Ghedalia Gold-Pastor is a junior majoring in Mechanical Engineering and is the co-founder of a startup called Puzzable. Puzzable is a social-gaming mobile app that raises awareness and funding for non-profits by allowing users to purchase, solve and share digital jigsaw puzzles featuring causes from non-profits. Ghedalia and his co-founder, fellow UMD student Zach Matz majoring in kinesiology, came up with the initial idea for the app together after setting out to start a company and discovering that the mobile apps & games market was a lucrative one. They settled upon the idea of allowing app users to turn any photo into a puzzle to solve and share.

Eager to further develop his app idea, Ghedalia enrolled in the Do Good Now course at the suggestion of a friend. The course was a good fit because it would allow Ghedalia to work on his business and pitch his idea during the culminating pitch competition.

During the course, Ghedalia recruited some classmates to join his team and bring their much needed expertise, including web development and knowledge about and connections to the non-profit sector. Once the team was formed, they began work on further developing the app idea, but struggled with how to transform the idea into one that would fulfill the purpose of the course – to “Do Good.” Feeling defeated, but not ready to give up, Ghedalia and his team kept brainstorming. Until the Do Good Now course, he was not familiar with the concept of socially responsible business, and was intrigued by the prospect of using his app to create positive social impact. Further inspired by a TED talk in class encouraging people to think about non-profits as scalable businesses, he became transfixed on figuring out a way to use their app to create social value. Ghedalia and his team then stumbled upon their current idea – they would partner with nonprofits, and each nonprofit would have their own puzzle pack that would contain eye-catching photos representing the nonprofit’s cause. People would see sample photos and could buy the puzzle pack. Upon downloading, the puzzler would see the non-profit organization’s name and a brief description of the cause, thus raising awareness for the non-profit.

By the end of the course, Ghedalia and his team created a working prototype of their app, developed a few different ideas for business models and perfected their pitch. During the Do Good Now final course pitch, Ghedalia exuded confidence and a stellar prototype while delivering the winning pitch, thus garnering $1,000 in support along with the enthusiastic backing of the entire class and teaching staff.

Although many of his team graduated and moved on to other fulltime jobs, Ghedalia and his original partner Zach are continuing the charge and running full speed ahead. Their Puzzable app launched in the app store at the beginning of September 2014, and as of December 2014 amassed 10,000 users. Ghedalia has always thought of himself as a creative person, and someone that enjoys going after big challenges, but had never identified as being an entrepreneur. Given his new-found experience starting Puzzable from scratch, and truly getting it off the ground, he now feels otherwise and looks forward to the journey ahead.