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Local startup Lisnr finds a home with Techstars and R/GA

KRISTEN FRANKE | WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2014

When you're a company like [Lisnr](#), accelerators come to you, not the other way around. As a relatively established Cincinnati startup, Lisnr already has millions in investments, a solid employee base and an even more impressive product. So when one of the largest accelerators in the country approached its chief executive, Rodney Williams, he was not planning on settling for just anything.

That accelerator was [Techstars](#), a Colorado-based, nationally recognized accelerator that has recently teamed up with [R/GA](#), an equally acclaimed design and advertising firm. As the [Wall Street Journal blog reported a couple of weeks ago](#), the duo is seeking startups that are far past the seed-stage and well on their way to generating revenue. Techstars and R/GA hope to attract companies just like Lisnr by offering them a worldwide network of investors, customers and developers.

That said, Techstars and R/GA's more-than-appealing offerings were not what convinced Williams and his team to come on board. There had to be a spark.

"When I usually meet an agency, they're trying to understand Lisnr," Williams says. "Within a few minutes of speaking with R/GA, they not only understood us, they understood how impactful we could be in the market."

Lisnr, which describes itself as a "premiere smarttone technology company," develops software that uses ultrasonic technology to transfer data through audio. It could mean big things for retailers who want to reach their customers directly, in real time. Anything, from advertising data to promotional announcements, can be transferred through audio waves directly to a consumer's smartphone or other device.

Working with Techstars and R/GA means that the technology can now become more prolific than ever. According to Williams, it has the potential to replace Bluetooth. This is no small task, and where an accelerator could prove very beneficial.

"The R/GA client base is incredible for Lisnr," he says. With success stories like Microsoft, [Beats by Dre](#) and [Nike Fuel Bands](#) on their resume, R/GA has proven extremely successful in marketing products to the exact customer base Williams hopes to reach. As for Techstars, Williams anticipates that they will help him to recruit even more top talent in the area to even further perfect the software.

"As we look at the next four months, it's really about connecting with companies, creating standards," Williams continues. "Demo Day, for us, will be about becoming the new standard."

After their time with Techstars and R/GA, Lisnr hopes to appear on millions of devices and have developed a team both in Cincinnati and New York that can further that goal. Though their New York office provides an important hub for the business, Cincinnati is still home.

"There are no better developers than here in the Midwest," Williams says. "Cincinnati has been amazing for us."

The company plans to move into its new building at 12th and Broadway in the next month, where it will have more room to expand and grow as a brand.

"The team is uber-excited," Williams says, "and so motivated to speed this up within the market."



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