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Mini Business Plan

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I Company Overview

Every year, over 4 million high school students face the daunting prospect of choosing the right college. In gathering information for this decision, these students must either coordinate campus visits to fit into an already busy schedule or attempt the near impossible task getting a feel for these colleges through purely virtual resources.

Campus Ambassador focuses on making the college admissions process easier for both prospective students and universities. We are currently developing a cross-platform mobile application that provides users with self-guided campus tours, event calendars, admissions and program information, and schedule planning. Using our app, prospective students will be able to explore options within a university on the go and make the most of their college visits.

The key to the proposition is that visitors will have access to all of the information they need without depending on admissions office tours and scheduled events. This allows the prospective students more freedom in planning a visit at their own convenience and also lightens the burden on universities to continuously provide admissions events. We plan to customize the app for universities who will buy on a per user basis., allowing prospective students to use the application for free during their visits.



II Problem and Solution

The Problem

Prospective students often lack basic information and can feel lost when they visit schools during inconvenient times for the university. They are dependent on the Office of Undergraduate Admissions for tours, panels and general guidance. The result is that these students must either change their schedules to fit with admissions offerings or wander around campus without a guide. Additionally, universities feel pressure to frequently provide admissions services in order to fill the need of their visitors.

When we were prospective college students, we often found ourselves lost on campus and missing important admission events. It is a real challenge to find the time to travel for a college visit, and often this small time window will not match up well with the services that are being provided. We would have really valued a tool that allowed us to guide ourselves on these visits.

In addition, we surveyed prospective students on tours and in information sessions, and they told us stories similar to our own. Karina Chow has worked at the Office of Undergraduate Admission at CMU and observed these problems first hand. She also found that tour guides and admission counselors were often overwhelmed with questions and emails from prospective students and their parents. Our product would take some of the pressure off of these employees.

The Solution

Our solution is a mobile application that provides geographical, historical, timely and useful facts based on the user's location. In addition, the app can guide users on tours and provide the same information as panels and events. This allows prospective students to visit at their own convenience without receiving a lesser experience. Also, it reduces the staffing and service costs of the admissions office by providing an interactive alternative.

High school students will feel empowered to make an informed college decision, and the Office of Admissions can shift its focus from logistics to more important matters.

We feel that our product creates value in numerous ways. We will save prospective students time and stress by providing them with an easy and convenient way to visit colleges. We will save admissions offices time and money by reducing their burden to provide comprehensive admissions events and information. Additionally, schools that can use our app can impress their visitors and enhance their reputation with a technically savvy and unique solution to a difficult problem. Our apps will be created in the context of a unified, central hub for the college visit process. This hub will contain our app offerings, and a website will offer users another setting in which to interact with the product.

III Market

Choosing the Market

We have put significant thought into choosing a market for our product, and we feel strongly that we would be most successful if we market to universities. The universities will pay us on a per user to make for them a custom mobile app and to it make available to students who are interested in their institution. The justification for this strategy is as follows.

There are 4,146 colleges and universities in the United States, 2,719 of which have increased need for admission assistance (www.cappex.com). Our user base is made up of the prospective student population, which according to the National Center for Educational Statistics, was about 4.5 million students in 2007.

If we choose the strategy of marketing directly toward users, we would consider 9 million apps sold in a year (an average of 2 per prospective student) as a measure of success. This number is based on informal exploratory discussions on the interest and willingness of high school students to pay for apps to aid their college search.

However, we can see that our potential for sales is much higher if we choose a different strategy. Based on data from Cappex, we can estimate very conservatively that over 25 million college visits occur in the spring season alone. This number is much larger than the number of prospective students due to fact that most high school students visit multiple

schools. The decision to sell the app to universities allows us to aim for full coverage of these visits. We support this assertion through our informal conversations with prospective students. Most indicated that they would download our app for every school they were considering if it was free and especially if the user data would be passed on to admissions offices to show their interest in the school.

The Carnegie Mellon Office of Undergraduate Admissions has already agreed to adopt our product on a trial basis. By having such a world-renowned university our product, it will make it easier for us to market to other universities. Marketing will likely consist of actually travelling to other universities and expanding from there. We also have connections to students within the Office of Undergraduate Admissions at other universities including University of California and Emory.

We do anticipate challenges in marketing to the decision makers at various universities, but we are confident that an enthusiastic response at CMU in addition to our low risk pricing model will allow us to be successful.

The last step in this process is making users aware of the availability of our app. We plan to use partners in the Office of Admissions to encourage visitors to download the app and believe that customer universities will be enthusiastic about promoting its availability. As we have stated, the product creates value for both the prospective students and the universities.

Segmentation

We have segmented our market in two distinct ways. The first segmentation deals the specialty and academic reputation of the school. We feel that technical schools with a strong academic standing will be vital for our market entry. These types of schools host large numbers of prospective students who visit from all over the world and value a reputation as a tech-savvy and cutting edge institution. From this group, CMU is a great place to start because survey data indicates a high proportion of CMU prospective students own smart phones, we are already working closely with the CMU admissions office, and staying local reduces our initial costs.

We can also segment our target schools by size. We are excited by the profit potential that large public schools provide and plan to aim at these schools once we have established ourselves in the market. We feel that CMU's strong connections with the University of Pittsburgh and Duquesne University will allow us to make the jump while also staying primarily local in the initial phase of our growth.

Initial Customer

We have reached out to Carnegie Mellon to be our first trial customer. They are very enthusiastic about our product, and our discussions have indicated that they would be very receptive to using the app and serving as a means for us to test and improve our initial versions.

Additional Sources of Revenue

We see plenty of opportunities for expansion beyond universities and feel that this type of growth forms the long-term goal for our company. For example, such a location-based app would be useful for amusement parks, museums, cities, and historic parks, expanding our potential customer base to tens of thousands of customers and hundreds of millions of users in the US alone.

IV Sales and Distribution

We plan to sell directly to our customers through the director of admissions. We do anticipate challenges in marketing to universities, but we are confident that an enthusiastic response at CMU in addition to our low risk pricing model will allow us to be successful. We intend to leverage our connections to get our foot in the door and believe that we can sway decision makers with the quality and potential of our product.

Customer loyalty will be a strong point of our business. A contractual agreement will determine a time period for the use of the app (probably one year initially), and we believe that customers will want to renew this agreement because of the benefits that they see in the visitor experience and their own workload. User loyalty is not concern at this time as we are essentially selling a onetime use application (this strategy may evolve over time). Each year a new group of prospective student users will replace the users who have made their decision and entered college.

V Competition

Overview

Some universities have built their own mobile apps but they lack what we consider required features, and often they are not engineered well. Most universities have online virtual tours, and event planning, but these are not centralized in a single essential application. There are some applications that offer similar services, but many lack several features that we will offer and others have interfaces that are difficult to use. In our opinion, this problem has not really been solved. It is simply a headache that college visitors and admissions offices currently deal with for lack of an alternative.

Competitors



Our main competitor will likely be Blackboard Mobile. Blackboard is a company that focuses on products for universities and some of their products are currently used at a number of universities (including Carnegie Mellon). However, their mobile application is far less used and has between 2-3 stars on the Google Play store and the iTunes store. Feedback indicates that this is due to its cumbersome interface and its high price tag. We think that because our app will be free for the users and because we have a team strong in user experience that we can outperform Blackboard Mobile.



Mobile Campus

Our second main competitor is Modolabs and their Mobile Campus application. They already have a number of universities using their application. However, their application focuses on an entire campus experience for students and alumni, with their admission information and prospective student aid as a secondary feature. Our primary focus is providing information for and improving the experience of the prospective student. Because this is our focus, our final product will be less diluted by what we consider to be additional features, which are the primary features of potential competitors like Mobile Campus.

Beyond these two competitors, most similar products are virtual tour applications, from which we feel that we are strongly differentiated. Our product is something a student will not only use at home to explore options with the school, but something a student can bring to campus to get the most out of his or her visit. We feel that we are unique in our direct intention to improve the college visit experience through user research and increased focus on this user set.

Customers sometimes buy from our competitors because they do not have the resources to make such applications on their own, although most universities still have not adopted such apps. In the case of Blackboard Mobile, a university may sign on due to the convenience of using a partner that they already work with. We believe that there is no other product that offers a comprehensive admissions solution, so we will be to penetrate the market with a different approach to the problem.

VI Financial Details

Pricing

We are planning to sell our app to colleges at a price of \$2.99 per user. This will be verified by user accounts, and the charge will only apply if the app user actually visits the campus of the school while using the app. This pricing model is not only low risk for universities who buy from us, but also gives us a strong potential for large profits. In addition, it will be easily adopted by users because it is free to them (addressing one of many complaints about Blackboard Mobile). Another strength of our pricing model is that it falls comfortable in the range of the cost of most mobile apps.

Funding

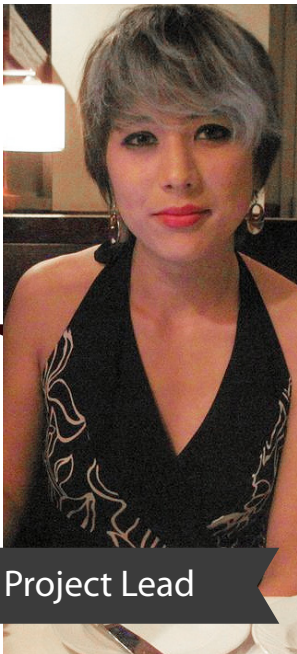
Initially, we will require very little funding to actually develop the app, so bootstrapping is appropriate. Our costs will essentially be test mobile devices and server space. When we begin to market the app, we will need funds to travel to schools and meet with admissions representatives. We plan on looking for angels and venture opportunities that believe in our vision.

Profit Potential

We feel confident that with an app priced at \$2.99, well over 25 million annual college visitors, and low costs of production we can generate significant profits. In the future we plan to collect data from the prospective students, like what activities they participated in or expressed interest in. We then plan on performing and selling our analysis of the data to help colleges use the prospective students time most efficiently and thereby enhancing the prospective students experience. We also plan on using our data to help universities target a specific type of student. Our future expansion into data analytics has very large potential to be our most valuable source of revenue.

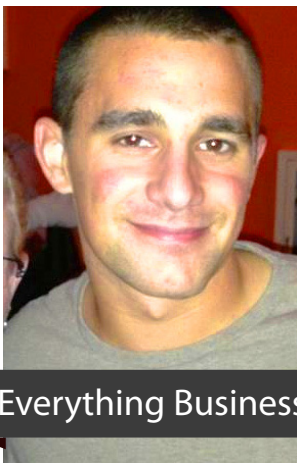
VII Team Information

UX and Business



Project Lead

Karina Chow is a senior currently studying Computer Science and Human-Computer Interaction. She has previously interned at both Adobe Systems and Yammer, Inc as a software engineer and data analytics intern. What sets her apart from our technically gifted team is her experience in front-end engineering, data analytics, communication and interface design, and user-centered research. Campus Ambassador started as a pet project of Karina's to reduce both the bulk of information requests received by the admissions office at CMU and the chaotic atmosphere resulting from admit month. As a tour guide, she saw a lot of the challenges prospective students faced when choosing the right college and decided to address the issue herself. To her dismay, she was unable to finish this project. We are hopeful that now that we have a full team of excellent engineers we can tackle and remedy this problem in all universities.



Everything Business

Matt Sarett is a junior at CMU majoring in Electrical and Computer Engineering and Biomedical Engineering, and pursuing minors in Computer Science and Business Administration. As a class project, he created a marketing plan for Vteractive (a mobile app startup company), and through this experience has discovered that he really enjoys developing strategies for small companies. Additionally, he is excited to say that he has recently accepted an internship position with Microsoft as a software development engineer. He feels that his biggest strength is that his broad range of studies really lends him a unique perspective in problem solving.

Development



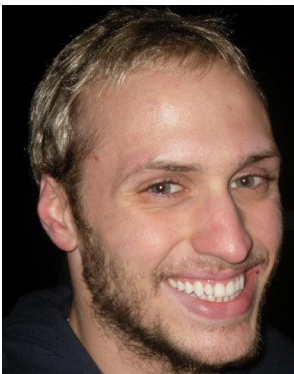
Backend Developer

Tamar Ben-Shachar is a senior at Carnegie Mellon studying Computer Science with a double major in Cognitive Science. She interned at Facebook where she helped write the subscribe feature, and at Meraki, a network system startup, where she re-wrote the mechanism for syncing information across shards as part of the backend team. She is excited about starting Campus Ambassador because she believes in the vision and the team. She has seen first-hand the unnecessary frustrations and stresses caused in the process of finding the right college. This needs to change, and she believes we are the team to change it.



Frontend Developer

Abby Motley is a senior studying Applied and Computational Mathematics major with an additional major in computer science at CMU. She has experience working with teams and presenting to small groups via two semesters of being a TA for a computer science course (principles of functional programming) at CMU. Through her internship with NCR's mobility and collaboration division this summer she learned a lot about the challenges faced when developing apps targeting use by multiple devices via cross-platform or native apps. She is extremely excited about Campus Ambassador's product because she has personally felt how much a positive campus visit can affect a prospective student's ultimate decision. She thinks our product is exactly what these students need to help them make the right choice and for the colleges involved to ensure they are accurately represented during every prospective student's visit.



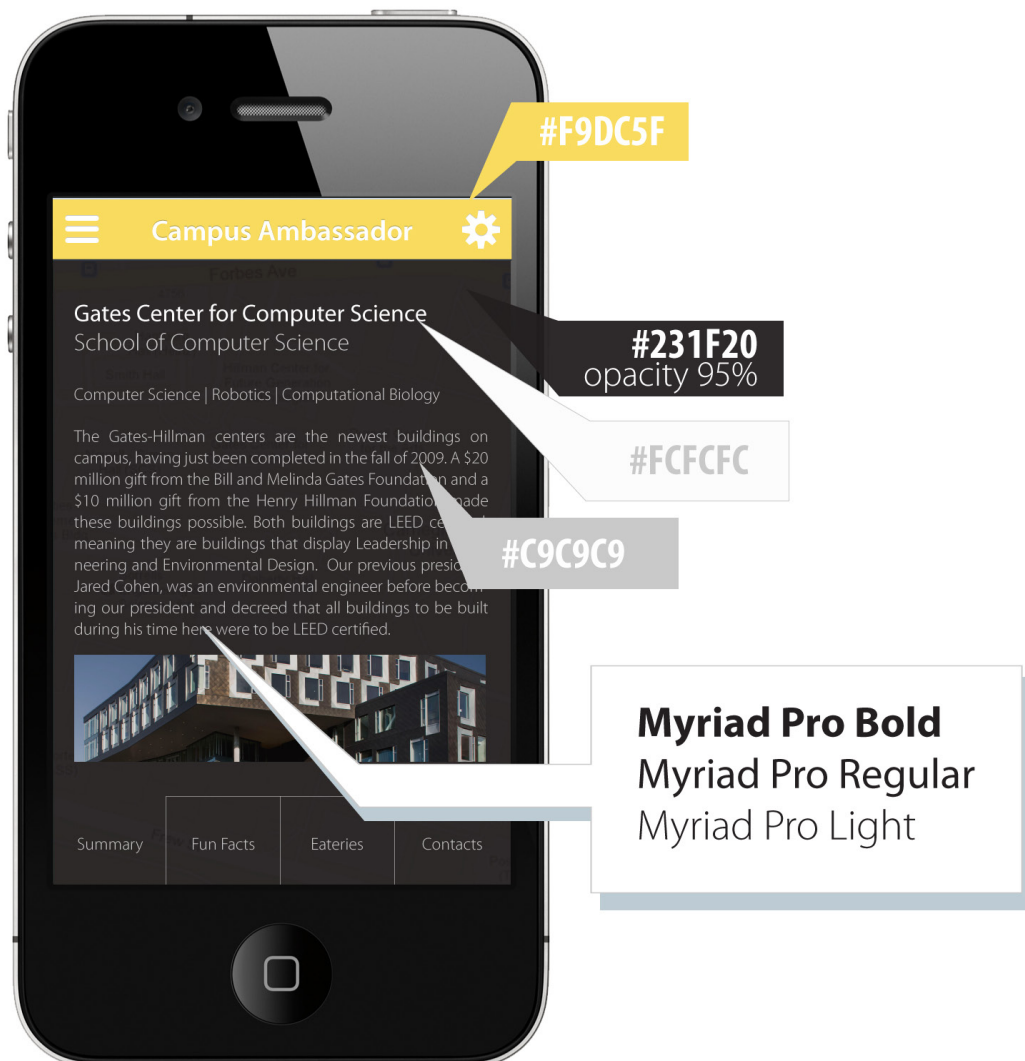
Frontend Developer

Daniel Glaser-Garbrick will graduate Carnegie Mellon University this spring with a Bachelors degree in Computer Science and with an additional major in Computational and Applied Mathematics. He interned at Morehead State University, where he programmed satellites. He is also part of the Cosmic X-Ray Background Nanosatellite team and the PocketQube femto-satellite team. He has experience both working in small teams and working with international teams. He also has experience in machine learning, finance, and sensor data analysis. What excites him the most about Campus Ambassador is that he will have a chance to help solve a problem that millions of people face every year.

VIII Milestones

Our development team is currently completing the navigation aspect of the app for CMU, including both building directions and guided tours. We have a working prototype with a minimal UI for the former feature. We also have partnered with a group of students, Mapyst (www.mapyst.com), who won a SURG grant for their navigational app for the CMU campus. We will be working with Mapyst in providing an accurate and comprehensive application.

We are also continuing user research concurrently with development. We have high-fidelity mockups and a design spec for our application that is continually changing with additional user research and development. Below are samples of both our preliminary mockups and design spec.



Mock-ups



Next, we plan to populate our database with all relevant admissions information about Carnegie Mellon, including building and program information. We will also allow user account creation for app customization. Our goal is a fully functional version of the app for CMU within the next 2 months.

IX Obstacles & Challenges

Because we want our application to be useable on both mobile and desktop, we are creating Campus Ambassador using web technologies over native applications. Thus, we anticipate some difficulty ensuring the app's features are consistent across various platforms.

We also must be conscious of how timely we are able to customize new universities. After talking with other companies that must customize their core application for multiple clients (e.g. BrandingBrand), we now know how to approach this area of concern. However, it will still be a challenge to do so quickly and efficiently with a development team of 4.

Lastly, pushing for university adoption will likely be difficult. Universities are notorious for being slow and bureaucratic, so we must succeed with flying colors at CMU to have a chance at acquiring other universities. Unlike virtual learning environments like Blackboard Learn, adopting our platform requires little change on the university's side. Because our app will benefit universities to a high degree and will require minimal effort to adopt, we believe that we will be able to overcome this hurdle and acquire customers.