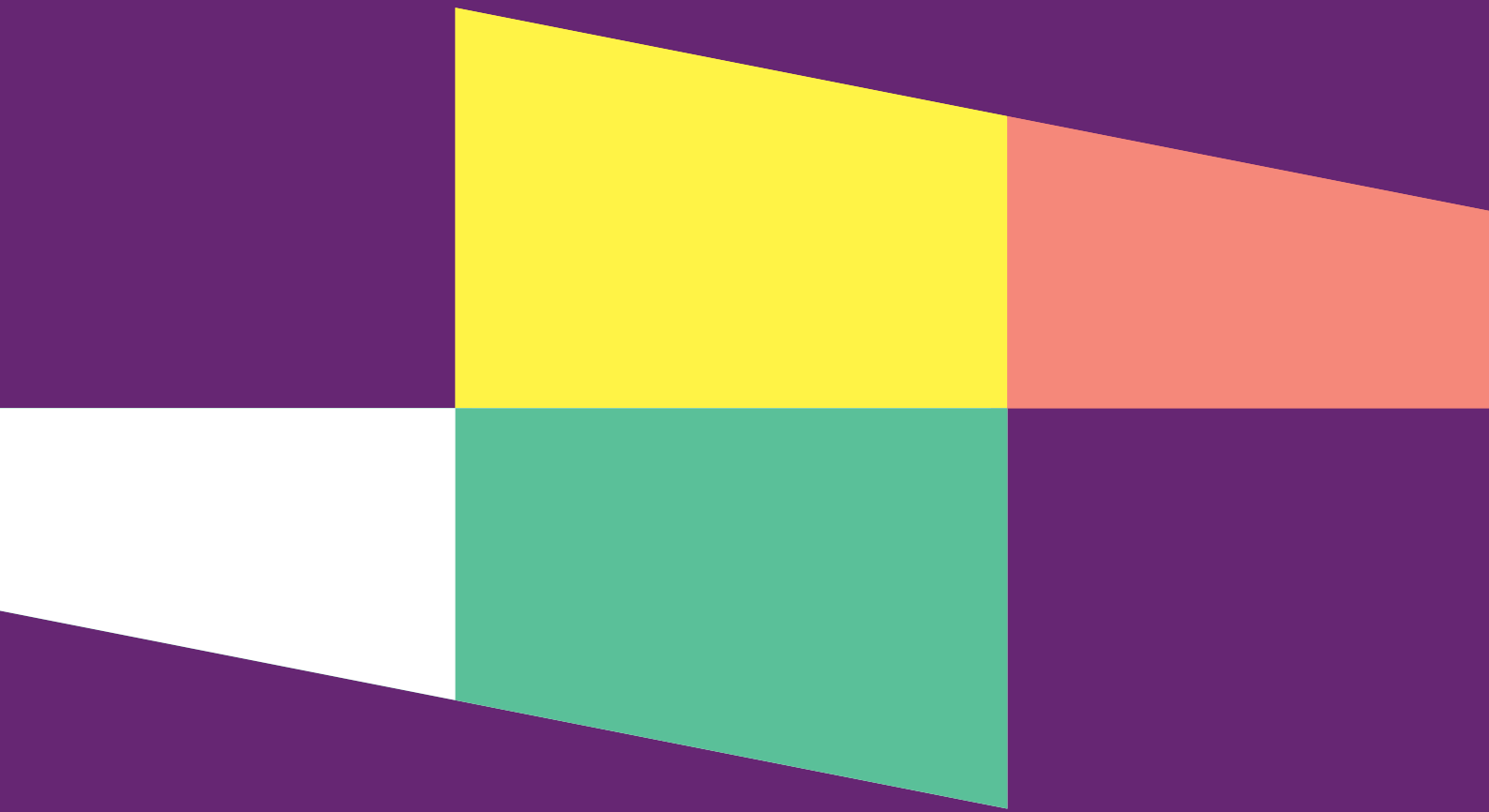# Smartly.io
Culture Handbook

Culture is the bedrock we've built Smartly.io on—it defines us as a company.
We believe that our culture, with product development speed at its core,
leads to long-term growth and success.

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

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Living by our culture 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 160+ people in 4 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

SMARTLY IO

Why We Exist

Businesses are growing online. We see that acquiring and growing customers through online advertising is a competitive advantage for modern companies. Traditional companies need to adapt to this change to succeed in the future.

The online marketing industry develops at warp speed. Inside Facebook alone there are hundreds of product teams pushing out new ad formats, targeting techniques and optimization methods all the time.

There's a severe lack of talent in the market. Even the most advanced online businesses are having a hard time recruiting, educating and retaining skilled professionals to manage their performance marketing.

This is where Smartly.io fits in. Our vision is to fully automate online customer acquisition—helping the largest advertisers to get great results, acquire customers, and grow their business online with minimum manual work.

The Smartly.io Culture Code

Our culture isn't something we write on our website and then forget about. It drives how we work every day with our customers and as a team, determines who we hire, and how we'll reach our vision.

Maximize Learning

We're Close To Customers

We're Full Stack

HUMBLE HUNGRY HUNTERS

Everyone Takes Ownership

Work Smartly

Humble Hungry Hunters

We want to be the best in the world at what we do—building a world-class product and service for our customers. The only way to succeed is to stay humble yet ambitious. We ask for and act on candid feedback to learn continuously from both our customers and teammates. We don't rest on our laurels, there's always room to improve.

"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,
Sales Team Lead at Smartly.io

We're All Full Stack

Smartlies are T-shaped with deep skills in one area, combined with a drive to work across disciplines. T-shaped people make full stack teams that speak the same language and work together effectively. Being full stack helps all Smartlies understand how the product works, how we develop it, and how customers use it to drive their business. This allows us to serve and add value to our customers in the best possible way, and steer away from siloing within the company.

"I specifically appreciate that there is no intermediate salesperson between our respective teams. No email for-warding to technical teams with an answer after 72 hours. At Smartly.io everybody is technical and everybody is closely in touch with the heart of the business. Instead of interacting with people who are only intermediates we get answers from the right people in a record time."

Benjamin Brun,
Acquisition manager
TechStyle

Everyone Takes Ownership

We foster transparency, which allows our strong autonomous teams the freedom and responsibility to define how to pursue our shared vision. Everyone is trusted as an owner—we're all responsible for thinking and acting in the long-term interest of the entire company and that of our team. At Smartly.io, nothing is someone else's problem—we're all doers with an entrepreneurial attitude.

The most important responsibility of a team lead is to facilitate growth—the team members' personal growth and team's growth. The team lead must understand each individual's strengths, weaknesses and personal aspirations, and give them accountability and room to flourish. The team lead is a coach and a sparring partner, not a micromanager."

Santtu Koivumäki,
Sales Team Lead at Smartly.io

Work
Smartly

10x productivity leaps can only be achieved by focusing on impact. We maximize output through automating manual work both for customers and internally. It's a marathon—not a sprint. Working smarter, not harder, allows us to nurture our work-life balance for healthy growth.

"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 at Finery London

Maximize
Learning

Staying ahead of the curve in our quickly evolving industry requires nonstop learning. As a company, we learn the fastest by boldly going for the biggest challenges head on, taking risks, and making fast decisions on all levels of the company.

All Smartlies are driven by ceaseless self-development and if we fail, we make sure to learn from it, and reach even higher on the next try.

"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 at Smartly.io

SMARTLY.IO

We're Close to Customers

We go the extra mile to help our customers succeed. All Smartlies do technical customer support to deeply understand customers problems. Our product development works in close cooperation with customers to build an amazing product. Our account managers and salespeople educate, advise and gather constant feedback from customers. Our long-term success depends on the success of our customers.

"I've always been a big advocate of the Smartly.io tool. One of the things that I really love about Smartly.io is how Smartly.io always puts its customers first. You can see that in terms the 24/5 chat support and the amazing account managers that we have. And how they always listen to the end user—us, and how we build the product together to make better optimization strategies and make our day-to-day jobs a lot easier. "

Astha Kalbag,
Paid Social Marketing Manager,
APAC at Uber

Our Team

We're a team of 160+ 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

- don't stomach demeaning, discriminatory, or harassing behavior or speech including cursing or inappropriate jokes

- hire, reward and promote based on merit and ability

- value diversity, practice empathy and disagree gracefully

- don't talk behind people's back, instead share feedback directly

- take ownership of fixing things that don't work, instead of just complaining about them

- take the lead to constantly develop our ways of working together

How We Work with Our Customers

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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.

"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."

Anne Thouas,
Head of Awareness Marketing
at Wonderbly

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."

Laura Joukovski,
SVP Media + Analytics
at TechStyle Fashion Group

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.

"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."

Markus Ojala, Chief Data Scientist at Smartly.io

"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."

Filippo Ciurria,
Senior Social Media Manager
at Global Skyscanner

"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.

Llibert Argerich
Global Director of Social and Content, eBay

"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."

Oskari Virtanen, Software Developer at Smartly.io

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. 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.

"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. "

Ilona Sippola,
Talent Team Lead at Smartly.io

"Even though we have developer teams responsible for each product area, everyone is encouraged to comment and improve all aspects of the product. If I encounter, let's say, a minor usability issue, I might just code a fix and create a pull request to start the conversation. I've never seen anyone at Smartly.io getting angry about 'stepping on their toes'—usually they're thankful for the help instead."

Emerson Holcombe,
Technical Account Manager at Smartly.io

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 has a company credit card, which they can use freely 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.

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

Otto Hilska,
VP of Engineering at Smartly.io

"Smartly.io doesn't have traditional career ladders. I've shifted from account management to product development to product management, and I've been encouraged and supported to learn new skills. Everyone's expected to take ownership of their own career development, be it cross-functional, cross-vertical or cross-market learning."

Miikka Holkeri,
Product Manager at Smartly.io

Extreme Transparency

We're a flat organization with 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 on Monday Breakfasts and Friday Demos. Every week at Smartly.io starts with an all-hands Monday Breakfast, 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-level Objectives and Key Results 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.

"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."

Johanna Kalli,
Product Communications at Smartly.io

"One of our short-term goals is to become data driven to gain more transparency of where we should improve. Sharing performance data openly makes it easier for all teams to adjust their operations in a self-driven way, leaving little need for outside pressure or micromanaging. "

Meita Siswana,
Account Manager at Smartly.io

"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."

Annabell Buchholz,
Account Manager at Smartly.io

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 80% 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.

FOUNDING		GROWING		SCALING		
2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
2	11	33	74	150	200	300
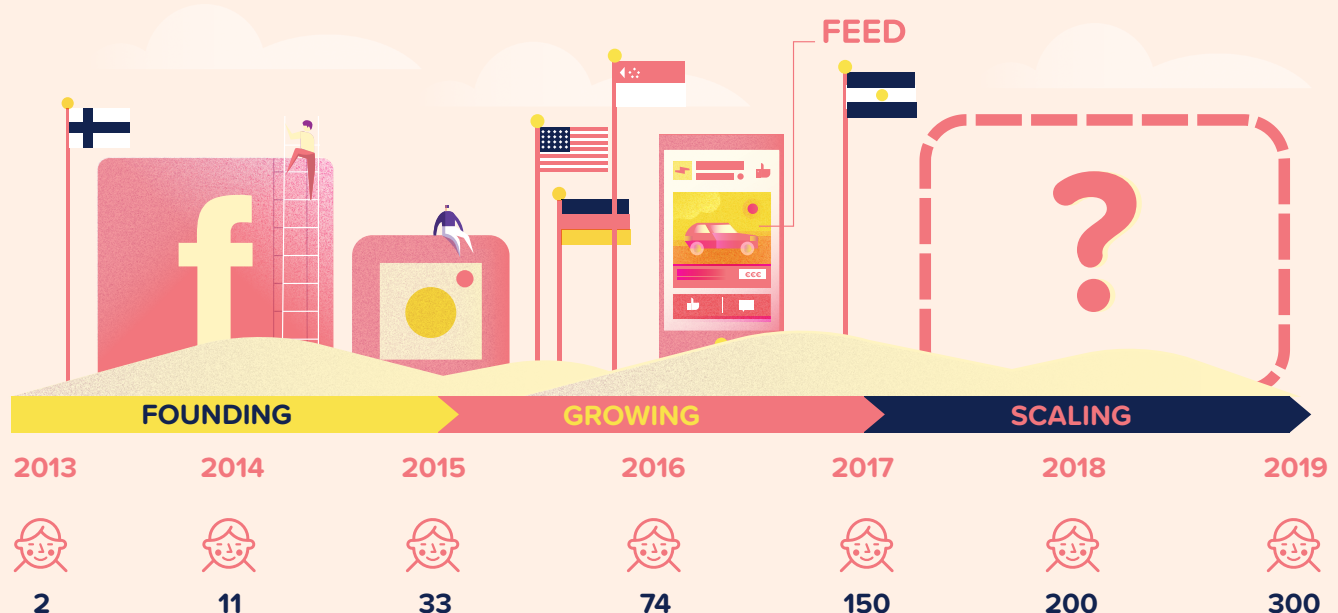
Below are some of the exciting challenges **we're looking forward to solve.**

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. Become more design-driven. 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 work hard 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

SMARTLY IO

www.smartly.io