.** Our engineering teams have chosen to use Kanban to track their progress. Their roadmaps are open for everyone to see, and we host regular Engineering Happy Hours where teams share their plans to the whole company. Engineers also have monthly meetings, where they discuss new components and technologies, and improve their ways of working. The notes from these sessions are shared openly to the whole company.

**We deploy to production 10-20 times per day.** Automatic testing and continuous integration allow us to see our work in production extremely quickly. We've automated and streamlined some of our internal work by using a chatbot to deploy code to production right through our internal team chat. We wrap up each week with Friday Demos, where the engineers demo the changes they've done to the tool in front of the whole Smartly.io team, educate account managers about the new features, and gather feedback.



## MARKUS OJALA

**Chief Data Scientist, Helsinki**

“I get motivated by seeing my work in production and being used by our customers worldwide. For example, the first version of our Predictive Budget Allocation feature was made for a customer trial. It worked nicely, so we developed it into a product feature and opened it to all our customers to help them optimize their budgets automatically.”



## FILIPPO CIURRIA

**Senior Social Media Manager, Global Skyscanner**

“Smartly has been simply outstanding in our opinion. Their team is VERY technical, and is updating/adding features very frequently. We’ve been amazed by the speed and reliability of Smartly.”



## LLIBERT ARGERICH

**Global Director of Social and Content, eBay**

“In the beginning, we sat down to discuss service expectations and they’ve been consistently meeting them ever since. Their time to market and reactivity are spectacular, making it possible to innovate together.”



## OSKARI VIRTANEN

**Software Developer, Helsinki**

“To me, it’s important that I don’t have to lock horns with some boss every time I want to choose which technology to use or how to do my job. Not only do I and my team make independent decisions about product development, but we also influence things outside our own scope, like who we recruit and what the company should focus on in the next six months. It’s nice to know that if there’s something wrong in the firm, I can do something about it instead of waiting for someone else to take the lead.”

# How We Hire and Reward Our People



**We hire to elevate, not to delegate.** We're on a mission to assemble full stack teams with the right mix of T-shaped people, who complement one another's strengths and weaknesses. T-shaped people have deep skills in one area, and a broad understanding and curiosity towards multiple disciplines outside their immediate experience. New hires must have potential to grow with the company on a good trajectory. We believe hiring right is crucial for our long-term success, and we put a lot of time, brainpower and enthusiasm into attracting the brightest talent and building a five-star team.

**Our recruiting process is tough and we don't make exceptions.** We hold a high bar even if it means hiring slowly when there's pressure to grow fast, because we want to find the best and the most motivated people for each team. If in doubt, we don't hire. We skip hiring people who don't commit and contribute to our culture—no matter how senior, skilled or nice they are.

**Our engineer track tests the depth of technical knowledge and the ability to make informed decisions.** The process includes a technical interview where we dive deep into various topics from frontend development to networks, security, and development methods. Developers at Smartly.io decide which technologies to adopt and which features to build, which means they have to have a good general understanding of product development.

**We stress full understanding of the Smartly.io tool in customer-facing roles.** All who apply through the business track are expected to learn the domain and our product, and their learning is put to test in the Smartly.io sales demo. Our recruiting process is action-focused, and it simulates the actual work you'll do as a Smartlie. It also mirrors the high expectations we hold for all our colleagues.

**The culture of great autonomy and responsibility starts with hiring the right people.** Only if we have the right people, can we trust all Smartlies to think like owners and put the success of the company before their own. When our [self-organizing teams](#) make smart decisions and act in a way that benefits the company in the long run, we don't need bureaucracy or heavy processes to guide our work, which makes Smartly.io a nicer place to work for us all.

**We give out company-wide bonuses and every individual reward is based on team work.** We believe all success stories are born out of joint efforts, and that's why we reward our people with company-wide bonuses. This system only works if all Smartlies are A-players who are ready to roll up their sleeves and contribute to the shared goals and vision, which is partly why we like to keep our recruiting process tough.

**All Smartlies have stock options.** If we succeed, everyone gets to enjoy the upside. We value long-term impact over quick wins, and reward our people for their impact on the long-term growth and profitability of Smartly.io.



## **ILONA SIPPOLA**

**People Team Lead, Helsinki**

“There are two reasons why we want to engage in such an extensive recruiting process. One—we really, really want to get to know to each and every candidate before we make the final call. Two—we believe that choosing whether to join a company is a big decision for the candidate. Going through a more elaborate hiring process allows both the candidates and us to make these important decisions based on more data points.”



## **JUN KAI LIM**

**Service Operations Engineer, Singapore**

“One of the key drivers of Smartly.io’s success can be attributed to how we hire people. Through our unique hiring process, we have been able to select the brightest people around the world. And they are the reason why this has been my best job so far.”



## **RAHUL AGARWAL**

**Business Development Lead, Singapore**

“It feels amazing to work at a company that puts its customers and people first every single day. What excites me the most is delivering value to our customers, which involves working very closely with them and us constantly maximising learning for each other. The culture that promotes tremendous trust, transparency and speed of learning keeps all of us extremely motivated to become better versions of ourselves.”

# Our Leadership Philosophy



**If you need constant management, this isn't a place for you.** We value a self-starting and action-oriented attitude in the people we hire. That means all Smartlies are strong self-leaders who are able set goals and get others excited about them, define the plan to reach them, find the needed resources, and execute. We expect everyone to understand the broader context, prioritize, and take action to get us closer to the company-wide vision. Your team and team lead will always support you and help you learn, but don't expect someone to lead you by the hand and tell you what to do.

**Everyone is an owner at Smartly.io.** All Smartlies have stock options, but being an owner is much more than having a stake in the company: it's about taking ownership beyond your own role, and making decisions that drive the whole company's success, not just your own or your team's. We don't stomach office politics or optimizing for your own success at the expense of others—we only hire people who are motivated to help others around them succeed.

**Our team lead system is rooted in servant leadership.** When we grew past 80 people, we realized that our Leadership team wasn't close enough to all Smartlies on a day-to-day level to give them actionable feedback and guidance. We decided to put a team lead system in place, and we wrote down a team lead philosophy to make sure that our principles of servant leadership, sharing power and helping others succeed would be amplified by the team lead system, not hindered by it.

**Team leads boost the positive effects of self-organizing teams.** The way we see it, outstanding team leads make themselves redundant. They help teams align their efforts with the vision and goals of the entire company—enabling them to make informed decisions and drive their own work forward. One of the team leads' key responsibilities is to foster a culture of candor where everyone feels encouraged to give, receive and act on constructive feedback, because that's the only way to maximize our learning.

**Team leads don't micromanage, monopolize decision making, or distance themselves from daily tasks.** At Smartly.io, team leads are hands-on, and they work for and with the team. They're like team captains who participate actively in the game, and help their teams follow the commonly decided game plan. A team lead's compensation isn't by default larger than their teammates'—an individual contributor could earn a lot more than their team lead. Also, everyone is encouraged to take leadership: you don't have to be a team lead to recruit new team mates, facilitate meetings, or mentor someone.

**Our expense policy is “act in the company's best interest”.** Each Smartlie is free to expense purchases from the company, as long as they act in the best interest of the whole company. As a profitable company, we're ready to invest into solving bottlenecks, like helping our current customers reach their goals, closing new customers, and recruiting people who elevate the team. On the less crucial fronts, we like to keep our costs low: we don't waste our customers' money on things like five-star hotels, flying in business class or fancy dinners.



## **OTTO HILSKA**

**Chief Product Officer, Helsinki**

“Hiring right + context + transparency + trust  
= well-functioning autonomous teams”



## **LOTTA SUURONEN**

**Market Lead, Austin**

“I’ve had the opportunity to work in multiple markets and offices, and see the company grow from 40 to 200+ people. It hasn’t always been easy, but it has been a great opportunity to learn and see how my input affects the team and our business. I believe it’s every Smartlie’s job to create an environment where people support each other, grow, and can have the highest impact on the business.”



## **MARTA BONZANINI**

**Market Lead of ANZ, Sydney**

“At Smartly.io you never stop learning. You get to the point where you are comfortable with being uncomfortable, as getting out of your comfort zone is part of the constant learning process. I love how the company is open to feedback from everyone, and each one of us is encouraged to speak up. Something else I really enjoy is the level of ownership we can take it our job. We work with ‘trust by default’ as one of our values, which really pushes everybody to do their best job and help each other across offices.”

# Extreme Transparency



**Teams at Smartly.io have full ownership of their own field, and we want to keep it that way as we grow.** We believe that when you hire the right people, help them understand the context (vision+goals), and give them access to all business-critical data, it naturally follows that they want and can make smart decisions that drive the company forward.

**Avoid information clutter with opt-in transparency.** When an organization grows, extreme transparency can result in an information overflow that frustrates efficiency. We believe in opt-in transparency—it means that all information is communicated to the whole team as a summary of highlights, with a “read more” link to a full-length documentation for those who want to dive deeper.

**Get a 360-degree view of Smartly.io at Weekly Kickoffs and Friday Demos.** Every week starts with an all-hands Weekly Kickoff, where teams share business-related key updates and learnings from the past week with the whole company. We also go through our business figures to keep everyone posted on how we’re doing and what we should do to stay on track. Correspondingly, we end each week with Friday Demos, where engineers show and educate the whole team on the new features they’ve built during the week.

**Forums for sharing knowledge and maximizing learning.** All Smartlies are encouraged to host Knowledge Shares to share information and educate colleagues. If we learn something new in the US market that would benefit our customers globally, the aim is to share and implement it across the organization within the next 24 hours. All sessions are recorded and notes are shared openly, so that the whole team can learn from them. When something goes south, we organize Retrospectives to learn from our mistakes and make sure we avoid the same pitfalls in the future.

**No internal emails.** We rely on a team chat in Flowdock in all internal communications. All flows are by default open for anyone to read and join the discussion. We use Confluence to share and store all information openly, and Periscope dashboards to open up all our business figures to everyone at Smartly.io.

**Involve everyone in strategic decision making at Futurios.** Twice a year, all Smartlies gather for a Futurio strategy day to discuss the company vision, goals and the product roadmap. We define Company Initiatives for the next 6 months, and organize workshops to find solutions to critical challenges in cross-functional taskforces. Futurios are big investments both time and money-wise, but they’re worth it as they help us stay agile and work well together even while growing globally.



## **JOHANNA KALLI**

**Product Marketing Manager, Helsinki**

“Transparency in sharing all data and information in the company enables me to constantly evaluate my own work and check if I am working to solve the most urgent matters for the business.

This is my 3rd job in 3 years at Smartly.io. I was not hired for a job, but trusted to grow the business.”



## **STEPHANIE SEMAAN**

**Team Lead, eCom/Travel, New York**

“We truly live and breathe insane transparency at Smartly.io - whether it’s in our monthly founder’s happy hour where anyone can ask our CEO any question or in any internal meeting or clients meeting where feedback is constantly demanded and given.”



## **ANNABELL BUCHHOLZ**

**Product Manager, Helsinki**

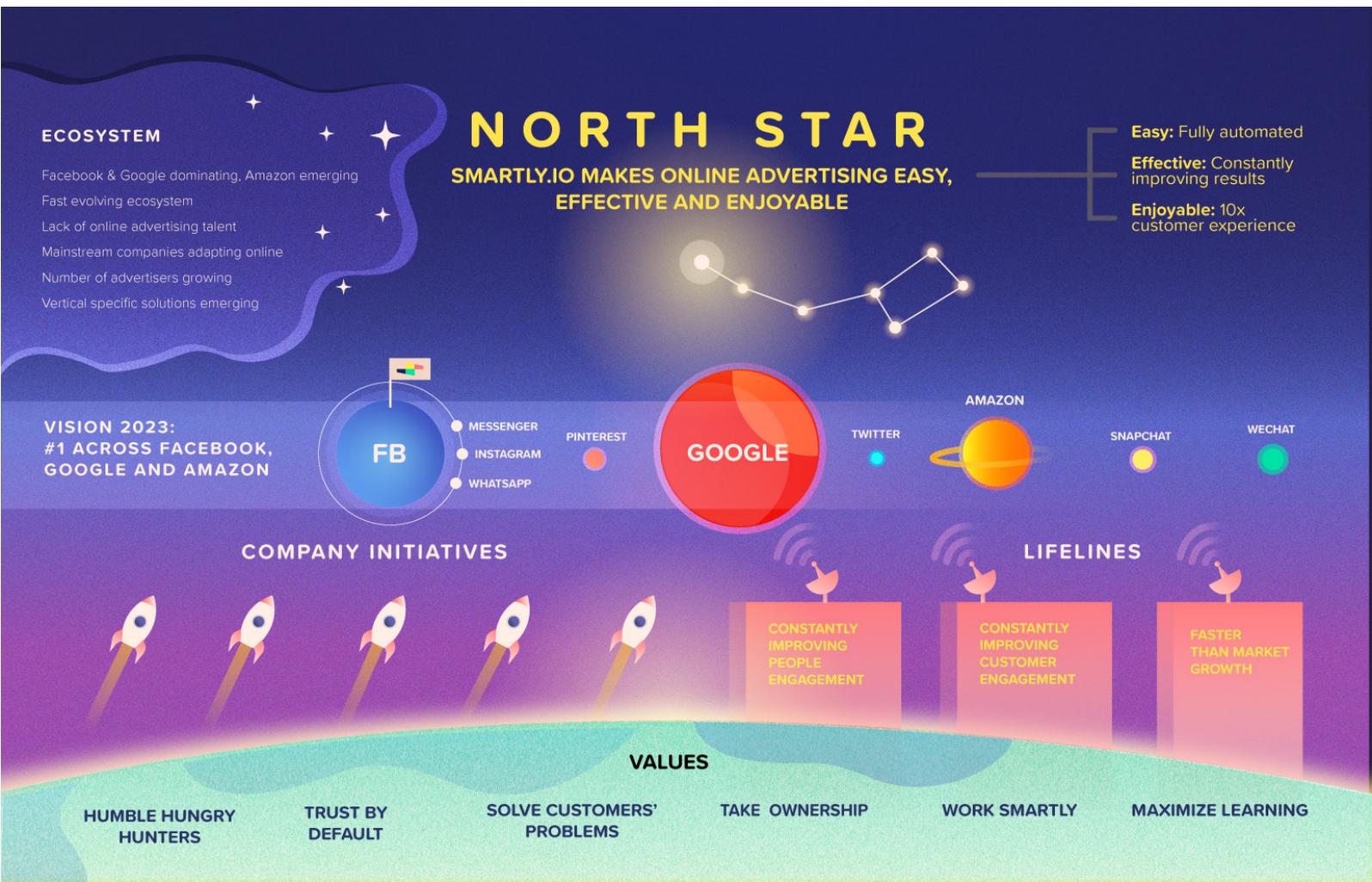
“We have a ‘two-minute rule’—if you don’t know something and you can’t find the answer by yourself in two minutes, you should ask a colleague. Everyone’s always ready to give you a hand and help you learn.”

# Hungry to Scale

We've got off to a good start, but we're still at the beginning of reaching our vision. We're all extremely motivated by the huge amount of things we'll build and improve together in the coming years.

Since day one, we've focused on building a good foundation for scaling: we have a healthy company culture and a stellar team that's driven to constantly exceed expectations in building the best product and service to our customers. Our product is built on a sustainable infrastructure that allows us to develop new features and functionalities fast. Our world-class customer support gives us competitive edge in the market. Over 70% of our large customers would recommend us to their peers, which is amazing, and they're eager to continuously build a better product and service closely together with our engineers.

But that's just an early start. In the next three to five years, we'll have to learn to do things we haven't done before. Luckily, we're better equipped than ever before to grow and scale Smartly.io.



# Below are some of the exciting challenges we're looking forward to solve.

1. Scale as an organization, but in a way that doesn't dilute our culture or cripple our ability to move fast. Instead, nurture and develop them continuously.
2. Extend the product from Facebook and Instagram advertising to a multi platform solution to allow customers to use one tool to automate their online customer acquisition across multiple advertising platforms.
3. Make it easier for new users to get up to speed in our product. Make our UX even more efficient. Ease of use and efficient UX have already been important competitive advantages for us, and in the future they'll play an even bigger role.
4. Automate the whole online customer acquisition funnel. We've only scratched the surface in solving problems for paid social marketing teams, and we've already pinpointed many processes in design and business intelligence which we could automate, like video creation processes, or reporting and attribution across platforms.

“

**We're all extremely motivated to build our future—developing the best product and service for our customers, and building the best company for our people to work and learn at. If this is something you see yourself contributing to and what gets you excited, you're in the right place.”**

**Kristo & Tuomo, the Founders**

