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## Harver and Gapstars: Mutual success story between Amsterdam and Colombo



Slowly but surely, it's being picked up by international media: Sri Lanka is hot. And we are not talking about the stunning beaches or the other tourist highlights. Sri Lanka is starting to become known for its abundance in tech talent by powering international corporations such as eBay, Paypal, Expedia, Emirates and other top tech brands. The Sri Lankan IT-BPM industry expanded by 300% to reach \$ 1.2 billion in export revenue in the past decade alone (NES 2019).

The country's growing tech talent is reinforcing companies like [Gapstars](#), in the IT-BPM industry to reiterate its competitiveness internationally. A B2B service provider, Gapstars developed a method to help fast-growing tech startups and scale-ups with high performing agile offshore development teams. A highly anticipated solution for top tech companies located in the Netherlands: with 60% of all Forbes 2000 IT companies setting up shop in the Netherlands, the war for talent is intense.

Gapstars is quickly gaining traction as a key talent and technology supplier for top tech companies in the Netherlands, who want to meet their expansion ambitions. Interestingly, Gapstars sees it working both ways. Gapstars helps companies grow, and their clients, to help them become the best IT service provider available, able to help more organisations meet their goals. A prime example of this is the collaboration between Harver and Gapstars.

[Harver](#) is an AI-powered pre-employment assessment solution platform that allows companies and applicants to 'eliminate the resume'. The company, founded in 2014 by Barend Raaff, has automated the application process, including analysis of modules, test, assessments and data to match the right candidate to the job. As of July 2019, the company had raised \$ 30 million and boasts Zappos, Netflix, Booking.com, Uber, Vodafone, WeWork and Casper as clients.



Recently Harver CEO/Founder Barend Raaff, and Gapstars CEO Hugo Hemmen, sat down with DailyFT to talk about their success and mutual interests:

**Q: Can you tell us how it all started?**

**Barend:** The story started almost 10 years ago, when my wife and I traveled to Sri Lanka to help manage an orphanage in Kandy. This is when I noticed Sri Lanka's booming IT talent pool. I decided to create a community of talented PHP developers for my tech startup Harver, which was growing fast. We quickly started to realize the potential and value we were creating.

**Hugo:** It's then that we joined to co-found Gapstars. We believed that together, we could create real value for businesses looking to accelerate and scale up, if we added up the right elements.

**Q: What are the key ingredients for the success of the Harver/Gapstars collaboration?**

**Hugo:** Harver perfectly fits the client profile we are looking for. Gapstars is very particular about who we want to work with. We specifically aim for young ambitious tech companies that fit our DNA and see the benefits of setting up their development operations in Sri Lanka. They need to grow at a certain speed, have funding secured and work on a disruptive business model we believe in.

**Barend:** Also, both Gapstars and Harver are convinced that success in this fast-growing and constantly evolving market has two defining factors: talent and time-to-market. Not only do you need to find the right talent quickly, you need to get them acquainted with your company culture, make them part of your team and get them up to speed in a short time span. We recognise that and Gapstars can provide this.

**Q: What can Gapstars – and Sri Lanka – offer Harver that other locations can't?**

**Hugo:** We firmly believe in our unique value proposition: we want to move beyond IT outsourcing. Building an extended team with Gapstars is like opening your own remote development centre, but without the hassle. That is exactly what we did with Harver.

**Barend:** Sri Lanka is an interesting destination with lots of potential. The growing tech talent pool paired with their great service culture is the driving force of success. That is why we invest in important areas, including our people, culture and operations to support the delivery of world-class software development.



Harver's growing development team at their Amsterdam HQ, October 2019

**Q: With Harver located in Amsterdam, how do you build an engaged team in Colombo?**

**Barend:** We understand the importance of building relationships and having as much face-to-face interactions as possible to improve commitment. This October, we are excited to have the entire Colombo Harver team visiting our HQ in Amsterdam, purely to build engagement.

**Hugo:** This is part of our Gapstars philosophy: we want our employees to grow and become global citizens. That is why we want our teams to visit our clients' head office at least once a year. Getting acquainted with people, companies and cultures from around the world contributes to both their personal and professional development. At the same time, we also encourage our clients to meet their (soon to be) developers in Sri Lanka to get to know them during the hiring process. We have seen that this highly strengthens the bond of trust on both sides and has a great effect on the overall dynamic.

**Q: Wired named Harver as one of 'Europe's Hottest 100 Startups' in 2018. How has Gapstars contributed to Harver's achievements?**

**Barend:** Working with Gapstars has significantly increased the speed at which we have grown. The war on talent has forced us to find a smarter way to source talent. With Gapstars, we were able to quickly build a high performing development team in Sri Lanka and almost immediately started seeing the results. And to see how Gapstars itself is growing to become the preferred choice for startups and scale-ups is the icing on the cake!

The above excerpts are from the interview originally published on the DailyFT. [Read more.](#)

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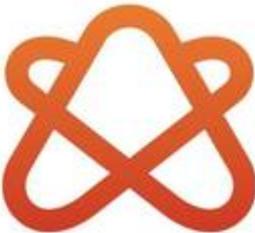
**ABOUT GAPSTARS**

Gapstars is a B2B service provider to innovative Dutch software companies. We developed a method to help fast-growing tech companies with high performing agile offshore development teams. Our method includes finding, hiring and facilitating developers in scrum team format.

We started our journey in 2015 with a young and ambitious team. Currently we employ 80+ professionals in our offices in Amsterdam, The Netherlands and Colombo, Sri Lanka. In 2019, our goal is to become an industry leader and an agile software development powerhouse. We are only interested in working with fast-growing

start-and scale ups that are looking for new ways to fuel their growth. Our current clientbase includes several highly ambitious and heavily funded start-ups that are looking to conquer their respective markets.

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Gapstars