

I wrote this article for a software client who wanted an article on why they chose Los Angeles over Silicon Valley. It was published on the magazine's web site in August 2012.

KillerStartups

You Set Up Shop Where? Los Angeles?

By [Guest Author Post](#) August 24, 2012 [Startup People](#)

The second most common question I get about my tablet publishing startup, [Readz.com](#), is: What are you doing in Los Angeles? The answer is simple: It's the ideal place to launch our company.

I started my career in Belgium and have travelled the world for business, but when it came time to build my own venture, I knew it had to be in the United States. America has the world's largest economy, full of early-adopters, and it has a fast-moving venture capital market. I also knew that Readz had to be based on the West Coast, close to the center of innovations in hardware and software.

So, why not Silicon Valley? It came down to the cost and quality of living. For me, Los Angeles outshines the Bay Area at both, and offers surprising advantages in terms of the talent, funding and support structure needed to build a successful company.



Talent

Few cities in America, if any, attract as many ambitious, creative and focused young professionals. If your startup has anything to do with social or traditional media, Los Angeles is the capital of the world and brimming with underutilized talent. As a technology startup, you'll find fresh-out-of-the-box college graduates from terrific

schools such as USC, UCLA, Caltech and CalPoly, as well as a great supply of experienced technology and design talent in the IT and web development teams of Hollywood studios, international media companies, advertising agencies, defense contractors and other leading corporations. More than a few of these people have the talent and ambition to join a startup but don't want to tear up their lives to look for work in Silicon Valley. Offer them a real opportunity and you won't have to worry about losing them in three months to the next big deal.

No other city in America is as large or diverse, with a population of 10 million and almost as many unique cultures. If you want your product to reflect the true diversity of America's fastest growing populations, and to be tested in a microcosm of the world, there are few better places to do it.

The fact that tech isn't the city's star industry means that you and your staff will draw on influences from world leaders in film, music, gaming, fashion, design, the arts, healthcare, defense and financial services. As publishing becomes more media and brand driven, it's great for us to be here, in one of the media and branding capitals of the world.



Funding and Support

It's becoming less and less of a secret that there are plenty of investors in Los Angeles, from the Harvard Business School Angels, Tech Coast Angels and Los Angeles Venture Association to Ashton Kutcher (call us, Ashton, you won't get punk'd). Google invests heavily in Los Angeles, both as itself and through YouTube. Yahoo maintains offices here as well. There are also many incubators and accelerators, including Idealab, Upstart, StartEngine, Amplify, Los Angeles CleanTech Incubator and LaunchpadLA. According to Howard Marks, the founder of StartEngine, more than 100 companies will emerge from Los Angeles incubators this year.

So where are the success stories? Los Angeles doesn't yet have a Google or an Apple to

its credit, but a short list of the companies that have succeeded here would do any city proud. They include: Activision Blizzard, LegalZoom, eHarmony, MySpace, BeachMint, DocStoc, Demand Media, CitySearch, ShopZilla, GreenDot, Mahalo, Break and Match.com. Los Angeles' emergence as a startup center tracks perfectly with the financial downturn of 2008 and the soft market that's followed, but there's no reason to think the next big thing won't come out of Los Angeles, and soon.

Weather

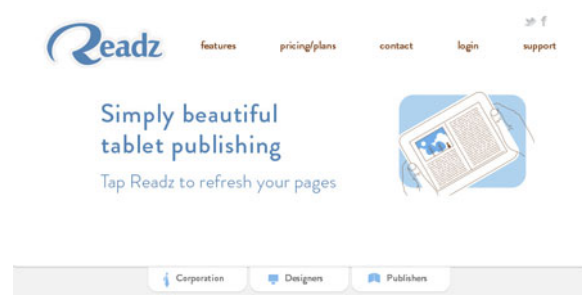
It is generally as awesome as advertised. Shirtsleeves-warm during the day, jacket-cool at night, about 8 months out of the year, with a sweater-worthy winter that would pass for October in most other parts of the country.

Traffic

Yes, a factor, but also a matter of location. As a startup, we weren't looking at an office downtown. There are thriving neighborhoods with office space and easy commutes if you look for them.

Housing

Your money goes much farther here than it does in Silicon Valley or New York. You may find yourself priced out of - or too far away from - some of the city's more famous neighborhoods, but you're an entrepreneur. Innovating and discovering alternatives: Koreatown, Mount Washington, Tarzana, Culver City, El Segundo and more, are what you do.



Work-Life Balance

No other city outside of New York offers so much to do, and no other city makes it possible almost year-round. Dinner overlooking the beach in October? Done. Outdoor concert in March? Bring your shorts. Skiing, surfing, camping, hiking, biking, deserts, beaches and mountains are a day trip. If your favorite band isn't touring through Los

Angeles, they probably live here and play the clubs on Sunset regularly. There's a real richness to Los Angeles, and endless opportunities to discover more, that are missing in smaller, otherwise great, West Coast cities such as San Francisco or Seattle.

After more than a year, I can say that our decision to set up Readz in Los Angeles has been validated every single day. With my family settled in our new home, I'm looking forward to building a thriving company in a city that will soon get the recognition it deserves as a center of innovation.

About Bart De Pelsmaeker

Bart De Pelsmaeker is the CEO of Readz. He has extensive experience founding and building software companies, with a unique focus on the publishing industry. Bart is also the owner of MXML, a consulting firm offering executive management to software and technology companies. Prior to founding MXML and Readz, Bart created a venture at Agfa Graphics: a digital marketplace that connects companies with creative marketing resources, and was Chairman of the Board for ProImage, which develops browser-based production tracking solutions for newspapers and printers. He also managed the Agfa Graphics software group. Bart has also worked at IBM, Sony and Riverland, and in a distant past, lectured at China's Wuhan University.



About Readz.com

Readz is a tablet content management system that empowers users to design, edit, publish and host interactive HTML5 publications on tablets. The web-based Readz solution enables users to publish striking layouts that incorporate rich



media without installing software or touching a line of code. Readz also allows users to

invite as many collaborators as they need without buying additional licenses. Through Readz, publications can be assembled quickly and distributed instantly, without waiting for approval from an app store or sharing revenue.

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