

FP STARTUPS

Today's startups and tomorrow's market leaders

TRENDING [Corus](#) | [Bombardier](#) | [Loonie](#) | [RRSP](#) | [Oil](#) | [Apple](#) | [Housing](#) | [Alberta](#)

The nanny connection: My Best Helper allows Canadian families to vet caretakers online



ANWAR ALI, ANWAR ALI | April 14, 2014 8:00 AM ET
[More from Special to Financial Post](#)

Republish
Reprint



Dr. Alexandra Greenhill, co-founder and CEO of myBestHelper.com, considers herself a “funny transplant” into the world of startups.

Ben Nelms for Financial Post

After striking out with a meet-and-greet nanny service in Vancouver, Tanis Jorge turned to the Web to find a caretaker for her two boys, JJ and Nuno.

Ms. Jorge’s search led her to My Best Helper, an online database that has the guise of an online dating site and is meant to help Canadian families vet the next caretaker for their children, find relief for household chores, or browse for one of the many other roles lumped under its namesake.

Her frustrations undoubtedly resonate with other working mothers, including the site’s co-founder Dr. Alexandra Greenhill, who realized that finding good domestic help is not always as easy as a knock on the neighbour’s door.

Dr. Greenhill, a medical doctor, considers herself a “funny transplant” into the world of startups. She is about to find out how much investors agree with her thesis ahead of a seed round of financing next month.

“We want to build a platform that allows families to feel that there is a back-up,” Dr. Greenhill said. “Anyone who has kids gets this. There’s no need explaining this to them.”

Related

[Follow](#)

10 things that propelled Ancient Rome to greatness that can help your business

Volta Labs looks to energize the East Coast startup scene

Before finding 28-year old Thai, Napatra, on My Best Helper in October, Ms. Jorge had employed a come to Canada through the live-in caregiver program and depended on the spotty availability of he

“It was really important to find someone I could trust,” said Ms. Jorge, the co-founder and chief ope startup Trulioo.

It’s almost trite to say societal shifts have reduced the amount of time families spend together at ho of stay-at-home parenting come and go. Regardless, the phenomenon has created a market that app executive of Vancouver’s Invoke Labs, the startup accelerator that spawned 2013’s venture capital darling Hootsuite.

This inevitably led to his collaboration with Dr. Greenhill.

“You’d be hard pressed to find anybody in Vancouver who doesn’t know who she is,” Mr. Tedman said. “We’re always on the hunt for the next partner to work with. We just began discussions and began to talk about what a relationship might look like.”

That relationship — exclusive because just five other companies aside from My Best Helper are getting Invoke’s attention now — began about six months ago.

Dr. Greenhill’s clever marketing also impressed Mr. Tedman. In a Facebook contest, she offered to be a nanny for a month. “I thought that was incredible,” Mr. Tedman said. “That’s as committed as one can get in terms of putting themselves on the front line.”

My Best Helper was born out of frustrations. Dr. Greenhill had tried online classified site Craigslist and sites such as CanadianNanny.ca and Nannies on Call, which ironically are now her competitors. Yet, she was only getting part-time options when what she needed was full-time care for her three children, now aged 11, nine and three. She even paid an Ottawa-based nanny agency \$1,000 in what she called “my desperate attempt to find a solution.”

A significant amount of non-professional caregivers are available on My Best Helper, on the assumption that a trustworthy person can be trained to do the job. The so-called helpers include a mix of university students, stay-at-home mothers and retirees looking for additional income.

While the net appears wide, domestic help from emerging nations is becoming a scarce pool. Since reaching a 10-year peak in 2009, the number of nannies coming to Canada through the live-in caregiver program has dropped precipitously. That year, nearly 40,000 caregivers were working in the country. Three years later, there was half that amount, according to data from Citizen and Immigration Canada.

The department says it does not set a target for temporary workers. It issues permits according to labour market demands, a signal that more Canadians are making themselves available as domestic help.

My Best Helper has some catching up to do. The site’s 5,000-odd users pale in comparison to Canadiannanny.ca, which has existed in various forms for 13 years and has about 100,000 caregivers in nearly 500 cities.

To accommodate her growth plans, Dr. Greenhill would like to more than double her current six-person team by the end of the year with more developers, marketers and an outreach co-ordinator to help with expansion to other major Canadian cities beyond Vancouver, it’s largest market, Toronto and Calgary. A launch into the United States is also on the horizon.

Dr. Greenhill also wants to make the site’s matching capabilities more intricate, which Mukul Krishna, Frost & Sullivan’s digital media global director, says is necessary to keep customers coming back.

“Everything hinges on the analytics algorithm that you’re using,” Mr. Krishna said. “The most important thing that has emerged now is being able to create a very sticky and personalized experience.”

Every time a user logs on, clicks on a link or runs a profile search, the site needs to be able to interpret that interaction and customize the next experience Mr. Krishna added. It’s something Dr. Greenhill, who learned how to code in high school, knows is important.

Follow “Financial Post”

Get every new post delivered to your Inbox.

Join 7,034 other followers

Sign me up

Build a website with WordPress.com

“If you want to grow any online strategy and try to do it without analytics ... You’ll be dead in the water,” he said. “It takes milliseconds for someone to get frustrated and move to another site.”

While Dr. Greenhill expects to raise somewhere between \$500,000 to \$750,000 in the imminent seed round, she would rather grow the company organically.

“I think every entrepreneur’s dream is to build a huge company without raising [funds]. While we’ve tried to bootstrap for the longest time possible, we’ve come to the realization that it’s time for us to add fuel to our engine.”

My Best Helper has already got some attention locally. It won the 2011 Vancouver Start-up Weekend competition and a cash prize of \$35,000 for third place at BCIC-New Ventures Competition in 2012.

An iOS mobile app, with the help of Invoke Labs, should be ready this month. “Our strategy now is letting people know we are open for business,” Dr. Greenhill said.



Find Entrepreneur on Facebook

Topics: **Entrepreneur**, **FP Startups**

0 Comments

Sort by



Add a comment...

Facebook Comments Plugin

⤵