

ARTUR, CO-OWNER OF „LEŻĘ I PRACUJĘ” (I AM IN BED AND I WORK) MARKETING AGENCY

What is your company? How did you get an idea of „Leżę i pracuję”?

Majka used to work for a PR and marketing agency before. We met when my mother's flat was being renovated. She turned up there because we didn't have enough people to paint the walls. My friend put up a post on FB that said we were looking for people to help us. She volunteered and she became a friend. And when you meet someone you usually ask: what do you do, etc.? Majka said that she ran someone's fan page on Facebook. And I replied that I would love a job, in which I could create one fan page. And then Majka came up with an idea: instead of giving me one fan page to run, we should set up an agency and create a brand for disabled people, so more people could have a job – a social enterprise.



Photo:<http://www.lezeipracuje.pl/>

Is Majka your age?

Majka's much younger, because she's 28 and I'm 39. But people say I look 28:-)

How did you start?

We've been on the market for a year now. Our first clients were friends: a travel agency, a restaurant. They wanted us to run their fan pages and handle phone calls from clients. They didn't

need telemarketing but more like promotional calls. I needed tools: software and training. I've never run a fan page and I had no idea how to do it. Actually I've never really worked before. Before that I had virtually spent all my day on the Internet: Facebook, chatting with friends, playing games. Now I actually do the same things but it all has a meaning: I run fan pages of various companies.

Do you like your job?

It's a great, great job. Although when you get something that you don't know much about, it's not easy. To give you an example, if you know your geography well, you'll be all right with a travel agency but it'll be much harder with an architectural office.

How do you get ready for a job and what do you actually learn?

I did *Internet Revolution*, a free online course. It's very good and you can learn a lot from it: <https://learndigital.withgoogle.com/internetowerewolucje>

Majka made some tutorials for us and her friends who worked for marketing agencies helped as well: they too made tutorials so I could watch and learn. I also learned a lot from her directly. She showed me the tricks: how to edit photos in Canva and how to copy write. Now we have our own educational programme. We're working on it so we can train new employees.

What other things did you need to do to get on with your enterprise?

I'm constantly learning since there's no other way in the business where there's something new everyday. Lifelong learning is crucial. Besides, we went public: we've been on the radio and television. We had photo sessions too, which was a problem for a person like me who has difficulties leaving home. Physically it was tiresome but it helped me recharge my batteries.

What is a challenge for you?

To organize my day. Theoretically I've been doing nothing but lying in bed since 1995. I have a carer coming in everyday to help me change my position. Once it's done I can't go on working so I need to get my work finished in a specific time slot. It's not uncommon in my state of health to get ill quite often. If that happens I can't work and then Majka has to take over.

Who supports you most?

Majka and a wide circle of my friends. There are a lot of people around me.

What kind of people do you want in your team?

If a person is in a wheelchair, paralysed from the waist down but have two good hands and can get in a wheelchair without help, he or she has a good chance finding a job. They can acutely manage without us. So in the first place we look for people whose situation is much harder: me, who lies in bed, Mateusz, who lives in a care home, Nikola, who has a little baby and suffers from spinal muscular atrophy. We want to show other people that even in such situation you can do something and get somewhere.

When did you realize you could make it happen?

I'm a believer and an optimist. But to make it clear: if you're you can't do much on your own but you can inspire others to do it. When I met Majka and she brought up the idea, nothing happened at first. Every time I saw her I reminded her of it and she started to think about it. Eventually she came up with a plan for a marketing agency. She brought in her friend, Sylwester, who's our graphic designer now, and we had a brainstorming session to outline our future business. That was

our first proper business meeting. I knew we had it and we would do it because there were three of us and we'd already got involved.

Has there been a do-or-die moment?

Majka and I both know what we want. We don't need massive profits. We don't need a typical corporation. We want to make a difference. Support for people with disabilities is still needed. We have a lot of applications from people who want to work for us. But when you run a company you can't hire everyone who wants to work there. There are 16 people in a queue. We also try to help through collaborative companies. They are willing to employ disabled people if only they can do the job. We became an inspiration for companies which now employ disabled people.

So you're some kind of a „bridge” ...

I believe that people need a trigger. If you don't push them, they won't move an inch. When there's an impulse or an incentive, something clicks and it starts working.

What would you like to learn now?

I have problems with my hands and it's hard for me to do some of the things with mathematical precision. Yet graphic design like designing posters and editing photos is what I would love to do.

Looking back, is there anything that you would do differently?

Whatever we do we always make sure to dot the i's and cross the t's. Of course, little mistakes happen from time to time but it's a lesson and you won't make the same mistakes again. I think we're going in the right direction.

What is the most important effect of your enterprise?

First, I know I'm making a difference. I've had clients calling me to tell me that I was an inspiration for them. It's uplifting and when things like that happen you want to do more. We work each other up in a positive way, which I think doesn't happen in ordinary companies. Second, I can see how much I've learnt. Majka used to rewrite my posts all the time. Now I can perfectly manage myself. I run a travel agency fan page on my own – I've been always good at geography and writing posts is far more easier for me now that it used to be.

My phone number is available to everyone. I get calls from people with disabilities, who have bedsores. After 20 years of lying in bed I don't have a problem helping people. I'm happy to support them when they ask my advice. It's great. No one teaches us where to get a bed, a computer or physiotherapy and since I know all this now I can share the knowledge. Institutional support is insufficient. This is how I got to know Mateusz. He needed some advice and now he works with us.

„Leżę i pracuję” is my baby. We started it with Majka and now we want to make it perfect. There are always some difficulties and I'm constantly thinking about it. It's mine. And we want our employees to think the same: that it's theirs, it's for them and that they have a say in the enterprise. We took part in the European Social Innovation Competition. We got as far as the top thirty but didn't make it further. It's a success anyway. And we're still moving forward.