

Executive Summary

BLOCKS is an online collaborative, social web service specifically designed to meet the needs of college students working on large-scale, team-based projects. The goal of BLOCKS is twofold: provide a social environment for students to find compatible team members, and a collaborative workspace for teams to develop their project. Consider the following scenarios.

Student A in Berkeley has just heard his professor announce a big group project. He frowns, not because he doesn't do well in groups—he does—but because he doesn't know anyone in the class yet, and there's always the risk he ends up in a group that just doesn't *click*. Meanwhile, Student B is an aspiring entrepreneur, who spends his time outside of school brainstorming new ideas and side projects. Suddenly he's got it! The Next Big Idea! Now all he requires to implement his project are: front-end developers, back-end developers, UI designers, graphic artists, finance majors, marketing majors.... in sum a lot of talented people from diverse backgrounds that he just does not have the time or resources to recruit, at least not in an easy fashion. The common solution to both A and B's dilemmas? BLOCKS.

BLOCKS solves the first problem of finding the perfect team for a large-scale project, whether academic or extracurricular, by providing a forum that facilitates coordination among students with a diverse set of backgrounds and skills. By using BLOCKS, college students can quickly and easily join or form a team with other students of similar interests, course history, or the required talents necessary to their project. This is how it works.

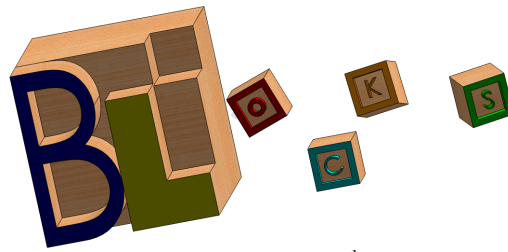
Students register with a college email address, and once accepted, have the ability to create a personal portfolio containing but not limited to their resume, course history, work experience and skills and talents. By doing so, students can then browse the profiles of classmates and peers with pertinent backgrounds and interests, allowing for relevant communication and ease in forming a group or recruiting an individual that has a high chance of being compatible to the team. Those students looking to join an existing team can also browse established projects with open positions and market their skills as appropriate.

Once a group is formed, BLOCKS then provides students with a project space – or a block – where students can efficiently organize and manage their team and project requirements. Elements in this collaborative space can extend to any that relate to a successful project – threads for open discussion, polls for voting, tools for scheduling, To-Do lists, deadline notifications, version control, graphical tools for visualization, cloud storage and sharing of important resources and specifications, etc – all of which is conveniently presented through a clean and customizable user interface.

The financial model for BLOCKS is attractive. The market demand for collaboration services is evident – sites like Piazza, Doodle, When2Meet, Edistorm, DropBox and Google Docs are all heavily used by college students to coordinate teamwork. Yet the critical problem isn't that such software is not available; it is that they are disjointed from one another. There is no overarching platform that encapsulates all the available tools so managing them simultaneously can be unwieldy and chaotic. BLOCKS is designed to resolve this issue; in fact, not only does converging collaborative tools into one platform help to simplify project development but the BLOCKS business model also extends to create a professional community of skilled individuals whom lend support to one another – transforming BLOCKS from a site into a social network for collaborators.

Because BLOCKS is a web service like Facebook or LinkedIn, where the majority of content is user-generated, early production cost is kept low. Given sufficient marketing and first-movers, BLOCKS should have a high potential for growth not only due to its self-sustaining nature but also because of its innovative and ambitious goals that outdistances it from current competitors.

Today's technology and college work culture presents the perfect opportunity for the creation of BLOCKS. In our humble opinion, we believe that the BLOCKS business model is strong enough and bold enough to be The Next Big Idea and that our team possesses the necessary ability to bring the business to fruition. It is our hope that this investment opportunity is sufficiently attractive to affect consideration and we are extremely excited to present the first unveiling in the building of BLOCKS, the team and the business plan.



Team Description¹

Lichen Han – Project Manager and Lead Technology Officer

Lichen is a third-year UC Berkeley undergraduate pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Computer Science. From a young age, he has identified his passions as art, technology and innovation. Over the course of his academic career, Lichen has always endeavored to bring the best of both worlds together – to merge art with science in creating unique and exciting works whether they are for school projects or for personal fulfillment.

As a computer science major, Lichen possesses strong skills in software engineering and web development. His past work experiences include web and UI design, web development, mobile development – front-end and back end – and mobile architecture. Along with his programming expertise, Lichen has strong writing abilities and course history with entrepreneurship.

Lichen believes that given his penchant for both humanities and sciences, he can bring his understanding of both spheres of knowledge together to culminate in the ultimate business model – one that satisfies consumer demand for a product that is functional, has high market relevance and still *looks* and *works* great. Lichen's overarching role will be Project Management. He intends to provide dialogue between technical team members, designers and business analysts. He will also be responsible for providing technical specification and features. In doing so, Lichen hopes to make sure that the needs of the business in all three sectors are met in a fluid fashion such that the end result is always competitive, innovative, and aiming at success.

Below is his LinkedIn profile:

<http://www.linkedin.com/pub/lichen-han/52/217/b5>

Gordon Yang – Product Manager and Lead Designer

Gordon is a third-year UC Berkeley mechanical engineering major who wishes to pursue a career in product development. He intends to focus on the design aspect that goes into developing the BLOCKS web service. He enjoys all kinds of design, ranging from graphic design to product design and takes great joy in creating something from his ideas. He is often brimming with new ideas and can easily identify ways to make a product better.

Gordon has a utopian and independent outlook in what happens around him and finds these characteristics as constructive in helping him brainstorm great designs. He is also involved in many student organizations where teamwork is key to success so he understands the merit of collaboration and ways to improve it.

Gordon will serve as the product manager and lead designer of the Blocks team, and will be in charge of managing the product specifications along with the various design features of BLOCKS. In short, Gordon's role is to ensure the constant improvement in the overall customer experience with the business and the product.

Below is his LinkedIn profile:

<http://www.linkedin.com/pub/gordon-yang/32/931/724/>

¹ Full team is not yet finalized



Team or Company Name:
BLOCKS – Lichen Han, Gordon Yang

Date:
01/31/2013

☒ Primary Canvas
☐ Alternative Canvas

The Business Model Canvas

<p>Key Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universities and college campuses for .edu emails. Web hosting services for domain name and servers. 	<p>Key Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fundraising. User Interface/Experience design Front-end and Back-end development. Tools development. Marketing. Advertising Search engine optimization. <p>Key Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Web developers Graphic designers UI designers Marketers Financial analysts Web server 	<p>Value Proposition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Social networking among collaborators and students. Showcase resume, skills, course history, etc in a personalized portfolio. Shop for academic and extracurricular projects to get involved in. Post project ideas and create projects groups with open positions. Find compatible team members. Recruit necessary team members and talents. 2) Single platform for collaborative work. Manage team members and project requirements – specifications, deadlines, goals, etc. Manage collaboration resources – editing, polling, sharing, etc. and recruit team members. Various tools to keep track of division of labor, project versions, designs, discussion threads, scheduling, etc. 	<p>Customer Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update tools used for collaboration. A social environment for networking among collaborators. Continual software, service and design improvement. User study and research – consumer feedback. <p>Channels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Web advertisement leads to our website from potentially related sources. Campus PR and flyers directly target our market group. Word of mouth is free. 	<p>Customer Segments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> College students
<p>Cost Structure</p> <p>Higher cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design. Development (user-generated content keeps production cost low) <p>Lower Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing. Advertising. Web hosting. 		<p>Revenue Streams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consumer will most likely prefer a Freemium Model – free to use but pay for features like advanced portfolio options and collaboration tools. Profit from potential web ads. Potential contract with companies interested in user generated projects Given strong user base and low production cost, there are definitely many ways to make profit. 		

Source: www.businessmodelgeneration.com



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	<p>Key Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Web developers Graphic designers UI designers Marketers Financial analysts Web server 		<p>Channels</p> <p>Primary – most important</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campus PR and flyers directly target our market group. Word of mouth is free. <p>Secondary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Web advertisement leads to our website from potentially related sources. 	
<p>Cost Structure</p> <p>Higher cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design. Development (user-generated content keeps production cost low) <p>Lower Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing. Advertising. Web hosting. 			<p>Revenue Streams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charge universities or students for use of collaboration tools. Profit from potential web ads. Or follow a non-profit model. 	

Source: www.businessmodelgeneration.com