

Spatialedge



By [Ilse van den Berg](#)

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In this week's #StartupStory, we chat to Retief Gerber, CEO of Spatialedge - a geospatial data insights and marketing company.

■ ***Tell us about your startup business. How did you come about the idea?***

We started as a small team of mathematicians and engineers working on geospatial data applications and big data projects like the Square Kilometre Array at Space Commercial Services Geospatial Information (SCSGi).



Along the way, we were put in touch with Geospatial Data Solutions (GDS), a direct marketing company that wanted to be more precise with its marketing efforts. We were able to help it market to the ±60 million consumers in its database and the company soon found that it would be a major differentiator for its business.

We saw further potential for more advanced data insights, so we decided to create Spatialedge - a joint venture between the two companies.

■ ***How did you hear about, and what motivated you to apply for the Barclays Accelerator programme?***

Yossi Hasson and Emily Skinstad from Techstars, along with Camilla Swart from Rise Cape Town, were taking a tour of

LaunchLab in Stellenbosch, the incubator where we have our office. Each office has a small blurb at the door with a brief description of what the company does, and Yossi happened to read ours. Frank had a couple of brief chats with the three of them and we were invited to apply.

We decided to apply thinking we didn't have much to lose by doing so. If we had known just how fantastic the programme would turn out to be, we would have been far less relaxed about it!

▣ ***What is the long-term vision for your company?***

We plan to become the best geospatial data insights and marketing company in South Africa.

Fortunately, that means we can help a large number of industries, including print media, banking, insurance, retail, etc. Once we have sufficiently validated our technology and expertise in South Africa, we would like to expand beyond our borders.



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▣ ***What do you hope to gain/learn from this programme?***

Spatialedge is technically very capable, but we have much to learn about marketing ourselves to potential clients, sales and intricacies of engineering a scalable business.

The programme gives us access to an incredible group of mentors that can help accelerate our growth. Growing a network like this would ordinarily take years. Being a part of the Techstars family also gives the company a lot of credibility.

▣ ***What are you most looking forward to in the upcoming 13 weeks of the programme?***

There is so much to learn! That in itself is exciting. However, we are really looking forward to seeing how these learnings are turned into accelerated growth for our business. Fortunately, we get to learn from the best in the business.

We have had master classes from experts that have opened our eyes to new possibilities. But the best part is getting to know all the people we meet, especially the members of the other companies in the cohort, and the Techstars employees and associates. It is a special group of people that we get to interact with every day.

▣ ***What are you most unsure of/nervous about?***

We were already very busy servicing our existing clients and expanding our suite of solutions, so hearing that we should get a lot of sleep before the programme was concerning.

However, being part of the Techstars programme is so invigorating that working even harder feels natural and exciting. It has been challenging to keep up with everything that is expected of us, but we have learned how to get better at it and are in the process of putting better processes in place to help us serve our clients better and scale our business at the same time.

▣ ***How do you define the word "success"?***

Forming lasting value creation partnerships that leave both companies in a better position.

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ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out Passing Stories). She is also the editor of Go & Travel, a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work [here](#) and [here](#). Contact Ilse through her website [here](#).

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