software/cloud engineer; AI Masters Student
@full-stack/backend engineering: currently focusing on Java/JS frameworks
(strong Python background)

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IDSA x Ars Electronica **Founding Lab Motivation Letter**

Submitted with resume **and** application video

I would like to carry my self-directed, blending, trans-disciplinary approach to educational and technical training forward. My basis, along with Austrian Gymnasium, is the interdisciplinary model of the liberal arts school you have in the US, which I was lucky to study in on a scholarship, and I credit this broad, sweeping education with my attitude. I see the same spirit taking shape in the future with IDSA, now fully technologically minded, because it is clear, our now nascent technologies in the AI space are just the beginning. Most people now have some sense of what is possible with language modality AIs, and of course there are other modalities too.

My deep wish is to apply humanist tech and deep, inspired thinking to different industries and ventures, liberally blending non-profit and traditional models, maybe models we have yet to invent. My first real job out of college has been for the Red Cross, here in Linz, and I would like to describe a recent **failure**, actually, that drives me in search of answers to the core dynamics of digitalisation, especially as applied to a non-profit organisation like the Red Cross. The rest of this letter will deal with this instance of a problem I am trying to explore currently, please see my educational and work background in my resume along with other personal details in my application video.

At a very late minute into a study project (practical) for ca. eight students, intended as a partnership between the Upper Austrian University of Applied Sciences, Campus Hagenberg, and the Red Cross, the project was cancelled, by my superiors in the Red Cross. Arguably, I had something to do with this, in that I expressed my desire to gain experience with a software company in Hagenberg: I was offered a traditional Software Engineering job and explained to my superiors at the Red Cross I would like to dissolve my old position and come back for a software engineering position to them, after gaining the exposure at the other company.

This might be construed as testy, but it makes sense form a skills development standpoint, which is generally my standpoint! My superiors decided to put the project on hold, saying they saw the project as an investment in me as their employee and they could not be sure I would be back – I argued for the project as an investment in the Red Cross, aiming to develop in an open source framework an alternative to what was costing the organization money and time in the current, closed-source product provided by a company.

So I failed, in the sense that I asked for too much, or at the very least, did not play my cards in the right way. But I failed not because I didn't hold my job for longer or something like that, but because, despite a track record of delivering digital transformation projects internally, could not deliver this project consisting essential of a free labor source and possibly a longer term cooperation mode with a local university: many regional companies

profit from such study project collaborations, the Red Cross had never established such a thing.

But I also see failure in our society's institution of the Red Cross here, on the digital transformation front. I dare to say this as an employee of some years, and mean it in a constructive sense. Also, I mean the Red Cross blood bank in Linz as the particular object of this view: why is it, that a solid, well-meaning organization, though traditional and conservative, cannot show bias toward action and collaboration at the university level. It comes down to people of course, but I think also the traditional culture that does not embrace the absolute need for transformation, still very prevalent in these institutions, even though it would be able to offer so much. I have seen up close how much money goes to waste in the inefficiencies of the consulting cycle and traditional IT business when it comes to non-profit. I dream of these institutions taking the initiative, taking on the responsibility too, of driving their own transformation.

I am now at a research-affiliated, university institute spin-out company developing (customising) software, and need to pivot to be able to implement a study project I care about. I trust I will achieve this but truly regret not being able to deliver this for the Red Cross here in Linz.

I cannot say that I have more answers than what I try to sketch here: instead, I leave it as an open question about how to transform our most essential intuitions in the years to come. I fear a widening of the gap, traditional business integrating LLMs and current AI technologies, leaving inefficient, comparatively unsatisfactory knock-off products for well meaning non-profits. So I bring this question with me as I apply to the founding lab, having admired the Ars Electronica for some time and had a keen interest in what role IDSA is to play in Linz, nationally, and abroad too, perhaps. I am excited to see the two come together and hope I can be part of this first official iteration of IDSA this summer and fall. I look towards potential application to IDSA if I go on to study past my Masters.