Tech Entrepreneurship   
**Assessment One**

A case study **Peter Coppinger of Teamwork.com**

horizontal line

# 

**Student Name** : Robert Gabriel

Student Id : R00102430

Programme of Study : Computer Science Web Development

Subject : Tech Entrepreneurship   
Lecturer Name : Lisa Murphy

Assignment Title : A case study Peter Coppinger of Teamwork.com

Date : 20/10/2015

# **1 Describe the background of the technology entrepreneur and how it influenced the path that he/she took. Is the background of the technology entrepreneur typical or atypical?**

Peter Coppinger is a 36-year-old living in Cork city, he enjoys coffee, being my boss, BBQ, and being the owner and lead developer of one of the biggest, most popular project management software companies in the world, with renowned clients such as Disney, Microsoft, and Netflix.

To give some background information on Peter, he's a coder at heart and he started programming on a Commodore 64 back when he was eight years old. By the age of 10, he was reading books on Bill Gates and the rise of Microsoft. He's quoted as saying “I [wanted to make amazing software with a like-minded team of great developers.](https://www.teamwork.com/blog/meet-the-team-peter-coppinger-founder-and-lea/)1” Peter’s entrepreneurial career was not sparked by any dramatic or painful personal event, but rather it developed from a simple, childhood enthusiasm for coding, computer games and a desire to share these things with his friends, which never abated: in each of his projects, he has always striven to achieve this goal of creativity and partnership and it is clear, that this early passion has driven him to put his love for for coding and programming ahead of any pursuit of profits.

This pattern of dedication to his dreams and his willingness to take risks, where others might have followed a more certain but less fruitful route can also be seen in his educational path. Having gone through secondary school, he then went on to attend Cork Institute Of Technology (Or Bishopstown College, at the time) where he studied computer science. However, he only lasted six months at the college, because he wanted to “make software, not learn outdated skills.2” During his time at CIT, he met his then rival and later best friend and co-founder Daniel Mackey, who also dropped out. This path could be likened to that of other famous entrepreneurs like Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg who achieved success despite not completing their university degrees.

The two of them quickly became friends and founded a semi-famous cafe called Area 51 3 in Cork city which was sold at just the right time in 2003. They went on to create a company called Digital Crew 4, which they later merged with granite digital in order to focus on [Teamwork.com](http://teamwork.com). Quickly, their work helped them to become a trusted web consultancy firm, completing hundreds of content managed websites for small and medium-sized companies. They both transitioned to developing powerful web applications for multinational clients, ever growing and improving.

However, it wasn't until they started having a runaway success that their journey really began, and the advantages of Peter’s long history of quick adaption and pursuing his own interests became apparent. After five years working on their Digital Crew company, they decided that they needed to be better organised and so they searched for an online project management application.

The lack of available fully-functional management systems dismayed them so much so that Peter, during his visit to his sister in Boston that summer, built Teamwork Projects version 1.0 all by himself sitting on his sister’s sofa in the sweltering heat. Teamwork.com has come a long way since that version 1.0 and from speaking with himself and Daniel, it seems that they have learned a lot in the progress. The most important thing which they taught me is that there is always something to be learned from everyone and that each new day brings some new lesson. He grew up with a love of computers and a drive to succeed and he has now fulfilled his goal of creating a global company in Cork.

Working under Peter has shown me that he's a manager, a risk taker, a go-getter, and most definitely an individual in terms of personal characteristics. It is his driven personality that has led Teamwork.com to become the number one project management software in the world, passing Basecamp as their quality slipped.

Peter’s background corresponds to that of an atypical entrepreneur, because throughout his life, he has, as an enlightened entrepreneur, pursued focus with a relentless passion, taking chances when necessary, such as when he dropped out of college, and always seeking the next great idea which inspires him to be be truly creative. At the same time, he has maintained his balance by using the time he has freed up in order to deeply and truly embrace and experience life, as can be seen in the fun loving, casual attitude of Teamwork, shown through its lively parties and relaxed atmosphere show that. He also remembers why he works to begin with and where he started from, in that he works to make a difference in the world of business and give back to the world and city that made him successful.

# **Q2 ) Identify and describe an “entrepreneur type” that best describes the technology entrepreneur that you have selected and discuss why you think they are this type?**

Peter can best be described as a Lifestyle Entrepreneur, people who “choose businesses that reflect their passions and are more focused on doing something they love than on the pure profit motive for starting a business 5”.

This can be seen in the way he preserves his ‘work hard, play hard’ attitude throughout all his businesses, the way he travels with his fiancée to explore the world while learning more about the personal and business history of his heroes, such as Bill Gates, so that he can emulate them. In all his business endeavours, he has striven to fulfil his dream of making “amazing software with a like-minded team of great developers.”

The way he met Brandon Harrison, for example, is also characteristic of a lifestyle entrepreneur. While traveling, they happened to be sitting next to each other at a startup hub in NYC and this chance encounter lead to Harrison becoming lead developer and to a certain co-creator of the product Teamwork Desk. This shows that Peter embraces life outside of work and chasing profits, which in turn enriches his work life along with creating a new friendship with Brandon.

Peter always pursues the ideas and products which interest him, rather than those ideas which might potentially be the most lucrative, another characteristic of the lifestyle entrepreneur. He has gone from strength to strength throughout all the different businesses he has founded and run, consistently focusing on his own love of coding and gaming.

He first owned Area 51 in November 28, 2004 - December 12, 2007, a relatively famous gaming cafe located in the heart of Cork city (https://[www.facebook.com/Area51GamingCafe](http://www.facebook.com/Area51GamingCafe)) , which, at the time, provided high-speed boardband and gaming PCs to Cork city, which shows his love for video games and computers.

In October 1, 2007 - February 8, 2012, he moved on to the company Digital Crew. Established in October 1999, Digital Crew quickly grew to become an Internationally well-respected, web-based software development agency. It specialised in Internet Application Development such as e-commerce websites, CMS, and Database-driven solutions. The web design part of the business was later sold to Granite Digital, to focus on TeamworkPM (later renamed to Teamwork Projects).

He then began developing the company which would later become the phenomenon that is Teamwork.com. From my own personal experience in Teamwork.com, it is clear that Peter is much more focused on creating a relaxed and friendly work environment than on a relentless drive for profit. Even within the confines of the company, he makes room for His own hobbies and interests, for example, while I was working there we all played Bomberman, Peter’s own favourite game together every Friday.

In conclusion, Peter is one of the most passionate people that I have had the honour to work under. It is evident as from his career history, as I have described it here, and from the culture he maintains in the office, that he works for love and the money is just a bonus, just as when he sold his past endeavours not to make a profit, but because he had another idea which he felt more strongly about. To return to his previous quotation, he’s found what he loves in Teamwork as he has created the team he’s always been driving towards.

# **Q3. Identify and describe the character traits and skills that have enabled your identified technology entrepreneur to establish and develop a business venture?**

Identifying and describing which traits and skills any entrepreneur has drawn upon to start a business venture is generally easier than picking out those which an entrepreneur has had to cultivate is, however, in Peter’s case he's a natural born entrepreneur which goes hand in hand with great coders . From looking at interviews and working under him, I have come to the following, some of which I have talked about already.

**Passionate**: With Peter and Teamwork.com, as the current example, the love and care he puts into his companies is what made Teamwork Projects the most popular project management software in the world. The raw enthusiasm in his voice in every interview on YouTube, podcast, and press event cannot be ignored and it this passion that has made both himself and Teamwork.com as successful as they are, while also ensuring its future growth. This kind of zeal and dedication can not be simulated, and the customers know that.

**Vision/Risk taking**: As the account on the Teamwork.com story page explains, Peter saw that current project management was “lacking basic features such as dates on tasks and some seemed to remain stagnant with the developers simply ignoring basic feature requests from customers.6” Seeing this, his vision allowed him to jump in the market with a huge splash, enticing thousands and thousands of users away from their current project management system, giving the users what they want as fast as they can while also giving them features they didn't know they wanted. “A first in project management with a unified login and integrations. 7 ” Another clear example of Peter’s risk taking is the purchase of Teamwork.com website domain for 645,000 euros in 2014 which lead to a massive sales increase.

**Persistence:** Peter’s persistent nature can be seen in his determined pursuit of Teamwork.com for 640,000. He emailed the stubborn owner of the domain for months to convince him to sell it

**Balanced**: As mentioned above, the importance of balance between working and having fun is driven by Peter and passed onto his company. As a happy employee is a better employee, he focuses on ideals that fuel that philosophy. Even now, Teamwork.com has an amazing reputation for great work live, with more and more people applying to work there.

**Problem-solver/leadership**: At heart Peter is a coder and so he is used to problem-solving, which is also a constant in running a business. As with software, you need to make sure a business is scalable and as its popularity and the amount of staff you need increases, you have have to solve problems daily. All of which Peter shows daily as Teamwork.com is still increasing in popularity and growing its user base.

**Good Health:** Peter is very focused on maintaining his health. In order to cope with the world of business with non-stop meetings and late-night coding at work, he has a treadmill in his office which allows him to keep fit and healthy and take care of himself. His well balanced work and personal life allows for a healthy mental state.

# **Q4. Explain the industry application and use of the piece of technology identified and discuss how your identified technology entrepreneur has contributed to both the economy and to society at large?**

The type of software which Peter has created is known as project management software, that is, any “software used for project planning, scheduling, resource allocation and change management. It allows project managers (PMs), stakeholders and users to control costs and manage budgeting, quality management and documentation and also may be used as an administration system.8”

Teamwork.com provides one of the best and most popular project management programmes in the world, called Teamwork Projects. As previously mentioned, Peter realised, in his own search for project management software, that everything available at the time was difficult to use, inefficient, and lacking basic features, so they made a great sensation when they entered the market. Those who had been giants within the field until that point, such as Basecamp and Asana, are still struggling to catch up with Teamwork Projects.

Some of the features included that Teamwork.com have made the norm are:

* Unlimited users
* Time tracking and logging on tasks (Billing and non-billing)
* 30 day free trials
* Privacy control
* Mobile Apps

By means of this innovative piece of technology, Peter and Teamwork.com have aided both the economy and society at large, in that they have created an easy way to manage your projects and your team online. Teamwork.com’s software allows for almost anyone to create and run a project, which in turn leads to greater efficiency and productivity. Increased productivity generally results in a greater profit margin for the company and so, they can hire more staff and expand their business. This expansion across multiple businesses boosts the economy in general.

The major advantage provided by Teamwork Projects is that it allows for teams to work remotely across the world, with companies like Netflix, Microsoft Studios, and Disney as case examples. While this might seem insignificant, it provides opportunities for teams and workforces to grow, without any of the common logistical problems, such as potential employees who live abroad and don’t want to uproot their families.

However, it is important to note, that Teamwork Projects is not only used in the business world, but also on a day to day basis by ordinary people in their personal lives. Projects can be used to manage basic tasks such as grocery shopping or planning something more complicated such as the renovation of a house, but in any case, Peter’s software has helped to make life easier and a little more manageable across society at large.

Teamwork.com started with a staff of three and as of last week (10/10/2015) they now have 48 employees and they continue to expand ceaselessly. I myself became employee 19 in January 2015. One of Peter’s primary goals in founding Teamwork.com was to create jobs locally, in the heart of Cork and he has been quoted as saying that is his intention to always keep the headquarters there, so as to contribute as much as possible to the economy of his home city.

**Q5. If you were to start your own business in the technology sector tomorrow what have you learned from this entrepreneur that you have selected that would influence you in the way you approach your enterprise?**

I am in the unusual situation of already having had a business when I was quite young. At the time, I was given a lot of advice by many older, ‘successful’ entrepreneurs on what I should do, however, I actually found their advice to be less than helpful. They often told me to go against my instincts and their suggestions were by and large out of date. I felt that these entrepreneurs of an older generation didn't understand the modern, ever changing world of the web and tech entrepreneurship. This impression of mine was confirmed when I met Peter and saw the way in which he went about building Teamwork into the unstoppable, commercial juggernaut that it is.

Had I the chance to start a business again, Peter’s influence would motivate me to stay true to my vision of how the company should be, instead of the way that profit hungry investors want to alter it, as before, to follow my love and passion for the idea and rather than always sticking slavishly to the business plan, because the business plan will change over time as competition shows up and your business evolves to suit the current market (as discussed in class), just as, throughout Peter’s work with Teamwork.com, the company has offered various, different business plans at different stages of development, in response to new competition and new business models. For example, if you look at their pricing page 9, they have had several different pricing plans over the years. The most effective business strategy is to give the users new features as quickly as possible once they ask for them, as this allows you to stay ahead of the competition.

Ultimately, Peter’s greatest influence on any potential businesses I may start in the future is his catchphrase, “Dream big.” This is printed on the wall of Teamwork’s offices, next to their highly ambitious goal, “photo here ” of “100 million users or bust by 2020.” This shows that you have to have a mission for your company and never think be fazed by the idea of the impossible. As with every successful company, they had a dream which they refused to give up on, and I would emulate this attitude in my own hypothetical business.

Following your passion, dreams and love and taking the odd risk from time to time, is what will make you success in business, as Peter and many other success entrepreneurs have proven.

# References

1 "Meet the Team: Peter Coppinger, Founder and Lead ..." 2014. 16 Oct. 2015 <<https://www.teamwork.com/blog/meet-the-team-peter-coppinger-founder-and-lea/>>

2 "Clinch – Teamwork." 2015. 16 Oct. 2015 <<https://jobs.clinch.io/companies/teamwork>>

3 "AREA51 Counterstrike Cork Map - YouTube." 2006. 16 Oct. 2015 <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eunqARuUF6s>>

4 "Digital Crew and Granite Consulting join forces." 2012. 16 Oct. 2015 <<http://www.digitalcrew.ie/index.cfm/page/newsarchive/id/2>>

5 "TYPES OF ENTREPRENEURS." 2014. 16 Oct. 2015 <<http://www.gaksu.com/allpdf/751_notes.pdf>>

6 "Teamwork.com - Our Story." 2014. 18 Oct. 2015 <<https://www.teamwork.com/story>>

7 "Launch Party for desk with Peter" 2014. 23 September. 2015

8 "What is Project Management Software? - Techopedia." 2012. 18 Oct. 2015 <<https://www.techopedia.com/definition/13132/project-management-software>>

9 "Teamwork Projects Pricing - Teamwork.com." 2014. 18 Oct. 2015 <<https://www.teamwork.com/pricing>>