

Health + IT Campus Magdeburg

Opportunities for Start-Ups in a New Innovation Hub for Medical Technology

Follow your visions rather than let a crisis stand in your way – that's the motto of Matthias Weber, Managing Director of Hasomed GmbH in Magdeburg. He and his company have just won the Grand Prize for SMEs 2020 (Der Große Preis des Mittelstandes 2020) awarded by the Oskar Patzelt Foundation. In Mathias Schulz he found a suitable, dedicated partner to help realize his ideas in the middle of lockdown. Together they want to turn Health + IT Campus into a center of innovation for pioneering health technologies and to advance digitalization in health care. Financed by private funds that Weber would prefer to invest in the future rather than in shares, the current team of three at Health + IT Campus GmbH set to work on October 1.

Space for ideas and successful business

Schulz has experience in start-ups: he headed Saxony-Anhalt's Business Plan Competition and was even responsible for company start-ups at the university in Halle and at the Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences. As Managing Director of Health + IT Campus GmbH, he is now offering those with ideas business prospects. By providing office space at affordable prices, a network with partners from different sectors, support aided by project scouting, knowledge transfer facilitated by an academy, and an accelerator program, the Health + IT Campus will soon be a site of innovative solutions for the health sector.

The fact that more partners are pledging their support shows that this is a winning vision. This has led to Hasomed GmbH's former office at Ölweide 18 in Magdeburg becoming the site of the Health + IT Campus as of October. To start with, 600 m² of office space and a 400 m² industrial hall are available. Schulz wants to create the feel of the famous "garage start-ups" for businesses with potential. The industrial hall is being fitted out with variable-size start-up offices. Thanks to mobile dividing walls and modern technology, this is where creative start-ups can find their feet. There are already plans being floated to expand the space by 600 m².

Active networks help pave the way

The founders of the Health + IT Campus see themselves as paving the way for people with ideas. Their motto is: "If everyone else is doing well, then I'll do well, too." That may not sound so business-minded at first, but Weber and Schulz are active and committed networkers. They are well aware that one individual's capabilities thrive when you join forces with others and pursue common aims. It's therefore no coincidence that innoMed e.V., the network for medical technology in Saxony-Anhalt, is headquartered at the Health + IT Campus and that Schulz is head of the branch office. He wants to expand collaboration between network members and establish a sector management team. The aim is to win significant tenders as combined groups: that way the group can carry out contracts and projects for which the individual companies wouldn't have enough capacity on their own.

Companies who locate to the Health + IT Campus in the future will also benefit from the existing contacts. Hasomed GmbH can envisage investing in suitable synergies as an industry partner. "If we ourselves can't help, then we'll know who can," emphasizes Weber, Hasomed's Managing Director. Schulz adds: "My job is to bring people together to contribute to the success of our start-ups and businesses."

The coronavirus pandemic has not put a stop to their work – quite the opposite. Health + IT Campus GmbH was founded largely during lockdown. The first leases have already been signed, and the company is even in communication with an Israeli firm – its first foreign contact. This is a promising indication that the building will soon be full of life. Medical technology companies are the primary focus, but Schulz is also open to other projects and companies that are agile and innovative. Gaming software solutions have been successfully transferred to medical technology of the future, for example.

HIT healthcare hackathon from November 20 to 22

Schulz is expecting around 100 people to take part in the first hackathon hosted by the Health + IT Campus. Developers, designers, engineers, computer scientists and many other creative minds will come together for a weekend in November to work on ideas for solutions to various issues. Topics include the development of a first aid app for teenagers, the gamification of e-learning platforms and a communication strategy for attracting volunteers for medical studies.

They will also discuss what the hospital of 2050 could look like – a topic requiring particularly imaginative vision. Will hospitals still exist in their current form as providers of comprehensive medical treatment? Or will sensor and robot technology and digitalization make home diagnosis and treatment a reality? What will patient rooms look like? Will artificial intelligence take over from daily ward rounds? Will therapies be carried out by holograms? What role will virtual reality play? And what impact will all this have on humans? The group will have open discussions, explore big, ambitious ideas and will no doubt have to tackle contentious issues when technological visions come up against ethical considerations. This should result in basic principles and approaches that can be transferred to individual sectors such as IT and primary care.

"These ideas will enable Saxony-Anhalt to become a true leading example," says Schulz with visible enthusiasm. "We have a huge amount of potential and hope that the Health + IT Campus will help to unlock it."

Given its focus, the Health + IT Campus is an obvious supplement to the Science Port and the Research Campus STIMULATE in Magdeburg. These Centers of Excellence are also sites where business and science come together to achieve even greater things.

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