

Spain's optimistic entrepreneur

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Spain hasn't been partying much lately. The economic crisis is all anyone talks about, "For Sale" signs are everywhere and even the most menial job vacancy draws hundreds of applicants. The situation is so dire that new [King Felipe VI](#) ascended the throne last week without a celebratory coronation, opting instead for a staid parliamentary handover.

[Youth unemployment](#) stands at a whopping 55 percent, and the national research and development budget for promoting new approaches in technology and other projects has been slashed by a quarter. But Pau Garcia-Milà is one Spaniard who refuses to despair, and his enthusiasm for entrepreneurship has won kudos from his new king.

The 26-year-old devised a pioneering cloud computing system when he was just 17 and turned it into eyeOS, an open-source desktop virtualization service that gives users access to work platforms and cloud applications on any device, anywhere. In 2011, eyeOS raised \$1.4 million in angel investments and is now being used by corporations from [Mitsubishi](#) to IBM, which chose to partner with the Barcelona startup instead of adopting Google's similar solution, [ChromeOS](#).

Spanish telecommunications giant [Telefónica](#) acquired eyeOS in April for an undisclosed amount. As of 2012, only 13 percent of firms had adopted cloud-based virtual desktops, so Telefónica hopes eyeOS will help it corner the market. Garcia-Milà remains connected to eyeOS without taking a formal role at Telefónica.

He also helped launch social media network Bananity, which allows people to build online communities with similar passions.

Hailed as one of the most successful young entrepreneurs in Spain today, he is trying to convince other young Spaniards that their ideas can be turned into reality.

To listen to Garcia-Milà, Spain has what it takes to recover — it's not the world economy dragging the country down so much as its self-defeating attitude. "Eighty percent of people who have ideas don't pursue them because their environment tells them they shouldn't."

He's experienced this negative pressure first-hand, and he's learned there are rewards to tuning it out. "I have failed countless times," he says, noting that while eyeOS took off, earlier ideas fizzled. "Often the best thing is to do the opposite of what you're told."

Garcia-Milà sports the startup look, with T-shirt, jeans, sneakers and a permanent smile. Every third sentence is a joke, and his answers tend to run long. This "gift of the gab" was evident from an early age, so much so that his childhood dream was to become a radio presenter.

Growing up in a small town in Catalonia, the son of two architects, it wasn't until his father installed Internet in the house when he was 14 that he discovered he had a knack for computers. He taught himself to code and began developing projects with friends.

In 2005, after nine failed ideas, he and friend Marc Cercos launched eyeOS. He was so engrossed in his work that he stopped attending university and got thrown out. Joining the ranks of Sir Richard Branson and Michael Dell, who set aside studies to chase success, Garcia-Milà plugged away for months. He didn't tell his folks about the expulsion, but his work paid off: Within a year, his firm had 30,000 users in more than 65 countries.

He returned to school with a scholarship to pursue an executive master's degree at Spain's prestigious ESADE business school, where he now teaches.

For all his bold talk, Garcia-Milà would never dream of moving far from home. He Skypes his mom from hotels while traveling, just got married and can't wait to start a family.

His first media splash came in 2011, after MIT named him Spain's "Innovator of the Year" (for under-35s). He began making TV appearances, was interviewed on the hit show Buenafuente and published his first bestseller, *It's All Yet to be Done*, an ode to optimism and a practical guide for entrepreneurs.

The book's foreword, written by Spain's then-prince, King Felipe VI, praises Garcia-Milà as a beacon for the nation's youth. "With cheerful conviction [Garcia-Milà] shows how this globalized world offers unique opportunities to the young men and women of Spain," the prince wrote.

Since then, he's appeared on shows like *Divendres*, discussing entrepreneurial success stories, and at conferences like the World Business Forum, speaking about the need for entrepreneurs to have a supportive environment and trust their ideas.

"We are not missing talent in Spain. What we're actually missing is perseverance," he says, urging those who get doors slammed in their faces to consider going in through the window. His message is resonating, and his latest book, *You've Got An Idea, You Just Don't Know It Yet*, landed in the nonfiction top 10 in both Spain and Mexico and was translated to English.

"He's saying what not many people do these days: 'Yes we can,'" says Maria Rosés, 27, who works for a family-run winery. "His book helped me see it's not a matter of waiting for the idea to come but chasing after it." She's transforming her business into an eco-tourism hotel.

Entrepreneurs generate 70 percent of Spain's new jobs, and the country desperately needs more new businesses to flourish. So Garcia-Milà's focus on boosting success in Spain could be vital for creating jobs and fostering economic growth.

To that end, he recently started hosting *We've Got a Plan*, a TV show where he helps struggling businesses — like the hair salon owned by a single mother that he saved from closure by rebranding it and revamping its business plan.

Earlier this year, he founded IdeaFoster, a company that helps turn business dreams into reality with coaching and technical support. Just three months in, it has already helped 28 projects, opened offices in Barcelona, Madrid and [Mexico City](#) and hopes to expand further. "My dream is to have an IdeaFoster in every country," he says.

Garcia-Milà isn't flawless, despite his popularity. His business skills were called into question in 2013, when his company suffered a funding setback owing to a product delay. "I think, like many others, the crisis ended up catching up to him at the wrong moment for his company, just as 'cloud computing' was becoming famous," says [David Arias](#), an online marketing expert.

But Garcia-Milà managed to turn things around by signing an agreement with Telefónica to co-develop new technologies for desktop virtualization in [HTML5](#). Thereafter, the relationship between the two companies strengthened, and eyeOS was bought by the multinational earlier this year.

Garcia-Milà has embraced his role as a public figure and is finishing his next book, focused on the power of communication, which hits bookstores in November.

It will take more than encouraging words to get Spain back on its feet, but with Garcia-Milà nurturing the next generation of entrepreneurs — and a royal seal of approval — Spaniards may soon be back in party mode.

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