

Embark Printing Marketing Plan

Team EXHALE



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Problem: develop full-scale marketing plan for an e-commerce corrugated cardboard printing enterprise

ColorHub is a B2B digital printing service for corrugated packaging, displays, and signage. They offer business advantages in speed, efficiency, and cost, since the process is entirely digital and cuts out many of the steps involved in tradition high-quality corrugated printing methods.

ColorHub wants to create a new arm of its business– a direct-to-consumer e-commerce platform in which users upload their image to the site (a la Vistaprint), select the desired product, and receive the printed cardboard in 72 hours.

Our challenge is to develop a full-scale marketing plan for the next six months as the business launches. The plan includes branding, competitive analysis, customer research, and product recommendations.

Brand: Embark Printing

- Our branding choices capture the spirit of adventure and risk associated with beginning a small business or startup.
- The brand plays on the idea of ships and shipping and evokes a voyage– Embark is a resource for the long term.
- The brand is active, plays on the brand’s speed and efficiency, as well as self-sufficiency of the user.

- The logo also subtly ties back to ColorHub’s original logo with the color scheme and the teardrop shape.
- Finally, the logo sums up the ideas behind the business— professional corrugated cardboard resources offered to the do-it-yourself ethics of our customers.

Technology: cutting edge

Barberan Jetmaster 1890



- The Jetmaster prints 180 linear feet per minute which transfers to about 50,000 – 60,000 sq ft an hour.
- The widest print is 74” with a little room at the margins.
- The length is unlimited, but the company will cap at 180”.
- This state-of-the-art printer is our competitive advantage.
 - It’s incredibly fast, flexible, and efficient.
 - It can work with a variety of products.
- It will be installed in six months
 - The printer is the back end of both the ColorHub main business and Embark.

Product Offerings: standardized for intuitive ordering for the consumer on the site

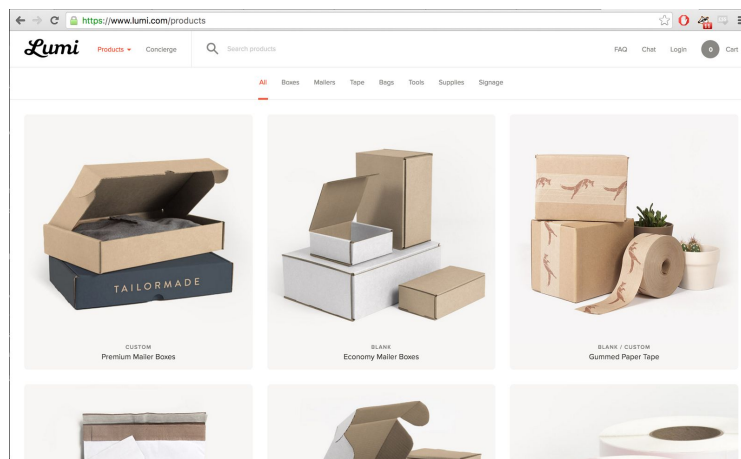
- Because the back end is the same, Embark's can operate in a similar fashion to ColorHub and allow the product mix to be dictated by demand.
- The main constraint will be our market and the e-commerce platform itself. We recommend a product mix that follows the same general offerings of ColorHub with limited customization for the sake of maintaining an accessible e-commerce site.
 - Packaging
 - This will be offered in standardized, stepped shipping a la USPS flat rate boxes– select a size or input product dimensions and have the site automate the selection.
 - Displays
 - We will have variable, quantized sizings that users can select in the same way as with packaging.
 - Signage
 - The same as displays

Competition: packed market, will need to break in at a different point

We were able to find many competitors offering everything from corrugate displays to custom packaging to multiple products from the same company. The market seems saturated, so we determined that differentiation would come through our initial target market and our marketing strategy.

- [zazzle.com](https://www.zazzle.com) – an online marketplace that allows customers to create both digital printing items and embroidered decorations on retail apparel items
- [promotesigns.com](https://www.promotesigns.com) – an online marketplace that allows customers to create commercial event signs
- [uline.com](https://www.uline.com) – an online marketplace that allows customers to create custom boxes in relation to both graphics and size

- blockposters.com – a modern online marketplace for customers to create personalized posters
- partystandups.com – an online marketplace offering a diverse portfolio of customized life-sized cut outs and items for corporate or promo events. The company can also provide same day shipping and specializes in cutting techniques and ink technologies.
- Lumi - our most prominent competitor
 - <https://www.lumi.com/>
 - Variety of product offerings, beautiful website, easy to use



Again, in such a competitive market Embark Printing has to distinguish itself by being the best in class at corrugated digital printing. Our Barberan Jetmaster 1890 printer allows for various efficiencies such as time and money savings. Listed below are a few others points that create our competitive advantage.

- State of the art technology allows for an efficient printing process in which artwork flows directly from the consumer's computer to the printing press
- Digital printing allows for cost and time savings
- Printing on plastic and other substrates
- Minimal waste ability for large print (50" x 80")
- Creative change without changeover

Customer Research: small business and startups

When we looked at a potential customer base for Embark printing we wanted to leverage the VFA community as well as other startups and early stage companies. Given Embark's unique printing technology and business strategy to stay low volume, we believe that startups and small businesses provide the best customer base. There are approximately 500,000 new businesses founded in the US each month, and each of these business is likely to require corrugated printing.

Large and late stage companies require corrugated printing in large quantities, but startups require a low unit volume and are easily accessible through Embark's current network as a Fellow-founded company. Examples of companies that Embark Printing can partner with are Banza, Doze, Castle, Ash & Anvil, NaturAll Club, and Zest Tea. All of those companies can use signage for conventions, special displays, or boxes for initial product testing or shipping. Tapping into the VFA fellow founded companies as well as using connections at other accelerators will provide the appropriate customer base to establish Embark Printing in the marketplace.

User Interviews

Russel Suskind - Doze Beds Co-founder

Russel is the co-founder of Doze Beds, a mattress service that hopes to make the process easier for clients. Doze is currently in the VFA Accelerator. Over e-mail, Russel shared his experiences using Colorhub with our team.

Current Systems:

Doze beds has actually used Colorhub before and the team are huge fans. They are currently in the process of using Colorhub to fulfill their next mattress order. As they are also members of the accelerator, they are great leads for purchasing other products the Embark Printing will sell such as displays and signage that they are currently not purchasing through their current relationship with Colorhub.

Problem:

Russel discussed that if they had not used a digitally screened and instead used plates that

would have cost them \$24,000, a price that is prohibitive for an early stage company like Doze.

Interest in product:

Doze will continue to use Colorhub. We advise reaching out to them to see if they would be interested in using this e-commerce site to streamline their company and personal purchases in the future.

Yelitsa Jean-Charles - Healthy Roots Founder and CEO

Yelitsa is the founder of Healthy Roots, a toy company that teaches natural hair care to girls of color by making dolls. Currently, Healthy Roots does not customize their shipping boxes. Yelitsa expressed enthusiastic interest in doing so however, noting that she believes the trust in her company would increase by doing so. Yelitsa was interviewed in person.

Current Systems:

Currently, Healthy Roots does not customize their shipping. The dolls are first manufactured, then sent to a fulfillment service that packs the dolls in boxes, prints out the mailing sticker, and ship the boxes.

Problem:

Yelitsa does not feel like Healthy Roots could use a service such as Embark printing because she perceives the price of customized boxes as prohibitive. She also relies on the fulfillment service for cost efficiency and therefore is not sure if she could incorporate the customized boxes.

Solution:

Knowing that certain fulfillment services will incorporate customized boxes, we advise that Embark Printing use content marketing to address this concern directly. For example, a blog on what fulfillment services will use business owner's customized packing would be useful.

Summary:

From these interviews, we suggest that Embark Printing focuses on branding themselves as an affordable and small business-conscious printing company. This can be achieved by prominently displaying pricing on the website, using blogging and social media to promote the

low costs that this service offers, in addition to providing educational content on how to incorporate Embark Printing services into their current supply chains.

Action Plan: get in the market via the VFA network and accelerators, experiment with Detroit small businesses, plan for the long term

- Startups/Accelerators
 - The VFA network will give Embark essential leverage at the beginning to grow at a sustainable rate.
 - The Doze use case illustrates this perfectly— Russell and Brendan needed a small batch of bed boxes for their first few production runs. Costs for turning to a large scale printer made that option infeasible, but they were able to print at low cost through ColorHub for the prototype shipping boxes. This new arm of ColorHub will streamline the whole process and make it a perfect resource for startups.
 - We plan to partner with the VFA Accelerator and others like it to become the go-to service for printing custom small-batch packaging and displays. We want to be the first name that comes up when founders and owners need printed corrugated cardboard. Allow product offerings to be dictated by these consumer needs, and expand to other markets as we quickly gain traction.
- Detroit Community
 - We want to test out a low-cost guerilla marketing campaign with small businesses in the Detroit area, starting at places like farmers' markets where the demand for displays may be high.
 - The startup/small business community in Detroit is rich, up-and-coming, and highly creative. We anticipate high demand for small-batch corrugate printing for mom-and-pop shops and the like. This strategy is designed to run in tandem with the accelerator partnerships more as an experiment.
 - As Detroit/Grand Rapids residents, the founders can execute unique ground floor marketing to meet the needs of small business owners and consumers in the city.
 - A grassroots campaign like this will be low-cost and will grow organically. A

physical marketing project for the e-commerce platform to bust out of the saturated market online.

- **Marketing Strategy**
 - First, we will leverage VFA network and partner with the Accelerator.
 - We want to also aggressively pursue partnerships with other accelerators– become the go-to tool for nascent startups’ needs– packaging, display boards, promotional products, etc.
 - We will implement guerrilla marketing at Detroit farmers’ markets– spread the word and meet their needs.
 - We will begin a content marketing strategy utilizing Embark’s blog. We will focus largely on supply chains for small businesses and startups with little bits of business acumen and product promotion to hit the initial target market. Posts can also advise entrepreneurs on how to incorporate Embark’s products into their fulfillment service workflow.
- **Long Term**
 - We need to optimize the e-commerce site SEO using AB testing to reach new customers via search engines.
 - We will also continue content marketing campaign, broadening scope of posts and social media presence as customer base increases. This appeals to both new customer acquisition and old customer retention.

Summary

Embark Printing will succeed. In the next six months as the business begins, our best course of action will be pursuing partnerships within the VFA network and with accelerators. Our goal is to generate sustainable income from early on by catering to nascent stage startup founders and small business owners. We want to become the premier resource for custom shipping and displays, powered by our product quality, speed and efficiency, and cost effectiveness. We also want to begin a low-cost guerilla marketing campaign within the Detroit area to try and grow the business among users outside of our built-in network.

While the back end of the business is being built up over the next six months, not only will we want to start these marketing campaigns, but a strong focus must be put on the front end, the e-commerce platform. The site must be clean, accessible, easy to use. For this reason, our initial product offerings will be very standardized to make use as simple as possible.

The long term goal is to take over the printing world. We want our brand and our market to be flexible and evolving with our customer base. A long-term content marketing campaign via the brand's blog is essential, as well as constant marketing tests and monitoring of the changing customer base.