

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 disjoined 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.