

# TeachMe

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# I. Introduction and Summary

Currently society is experiencing a major overturn in the workforce reflected by an inflow of younger employees. These younger employees are largely concentrated in some of the lower-achieving schools in the nation as a result of the “revolving door effect”[5]. As inexperienced teachers, they are faced with problems such as creating effective curriculums, collaborating with their coworkers as well as establishing classroom-management skills. [4] Due to the lack of resources that help these teachers in these areas, the students become the subjects of experiment, resulting in a decline in the quality of education. To solve this problem, there must be a new tool.

TeachMe, is an online database and forum that targets the K-12 Market. The convenient website allows new teachers to immediately come in contact with other teachers, perform filtered searches on related topics, and share popular ideas or tips. TeachMe includes 3 distinct gadgets: RememberMe- a tool that creates individual student profiles for teachers to remember them and track their growth, MeetMe- a video conferencing tool for teachers from across the globe to meet face to face, and AskMe- a polling tool for teachers to receive opinions and have their questions answered.

While competitors such as Edmodo and EdWeb exist, TeachMe provides a connection on a much more personalized level. TeachMe especially targets communication among teachers who have taught the same individual students but have moved on to different school and thereby fosters a stronger atmosphere of care between educators and students.

This company will initially be funded by private, profit-seeking investors and will function on the revenues received from the schools that adopt the program. Access to the website will be charged based on the size of the school and additional money could be generated through selected advertisements. TeachMe aims to provide services to underprivileged schools initially, specifically through the TeachForAmerica organization and eventually branch off to include schools across the nation and more. In the future, TeachMe also hopes to partner with groups such as Apple, Google and other prominent businesses interested in influencing the education of the future generation.

## II. General Description & Mission Statement

Teachme is an educational company hoping to minimize the gap between inexperienced teachers and more experienced teachers. It strives to lessen new teachers' anxiety when they first step into classrooms by offering a network of support as well as familiarize old teachers with current technology. It is an organization providing innovative features and gadgets online. By targeting the K-12 market, TeachMe envisions a future in which teaching is more efficient, more engaging, and more effective.

### ***Mission Statement:***

*TeachMe aims to provide a long-term solution to the problems caused by generation differences and high teacher turnover rates, thereby improving the quality of learning in the K-12 market.*

### ***Goals and Objectives***

- To provide new teachers with a safe and private platform to voice concerns
- To facilitate collaboration among teachers of different parts of the world as well as within the same school
- To bridge the gap between new teachers and old teachers through familiarizing the older generation with social networking
- To familiarize new teachers with expectations and insights into the professional setting and
- To provide teachers with ideas to improve their current state of teaching through discussion forums
- To improve the quality of education of every child.

# III. Market Analysis

## *Market Need*

Since 2001, there is almost a 40% increase in the achievement gap of high-income and low-income students. [8] This difference in achievement can be simplified into the following problems:

### **“Revolving Door Effect”[5]:**

21% of teachers at high-poverty schools leave their schools annually. [7] These teachers typically transfer from low-income schools to higher-income schools while novice teachers fill their vacancies. As a result, a concentration of experienced teachers gathers in schools that had already developed a stable and superior education quality whereas the low-income schools bear substantial costs. The quantitative and qualitative costs of these low-income schools lies in 4 broad categories:

- 1) The financial responsibilities to train new teachers
- 2) The decline in the quality of education as students serve as experiments for new teachers
- 3) The difficulty in tracking student progress from grade to grade on a more personal level
- 4) The lack of productive relationships between parents and teachers

This effect creates a long transition period in which efficiency and quality of teaching plummet.

### **Classroom management:**

A public agenda survey conducted in 2004 found that 85% of new teachers believe that they are unprepared for dealing with behavior problems in classrooms. [4] Evidently, the current training programs do not adequately prepare new teacher for the real classroom.

### **Curriculum Planning:**

New teachers face the daunting task of creating a complete set of lesson plans for their students without much guidance. The process is long and tedious as teachers do not have much experience of creating lesson plans and must learn through trial and error. In fact, in a recent survey by Teach for America, 85% of teachers responded that the materials provided by their respective schools were insufficient.

### **Supportive Environment:**

New teachers often feel unsupported by their administrators [4]. Although they may want to seek help from their more experienced colleagues, they lack the platform to do so as old teachers remain unaware of emerging technology and novel methodologies to share ideas. [7] The K-12 market thus needs to introduce an easy-to-use platform that older generations are aware of to facilitate the exchange of ideas.

### **Private Social Network:**

Social networking plays an important role in today's society; however, older teachers are unfamiliar with the details of this social hype and nervous to be involved in online sites that may cause privacy issues. According to MMS Education, teachers are moving towards social networks that are designed for them with increased privacy and more exclusivity. Based on a survey done by edWeb, 84% of teachers cited privacy concerns in mainstream social networks. TeachMe.com addresses this issue by making the site exclusive, requiring proof of teaching license a pre-requisite for registration.

## ***Market Size***

TeachMe.com targets public and private institutions across the globe with a focus on the K-12 teachers within lower-income school districts. The following indicates the current market:

- There are 3.7 million full time equivalent teachers in the United States with 3.4 million in public schools and 0.3 million in private schools. Out of the public schools, 56,000 receive Title I funds (low-income schools). [1]
- Over the past decade, the number of full time K-12 teachers has risen 7%. This increase is largely comprised of inexperienced teacher with five or fewer years of teaching; furthermore, 20% of teachers are under the age of 30. [2]
- According to research data, between 2005 and 2011, the percentage of teachers older than 50 dropped from 42% to 31%. [1]
- When transferring within districts, teachers tend to switch from low-income schools to higher-income schools. In fact, 21% teachers at high-poverty schools leave their schools annually. [5]

Since these young teachers are willing and able to adapt to new technology [4], TeachMe will be able to catch up and establish roots among young teachers today. Once these teachers gain more experience, they are likely to remain users on the website. In the future, TeachMe will continually meet the emerging needs of teachers, thus providing an advantage in the market.

### **Current Options:**

There are a few online platforms that offer social networks for teachers, such as Edmodo and edWeb. However, they do not specifically target new teachers and do not offer the same level of resources to new teachers. Edmodo targets the ability of teachers to relay information such as homework due dates and reading assignments to students. edWeb offers a social media for *all* teachers and is not geared towards helping to ease the transition of new teachers. Furthermore, both lack the gadgets and news feed that allow for a more personalized experience. Therefore, they do not offer the same level of resources to new teachers. TeachMe thus hopes to target the rising group of new teachers and expand after obtaining a secure foothold in the market.

## IV: Features

### Overview:

TeachMe provides teachers with an opportunity to share knowledge and ideas in a closed and safe environment, offering a rating system for users to rank a certain idea or hit within the site. It's one stop, streamline database meets many basic teacher needs and is found based upon content filtered by top rated searches. Mentor teachers can offer aid to the younger teachers posting their own ideas as well as possibly selling some of their lessons and other resources if needed.

### Trending:

This tab is based on the teacher's viewing preferences (recorded by the system over time) and is personalized for each teacher. These preferences would automatically include top- hot topics that are relevant to the teacher's grade level, geographic location, subject matter, and interests.

### Forums:

This tab would have the teacher's "favorite" forum threads at the top, and show the number of unread replies. Beneath that, there would be a search bar for the teacher to search for particular topics. In addition, there is an advanced search feature, which allows teachers to filter his or her search by grade level, location, subject, district, and even school district. After the search bar, there would be the general forums. These would be divided into different subtopics (academic, behavioral, preparation, technology, and miscellaneous). Within each subtopic, teachers can find specific threads posted by other teachers.

### Gadgets:

1. "RememberMe": A tool for teachers to establish a profile for each student. The students profile will be stored in the database of the schools TeachMe page. When a teacher leaves the school, the students profile will then automatically be transferred to the new teacher's account with comments and individualized notes passed on to the replacing teacher. An example profile will include personal qualities of the student, likes, dislikes, friends, hobbies and what motivates or discourages him or her. The new teacher could then add on to the profile as the student grows from grade to grade. To tackle privacy concerns, each teacher could also designate whether the information they put into the database is are private or public (allowing future teachers to access).
2. "MeetMe": Teachers will have an automatically updated "friends list" paired with the MeetMe video conferencing tool. Teachers who have taught the same students will be paired together and could thus discuss the progress of the student face to face, enabling teachers to check on how his or her previous students are doing as well as provide a medium in which the new teacher could ask for advice on how to deal with a particular student. Video conferencing is not limited to people on the "friend list"; it could be made between unrelated teachers from across the globe.

3. “AskMe”: A tool that allows teachers to create and to participate in polls or to simply hear the opinions of other teachers. The polls or short answer questions can also be made public for students, parents, or the general public. Most importantly they can be easily shared among communities. For instance, if a new teacher asks his predecessor a question that he does not know how to answer, he can easily forward the question to the community of teachers.



## V. Marketing Plan

### ***Step 1: Enter the market as a for-profit organization with funding from profit-seeking investors***

TeachMe will first gain recognition by entering the market as a for-profit organization geared towards providing a unifying link for teachers through an online database. The initial start-up cost will be covered by venture capitalists who will acquire shares of the company and be paid with their respective shares of the profit in 5 years.

### ***Step 2: Gain recognition among target market of lower-income schools***

The initial target customers are the 5600 lower-income schools that receive [9] Title 1 funds from the government in the United States. To reach that market, TeachMe would first partner up with Teach For America, for nearly all Teach For America teachers are teachers with fewer than 5 years working experience.

First-year teachers, especially new college graduates, already are a part of an increasingly technologically savvy society and more readily search for new ideas and ways to delve into the professional setting of preparing the next generation of young minds. In addition TFA shares the same goal of shortening the gap between the quality of education between the richer and poorer districts. TeachMe would aid in accomplishing this goal. Lastly, TeachMe is free for TFA teachers.

TFA teachers will be offered with free accounts on the website and eventually could then recommend TeachMe to other teachers in the school to gain recognition.

In addition, TeachMe hopes to partner up with groups such as Google, Twitter, or Facebook that could make the site more accessible since pairing with social media sites will also allow TeachMe to reach a larger market.

### ***Step 3: Penetrate the Market with low cost and unique features***

This site will provide a one-shop-stop for teachers looking for assistance from more experienced teachers and will offer a free culmination of teacher help and teacher discussion of ideas all on one site. It is a streamline database that meets many basic teacher needs, making it more convenient and user friendly.

Each school adopting TeachMe will be charged an annual fee of \$500 for the first 100 teachers and any teacher above that number can have accounts for free. This becomes a compelling selling strategy since the average number of teachers per school is 160, meaning that an average school will be getting 60 accounts free of charge or have a discounted price of ( $\$500 / 160 = \$3.125$  per teacher).

If a school has less than 100 teachers, they will be charged \$5 / per teacher / year

Most importantly, when teachers transfer schools, their TeachMe accounts will be “paid” yearly by their old school. But since most schools already have over 100 teachers and since they pay nothing more than \$500 /year, these accounts are technically free. This is essential to the success of TeachMe since TeachMe is all about the connection between old teachers and teachers replacing them, thus building a strong student profile and connection.

#### ***Step 4: Expand Market as teachers transfer from one school to another***

Since teachers have their accounts “paid for” by their old schools and will get to keep them for free, they could act as the link between their old school and their new school and eventually allow TeachMe to penetrate into their schools if they recommend it to their colleagues. The network of teachers will thus grow as teachers change schools and help TeachMe to expand its market.

#### ***Sustainability:***

Estimated start-up cost:

- Around 2 million dollars
- \$ 1000 on small business server
- \$ 100,000 each on 3 full-time coders
- \$ 1.2 million on marketing product (including sales representatives, transportation / air fares,
- \$ 500,000 on improvements (developing more gadgets)

#### **Short Run:**

- TeachMe needs to reach at least 7% of the 56,000 underprivileged schools to break even.
- Teachme aims to reach 7%, which is 3920 schools, and charge each school \$500 per year, and will have an annual revenue of about 2 million (\$1,960,000 to be exact). In fact anything beyond that will be profitable.
- Revenue could also be generated as from advertising for companies in a non-invasive manner similar to Facebook, perhaps in a suggestion tab. (Ads are shown in separate section that is completely negligible)

#### **Long Run:**

- Assuming TeachMe reaches 10% of the 56,000 low-income schools, it could then generate theoretical yearly revenue of \$5.8 million and thus a profit of \$3.8 million per year.

# VI. Appendix

## **Methodology:**

TeachMe's primary research method is through browsing online databases and consulting surveys conducted by various organizations. Some minor questions and answers are made in person with various professors here at Rice University regarding their experiences as new teachers. These information are undocumented and are used only as ideas that guide the business. Overall, through this research, TeachMe discovered the need to minimize the generation gap among teachers and is therefore addressing this problem.

### Work Cited

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