



# Leading Through Crisis: A First-Hand Account from an Israeli Startup CEO Balancing Military Reserve Duty

*By Tal Duvdevany, CEO, WATCHIT*

**In Israel, the term 'resilience' is not just corporate jargon; it's a way of life. The recent war has subjected our nation and its businesses to an intense stress test, revealing stories of extraordinary perseverance and ingenuity. Among them is the story of WATCHIT, a company I helm, where the dual role of a CEO also includes military reserve duty.**

## **CEOs in the Trenches**

Amid Israel's war, approximately 15-20% of the high-tech sector finds themselves directly involved in war efforts<sup>1</sup>. While many would consider it an insurmountable challenge to balance executive leadership and military duty, company leaders prove otherwise. Leveraging the power of remote communication and digital platforms, we not only stay connected with our devoted teams, but also successfully navigate the company through one of its most challenging periods.

## **A Story of Cross-Border Collaboration and Creative Solutions**

When challenges arise, that's when partnerships are really put to the test. It goes for all types of partnerships, whether it's in marriage or in business.

I was not surprised to find out just how strong WATCHIT's partnerships really are, and I'll give you two heartwarming examples:

1. Remora - a Greek boating company. Faced with travel restrictions and logistical roadblocks, carrying out installations in Italy became a challenging task. It was Remora who brainstormed a workaround. They not only devised a plan but also executed the on-site installation of our Smart Prevention Systems on Italian boats. Their initiative allowed us to uphold our commitment to elevating boating safety standards, aligning perfectly with our mutual vision for a more secure and enjoyable future on the water.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Start-Up Nation Central



- Rafnar - Leisure vessel builders. Rafnar offered us unparalleled support during the Olympic Yacht Show in Athens. Already equipped with our Smart Prevention Systems on their high-tech boats, Rafnar displayed our tech at the show. They handled all logistics, and the attention garnered for our systems was beyond expectations.

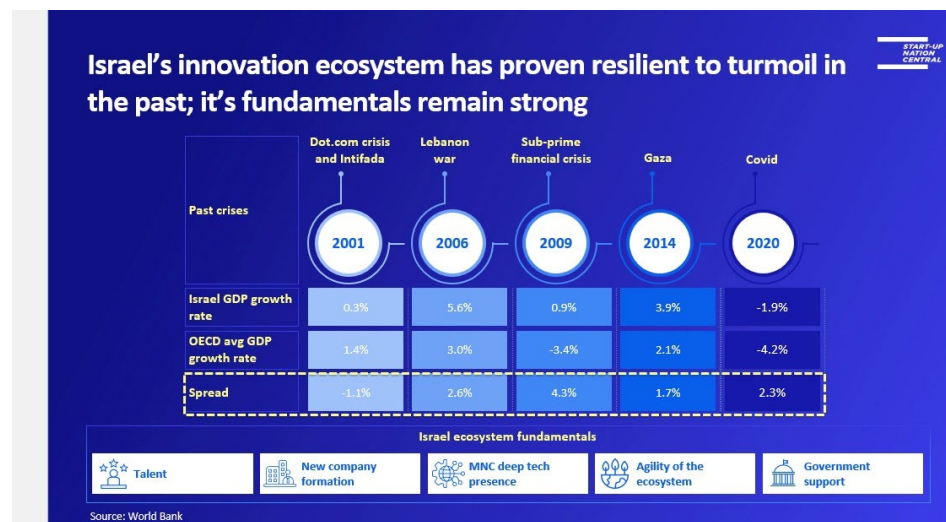
Such international cooperation doesn't just speak to corporate synergy; it testifies to the unbreakable human spirit that thrives in adversity, building bridges when walls seem to close in.

### The Backbone: Committed Employees and Understanding Customers

Any leader knows that the core strength of a business lies in its people. WATCHIT's team has shown a level of commitment and resilience that went beyond duty. They have remained focused, adapted to new operational norms, and have kept the wheels turning. Our customers, too, have shown an extraordinary level of understanding and patience, reinforcing the idea that resilience is not a solitary endeavor but a collective one.

### Business As Usual, Almost

Despite the substantial number of tech employees drafted for reserve duty, the tech engine continues to run. Backed by data from past security events - it's clear that the spirit of innovation and resilience will continue to drive WATCHIT and other Israeli tech startups forward.



There are over 450 Multinational companies operating R&D and innovation centers in Israel. They continue to operate alongside Israeli global companies that continue to serve their customers abroad<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> According to Start-Up Nation Central



### **Forward-Looking**

Though the road ahead is uncertain, the solidarity, agility, and resilience displayed by the Israeli tech community are reasons for optimism.

Many startups are led by CEOs whose commitment runs both to Israel and to the company - investors, customers, and employees alike. We share a deep commitment to them, and we feel that despite all the hardship, we must keep the engine running for them. I truly believe that this sector is a shining example of our country's resilience.

As we look forward, it's important to remember those who have been directly impacted by Hamas's brutal attack. We participate in the grief of the families and wish for the quick return of the abductees to their homes.

Luckily, I can testify that I feel the continuous support from our global and regional allies, making me confident that we will emerge from this crisis stronger than before.

### *About WATCHIT*

Founded by former Israeli navy commanders who identified a critical need, WATCHIT has developed a "Smart Prevention System".

The system combines advanced algorithms with the valuable experience of seasoned captains.

WATCHIT's innovative prevention system eliminates human error by seamlessly integrating with the boat's existing sensors and providing a timely warning for the main concerns while at sea - vessel grounding, navigating condensed waters and collisions.

WATCHIT's vision is to set a new standard in recreational boating safety, reduce vessel and environmental damage, and most importantly, save lives.

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