## Sprout

# **MRD OUTLINE**

October 25, 2014

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## Vision

For a modern, on-the-go musician who risks losing song ideas in life’s high pace, our product is a new mobile application that provides a quick, sophisticated means to capture and grow song seeds. Unlike the current solutions that are either overly-simplistic audio capture tools or overly-advanced audio production programs, we offer a focused solution designed to help musicians collaboratively make the transition from ideation to pre-demo production using a powerful instrument they already have: their voice.

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## Motivation

### Customer Segments

Our intended customers are musicians who write original music. This broad segment includes both amateur and professional musicians, all of whom we hope to appeal to with a combination of sophistication and ease-of-use. Within this segment, we are targeting tech-savvy individuals and bands interested in utilizing novel methods of capturing and sharing musical ideas.

We sought out musicians who we personally knew. All that we were able to speak with were currently amateur musicians, though at times, some had played professionally.

We posed these questions to our current sample size of 5:

* What tools do you use to capture song ideas? Do you use your phone?
* What are the limitations in the tools you use to capture song ideas?
* Tell me about the last time you wrote a song? Where did it start, where did you get the idea, how did you develop the idea?
* Can you describe your method of sketching out a song idea?
* Do you play in a group or solo? If in a group, how do you share ideas? At what point do you share your ideas with others?

Early adopters will most likely constitute individual musicians who do not have an established and tested method for cataloging their song ideas. These users probably have limited access to professional-quality production tools, but are looking for a user-friendly way to leverage and expand their creativity. In addition, we anticipate that front-of-the-curve technophiles who love writing music will also utilize this tool.

**Steve** gave up his desk job five years ago to become a professional, independent musician. Ever since, he’s been writing and performing his own, original songs, but, as he has not yet “made it big”, he’s always on the road playing as many gigs as he can find. His world is music, but his phone rules his life. Constant traveling means that he doesn’t always have the best opportunities to capitalize on the myriad of musical inspirations he encounters on a daily basis. What’s more, when he does come up with an idea, it is difficult to get his hometown producer-friend’s opinion. He needs a better way to sketch his music in airports, at diners, in hotels—basically anywhere since he never knows when an idea will hit him.

**Sam** is the lead guitar player for the band *Where’s My Finger?* that he and his three best friends started. When he’s bored at school, he’s always thinking about new riffs he can shred out on his 6-string, but can’t keep track of all the cool lines that pop into his head. Additionally, though the band loves playing together, they all go to different high schools and can’t practice together more than once a week on Sunday afternoons in Bo’s (the drummer) garage. Their idea-sharing tools are limited, making their jam sessions more about coming up with ideas rather than practicing their best lady-swoonin’ songs. He needs a way to feed seeds to his buddies so they can write more songs!

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### Unmet Needs

We believe that music writers have a difficult time capturing and cataloging the inspirational riffs that they later use to develop songs.

We also believe that music writers who write for, or perform in collaborative groups have no streamlined channel to share ideas with other musicians.

Though the pain is might not be noticed by all musicians, we believe that it stunts creativity by requiring the musician to focus heavily on developing and maintaining a working “system,” rather than the system being a set of tools that automatically manages the mechanics, thereby increasing the musicians focus on the music.

Our research indicated that most individual artists are reluctant to share their music in its initial stages to avoid critiques that are too external to the musician’s intentions. We think, then, that bands would be the target audience for sharing features. As we have not yet spoken with any band members, we hope that this feature will prove useful once we do.

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### Existing Solutions

Analog:

*Pen & Paper* – Trained musicians are able to write chord/note progressions, but can be difficult to keep organized; not useful for musicians without sufficient theory knowledge

*Repetition & memorization* – repeatedly singing/playing a riff will help a musician remember a seed for later; this requires a lot of effort

Digital:

*Voice-memo apps* – Records audio snippets, but do not permit any editing, difficult to keep organized

*Amateur/Professional grade production software* – These require pc/laptop-style recording and editing methods; many advanced features that are more appropriate for post-demo recording, production, and performance

Both Analog and Digital solutions do not offer a suite of tools, all in one place, that are both sophisticated and easy to use. This is where we hope to gain the most ground, by providing sophisticated features that are not overly complicated, thereby eliminated the often unnoticed barriers that prevent musicians from taking full advantage of their creativity.

The current competitor matrix is missing significant coverage in the middle space where we think the sketching, pre-demo creative process exists. This is the niche we hope to occupy.

### Macintosh HD:Users:ben:Google Drive:Foster:Y2:Q4 - Fall 2014:Product Management:Product Management Team Folder:feature matrix.jpg

### Differentiation

Our team has extensive musical background, fantastic ideation, and a fairly strong understanding of UIX, and great market analysis skills. Unfortunately, no one is a developer. Wah wah.

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### Why Now?

Smartphone penetration is at an all-time high, with US number reaching nearly 80%. These devices have significant processing power and have seamless integration between the hardware and software. In addition, the barriers to developing mobile applications have dropped significantly as the number of frameworks and developers have increased.

## Use Cases

For each key use case, walk step-by-step through scenarios for how a user would experience an ideal solution to their problems, i.e., one that is not constrained by technical considerations.

Case 1, Quick Record:

Steve is walking down the street when a car passes him, music blaring. The beat triggers a “light bulb,” for a song, so he needs to capture it before it goes away. He takes out his phone, presses the “quick record,” and beatboxes a quick rhythm into the app. As he is doing so, a melody pops into his head, so as soon as he is done with the rhythm, he adds another layer by singing the phrase. He now has a seed to grow when he has a little more time to spend on the idea.

Case 2, Advanced Record:

Sam decided to go somewhere quiet for lunch. He had the briefest idea for a song and really wanted to bring it up with the guys on Sunday. *Where’s My Finger?* plays almost exclusively in the key of G, but Sam heard that Bm is an awesome key to mess around in. Since he has 30 min, he sits down to work. He sets the key to Bm, the time signature to 4/4, and the tempo to crunchy 75 bpm. Since the app is already calibrated to his voice, he gives himself the reference tone, the 4 beat count-in, and begins sketching. As he records guitar ideas for the chorus, bridge and verses, he goes back and edits the pieces that don’t quite fit.

When he feels decent about each part, he goes back and starts singing bass lines to compliment the screaming guitar licks he has dreamed up. After the first pass, Sam lowers the phrases down an octave and moves them around slightly before applying a punchy, overdriven 5-string Ibanez sample to the track. Next, it’s the drums, and he spends extra time finding syncopated bass drum hits that only exist in the best of rock and roll. With the addition of his vocal high hats and snares, he finally feels that each piece of the song is built enough to give his band members something to work with.

He adds it to *Where’s My Finger?* ’s folder and notifies the other members. He flagged John’s newest set of lyrics, thinking they would go perfectly with the new piece. Sunday comes around, and since Matt can read music, he printed off the bass line in musical notation. Sam can’t, but knows how to read tabs, and looks at the tab layout on his phone. The boys’ practice is much more productive since they already know what to work on; the song seed is the origin of *Where’s My Finger?* ’s chart topping single, “Chocolate Surprise.”

## Market Size

At least 14 Million people writing music on a regular basis, based on quick facebook data (30M facebook pages pertaining to music, of those, about 50% are involved in original content, assuming 1.5 writers per musical group and a 65% smartphone penetration rate yields 14M consumers).

## Caveats / Risks / Key Dependencies

Points at which this endeavor could fail are primarily two-fold. The first is failure of adoption. In this case, we simply are unable to acquire the user base necessary to support the continued development of this app. The second is technological feasibility. We hope to create a product that has a significant amount of back-end processing dedicated to automating and assisting the capturing and editing process as much as possible. As such, we would require some intense algorithms that might take some time to develop; these algorithms would hopefully be self-learning, which would also require a significant user base in order to make them intelligent.

Since sharing would be selective and private, we do not think we run the risk of artists stealing each other’s ideas.

We do not believe revenue generation is too much of an uphill battle. There are plenty of applications that generate sales, and we have already considered various approaches to solving this problem; the most obvious will probably be Freemium model that allows additional in-app purchases which give the user more functionality.

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## Strategic Considerations

Yes—as per the requirements of this assignment.

## Go/No Go Recommendation

Go. Why the hell not?