



July 29, 2014
Getting Huge



Huge, a digital consulting firm (at left), is one of many tech-oriented startups to thrive in Brooklyn in recent years.

GETTING HUGE

Huge, a full service agency located in the DUMBO section of the Tech Triangle, provides digital strategy, marketing and design services to some of the world's biggest and most well-known corporations. The company got its start in 1999 and quickly grew from a small to a medium-sized business, when its first client, IKEA, hired Huge to revamp its websites.

"We were founded in Brooklyn because it was the most practical place to grow our kind of business," Huge's CEO Aaron Shapiro said. "We never felt the need to be based in Manhattan to pretend to be something other than

who we are."

Huge has since collaborated with a host of notable for-profit ventures and cultural institutions, among them the Museum of Modern Art, Reuters and the National September 11 Memorial & Museum, recreating and, at times, constructing from scratch, their websites. In October of last year, Huge teamed up with *National Geographic* to create *Your Shot*, the magazine's now popular virtual photo assignment community.

Despite its tremendous growth over the past 15 years, Huge still manages to maintain a startup culture within its headquarters, placing an emphasis on fostering a sense of community.

"The key is to always stay hungry and never rest on your laurels," Shapiro said. "I think one of the hardest but most important components to this is to make change a part of your culture.

Change is hard. It's exhausting. It can be frustrating. But unless you change you will eventually become obsolete and in our business it's important to be changing ahead of the market so that we can help our clients manage that change as well."

Shapiro notes that most of the world's biggest and most profitable companies came into existence and created their business models before the Internet dramatically changed the societal and commercial landscape. As a result, they must now "rebuild themselves internally and externally" to remain viable.

"Huge was founded on helping companies not just design websites and software to facilitate those interactions, but also to help companies manage the organizational change that's necessary to turn a business into one that's as tech-first as a Google or a Facebook," Shapiro said.

Like Livestream, a significant portion

of HUGE's employees live in Brooklyn, commuting to work either by bike or by ferry.

"We're excited to be part of the technology industry that has grown up around us over the years and Brooklyn is such a part of our DNA we could never leave," Shapiro said.

The Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce has helped nurture tech startups, partnering with NYU Polytechnic School of Engineering to secure a grant to expand incubator space and launching an IT community partnership to address the skills gap at local businesses.

"I never liked that quote, 'Brooklyn is the new Manhattan,'" Scissura said. "Brooklyn is Brooklyn. We're bigger, bolder, more creative and more innovative. We are where small and big companies thrive and we are no back office or shadow of Manhattan. We are our own borough."

CITYANDSTATE.NY.COM