

# FROM VISION TO MVP IN 3 WEEKS

The Innovation Women Collaboration  
with East Coast Product



# ABOUT INNOVATION WOMEN



Innovation Women set out to solve the glaring problem of male-dominated panels at technical and entrepreneurial events. (In fact, it's become such an issue, there's even a Tumblr called, "All Male Panel," underscoring the lack of diversity.) Bobbie Carlton, founder of Innovation Women, realized that the key to promoting gender balance was creating a marketing tool that allows qualified women to promote their expertise and stories and for event planners to find and book them.

In April 2015, Bobbie was in a time crunch to design and build an MVP of her speaker's bureau. Despite a successful Kickstarter campaign to raise funds for development, a couple of false starts and the lack of a technical cofounder were barriers to translating the vision into a tangible product.



“There’s even a Tumblr, ‘All Male Panel’ underscoring the lack of diversity...”

# THE REQUIREMENTS

With a deadline for launch 3 weeks away, our team outlined the key challenges, objectives and required features for the Innovation Women MVP.

## Key Challenges

- Working outside of our technological wheelhouse (Ruby on Rails)
- A strict 3-week time limit
- Rethinking and building the prototype from scratch

## Objectives

- Create a user-friendly platform that makes it easy for event planners to find and book technical and entrepreneurial women in one place
- Have a ready-to-use product that speakers and event planners can sign up and pay for upon launch

## Required Features

- Allow event organizers to create accounts, register events, and search the database for speakers based on location, presentation topics, and expertise.
- Event organizers need admin approval before accessing the database.
- Prospective speakers, (i.e. entrepreneurial and technical women at all levels of an organization) need to be able to register and edit personal profiles.
- Profiles should highlight the speaker's background, expertise, speaking topics, and support content such as slide decks and videos.
- Paid, subscription-based memberships

Despite the short execution window, it was critical to remain agile and strike the right balance between function and presentation.

# OUR PROCESS



## Phase One: Discovery

To kick off the project Chris Swenor, CEO of East Coast Product, worked closely with Bobbie to understand her business plan and product vision. We needed to think about the scalability of first iteration features and how they would lead to quick learning and validation.

While ECP was bringing the technical expertise, it was critical for the Innovation Women team to understand their technological options and prioritize feature rollout.



## Phase Two: Design & Architecture

Roadmap in hand, our developers were able to hit the ground running using some previous designs and scaffolding from a previous Innovation Women prototype. At this point, our technical lead, East Coast Product's CTO, Ivan Blazevic, came in to define a plan of attack and to begin feature estimations. In the meantime, the rest of the dev team worked to get up to speed with Ruby best practices. Development jumpstarted once milestones and deliverables were outlined.

## HOW IT WORKS



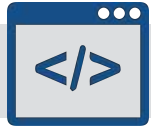
Event managers get their own free accounts. Once approved, they have access to the profiles and can invite speakers to their event.



Speakers pay only \$100/year, a fraction of what a PR agency would cost or what a traditional bureau would take in speaker fees.



Tell your story. Share your passion. Public speaking helps you connect with more customers, potential partners, and funders.



## Phase Three: Development

Before development got underway, the Innovation Women team brought on a freelance software engineer to manage the app post-launch. For an international development team to stay in sync and work together successfully, the East Coast Product and Innovation Women teams communicated daily through morning stand-ups, code reviews, and pair programming.

The Innovation Women platform was built primarily in Javascript, Rails 4.2, and Ruby 2.2.0. The team also relied on Vagrant and GitHub throughout. Staging and production sites were hosted on Heroku.



## Constant Communication for Successful Collaboration

Open communication between East Coast Product and Innovation Women was critical to the success of this project. We rely on tools like Slack to make sure our clients can get in touch with any of our team members instantly. Bobbie says:

**“I loved being intimately tied to the process. I knew what was going on every step of the way. It wasn’t a black box you put time, money, and effort into.”**

Problem solving was quick and the East Coast Product team was able to speed ahead while keeping Bobbie and the rest of the team involved actively involved throughout the entire project.



# THE RESULTS

The easy-to-navigate Innovation Women app allows prospective speakers to create detailed profiles that event planners can browse. Once they find a good fit, event planners can communicate with speakers directly through the platform. Not only was East Coast Product able to deliver the Innovation Women platform in time for Bobbie to receive Boston Business Journal's "Woman to Watch" award, the MVP allowed the Innovation Women team to test their overall concept and product-market fit.

With over 700 user accounts, The Innovation Women speaker's bureau is well on its way to becoming the go-to place to find new voices and connect with a diverse group of industry experts and content. They recently partnered up with Mass TLC to create profiles for employees of Massachusetts' biggest tech firms

including: Akamai, Acquia, Dyn, Enernoc, Fidelity, iRobot, Hubspot, Mathworks, Microsoft, Partners Health, and Raytheon (BetaBoston 10/15/15).

## FEATURED SPEAKERS



**KATHLEEN WARNER**  
Founder  
Inspire Ventures



**REIKO BEACH**  
Partner  
TRB Design, Inc., The Toolbox, Inc



**SAM HAMMAR**  
Director of Strategic Partnerships  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts,  
MassIT



**CHARLOTTE FARMER**  
Principal  
The MITRE Corporation

Want to learn more about how East Coast Product can help you bring your vision to market?

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