Youth Entrepreneurs Alumni Platform Implementation Plan

The Alumni Relations Priority aims to serve as a liaison between alumni, current students and the organization as we work to fulfill Youth Entrepreneurs' vision of cultivating mindsets and fostering personal transformation/self-actualization, while motivating our alumni to become lifelong change agents within their communities. The Alumni Relations Priority will work with other priorities within the organization along with corporate partners to support our constituents upon completion of their YE coursework and will further engage, encourage and support them on their journey to self-actualization.

Overview/Background

As Youth Entrepreneurs strives to accommodate our growing customer base, traditional practices and privileges offered to our constituents in prior years have been modified or eliminated. One common practice that is now antiquated and unattainable involves our ability to engage/develop relationships with current students and alumni in a physical (face to face/personable) manner.

Over the past year, the Alumni Relations priority has strategized approaches to engage our constituent base. To gain student/alumni insight, we've polled, surveyed, and held focus groups with alumni and current students. Our ongoing efforts to engage alumni include various social media platforms, the YE Connect Newsletter, email, push-notifications and the opportunity section of YouthEntrepreneurs.org. While valuable, our engagement with our constituents is restricted due to a lack of measures.

We've also received insight from fellow associates who voluntarily participated on the Alumni Platform Subcommittee. During a presentation at the 2019 YE Next competition, Dexter Law Jr. (a YE Alum) proposed an idea to create a digital platform that would engage and inspire networking among our alumni base. During YE Summit 2019, Dexter pitched his idea to the Summit participants who provided suggestions and feedback for potential features for this platform.

Overall, our constituents have expressed a strong desire to stay connected to YE through a digital platform that will assist them on their journey to self-actualization. It is our hope that the Alumni Platform will fill the void felt once our alumni are removed from the classroom.

Alumni Platform Description

The Youth Entrepreneurs Alumni Platform will serve as a digital community for Youth Entrepreneurs alumni and current students. The Platform is designed to increase engagement, communication, foster networking, and encourage a lifelong approach to transformation and self-actualization. The Platform will empower users to discover, develop and apply their time, talent and treasure as they continue to embrace the entrepreneurial mindset. The Alumni Platform provides an avenue for our constituents to be **Opportunity Obsessed**, distribute and enhance **Knowledge**, create a sense of belonging, and broaden their personal, professional and educational development/network.

Goals/Objectives

As the Alumni Relations priority endeavors to identify approaches that encourage our constituents to increase engagement and become lifelong change agents within their communities, we believe that we've identified a programmatic option that will be mutually beneficial for the organization and our constituents through the YE Alumni Platform. It is our belief that the implementation of a YE Alumni Platform will:

1. Provide resources and support for Educators who express a need or desire to have additional support inside the classroom (Opportunity postings, Mentorship Opportunities, Alumni Business Directory, File and Resource Sharing)
2. Offer current YE students and alumni opportunities to engage and network
    a. Increases interest and participation among alumni and current students to gain valuable insight into the next stage of Youth Entrepreneurs (beyond the classroom)
    b. Encourage Alumni and current students to share their experiences from their involvement with Youth Entrepreneurs (increase awareness and recruitment of the Alumni program)
    c. Create a group of peers with shared interest and common goals
    d. Support the entrepreneur endeavors of our constituents (Student Marketplace)
3. Expose alumni to educational and applicative opportunities which will ultimately help them further (develop their innate abilities) themselves on their pathway of transformation.
    a. Mentorship (peer to peer, organizational partners)
    b. Resources (i.e. soft skills/transferable skill development, business/legal advice, learning modules, alumni business marketplace)
    c. Opportunities (internships, job announcements, scholarships, volunteer events, experiential learning opportunities)
    d. Support (fellow constituents)
4. Empower and highlight YE alumni, increasing their confidence and development of communication and leadership skills
5. Expound upon our YE students and alumni's knowledge and understanding of YE's Foundational Values and common economic principles
6. Ignite a desire for our alumni and current students to maintain a life-long connection to Youth Entrepreneurs

Analysis

Once the Alumni Relations priority identified the needs of our constituents, we began researching the market to ensure we wouldn't duplicate efforts. We evaluated various third-party and outside vendors on the market to find an option that would maximize value for our organization and constituents. We took the feedback gathered during the 2019 YE Summit along with input from several internal priorities to help find the best option.

Key Stakeholders & Capabilities

Data: Input from the Data priority aided our team in choosing a platform that would integrate with our existing data management system, Salesforce, and ensure the best verification and data-mapping techniques were used.

Compliance: Input from the Compliance priority helped us evaluate the risk associated with our platform. They aided in ensuring we choose an option that would comply with the privacy/compliance standards for our organization.

Marketing & Communication: Input from the Marketing & Communications capability aided our team in evaluating the various communication and marketing techniques to ensure the platform's communication methods aligned with our organizations existing communications efforts, HubSpot. They also aided in ensuring our outreach efforts for the platform created the biggest strategic impact.

Milestones/Success Measures

Given we deploy by the end of May, our primary goals for YE platform are as follows:
- 50% of registration of current students (in a six-month period)
- A minimum 300 alumni registered to the platform (in a six-month period)
- 50% of registrants engage with the platform a minimum 3 times a month

Expected outcomes include:
- Decrease in outdated information in our current CRM
- Increase in peer-to-peer engagement

We will use these metrics, alongside the analytics tools provided by the vendor, to track engagement and gauge the success of our platform.

Risk

The potential risk associated with selecting this third-party vendor are listed below:

1. Low engagement/interaction with the platform
   a. With the launch date in proximity with the completion of Spring semester, we will work with Educators to bolster current students' registration within the classroom. We will also use our current communication efforts (YE Connect newsletter, social media, email and push notification) to drive registration among alumni. It is our belief that alumni/current students will assist in reaching unregistered alumni (unaccounted in our CRM) through word of mouth.
   b. In order to combat this risk, Graduway offers a customer success team with dedicated Professional Services Manager and Account Manager to help to identify their key strategies and build out our platforms in accordance with our visions and goals. This team is maintained throughout the duration of our contract.
2. The platform does not meet our needs
   a. In order to combat this risk, we can negotiate a shorter-term service agreement with option to terminate the agreement based on results and engagement analytics gathered after the launch of the platform.
3. Delay in platform implementation date
   a. We anticipate beginning implementation of the platform the week of March 9th, 2020. Delays in this schedule could affect our official launch date. We anticipate the official launch nearing the completion of Spring semester. An offset in the deployment schedule will stall our efforts to work with Educators to bolster current students' registration within the classroom.
   b. If the schedule is delayed, we may use current students to test the platform during the second wave of the soft launch (additional information may be found in the Implementation/Next Steps section of this document).

Analysis Criteria

The criterions below were used to evaluate each vendor. When analyzing vendors, we ensured that each component aligned with the goals/objectives of our platform and our organization. The weighted decision matrix in Figure A of the appendix gives a visual representation of our evaluation. It includes non-negotiable features which includes mobile responsiveness, extensive privacy options, cost, data management, access, mentorship features, communication, site-features, customization, and easy registration/login. A more comprehensive list of considerations, Figure B, can also be found in the appendix.

Researched Vendors

A thorough analysis of each vendor can be found in Figure C of the appendix.

Recommendation

After extensive research and analysis of each prospective vendor, we, along with the aforementioned internal priorities, recommend the Graduway alumni engagement platform as the premier option for our organization. This platform is very versatile, offering a solution that is mobile responsive and includes a Youth Entrepreneurs branded mobile app. Graduway meets many of our non-negotiable criteria and successfully aligns with the guidelines of our internal priorities. Graduway also offers extensive tracking engagement features and strategies to improve our implementation plan.

Proposed Service Agreement

We have received a proposed service agreement from Graduway. Our recommended package allows for an unlimited number of registered users, admins, and groups along with a custom URL and ongoing support following the implementation process. Our first-year costs would be ~$18K with a recurring cost of ~$14-17K in subsequent years. The agreement is valid for 4 years. Charges for subsequent years are indexed to increase 5% per year after the first year of service. We reserve the right to terminate the agreement at any time. This is the initial, unnegotiated, service agreement. Upon approval, we plan to negotiate the agreement to fit the needs of our organization.

Implementation/Next Steps

Graduway offers an eight-week implementation plan to integrate the platform. We anticipate deployment of the platform to begin the week of March 9th, 2020. A soft launch, expected in mid-April, will be open to a select group of engaged alumni (~300 users). We may use this group as brand Ambassadors, to test and drive interest to the platform (kickstart content sharing).   An additional soft launch, anticipated for late April, will add additional users (~1000 users composed of additional engaged alumni and Summit participants) to the platform for testing, platform monitoring and strategizing campaigns for continued growth. Our official launch is expected in May.

 More detail involving implementation will be provided after the finalization of our service agreement. Our team has also begun to identify the internal priorities needed throughout the implementation process. Representation from the following priorities will be assets for a successful implementation of our platform; Data, Compliance, Marketing & Communication, and Alumni Relations. These individuals will not be required to attend all implementation sessions and will be requested on a need's basis.

Appendix

Figure A: Alumni Engagement Decision Matrix

Alumni Engagement Software Weighted Decision Matrix									
		OPTIONS							
Criteria	Weight	Graduway		Hivebrite		Almabase		PeopleGrove	
		SCORE	TOTAL	SCORE	TOTAL	SCORE	TOTAL	SCORE	TOTAL
Events	2	5	10	5	10	5	10	5	10
Cost	3		0		0		0		0
Salesforce Compadability	4	5	20	4	16	4	16	4	16
Privacy Options	5	5	25	2	10	2	10	2	10
Mentorship Aspect	4	5	20	5	20	4	16	4	16
Admin Menu (Analitics)	3	5	15	5	15	5	15	5	15
Networking Features	3	5	15	5	15	5	15	5	15
Customizable Features/Pages	5	2	10	4	20	4	20	5	25
Groups	4	5	20	5	20	5	20	5	20
Professional Profile	3	5	15	5	15	4	12	4	12
Registration/Login	3	5	15	5	15	5	15	5	15
Mobile Application/Mobile Responsivness	5	5	25	5	25	3	15	3	15
RSS feeds	2	5	10	5	10	4	8	0	0
Gamification		0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Total			200		191		172		169

Figure B: Expanded Criteria List

Cost: What is the upfront cost? How will our pricing module look? What are the fees and what limitations do they come with? How can we leverage value-added as measure for cost?

Data Management: How compatible is this software with our current data management system, Salesforce? How well can student data be mapped from our platform to theirs and how will this information be verified/updated?

Access: How will the platform access/censor content? How will different user groups interact and how much control do we have over it? How can we ensure our students are only engaging in meaningful discussion?

Mentorship Features: How immersive is the admin menu? Does the platform have any data analytic tools?

Communication: Does the platform allow mass communications to be sent like email and push notifications? Does the platform offer in-app messaging?

Site Features: Does the platform offer private messages? Does the site allow user search based on specific criteria? Does it allow for photo/album upload? Are there any limitation when creating groups? Does it allow gamification or a ranking system?

Customizable Pages (Public/Private): Does the site allow us to ad customizable pages like learn/virtual, student marketplace, opportunities (internships, scholarships, jobs), embedded videos, yearbook?

Registration/Login: Does the platform have ability to login/link information between existing social sites like LinkedIn, Facebook, Google, etc.? How can we ensure only Youth Entrepreneur students are registering to our platform?

<u>**Figure C: Vendor Analysis**</u>

Graduway: This vendor's platform is a promising option due to its extensive network features. Some of the key features include audience segmentation capabilities, a completely branded mobile application and platform, increased control over the ability to censor information. Their primary disadvantage is a lack of gamification.

Hivebrite: This was also a promising option for our platform because of its extensive business professional features. This platform allowed mentors to share documents within the application. Its primary disadvantages included limited customization and lacks the ability to censor unwanted content.

Buddy Press: This vendor offers viable options, but they do not meet the needs of our platform. This option involves hosting our platform in Amazon Web Services LightSail and building our platform using WordPress and extensible plugins. Advantages include a lower startup cost and complete customization. Disadvantages include less support during implementation and more responsibility on the organization when building.

Almabase: This vendor offers viable options, but they do not meet the needs of our platform. It has features similar to many of its competitors such as mentoring and peer-to-peer connections, their compatibility with salesforce, an extensive admin console, and easy registration/login. Its primary disadvantage included not having a mobile application, it's lack in audience segmentation, and an outdated look/feel.

PeopleGrove: This vendor offers viable options, but they do not meet the needs of our platform. The benefits of this platform include the ability to create groups/communities, an opportunities page, and the ability to construct a student marketplace. Its primary disadvantage was not having a mobile application and not having a directory of users. This platform's primary focus was related its mentorship feature.

Xinspire: This vendor offers viable options, but they do not meet the needs of our platform. This vendor had a well-developed mentorship software but lacked many of the features listed in the criteria section.