

## Settled. But that doesn't change a thing...

Ishay Green (29), a “PC child” for as long as he can remember, a scholarship graduate of the Efi Arazi School of Computer Science, has no financial worries. On graduation, his start-up made a \$20 million exit. Apart from freeing him from anxiety, this has not changed much for Ishay.

*By Tami Berger,  
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On the way to the interview, I decided to toss out the sheet of questions I had prepared, and just let the conversation with **Ishay Green** flow. Because I have no affinity for computer science, and I didn't take along an interpreter from the Efi Arazi School, our talk about the start-up that he sold was very limited. Our discussion of the start-up that Ishay is working on now was also minimal, but that is because he hasn't yet gone out onto the market, so everything is confidential.



We talked about life. I was very interested in knowing what an immediate profit of several million dollars does to an ordinary person, someone who doesn't come from a wealthy or even fairly well-off home. In truth, I was surprised. I don't know what Ishay was like before the exit, but I had a fun conversation with a modest, simple, madly funny kid (yes, kid), who claims that the only thing that the money has done is to free him from one worry.

Ishay defines himself as a “PC child” - he has been messing with computers since the age of six, programming computer games for fun, and started to work as a freelancer at the age of 16. He worked for high-tech companies, carrying out projects on which he worked for an average of a week, and earning around NIS 4,500 for each project. Not bad for a 16-year-old...

### **So in fact, you were a geek?**

“I don't think I was a geek. I had friends who were geeks, and we used to program together, but I was also a surfer and I hung around with the surfers on the beach in Netanya, and I also did stupid things like going along with them when they stole fisherman pants from washing lines. I didn't steal, and not just because I'm a coward. The only time I ever stole anything was at the Arad Festival, when I stole a chocolate milk - and I was caught.”



One of the companies that Ishay worked for referred him to the Technology Unit of the IDF Intelligence Corps, where he continued doing what



he had always excelled at, even participating in projects that won the Israel Defense Award and the Chief of Intelligence GHQ Prize for Creative Thinking. On demobilization from the army, Ishay served as chief technologist of an unsuccessful start-up, and then traveled for a year in South America. In the course of his studies at IDC Herzliya, Ishay founded a start-up called Unigamma, in the field of enterprise security. Unigamma was sold after a year and 10 months of work, to the first to make an offer, the American company McAfee, for \$20 million. The exit took place just as Ishay received his bachelor's degree in computer sciences.

**You worked on the start-up for less than two years and decided to sell it to the first bidder?**

"We sold at the first opportunity because it suited both the investors and the staff. The company had 17 employees, and almost all of them were happy with the exit. I continued to work McAfee for about a year, to make sure that all the targets that they set and that we set ourselves were met, and then I turned to the next start-up."

**You made a profit of a several million dollars, and instead of taking early retirement, buying a house, or going on a trip around the world, you simply decided to carry on working?**

"For me, retirement means death. The year that I worked McAfee was not particularly strenuous, and all in all, high-tech "does it for me". When I got the money, I did the one thing that I felt was the most important: I paid off all my parents' debts. I also donate money to things that are important to me (he prefers not to give details – TB), but apart from that I live in a rented apartment in Tel Aviv, drive a Peugeot 206, get up every day at 8 a.m. and work until 8 p.m."

**Tell me a bit about the current start-up. In everyday language, if possible.**

"I can't go into too much detail because we have not yet gone out onto the market. The company is called Soloto, and I set it up together with a friend. We are mapping the computer genome. The plan is to go out onto the market in about seven months time."

**So money hasn't changed you or your lifestyle at all?**

"Look, obviously having money means you have less to worry about, but it hasn't turned my head. I don't economize on sports equipment, I eat in good restaurants, and my vacations are at a higher standard than I was used to before the exit. I also invest a lot in the theater, but nothing more than that."

**Theater??**

"Daphne, the love of my life for the past two years, is a director and playwright and she has brought me into this world which, by contrast with the world of high-tech, is very deep. High-tech is very functional. In the theater, the aim is not to create money but to create emotion, and that is something that I connect with very much."

**What form does your investment in the theater take?**

"I am currently accompanying the play Romeo and Juliet, being performed at the Tmunoa Theater. I do the stage sets, public relations, and financial management. With my next exit, I don't intend to waste the money on myself but invest it in the theater and in the arts in general. I also belong to a group of young people aiming to fight corruption, with the eventual goal of setting up a political group of the uncorrupted."

**So where do you see yourself in 10 years time?**

“Fighting like mad against corruption, involved in the arts, and, of course continuing to work in high-tech. The truth is, I’m really not sure.”

**Married?**

“I’m dying to marry Daphne, but she says I’m too childish.”

**What did your degree from IDC Herzliya give you?**

“The IDC made it clear to me that there is no reason to wait in order to set up a start-up. **Ela Matalon’s** course in entrepreneurship taught me a great deal. There were guest speakers during the course who talked about their mistakes and about the things that they did right on their way, and this gave me many tools when facing things in real life. IDC Herzliya is the best academic institution in the country, because it succeeds in combining the real world and the academic world, with a great deal of soul and humanity.”

**What is your connection today with the IDC?**

“I accompany a student, and I lecture in Ela Matalon’s course in entrepreneurship.”

**Which lecturers do you remember best?**

“**Gadi Taubenfeld** and **Shimon Schocken**. They see the person inside every student. It is thanks to Shimon Schocken that I completed my degree. In the course of my studies, I had problems with my parents and I had to work, and I wasn’t able to keep up with everything I had undertaken, and they took this into account with understanding and sensitivity.”

I begin to see that Ishay is running out of patience. Perhaps it is because he has been sitting for almost an hour without a computer to hand. Daphne calls to say that she is underneath the building and she can’t find a parking space, so Ishay races through all the offices in the building to get cars

moved out of the way for her. Their new dog, which he brings with him to the office, runs down the stairs after him, and so do I. The way he operates is funny. He goes up to the law firm, goes into the offices, calls out to Daphne from the window, and then he notices that his dog has urinated on the floor in one of the offices. Without blinking, he goes into the kitchenette, takes a bucket and a floor cloth, and begins to clean the floor. I look on from the side, and smile to myself.



I understand that our interview has come to an end. I came with completely different expectations, but I am leaving as happy as can be. Just before leaving, I try once more, after all.

**Ishay, what message do you have for the students at IDC Herzliya?**

“Can I have three messages?”

**Go for it**

“1: Anything is possible. 2: Come to the theater and discover a new world. 3: Help, contribute, and volunteer.”