Dylan Montgomery

Daniel Zawacki

Technical Report Writing

3 February 2025

Participation 1: Diagnostics

My current professional circumstance is the launch of my own business, which is initially modeled to provide website hosting services to farmers and other parties within the agricultural industry.

I began this pursuit in February of last year, when I participated in a pitch competition hosted by the Akron regional I-Corps program and sponsored by the National Science Foundation. At that time, I had been developing the underlying technology for three years and was seeking a way to translate it into a profitable business. Through the I-Corps program, I interviewed many individuals and businesses, eventually narrowing my customer segment to agriculture. I selected agriculture because it consists of individuals who run their own businesses and have a particular need to coordinate logistical data.

Later, I reevaluated my pitch to better explain and address my business model and how my proposed solution would meet the needs of my selected customer segment. I advanced to the finals that May, ultimately taking third place and missing the prize money allotted for first and second place.

Since the program, I have begun acquiring customers, yet I still struggle to clearly explain my business model or provide people with the necessary context. I often include excessive detail in an attempt to provide a comprehensively accurate answer. Furthermore, I tend to lose sight of the core question being asked and the underlying reason for the inquiry.

The core of my business model is the Data Framework called Mycelium Schema Standardization (MSS). MSS is a universal language for information interoperability that allows data from disparate sources to be aggregated into a single cohesive resource. Applied to agriculture, having farmers operate and optimize their internal processes on this underlying framework enables their websites to serve as a collective point of contact, creating what could be called a transparency of supply and demand. This provides obvious benefits, but I must be able to communicate my reasoning in the context of what a particular person needs to know.

Local farms constitute the majority of US agriculture by count and acreage, yet they operate at 10% less efficiency per acre than large industrial farms. Surprisingly, this is not due to a lack of production capability. The cause is that local farmers cannot plan to grow a product they are not confident they can sell. This lack of foreknowledge results in their product being more expensive and logistically inaccessible to consumers via traditional retail grocery stores.

Consider the potential if local farms could be accessed as a single, cohesive resource, keeping in mind that local farms require less transportation and astronomically less waste value recapture in their pricing. My company aims to create a new paradigm, transitioning into a food brokerage that allows the local industry to operate with the same economies of scale as large, centralized conglomerates. Simultaneously, allowing individual farmers to compete and doing so without sacrificing their independence. This ultimate business model is not dependent on the brokerage owning the software, only on the competition to utilize its benefit.

The analogy I often use is that the MSS is similar to the United States Postal System, and I must create the postal system before I can create a company that utilizes that infrastructure. To address this, I must adopt a transitional business model that provides web services and ERP software, generating revenue from the hosting and data management rather than through software subscriptions.