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GoStork's online platform eases path to parenthood



Eran Amir (left) and his husband, Dr. Michael Gowen, with their daughters, Yael (left) and Ariel. PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

BY NATALIE MISSAKIAN
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In the top right corner of his Zoom background, Eran Amir displays a photo of his daughter Ariel at three months old.

It's her first Halloween and she's dressed as a grandma, oversized black-rimmed glasses perched on her nose and a cotton-ball wig covering her tiny head.

Cuteness aside, the photo is a reminder of why Amir, 45, left a 20-year career in financial technology and product management to launch GoStork, which aims to become the Amazon of the fertility industry.

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"When I turned 40 I wanted to build my family through surrogacy," said Amir, who has spent the last three years running the virtual company out of his home in New Haven's East Rock neighborhood. "I'm gay, so for me, that was the only option, besides adoption, but I wanted to have my own [biological] child."

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Eran Amir's daughter Ariel, 4, is a GoStork co-founder and the inspiration behind the startup.

To begin his fatherhood journey, Amir turned to Google. But he quickly found himself overwhelmed by the endless choices and frustrated by the vague details and lack of pricing transparency on agency websites.

Connecting with fertility specialists proved just as challenging. He remembers registering at dozens of agency websites, giving out his personal contact information, only to have someone call him back when he wasn't free to talk.

"I was searching for months, and I really didn't understand what I was supposed to be asking," he added. "I had excel spreadsheets and I was making phone calls and extracting all of the information in a very manual way."

Six months into his search, he met his husband, Dr. Michael Gowen, who recently completed his dermatology residency at Yale New Haven Hospital. They married a year later and moved from New York to East Rock in 2019. They now have two children through surrogacy: Ariel, 4, and Yael, 16 months, and have begun planning for a third.

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After Ariel was born, and motivated by his own experience, Amir quit his job as director of product management at investment bank BNY Mellon to found GoStork. Fittingly, he put Ariel's name on the company masthead as his co-founder.

"My background is in technology so coming from tech, I knew something was missing in this [fertility] world," he said. "I wish I had this when I was on my journey."

Not another Google

Amir's goal is to simplify family planning the way websites like Expedia and Trivago have simplified travel.

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Intended parents can use the website to find, compare and connect with egg donors, surrogacy agencies and fertility clinics. They can also apply for fertility financing on the site, since the cost of a typical surrogacy can range from $80,000 to $200,000.

After registering on the site, visitors are asked a series of questions about their preferences. Based on the answers, GoStork shows users tailored lists of egg donors, and pre-screened surrogacy agencies or fertility clinics.

People searching for egg donors, for instance, can see photos and bios of thousands of potential donors, which can be filtered by personal characteristics such as age, height, ethnicity, eye color, hair color and education, as well as by price.

Users can also compare agencies based on factors such as experience and cost, and can chat and book appointments with them right on the platform. GoStork recently added a concierge service, where users can request a one-on-one consultation via Zoom.



"I didn't want to create another Google. That's not what GoStork is all about," Amir explained. "It's about the aggregation of data and creating transparency. If you're looking for an egg donor, you can see exactly how much it costs and all of the breakdown — the agency fee, egg donor fee, travel expenses, legal, insurance — everything's there."

Getting providers to share their costs wasn't easy at first, but Amir eventually convinced them by telling his own story. He assured them potential customers and even competitors are already doing their homework on prices "so why don't we just save time and effort and make everything easier for the consumer."

One-stop fertility shop

The startup taps into a booming industry: as many as one in six couples wishing to start a family seek some type of fertility assistance, according to the American Society of Reproductive Medicine, and analysts expect the global market will grow to $45 billion by 2027.

Dan Tyre, an angel investor who was one of GoStork's earliest backers, said he saw the investment as both a great business opportunity and a way to "do good for the universe" by helping people start families.

"I was incredibly impressed with Eran's background and his professionalism and his sense of urgency," Tyre said. "And then his story just blew me away."

Since launching publicly in 2020, the company has raised $760,000 in seed funding and has served around 12,000 fertility consumers from over 105 countries and 50 states. Its database has also grown to include 10,000 egg donors and 60 surrogacy agencies, making it the largest online marketplace for fertility providers, according to Amir.

Although registration is free, GoStork is testing a $99 premium subscription for egg donor searches. The fee gives visitors access to more detailed profiles, a side-by-side comparison tool, and a way to contact agencies directly. Those services are still free for surrogacy agency and IVF clinic searches. The startup also earns revenue from agencies and clinics through referral and booking fees.

GoStork added IVF clinics to the site in August for those looking to freeze their eggs, or who need help getting pregnant, but aren't interested in surrogacy. The company has partnered with clinics in over 100 U.S. locations, including top clinics such as the San Diego Fertility Center, Boston IVF Network and New England Fertility Institute, which has a location in Stamford.

For the long term, Amir is eyeing other additions, such as adoption agencies, sperm donors, fertility lawyers and egg banks.

"Our goal is to be the one-stop shop for fertility and family-building providers," he said.



At A Glance

Company: GoStork

Industry: Technology

Top Executive: Eran Amir, Founder & CEO

HQ: New Haven

Website: https://www.gostork.com/

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