



A NEIGHBOURLY POWER STRUGGLE?

Qurrent | Igor Kluin

“As entrepreneur I was too early, but as an idealist I was right on time,” says Igor Kluin, founder of Qurrent. This company, founded in 2005, allows neighbours to share their sustainably generated energy with each other through the “Q-box”.

The Q-box combines the energy generated by personal solar panels or micro wind turbines and regulates the energy needs and costs accordingly among the participating neighbours. This could ultimately cancel out the need for large overarching energy companies.

Back in 2003, Kluin was intrigued by the energy challenges our society would soon face. “A lot of people had no idea, and even if they did, they didn’t know what they could do about it,” he remembers.

A group effort

In order to make a lasting difference, Kluin knew everyone needed to contribute, which also meant it needed to be very easy for people to adjust their lifestyle. “People are very resistant to change, so whatever solution I would offer, needed to require a minimal effort on their part,” Kluin laughs. “But more importantly, I didn’t want sustainability to be associated with the negative feeling of doing things less, or apologizing for every un-recycled plastic bottle. Sustainability needed to feel as something positive. Generating your own energy and being able to share that with those around you allowed for just that. Because I had a completely different background, I wasn’t bothered by the constraints of the industry, I didn’t see its hurdles, so I could brainstorm freely and come up with truly new ideas. I spent a year learning everything there was to know about sustainable energy and our current system and became somewhat of an expert on local and smart energy.”

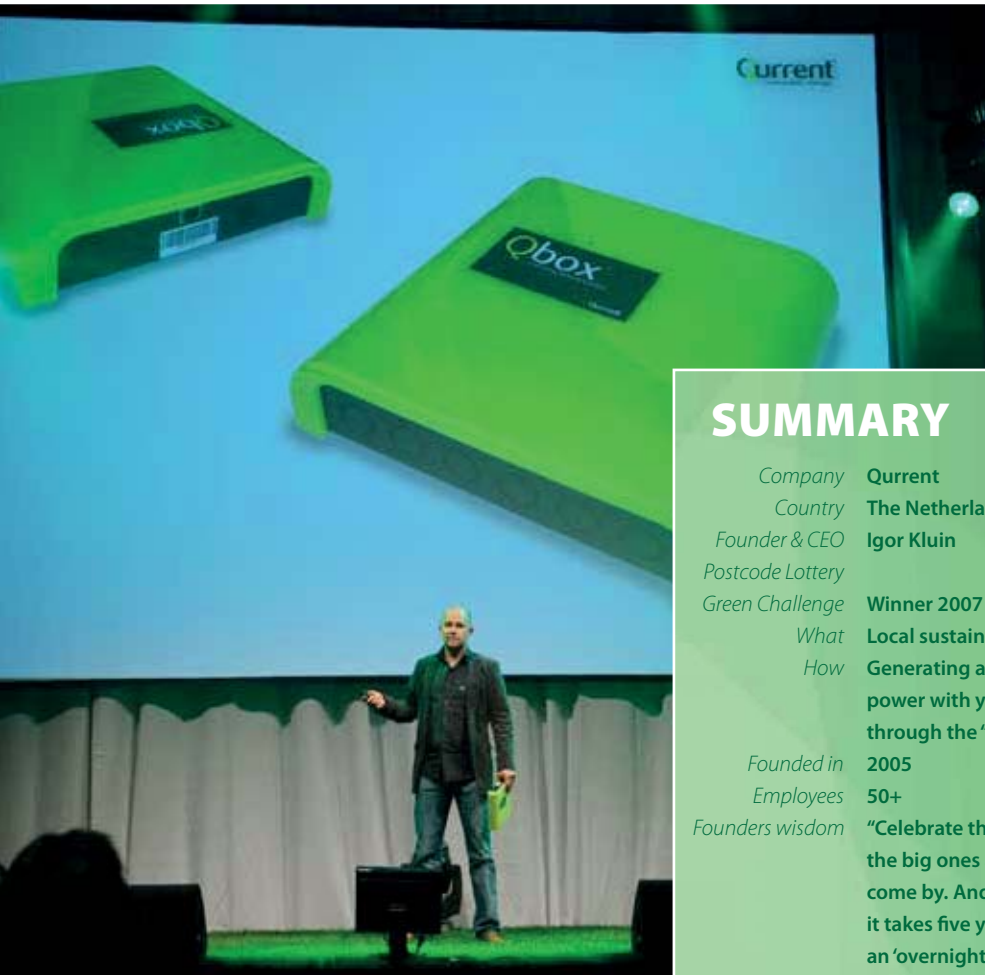
The first years of Qurrent were spent in boardrooms of real estate developers and housing corporations talking about the changing energy industry. “They were all ears,” says Kluin, “but that was unbelievably frustrating, because their interest hardly ever translated into real action. At some point I felt like a lobbyist rather than an entrepreneur.”

The first edition and the first winner

In 2007, Kluin entered into the first edition of the Postcode Lottery Green Challenge. There were 439 applicants from 50 different countries during that first edition of the competition, and Kluin’s Qurrent won the grand prize of EUR 500.000.

The prize money allowed Kluin to further develop the Q-box and start a pilot phase. At ten different locations, hundreds of Q-boxes were set up to test and monitor energy usage. However, because Qurrent challenged the business model of the large energy companies and due to the relatively high costs of solar panels back then, it was only in 2009 that Qurrent was able to book its first success.

A few years later, a crucial deal with a large strategic partner fell through after nine months of negotiations. Kluin had spent all his time and energy on this deal and when it didn’t happen, he found his company in total free fall. “Suddenly the mismatch and inequalities in the relationship became clear. For them it was just



SUMMARY

Company **Qurrent**

Country **The Netherlands**

Founder & CEO **Igor Kluin**

Postcode Lottery

Green Challenge

What

How

Winner 2007

**Local sustainable energy
Generating and sharing solar
power with your neighbors
through the "Q-box"**

Founded in **2005**

Employees **50+**

Founders wisdom **"Celebrate the small victories,
the big ones are difficult to
come by. And remember:
it takes five years to become
an 'overnight success!'"**

"As entrepreneur I was too early,
but as an idealist I was right on time."

another project in their pipeline, for me it meant life or death. Looking back on it, I can say it was one of the most rewarding periods in my life, but when I was going through it, it definitely didn't feel like that. A fundamental belief in what I was doing kept me going. It was more about the bigger picture than about my own success. I was really on a mission. Practically, the episode taught me to demand commitments earlier on in negotiations with larger companies, especially when the relationship is out of balance."

Lasting impact

Creating true and lasting impact was always Kluin's ultimate goal. In order to do so, Qurrent needed to scale up, which required a serious financial investment. He had been looking for a partner in the energy industry for a while, but Qurrent's business model clashed too much with the existing structures.

Enter the DOEN Foundation, who had been involved with the Postcode Lottery Green Challenge from the

start and as such had been in close contact with Qurrent after they won the competition. When Kluin was looking for investors, he – together with the DOEN Foundation – applied to the Postcode Lottery's Dream Fund. With the financial help of the Dream Fund the DOEN Foundation was able to make a large investment in Qurrent. Qurrent was a perfect fit with the DOEN Foundation in their ambition to make 100.000 households in the Netherlands energy-neutral. The DOEN Foundation took over Qurrent in 2011, and several other investments were subsequently made. Today, Qurrent has grown into one of the greenest energy companies of the Netherlands. Kluin continued working for his company for another two years before leaving to chase new dreams.

Since then, Kluin has shifted his focus to transforming the financial world through his new company, Monyq, an app aiming to change the traditional banking sector.