

EVA Interviews Team “Selenokhod” in the Google Lunar X Prize Competition



EVA Interviews Team “Selenokhod” in the Google Lunar X Prize Competition

From Russia, we welcome [Team Selenokhod](#) to EVA Interviews: The Business of the new Space Age™ in the fourth of this series of Lunar Editions. As one of the most recent entrants in the [Google Lunar X Prize competition](#), Team Selenokhod looks to build on Russia's early lunar robotic successes of the 1970 Lunokhod-1 and 1973 Lunokhod-2 remote-controlled rovers in their efforts to win the prize. I'm excited to have Nikolay Dzis-Voynarovskiy, the CEO of Team Selenokhod, join us to discuss their team and activities to date.

EVA: Thank you so much, Nikolay, for participating in the Lunar Editions of EVA Interviews: The Business of the new Space Age™! Can you please tell us more about the formation of your team? How was your decision made to compete and what do you (and your team) hope to get out of your involvement? How is it going so far?

Nikolay Dzis-Voynarovskiy: Just after announcement of Google Lunar X PRIZE a group of Russian space enthusiasts came to a decision to participate in the competition. Most of those people are former and acting aerospace engineers consolidated by their common model rocketry hobby. We were NewSpace enthusiasts and were trying to develop small-scaled private space rocket at that time. So it was natural for us to take part in the first ever competition of private moon rovers.

It took more than a year to transform this group into a real team because some people liked amateur style of work and do not want (or were not ready) to work in a “business” full-time way. Also finding the registration fee sum posed a certain problem. We started real work in 2009, late June.

EVA: It is indeed a major commitment of time and resources for all participants, and you are to be commended for overcoming those initial hurdles. Looking at your team as a business proposition brings an important added component to your efforts, and one that many teams may never have experienced before. Some of my previous guests have pointed out that raising capital is one of the major challenges facing their (or any) company. For Google Lunar X PRIZE contestant companies, I suspect this is especially challenging. Realizing that this is a sensitive topic; that you are involved in a competition; and that fundraising activities are particularly proprietary and secret; are there any lessons you have learned about raising capital that you can share with us? Have you attempted to generate revenue yet through bootstrapping? If so, how?

EVA Interviews Team “Selenokhod” in the Google Lunar X Prize Competition

Nikolay Dzis-Voynarovskiy: In fact we are working for not so long. That's the reason why it's too early to talk about lessons.

EVA: Perhaps you can share some lessons later. You have definitely made progress so far in your short time as a team, and [are receiving good media coverage of your teams efforts](#). Your robot has already charmed and



inspired a young audience at its [Memorial Museum of Cosmonautics](#) debut! What have been your biggest technical challenges to date? Have you invented anything new, as a result of your research for the prize, that could have a terrestrial application or market?

Nikolay Dzis-Voynarovskiy: As we plan to purchase existing rocket, booster and lander from traditional aerospace companies, the biggest challenge is to fulfill all Prize requirements along with meeting very harsh mass constraints.

EVA: If you could put a call out for help, what would you ask for? What do you need at this stage?

EVA Interviews Team “Selenokhod” in the Google Lunar X Prize Competition

Nikolay Dzis-Voynarovskiy: We need somebody who could explain to investors the perspectives of the market.

EVA: I suspect that may be even more of a challenge in Russia! There are active efforts underway here to do just that. Activities such as the [Space Investment Summits](#) are designed to bring together space entrepreneur and investors. If we have any Russian readers with an expertise in financing and an interest in Space, please [get in touch with Team Selenokhod!](#)

As Will Pomerantz and his colleagues at the GXLP team describe it, Moon 2.0, is a new era of lunar exploration. What transformations do you see occurring as a result of your team’s actions, and as result of the prize itself? What do you expect the future will bring, for lunar exploration and development, for the world and for your team, assuming the prize is won? And if your team wins?

Nikolay Dzis-Voynarovskiy: I would not like to make any speculations about the future. It is bad that future is unpredictable. The good thing is that we make this future by ourselves. Speaking about our country, Selenokhod is one of the few private space enterprises. No doubts our success (even partial success) will inspire next generation of entrepreneurs and start the rising of private space industry in Russia.

EVA: It looks like from the media coverage of your museum and [Sciencefest](#) events, that you may already be accomplishing that goal! Nikolay, thank you so much for joining us and sharing your thoughts! Best wishes for your success both in the competition and initiating the rise of a private space industry in Russia!

Nikolay Dzis-Voynarovskiy: Thank you very much!

For those readers who use Twitter, you may want to follow the Selenokhod team at [@team_selenokhod](#) , (and EVA [@EVA_interviews](#) and the Google Lunar X PRIZE at [@glxp](#),) or read their updates at their [blog](#). Disclaimer: Opinions expressed are those of the author and her guest and may not reflect those of Team Selenokhod, its team members, the Google Lunar X PRIZE, Out of the Cradle or BMO Nesbitt Burns. Copyright belongs to Eva-Jane Lark, please email her at evainterviews (at) gmail (dot) com for permission to use these interviews.

Please stay tuned for more GLXP Team interviews! Please remember to check out the earlier editions if you haven’t yet read them: To start this series, EVA went directly to the source and [interviewed the Moon](#) about its expectations for future lunar commercial activities. Coming back down to Earth, the second interview focused on the organization whose actions and incentives are most helping

EVA Interviews Team “Selenokhod” in the Google Lunar X Prize Competition

to make business on the Moon a reality and talked to [William Pomerantz](#) Senior Director of Space Prizes for the X PRIZE Foundation about the exciting [Google Lunar X Prize competition](#). Next was the first of the team interviews with [Michael Joyce of Next Giant Leap](#).