

The following is my application to YC S15. Unboard was offered an interview after the online application, but we did not move on beyond the final round.

Company name:

Unboard

Company url, if any:

<http://www.unboard.io>

If you have an online demo, what's the url?

(Please don't password protect it; just use an obscure url.)

<http://www.kevinandstuff.com/chamberofsecrets/EpicEverything.html>

What is your company going to make?

Unboard is creating the next big Esport, a digital Collectible Card Game (CCG) for mobile and PC platforms called Epic Everything. We plan to have the biggest multiplayer game by 2018.

Phase 1: To build up reputation and revenue, we have started off by leapfrogging off of partnerships with board game publishers. In these partnerships, we build official mobile adaptations for popular board games. We gain reputation by association with an established publisher and by our well-made app. We gain revenue by splitting app sales with the publisher.

Phase 2: Now we are transitioning from mobile adaptations to our original flagship game Epic Everything. We believe we can gain big initial traction by launching a Kickstarter this mid-April. Thanks to the unique gameplay of Epic Everything and the recent popularity of digital CCG's, we have the opportunity to reach billions of players.

Where do you live now, and where would the company be based after YC?

Berkeley. Berkeley or SF.

Please enter the url of a 1 minute unlisted (not private) YouTube video introducing the founders.

<https://youtu.be/MGLbv4O4Duc>

How long have the founders known one another and how did you meet? Have any of the founders not met in person?

I'm the only founder right now, but I'm actively looking for a cofounder.

I have a close friend, a recent Berkeley graduate with an offer at Airbnb, that I've known for a year and a half who's worked with me developing some of Epic Everything. We've been discussing the possibility of him cofounding Unboard with me.

How far along are you?

We are releasing the official mobile adaptation of the popular board game "The Resistance". At the same time, we are alpha testing Epic Everything and compiling materials for its Kickstarter.

If you've already started working on it, how long have you been working and how many lines of code (if applicable) have you written?

7 months 7 days. 100,000+ lines of code, split between The Resistance and Epic Everything.

Which of the following best describes your progress?

Prototype

How many users do you have?

100

Do you have revenue?

Yes

How much revenue?

\$10,000

What is your monthly growth rate?

(in users or revenue or both)

N/A

If you've applied previously with the same idea, how much progress have you made since the last time you applied? Anything change?

N/A

If you have already participated or committed to participate in an incubator, "accelerator" or "pre-accelerator" program, please tell us about it.

Fall 2014, we were in Free Ventures, a Berkeley-based student-run accelerator that takes no equity (<http://www.freeventures.org>).

Why did you pick this idea to work on? Do you have domain expertise in this area? How do you know people need what you're making?

While working on "The Resistance" mobile adaptation, Epic Everything was just a side project I demoed to a few friends. They loved it. From there, I realized a potential transition from our mobile adaptations to making a possible Esport.

When I was 10, the first time I coded, I made an ASCII game in terminal with C++. I've been designing/coding games ever since then. I competed in the first ever high school Esports league (<http://hsstarleague.com>) and have followed Esports since middle school.

Recently, digital CCG's have skyrocketed in popularity thanks to a game called Hearthstone. Because of Hearthstone's quality, people have begun to realize the potential behind digital CCG's. However, despite demand, no significant competitor to Hearthstone has been released yet. In many ways, Epic Everything is capitalizing on this popularity and becoming that competitor with a unique take on the CCG. At the same time, I'm also just making my ideal Esport, something I personally would want to watch and play, a game I know people like me wish for.

What's new about what you're making? What substitutes do people resort to because it doesn't exist yet (or they don't know about it)?

Epic Everything is a CCG in real-time. In comparison, a conventional CCG is turn-based. Usually, one player takes a turn playing their cards, then the other. In Epic Everything, there are no turns and both players can play cards at any moment.

As a result, the game is far more thrilling. In Basketball, actions like dunking and buzzer beaters add character and excitement to the sport, and successful Esports and games need equivalent "big plays". The conventional CCG has no equivalent, because it is turn-based and slower-paced, but if you put everything in real-time you create the possibility for crazy combos and last-minute comebacks. Epic Everything is a game that takes the tried and true model of the CCG and adds this genre-breaking element.

Current CCG players are distributed among a variety of physical and digital card games, but they're all turn-based, including Hearthstone. Nothing adds the element of excitement like the real-time gameplay of Epic Everything can.

Who are your competitors, and who might become competitors? Who do you fear most?

There are many sub-par card games released right now, but there is one well-made CCG: Hearthstone. Hearthstone is the best digital CCG right now, and the only one truly well-made. It's what we fear most because it's so high quality.

However, while Hearthstone is fearsome, it's also the first mover that helped skyrocket popularity in digital CCG's and create our huge opportunity in the first place.

If Hearthstone is DOTA, Epic Everything is League of Legends. Alternately a more general analogy is if Hearthstone is Yahoo, Epic Everything is Google.

What do you understand about your business that other companies in it just don't get?

Games are not high churn by default. This is a pattern that arose because companies keep cloning games without sufficient innovation. While the cloning strategy (ahem Zynga) gets you a quarter of the market for several months, it won't last long term. You need significantly unique and deep gameplay (not only optimized gameplay) for players to play your game consistently.

How do or will you make money? How much could you make?

(We realize you can't know precisely, but give your best estimate.)

Epic Everything will have freemium purchases. It's nothing new: in-game currency that can be earned through gameplay or purchased by real money that can be used to buy card packs. Tweaks will be needed so Epic Everything is not pay-to-win or manipulative.

Early Hearthstone is a good reference for how much we could make within 2 years. They use the exact same card pack purchase model. It made \$30 million in revenue its first year. League of Legends is a good reference for an upper limit on a freemium Esport in general. It made \$1 billion in revenue in 2014.

How will you get users? If your idea is the type that faces a chicken-and-egg problem in the sense that it won't be attractive to users till it has a lot of users (e.g. a marketplace, a dating site, an ad network), how will you overcome that?

Epic Everything needs to reach a critical mass of users to gain momentum and become Esports-worthy. We have a strong plan to reach this critical mass through Kickstarter.

1) Digital CCG's are a perfect match for Kickstarter, which is essentially glorified presale. From \$5 for beta access, \$20 for several card packs, \$50 for special edition Kickstarter-only cards, to \$1000+ for the chance to design a card and more, each reward tier has a relevant prize. Reward value can be insane, since digital products have no marginal cost. No gimmicky miscellaneous gear.

2) Kickstarter campaign success is strongly correlated with the visual professionalism of the campaign. We have beautiful art (bit.ly/EE-assets) and scenes of a beautiful trailer being put together (<http://youtu.be/KqsodujOWfs>).

3) College is a huge advantage. We've recruited a student marketing team across 15 big college campuses. With 20,000+ students enrolled each campus, a 50% reach per campus, and a 2% contribution rate at an average pledge of \$25 (the most popular pledge on Kickstarter), we start off our campaign with \$75,000+ guaranteed funding and 3000+ backers. This is not including the bulk of funding from Kickstarter traffic, news, or word of mouth.

Our early success will be dependant on Kickstarter. If Unboard happens to be invited for a YC interview, we'll be in the midst of our Kickstarter by then and the momentum and potential Epic Everything has will be clear. Whether we struggle to get \$50,000 in funding or rocket past half a million, the Kickstarter results starting mid-April will speak for themselves.

If you had any other ideas you considered applying with, please list them. One may be something we've been waiting for. Often when we fund people it's to do something they list here and not in the main application.

The current iteration of the smart watch is flawed. It's not useful enough to be worth the effort of getting one. However, if someone were to combine the functionality of a Fitbit, Pebble, and Nymi, that would be a watch worth getting. Too much utility to pass up.

Please tell us something surprising or amusing that one of you has discovered.

(The answer need not be related to your project.)

I laugh everyday about some online video or joke, but before the internet, did people laugh as much? Was humor as accessible? It was accessible by TV, but what about before that? Was it less accessible? It was accessible in literature, but what about before even that? Essentially, with each technological advancement in society, did we also find it easier and easier to laugh?

What convinced you to apply to Y Combinator?

I'm young! I lack experience and knowledge. I'm hoping Y Combinator, with a huge alumni network and experienced partners, can help me alleviate this.

How did you hear about Y Combinator?

You guys happen to be a big thing in the Bay Area.