

# Latenite

## 2020 Carleton College Startup Competition Proposal

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### 1. Executive Summary

Latenite fuels the innate human desire to gather, belong, and form communities. Our platform is a highly creative invitation creation tool that follows the user through their journey on a weekend night, integrating all the different technologies that a person needs to plan or attend gatherings.

Latenite allows college students to minimize time spent on event planning logistics so that they can maximize enjoying time spent together, off of their phones. In contrast, competitors like Facebook and Snapchat speak about connecting people, but their products actually increase polarization, isolation, and loneliness.<sup>1</sup> By providing users with tools to easily create invites with more visual impact, reducing friction of sharing invitations, and allowing users to easily alter preset groups, Latenite encourages undergraduates to maintain a vibrant social community on their campuses.

Carleton students currently use email for invitation creation and sharing. The functionality and visual appeal of email, however, leaves something to be desired. While Latenite is built specifically for Carleton students as a superior replacement for email event invitations, our proximal user base extends to other liberal art colleges and academic institutions, as they often use many fragmented technologies to plan and host gatherings. We will eventually roll Latenite out to larger universities in order to target Greek life students, as they craft ornate and cheeky invitations for rush events (typically sent through text) and would enjoy the creative control offered by Latenite.

### 2. Product Overview

**The problem:** Carleton students currently send party invitations to one another using email, where they will spend up to several hours crafting the most creative and visually engaging invites. On the surface, this clever use of available technology works well, but email's functionality and level of visual appeal fall short of the target audience's needs.

Often, a night out at Carleton is equal parts hectic and delightful, and much of this hecticness is caused by the email factor. Students journey from one small gathering to the next in shifting packs in a state of chaos, logging in (and re-logging in) to their emails in a search for the location and timing of each event. Forwarding an email to a friend who wants to meet you at a party later in the night is an ordeal of epic proportions. Accessing a specific email from your phone requires remembering vague search terms or extremely specific information about the event, which you may not even remember, especially during a night of revelry and rambunctiousness.

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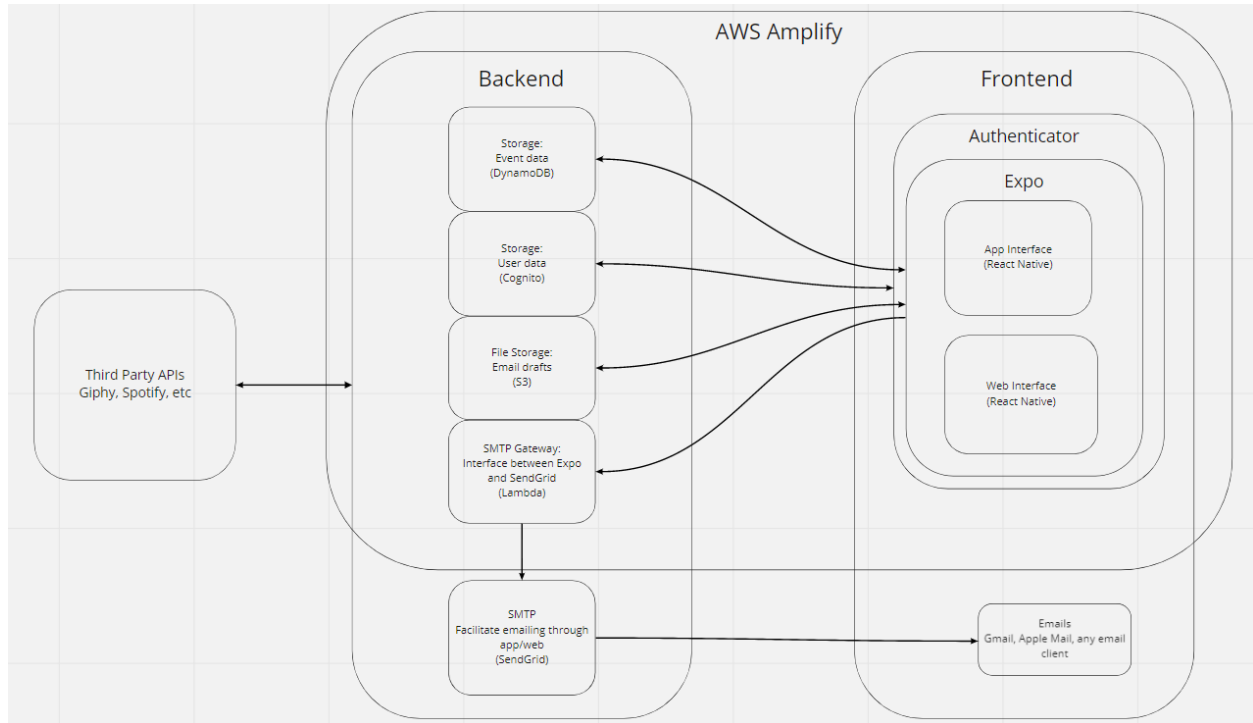
<sup>1</sup> Wadhwa, Salkever. *Your Happiness Was Hacked: Why Tech Is Winning the Battle to Control Your Brain-and How to Fight Back*. Oakland: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2018. Print.

Additionally, it is difficult to plan a party using solely email; Therefore, students will integrate other technologies such as a messenger and text in order to bring an event to fruition. Planning an event requires designating a group of organizers to write the email invitation (typically done in-person or over text), determining who will bring what supplies, and finding a time that works best for everyone. Before writing their event emails, clubs will use apps like Groupme when planning events due to their polling capabilities. The use of many distinct technologies to plan an event and send out an invitation means that necessary information is fragmented and can be difficult to access.

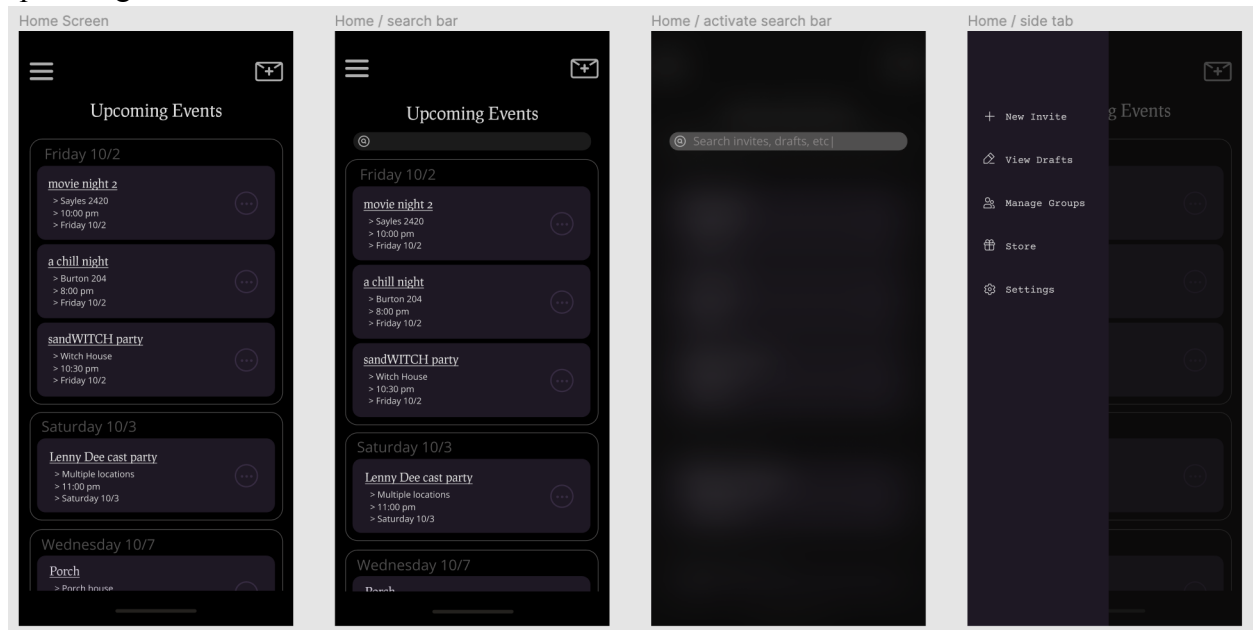
**The solution:** LateNite follows the user through the party planning process and into the night of the event. Our product preserves the simplicity and fun of the email form, and makes creative-looking invites easier for people to achieve.

- ⇒ For the planning process, LateNite integrates polls and checklists. With polls, guests can vote on details such as the party theme, music preferences, and date/time. With checklists, organizers can offer to bring supplies. Information from these polls and checklists allow users to easily access the event's theme, time, and what they need to bring.
- ⇒ Technologies like Gmail make it difficult to edit groups. If you'd like to slightly amend a group to fit the energy of an event, LateNite allows planners to use and alter a preexisting group without the restrictive Google Groups system or having to copy and paste every address from your last gathering.
- ⇒ On a night out, users can easily share tiles of the party's information with friends through airdrop or qr code. They can, at the press of a button, put the house location into their native maps app without trying to get the address from a friend.

**Solution specs:** Development is well under way with proof of concept for many features already implemented. The product is a web and mobile app built with React Native on an AWS stack. The app is wrapped by Expo, enabling easy development and testing across iOS, Android and web platforms, and also by AWS Authenticator which communicates directly with Amazon's Cognito service for managing user data and accounts. A Lambda gateway interfaces with SendGrid's SMTP servers and various other third party APIs are accessed directly by the app such as Giphy and Spotify.



**Design:** [The app](#) is designed with a default dark mode view and meant especially to be used in low light. The home page allows users to see every event they have been invited to in the upcoming weeks.



### 3. Key Features and Differentiation

**Superior, engaging, and more enjoyable experience over existing products:** Latenite's invite creation features provide high customizability, such as many more fonts that are not offered on email, themes (moving gif backgrounds, images, colors), and an in-app gif and image search feature. Latenite is easier than email to create invites with and looks cooler, increasing preference for our app rather than using email to send out event invitations.

### Unique, Enhanced Functionality:

#### 1. Notification reminders of essential information

- You have two events tomorrow.
- "a chill night" has been moved from 7:00 pm to 9:30 pm.

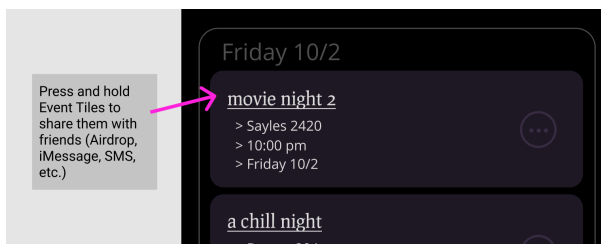
With email, it is easy to forget prior commitments or an event's timing. Latenite sends reminders and allows hosts to change the time or date of a gathering.

Latenite also allows users to view their upcoming events in sequence, so that they can easily determine which events they would like to attend.



#### 2. Easy sharing of event "tiles"

All the information needed to attend a party is easily transferred through airdrop or any messenger, without having to laboriously log into and then search through email.



#### 3. An advanced group system

With Latenite, groups can be created specifically for an event or reused from previous events. Unlike with Google Groups, pre existing groups can also be altered for a single event. The Latenite group system also allows users to designate some individuals as *planners* and others as *guests*. Through event-specific organizer groupchats, *designated planners* can agree on

logistics before creating an invite for the event. *Guests* are not granted access to the planning phase of the invite.

#### 4. The Market

Undergraduate college students have immense purchasing power of \$376 billion, 245 billion of which is non-discretionary, meaning that the overwhelming majority of spending by college students is on non-necessary items. For undergraduates, technology is a \$10.6B market, a portion of which we seek to capture through some combination of premium Latenite customers, in-app event promotions, and targeted advertising.<sup>2</sup>

During post-pandemic life, our target audience will have strong desires to re-establish social behaviors and attend gatherings, which was not possible during the pandemic. There will be a strong momentum towards being together in-person. Habits that were once strong surrounding get-togethers will have diminished, and students may express an increased willingness to explore new behaviors surrounding organizing parties, and a demand for technologies that make getting together easier and more fun.

#### 5. Target Audience Behavior and the Competitive Landscape

**Evaluating Email as a medium for party invites:** Why do Carleton Students currently use email as a medium for event invitations?

Upsides	Downsides
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Everyone has email, not everyone wants to be on social apps like Facebook.</li> <li>- Easy to copy and paste email lists for a group</li> <li>- Customization options are simple to use and plentiful in comparison to FB events or text group chats</li> <li>- Extremely simple to use</li> <li>- It's what Carleton students before them have already done</li> <li>- The underground energy of party emails is a nice contrast to the traditional, more professional and academic email use case (slight cool factor and the feeling of breaking the rules is prevalent)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Email is a more formal medium than alternatives like Snapchat or Facebook</li> <li>- Only one person at a time can work on an email draft</li> <li>- Have to be signed in and must remember vague search terms to send the invite to a friend</li> <li>- Lack of creative control - No ability to have background colors or themes; limited fonts</li> <li>- Have to manually search online for GIFs or images to use in your invitation, then drag them to your desktop</li> <li>- Difficult to access font customization options or add media to an email while on a smartphone (vs a computer)</li> <li>- Easy to forget about an invitation that you received through email</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> "College Explorer: Refuel Agency." *Refuel Agency* | COLLEGE, 18 Dec. 2020, [www.refuelagency.com/college-explorer/](http://www.refuelagency.com/college-explorer/).


























	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sometimes hard to remember where a certain house is if the address is not clearly stated on the invite</li> <li>- Often duo two-factor authentication can make it very difficult to access emails.</li> </ul>
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### The changing tides: What is email missing?

Carleton students have expanded the platforms they use for invite creation to Facebook, Snapchat, and Groupme in addition to email. This behavioral shift reveals that individuals are willing to outsource party planning and invites to different tech platforms which provide functionality that email does not offer.

Although these other platforms that Carleton students have been using to organize gatherings can be useful, they are not sufficient. Whereas apps like Groupme allow for some helpful event planning features, like polls, they are more formal and often used for meeting logistics rather than fun events. It feels awkward or unnatural to use groupme, with its business-style color scheme, for planning a party. There exist communication apps specifically for academic or work communication - why not nightlife communication? Slack, for example, is extremely successful yet in essence it is simply a messaging system for business purposes. People greatly appreciate the separation between their personal lives and their business / work / academic lives. In parallel, Latenite acts as the barrier between the personal and academic lives of students.

### The Competitive Landscape:

Product	Gmail	Facebook	Snapchat	Groupme	Latenite
					
Creative control					
Accessibility (can you access an invite without being on the platform?)					
Reusable groups					
Alterable groups					

Formal?					
Academic?					
Polls					
Checklists					
Spotify integration (ability to suggest songs)					
Tap to pay (Deeplinked Venmo usernames)					

## 6. Strategy and Implementation

### Customer Acquisition Strategy:

Our first and foremost priority is to build a product with a joyous user experience. We believe that by dedicating ourselves to making Latenite as wonderfully functional as possible, paid marketing efforts will have a high return on investment.

If product-market fit is strong, friction for organic downloads will be low. However, a small marketing budget will be required to get the word out and acquire the first few downloads when launching at new institutions. The portion of the budget that is reserved for marketing will be utilized to organize events, print out posters, and run social media campaigns.

In order to maximize organic spreading of the app as we get closer to product-market fit, we will build virality into the Latenite's design. The first 100 users of the app will receive premium for free, giving them access to more colors, fonts, and backgrounds, and allowing them to create the most visually dynamic invites with the result of drawing interest from other potential users. Latenite users can also share events with anyone, even if they do not have the app. If someone who has just received a tile wants to view the full invitation, they must download the app. The tile feature incentivizes downloads without restricting information from potential customers.

We will maximize the number of touchpoints to the app in order to optimize subliminal exposure, by allowing users to send invites made on Latenite through email as well as text message and webview functionality. People will also need the app to access features such as polls and checklists. A host using Latenite to throw an event can encourage the other organizers to download the app in order to use collaborative features such as polls and checklists during the

planning phase of the event. Allowing people to reach the app through many channels will lead to increased awareness of and interest in Latenite.

Gamification will encourage users to become comfortable with using Latenite. Users who share the product with five friends will receive premium for free, plus incentives (such as exclusive themes and backgrounds) for firsts on the app like sending your first invite, sharing your first poll, or creating your first group. Lastly, Latenite will be placed strategically on the App / Google Play Store, by being designated as an event planning app rather than a social platform.

### **Marketing Strategy:**

Early Growth: We will launch both paid and unpaid research surveys to Carleton students through mediums such as Facebook, and ask if Carleton professors would be willing to share the surveys with their students. If a participant agrees to a follow-up interview or indicates that they would like to test a beta version of the app, we will designate that individual as a member of our beta tester program. Beta testers will be first to receive updates to the app pre-launch and will get access to the premium version of the app for free.

Organic Marketing: Posters will be placed around the Carleton and St. Olaf campuses during the soft launch phase, and we will design Latenite branded merchandise and do a give-away in the student unions of both campuses.

Marketing Campaigns: As we get closer to product-market fit, we will run some small marketing campaigns on Instagram and Facebook targeted towards students at other liberal arts colleges in order to determine what other changes need to be made to the app, and for practice as well. After completing the development sprint following the small campaigns, we will then run more rigorous campaigns at other liberal arts colleges and universities.

### Sponsored Events:

[Food trucks] Sayles, a Carleton-run food cafe serving fried food until 1 am, closes much earlier than some students prefer to stay out. The dreaded part of every night out is deciding whether to go to Sayles or stay at an epic party.

Our plan is to park a food truck decked out in Latenite decor outside of the student union from 11 pm - 3 am so that all those students can get some delicious food all through the night, provided they download the app. We will then replicate this idea at other liberal arts colleges and, in the future, larger universities.

[Exclusive Campus Events] At small schools like Carleton, we will throw events at spaces such as the Cave (an underground student-run music and entertainment venue), where we would invite a band or DJ to come play and require users to have downloaded the app as their entry ticket. After getting practice throwing these events at smaller schools, we will then replicate them at larger universities.

### **Monetization:**



The Freemium Model: Latenite is based on a freemium model, in which users are granted free access to base functionality of the app. Free features comprise the majority of the app. They include the ability to create and send invitations, use polls and checklists, suggest songs, integrate their Venmo usernames for easy payment. The premium model of the app will give the customer access to vibrant invite backgrounds, fonts, colors, and themes, enabling the ability to create cooler invitations.

Other potential models: Depending on which audience expresses the most interest in Latenite, we may want to implement targeted advertising of local chains (eg. Domino's delivery at the end of the night) and/or include the ability for users to self-promote events in addition to, or instead of, the freemium model. Targeted advertising requires time towards developing relationships with brands but may be the most effective long-run model. If larger universities take up Latenite, student organizations may want to promote their parties, games, or performances and be willing to "broadcast" their event to the campus.

## 7. Proposed Budget

a. First year budget projections are broken down by quarter and category. Revenue will not pick up until the release of subscription features which have a launch date one year prior to product release. Technological costs will be negligible so long as LateNite is confined to the Carleton community, with costs coming from AWS domain hosting and servers as well as SendGrid SMTP. Labor costs will be largely focused on consultants for front end software and graphic design and could be increased if the subscription features' development falls behind schedule. Sales and marketing costs should remain within projections for the first year because of the limited scope and target audience. Due to our low operating and overhead costs we expect to break even by year two with the release of premium features.

	2021-Q4	2022-Q1	2022-Q2	2022-Q3	2022-Q4	2023
Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	+\$500	+\$3,000
Servers & Hosting	\$40	\$60	\$60	\$60	\$100	\$200
Labor	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$1,000	\$500	\$500
Sales & Marketing	\$800	\$700	\$300	\$300	\$500	\$1000
Total Costs	\$1,340	\$1,260	\$860	\$1,360	\$600	+\$1,300
Running Total	\$1,340	\$2,600	\$3,460	\$4,820	\$5,420	\$4,120

b. Our intention is to outsource front-end development of the application. The architecture of the app is compartmentalized such that consultants' work will be able to be integrated quickly and efficiently to the main code base.

1. Backend work is handled internally with an abstraction layered over the top to interface with front end designs. This will give consultants a simple API to interact with the app's core features and make them look nice.
2. Front end work is outsourced to speed up development and get the product and then premium features shipped on an expedited schedule. Doing all the work in-house would result in a full year slow down in premium feature development and would likely not be as high quality because we don't have graphic designers or front end developers on the team.
3. Even upon reaching our breakeven point we are at only ~\$5,000. This is to give significant padding to allow for increased spending on development to push for more features and quicker release dates if there seems to be demand.

c. In sales and marketing we expect a big push on release to the Carleton community in Q4 and then another ramp up in 2023 when we start looking at other colleges and universities.

d. Our priority is to build a highly functional product that we're proud of as quickly as possible and get it out in the world to see how it performs. Therefore at this point, we do not have plans to spend on legal filings including the trademark, GS1 memberships, and LLC.

## **8. Company Vision and Bios**

**Our Values:** Our team is rigorously customer oriented. We are dedicated to creating a product that students emphatically love by being willing to adapt based on feedback from our target audience and user experience. Therefore as we continue building the product, it is essential for us to conduct user interviews and have channels through which users can easily contact us, so that we can pivot often as we learn more about our target audience.

### **The Team:**

Rachel Hodes - Rachel is a senior Cognitive Science major and Creative Writing minor. She took time off from Carleton to work with [Muze](#) (a freeform mobile chat platform) on product direction and growth strategy. She is a member of the sketch comedy group, Lenny Dee.

Charlie Bushman - Charlie is a senior Physics major with 5 years of experience in software engineering internships and independent projects. He also captains a frisbee team and does stand up.