

Project Name: Spark Academy

1. Value Proposition:

We are Spark Academy. Our goal to build the largest live-streaming knowledge hub in Canada. We are an online knowledge-sharing platform featuring experts in different fields sharing their knowledge through live-streaming videos. One of the major pain points we solve is that the current online learning materials are in lack of mutual interaction between the students and the instructors. Our feature, the live-streaming videos, will allow abundant opportunities for interaction between the students and the instructors. Our survey has shown that around 70% of student population believe interaction is an essential part to their learning and around 30% of them claim that they're able to learn best when interaction is involved. There exists a huge demand for communicating with appropriate instructors in the market, and we offer solution to this demand by connecting the students with the people who has relevant knowledge to share. In Spark, the audiences are able to ask questions, or exchange opinions with the instructors. More features will be added in the future to exemplify the interaction opportunities on our platform. This will be our unique advantage when compared to other online learning products. Our live-streaming platform is currently in the development stage, and we expect to start running it by fall 2020.

2. Customers / Beneficiaries:

The potential customers are all people who would like to learn knowledge online while engaging in thought-provoking conversations. The total addressable market is the younger population between age of 16 and 30 in the English-speaking countries. Due to the network delay of oversea connection, the serviceable addressable market would be the younger population who intends to learn knowledge online in Canada and USA. Considering the population we're able to reach in the earlier stage, the younger population in major Canadian cities, such as Montreal and Toronto, would be our serviceable obtainable market. Lastly, our beachhead market would be the

proportion of younger population who wish to engage in conversation with a knowledgeable instructor but have no opportunities to do so. According to our survey, approximately 70% of the younger population acknowledge the importance of interaction during their studying process, and 20% of them claim that engaging in an interaction with instructors in their ideal learning style. These proportion would be our beach head market.

3. Marketing:

On the content side, we will reach out to professors/lecturers in three main ways. First, we will contact the professors within the McGill Network and reach out to alumnis based in Montreal through the McGill Alumni Association (MAA). Secondly, we will contact our target lecturers via LinkedIn, cold call and cold email to set up quick meetings to introduce Spark. Thirdly, we will attend on-campus events as well as networking cocktails to find potential professors and pitch our business idea to them.

On the student side, we will be reaching out to our target customers in two ways. Firstly, we will inform students directly on McGill campus. As all founders are well-connected students at McGill, it is easy to reach our target customers through various campus events, McGill career services and club activities. Secondly, we aim to inform student users of our platform through social media channels as these prove to be most efficient and cost-effective. We can tailor our social media advertisements by location and age to ensure the appropriate demographics are targeted. Meanwhile, we will be using our own social media accounts to post content and interact with student users to increase their awareness of our service. Paid ads involving video campaigns represent another way for us to promote our brand and establish a sincere connection with potential users. Most of our team members have backgrounds in software engineering which represents a great asset to Spark. Through a beta sign-up on our website as well as through a survey we are administering, Spark is building an email list with which we will be able to contact our target group directly and build our user base.

4. Competition:

Our indirect competitors are those companies who also offer online learning materials, such as Udemy and Coursera. However, I call them indirect competitors because we actually offer a different type of service from these competitors, and serve different demand as well. Instead of replacing the online courses, we offer an alternative way to gain knowledge through interaction. For example, the students don't need to follow a certain schedule as they progress through their learning. They simply need to go on our platform during certain period of time and be able to interact with instructors. The mutual interaction between the students and the instructors would become our core value proposition, which is hard for other online learning services to provide. One reason I believe there hasn't been a similar product is that people didn't recognize the importance of interaction during the learning process. According to our survey, a large portion of students believe that interaction is an essential part to their studying but sometimes they don't get the opportunities to interact with instructors, and this demand still remains unsolved even there are lots of courses available online. Lastly, the content abundance and the student-instructor connection will be our core competency when we reach a later stage, but it also requires a relatively long period for us to develop such an advantage. In order to develop the size of user base we desire, we plan to focus on providing better services, instead of generating revenue, in order to attract more users when we're still in the expanding stage.

5. Business and Financial Model:

There are three main approaches we can make money: Ads revenue, Premium charges and Partnership with top-rated instructors to create learning materials. First of all, when we reach a larger amount of user base, we can start offering short advertisement opportunities, which will be able to offer us a steady amount of cash inflow. Secondly, setting charged premium will certainly be an option for us when we have gathered a significant amount of content-maker on our Spark platform. Lastly, partnering with those top-rated producers to create higher-end learning contents will

also earn us income from the subscription fee. In order to encourage instructors to create better contents on our platform, we will set up a donating system, which allow students to support the instructors economically. Based on the survey we've done among our potential user base, there exist a significant demand for interaction in their learning experience, that has yet to been fulfilled. Our Spark platform offers an exceptional opportunity for out audiences to interact with the instructors, which further enhances their learning experience and efficiency. We may compare with another company that's similar to us: Twitch, a US videos live-streaming platform, with the primary focus on video gaming. They have kept growing in their market cap since 2012, and their revenue in 2019 is recorded as 1.54 billion USD. During our expanding stage, we would mainly focus on the product development and marketing. Our expected cost in these two areas are expected to be 20k-30k CAD in the first year or so, after which we can expect to have a positive cashflow.

6. Team Composition:

I gather a development team to work on this product because I believe it's going to be a socially disruptive product in the field of online education. It solves two major current very well: the high entry barriers for instructors to create contents and lack of opportunities for students to interact with instructors. Charles is our technical team lead. He has abundant experience in building software architecture and systems. Our second team member, Violet, is a well-experienced software engineer as well. She has abundant internship experience in software engineering. The third member on our team is Andy. She is also a very dedicated and knowledgeable software engineer. For myself, I have fundamental knowledge across various field in managing a company because I have been focusing on cultivating my business acumen and strategic planning skills. Background in statistics and computer science helps me better understand the market demand and convey my idea to the technical team easily.

7. Other Considerations:

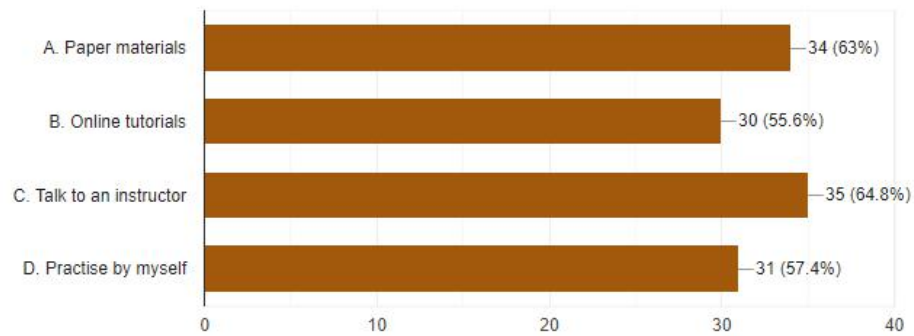
One of the major risks of our business model is that we need to have acquired a large amount of user base in order to start generating revenue from ads or subscription fee. When there hasn't been a significant size of our user base, the income from ads or subscription fee may not be motivating enough for the instructors to keep producing high-quality contents on our platform. The lack of audiences in the earlier stage may also cause the instructor to feel that their work isn't creating enough social values. In order to better deal with these risks, first of all, we would try to create a channel for the students to support the instructors they like. For example, one of our solutions is to add the optional subscription fee for subscribing an instructor. Students can gain certain benefits by paying the subscription fee to the instructor, and it can be a good way to motivate the instructors to create better contents. Donation systems will also be considered in order to allow students to better support their instructors. Partnering with university is our first consideration. For example, we can call for the university professors to hold live sessions on our platform, the people who are interested can attend the live sessions. It allows more people to learn knowledge from our professors, and allows our professors to generate some income during their spare time. Aside from that, partnering with professional networking site, such as LinkedIn, is also among our consideration. Our product is currently in the development stage, and we plan to start testing our product by fall 2020. By that time, we will be testing our product at McGill in order to advance our product and to add more features as needed. For now, our key next step is to develop and polish our online platform, which attempts to make the learning/teaching experience as enjoyable as possible.

Survey Results:

(54 responses in total)

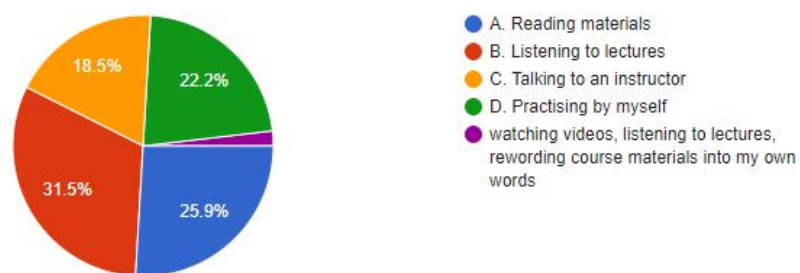
What resources would you like to use when you're learning something?

(54 条回复)



Under which circumstance are you able to learn most efficiently?

(54 条回复)



How would you rate the importance of interaction when you're learning something?

(54 条回复)

