

App Ideas

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Why do I need to come up with an app idea?

You might be wondering why this class doesn't just assign you a project. After all, in industry it is much more likely that you will be given something to work on rather than you making a project up from scratch. There are multiple reasons why we have made this decision.

I strongly believe that when you really care about what you are working on, you not only work harder, but you learn a lot more. This is backed up by research into the learning process.

By allowing you to bring your own app ideas to the table, you feel less like you are being forced to work on something, and more like you get to work on something. This is not just another group project, but an opportunity to bring one of your ideas from nothing into a fully functional product.

Having you bring your own ideas also means that the course is constantly changing semester after semester, identifying new technologies, problems, and solutions.

Each of the teams will have their own unique app to show off to employers, instead of graduates constantly having the same projects in their portfolio.

And finally, even if your app doesn't get picked, you probably now have a capstone idea.

How do I come up with an idea for a software project?

I found a pretty good resource on this on the following website:

<https://www.apptamin.com/blog/how-to-validate-your-app-ideas/>

Gabe is focused mostly here on business related apps that have the potential to make money, but a lot of what he has said still applies to this class.

Games

Another area that is ripe with a lot of potential are simple games that you might have played as a kid. Think about how you could put your own unique spin on something that already exists. In this class we have seen:

- Several Tamagochi based applications
- Pazaak From Star Wars: KOTOR
- Defend the Castle style games
- Cookie Clicker inspired idle games
- Even original board games!

Do keep in mind that we do not want you to produce a clone of a game, it should have your own personal spin on it.

When considering games, consider that without a strong background in graphics frameworks, it will be difficult to do anything involving any sort of on screen animation or physics.

Can I still use it for Capstone?

Yes, although in the end your idea will need to be approved by your capstone advisor.

Many past students from a variety of capstone advisors have added to their group app or have done their app idea that did not get picked. In that case that your app idea is picked, it is not acceptable to simply reuse the app produced in this class. Significant improvements and additions should be made if the project is to be used for a capstone.

How do I convince others to join my project?

This is a difficult question to answer.

At this point I have taught 7ish sections of this class, meaning about 40 projects have been developed. I wish I could say that there was something in every approved project that leapt out as something that got others interested. However, that doesn't seem to be the case.

People come from a wide variety of interests and backgrounds, and what seems like a great idea to some is at the bottom of others lists.

I think one of the biggest factors in getting your idea picked is having a clear message about what your app is, and having that be something interesting. You want to have people think "I understand what that is, its a cool idea, and I think its something I could help do" then they will probably vote for it. Try your best to seem approachable.

How should I approach my product pitch?

Pitches will be in a “pitch-fire” format, which means you will have just 2 minutes to get the audience interested in your idea. You will have no slides or props. You won’t have time to go over features, so just focus on the core of the idea and make your enthusiasm contagious. Here is the format for pitches that we recommend:

- Who are you and what is your background? (10-20 Seconds)
- What is the problem that you product is solving? Or, begin with a story (20-40 Seconds)
- Explain the product and how it solves the problem (20-40 seconds)
- Explain who the product is for (10-20 seconds)
- Who do you need on your team to complement your skills (databases, UI, algorithms?) (10-20 seconds)
- Finally, make up a name for your product so we can give it a title

For examples of product pitches as part of Startup Weekends see the following videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlvGZ86flcM&t=137s&frags=pl%2Cwn>

For a nice blog post on product pitch advice:

<https://www.techstars.com/content/community/pitching-supremos-advice-pitch-startup-weekend/>

How do I choose a software project?

Honestly this doesn't seem to be much of a problem, but I'll write a little about this anyway.

Don't just vote for your friends, this really causes problems with the voting process.

Also keep in mind that while it is cool to work with your friends, if it turns out your friends aren't the most responsible with group projects, this can lead to both bad results in the classroom and in your friendships.

If I were voting for a project this would be my criteria:

1. The project seems possible to achieve.
2. The project seems interesting.
3. I feel there is something I could contribute to that project.
4. I am interested in building skills in technical areas of the app for future employment.

