TEKLABZ develops and implements Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for businesses. Their vision is "To empower the GIS technologies within Service Providers" with a mission to "Enable GIS for better information management, flow-through, and visualization".

**MOTIVATION**
- To develop a long-term business strategy and grow the business
- Increase his confidence in business acumen and decision-making

**ACTION**
- Participated and completed the 1-year Mowgli Mentoring Experience (MME) program
- Committed to the program and continued the mentoring relationship with his Mowgli Mentor, Phil Ingle through regular contact and stayed in touch after the program

**ACHIEVEMENT**
- Addressed personal doubts about the direction the business was taking
- Gained practical and emotional support to realise her goals
- Expanded the business' product line/product offering
- Business is more financially secure
- Employed 4 new members of staff
- Awards: All World Arabia 500 Finalist in 2011 and 2012
- Jordan Fast Growth 30 Finalist in 2011
- Business has expanded into 5 new countries
At just under 30, Ramzi Qaqish has achieved a great deal. Having graduated from Princess Sumaya University for Technology and the Amman Arab University, Ramzi was able to leave university and embark on a regular career path. However, he often found himself sitting in cafes with his friend Omar Marji, discussing their ideas for a company of their own that they just knew could work. With their skills and capabilities, they felt sure that they could set-up and run a successful business developing and implementing GIS systems for businesses. It wasn’t long before their idea for TEKLABZ (Technology Labs for Software Industry) began to take shape. “The whole of the first year we spent talking in cafes and brainstorming; it was like a foundation year, but it was necessary,” says Ramzi.

In 2009 they applied for a place at the iPark incubator in Amman and enlisted two friends, and old colleagues, to join the venture, Yazan Sbeih and Yazan Al Zaghah. Ramzi believes the process of applying was very useful for TEKLABZ. To get into iPark they had to present a business plan and showcase their ideas. “We were eventually selected in June 2010” says Ramzi. “The iPark is good because it provides us with much-needed space and shared facilities.”

Once the team had access to iPark’s resources, they were able to concentrate on the operational side of the business; building up and serving the client base. At around the same time, Ramzi decided to apply for Mowgli Mentoring Experience program. After being accepted into the program and taking part in the 3-day Kickstart workshop in March 2010, Ramzi was matched with his mentor, Phil Ingle, and embarked on a yearlong mentoring relationship. When Ramzi applied to take part in the Mowgli program he didn’t know quite what to expect, as mentoring is a relatively unfamiliar concept in the Middle East. “I wasn’t used to having someone like Phil to talk to; who is available just for you and wants to help you. It was a really interesting experience for me, since I was able to just tell him about any doubts or worries without feeling embarrassed about it.” By the end of the program, Ramzi felt he really understood the benefits of having a mentor. “The mentor initiates ideas and helps you think through things. They also encourage you to plan well; helping with long term strategy.” Some entrepreneurs believe they will benefit more from a technical or business advisor. Ramzi strongly disagrees with this idea. “Come on, that’s not what a mentor is for! They aren’t supposed to be technical experts… it’s basically practical and emotional support for the entrepreneur.”

For Ramzi, Phil came along at just the right time for TEKLABZ and helped him overcome personal doubts about the direction of the business. “I’m really happy with Phil, he was there for me consistently throughout the whole year, and he was always available to talk about my plans and objectives. It was especially helpful when I had an issue which I felt I couldn’t talk to anyone else about. It’s really great to have this relationship with someone who doesn’t expect anything in return.”
Ramzi Qaqish
TEKLABZ, Jordan

development, step by step.” Ramzi believes Phil also got a lot out of the experience. “I think it was a learning experience for Phil too, since Jordan as a country and our business practices were so new for him. This is one of the things that makes the program valuable.

Its cultural learning for both the mentor and the entrepreneur.” Ramzi acknowledges that for a relationship to work, it requires great commitment from both parties. “I do feel that it’s important that it should be a serious relationship from the beginning; it’s all about making regular contact and being very committed to the other person, if you’re going to get the most benefit from the program.”

In the years following the Mowgli Mentoring Experience program, the four founders were able to start working full time on TEKLABZ and the company has gone from strength to strength, having been selected for the Jordan Fast Growth 30 list.

Ramzi is very proud of their achievement: “We applied for the competition as a start-up company and we were selected after they decided our business met the criteria. We all felt really pleased about it, since it’s a good motivation for us to keep working and keep developing our ideas and our vision. Jordan is a very small market, and getting positive feedback and recommendations from others makes us feel more confident and ambitious. We are hoping to begin working in other markets, for example Saudi Arabia is a possible market where we feel like there are many opportunities for TEKLABZ.”

“We’re still at iPark, but we really don’t have enough space for the four of us so it’s getting to the time when we’re thinking about what to do next! We’re talking about how to get bigger projects and really take things up a stage, to bring in bigger contracts. Over the last year, a big change was that we all left our jobs in stages to work full time on TEKLABZ – first two, then another one, then another one.

We decided it would be sensible to start paying ourselves salaries, step by step, instead of all at once and I think that caution paid off- we didn’t take a risk in that way.”

"We're all still having ideas and talking them through with each other and I think that's really important"

In 2011 TEKLABZ were finalists in Jordan’s Fast Growth 30 and in 2011 and 2012 they were listed as Arabia 500 finalists. The future looks bright for TEKLABZ. “Despite the current political situation we’re remaining positive, and we’re all sure we’re going to survive. We still have positive cash flow, and we’re afloat even though times are hard.

We have some ambitious plans for expansion in various ways, and we’re talking about several ideas for how to take them forward. We’re all still having ideas and talking them through with each other and I think that’s really important!”

After his experience, would Ramzi recommend the program to other entrepreneurs like himself? “Yes”, says Ramzi, “the program gives you somebody to talk to about your business; to share your thoughts and ideas, and take advice that helps you to overcome your challenges and weaknesses.”

Since the program came to an end Ramzi and his mentor, Phil, are still in contact and intend to stay in touch. “I still count Phil as a friend, not just my mentor. When the year ended, I was really happy to introduce all my team to Phil and I know that if I ever go to London I will definitely be able to connect again and catch up with him!”