



FOSTERING THE ORGANIC GROWTH OF THE H3 FACTORY ECOSYSTEM

VENICE PROJECT CENTER

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Abstract

This research project developed a series of recommendations to foster the organic growth of the H3 Factory Ecosystem, an incubator and accelerator space in Venice. The team facilitated the fulfillment of all research-identified components of a successful startup incubator through the design of a collaborative third place within the H3 Factory, the planning and development of a series of programs and events that foster career development, and the betterment of SerenDPT's web presence. From our research, the team hopes our proposed recommendations will contribute to SerenDPT's long term goal of diversifying the Venetian job market to mitigate the decline of Venice's residential population.

Executive Summary

As an Italian city long appreciated for its historical significance, Venice has brought a great influx of tourism to its local region of Italy. The dominance of the tourism industry has resulted in a tourism-oriented economy, which has become dependent on this industry's success. As Venetian tourism continues to dominate the economy and the island itself, Venice's residential population is seeing a drastic decline. Occupations in the tourism and service industry do not provide sustainable or livable salaries for the Venice area, which has encouraged residents to seek cheaper and more sustainable living elsewhere. Due to an increased demand for tourist housing, opportunities for permanent housing have declined. Additionally, recent travel restrictions implemented in efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 have greatly damaged Venice's economy, and this over-dependence on the service unstable industry has made the need for job diversification undeniable.

SerenDPT is a benefit corporation founded in 2017 that aims to slow Venice's demographic decline by providing the Venetian community with new and diverse job opportunities.

SerenDPT's main efforts reside within its H3 Factory, a startup incubator and accelerator located on the island of Giudecca. To foster the growth and success of this startup ecosystem our team's research aims to identify and foster components of successful entrepreneurial ecosystems within the H3 Factory.

Our team conducted an extensive literature review to identify components of success crucial to economic ecosystems. To further this research, the team interviewed incubator and startup experts namely: Curtis Abel, Monty Sharma, and Marc DeVits and asked these experts to describe their past experiences and identify components they considered to be crucial to an ecosystem's success and what could cause an ecosystem's failure. When compared to the results of our literature review our team identified nine major components essential to a startup incubator's success. The presence or absence of these attributes were established for the H3 Factory and our team found that while the H3 Factory already has research universities and partners, community events, competitions, and co-working programs it is still lacking in its

presence of a collaborative third place, mentoring and networking events, guest speakers, investment opportunities, and web presence.

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to understand the structure of a collaborative third place. A third place is a space not considered a home or work place, which results in the fostering of new relationships and interactions with other members. To build this warm and welcoming atmosphere, the team combined its literature research with interviews involving small business owners of third places to determine five characteristics crucial to developing a third place: cleanliness, aroma, comfort of furniture, adequacy of lighting, and view of the outdoors. The team used SketchUp to then create 3D renderings of design proposals for the H3 Factory's pre-existing cafeteria and cavana spaces, referencing previous IQP computer-aided design (CAD) drawings and presentations. These designs to transform the cafeteria and cavana spaces in a coffee shop feature writable walls, optimized occupancy, local art and culture, and excellent spatial functionality. The coffee shop is designed specifically to appeal to the components of a collaborative third place from previous research and this design offers the H3 Factory a space that heavily encourages collaboration and fosters the creation and development of new ideas.

After interviewing business owners, startup incubator experts, and entrepreneurship experts the team also developed a series of recommendations for potential programs and events. To encourage more mentoring and networking opportunities, the team recommends a mentorship program and monthly networking events. The mentorship program would build relationships between entrepreneurs at different levels of expertise to provide guidance to those at earlier stages within their startup. Monthly networking events offer members of the H3 Factory to develop new relationships, resources, and investors. Within networking events our team recommends introducing guest speakers to the H3 Factory space.

The most important events for a startup incubator include opportunities for a startup business to gain investors and capital. Pitch contests not only give members of the H3 ecosystem opportunities to present their business ideas and gain valuable feedback, but they also encourage investors to become acquainted with the H3 Factory. By holding these pitch events, SerenDPT

and the H3 factory would be put on the map as places for investors to find new and promising startups and help the H3 ecosystem gain notoriety.

As a result of our research and interviews with H3 Factory members, our team came to the conclusion that SerenDPT needed an improved web presence. Our team re-designed the corporation's website to be easier to edit and manage as well as create a user friendly interface.. The benefits of the redesign lead to a more user friendly interface that promotes SerenDPT and the H3 Factory to the Venetian community as well as the rest of the world. This also lends itself to keeping the website updated with new information that would not require prior coding knowledge. Our team also determined that the benefit corporations social media was not being used to its full potential. As a result, the team worked with Giulia Speri to create a plan for posts, along with ways to better interact with followers. Over the seven week period that our team worked with Speri, the SerenDPT Instagram more than doubled their number of followers. Our team hopes these shareable resources will raise awareness of SerenDPT's initiatives and events, which will foster the involvement and ultimate success of the H3 Factory ecosystem within the Venetian community.

With the implementation of our project's recommendations, our team has full confidence in the H3 Factory's ability to succeed as a startup incubator and accelerator. Our research reliably establishes components crucial to the success of a startup incubator and in our team's work to foster the organic growth and success of the H3 Factory, we hope to facilitate SerenDPT's long-term efforts to fight Venice's demographic decline and reintroduce a healthy and diverse population to the city's residence.

Chapter I: Introduction

Venice is an Italian city long-appreciated for its historical significance. Its unique site and architecture, however, has also brought in an **influx of tourism that has shaped and ultimately dominated the economy**. The growth in the tourism industry has created a seemingly stable, high-demand service industry, which has influenced the majority of Venetian occupations to shift into tourism, which, despite the demand has not been sustainable for the fragile city, as demonstrated by the crisis brought about by the COVID pandemic.

Some of the consequences of the economic dependence on tourism are concerning. **The residential population has been declining significantly** since the 1950s, and the number of Venetians who reside in the city has been reduced to about one-third its original population, which is just over 51,000 current inhabitants. Long term residents are apprehensive about Venice losing its political power and significance, but also have concerns about the diversity of livelihoods and the vitality of this historical city (Leo, Bernardo, O'Connell, & Ferrara, 2019). The demographic shift of Venice is a complex concern affected by more than a few factors, but the decline has largely been attributed to the economic dependence on the unsustainable and highly imbalanced growth of tourism.

While the average cost of living for Venice is about €30.000 per year, the average job in the service and tourism industry only produces an annual salary of about €20.000 (Leo, Bernardo, O'Connell, & Ferrara, 2019). This **inability to make a living wage encourages many Venetian residents to seek residency elsewhere**, where the cost of living is more commensurate with the average salaries. While some jobs in the historic city may provide living wages, these jobs are concentrated in just a few sectors, dominated by tourism. The dominance of tourism also leads to additional accelerators to Venice's population decline, including the reduction of resident housing in favor of catering to tourist (and therefore non-residential) housing. The **decrease in resident housing** ultimately fosters a competitive, bid-like housing system, which inhibits the ability of even those with livable wages to remain in Venice, as housing is provided to those who are able to pay the highest rent.

Developing the job market beyond tourism would create space to seed and nurture networks, such as commerce and technology which already exist, but that will offer living wages, sustainable careers, and attractive lifestyles.

SerenDPT is an Italian benefit corporation that aims to repopulate the city of Venice by offering opportunities for a more diverse employment in non-tourist sectors and a better future to the inhabitants of the Venetian islands. SerenDPT's mission focuses on sustainability through economic diversification. The company was founded in 2017 to foster technology-driven solutions to social problems through the H3 Factory, which is its startup incubator. Through these efforts, the organization plans to build an ecosystem of startups that supports the creation of businesses and jobs in Venice by providing local residents with training, mentoring and funding opportunities to become more qualified and successful.

This project was conducted to assist SerenDPT in the planning of programs, events, seminars and other opportunities for interaction to foster a successful entrepreneurial ecosystem. To meet that goal, we have identified four objectives:

- 1. Identify components of a successful startup ecosystem.**
- 2. Modify the H3 Factory cafeteria to create a collaborative, innovative third place.**
- 3. Plan and develop programs to foster these components of success.**
- 4. Create shareable informational resources to promote awareness for these programs and platforms**

Our team aimed to foster SerenDPT's H3 factory by researching components of previously successful startup ecosystems, programs, and experiences. This research assisted in creating valuable programs, resources, and third space for the H3 members to utilize.

Chapter II: Background

Understanding the Venetian economy and recognizing components consistent among successful ecosystems is essential to the understanding of our team's project to foster the sustainable success of businesses and members of the H3 Factory Ecosystem. The goal of this process is to facilitate an ecosystem that will one day help SerenDPT's long term aspirations to slow and reverse the demographic decline of Venice's resident population.

2.1 The Venetian Economy

The Venetian economy depends heavily on tourism; however, it is not sustainable for Venetian residents or the environment. Cruise ships and ferries to the city have heavily contributed to the canals and city base erosion pollution. Aside from this, tourism contributes, on average, 3 billion Euros per year. People who do not work in the service industry, like lawyers and accountants, make a living off of those who make money in the service industry.

The Implications of Over-Tourism

The Venetian economy relies heavily on the service industry to maintain a certain standard of living. According to data from 2019, there were nearly 13 million overnight stays in Venice by tourists, and 1.6 million tourists visited Venice via cruise ship (Momigliano, 2020). Venice typically sees around 10 million international guests annually, contributing to the Venetian economy's average of 3 billion Euros in revenue (Italy's Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Since there are many tourists, residential housing in Venice is changing to accommodate visitors. As a result, **Venetian residents are leaving Venice because they struggle to maintain a sustainable city center job.** Also, the inflation of essential services for the tourist sector means that the wages of available jobs in Venice are not sustainable. A career in the service industry, which heavily dominates the market, might pay 20,000 Euros, while the average cost of living in Venice is around 30,000-35,000 Euros (Momigliano, 2020). Furthermore, wages in the service industry do not lend themselves to living a comfortable lifestyle in Venice. Therefore, Venetian residents' solution is to balance tourism and sustainability to protect residents' health, well-being, the Venetian environment, and the historical city itself (Momigliano, 2020).

As a result of the pandemic, the Venetian economy has suffered from a lack of tourists. Residents have referred to **tourism in the Venetian economy as "a bottomless well"**. COVID-19 has put this issue into perspective, and it is **time for Venice and many other European cities to shift their economies to be less dependent on tourism** (Momigliano, 2020). The Venetian economy lost approximately 1 billion Euros in revenue due to the pandemic (Momigliano, 2020). The epidemic has presented a unique opportunity for Venetians to build a more sustainable economy that is less reliant on a single sector.

Encouraging a Living Wage

Research shows that **minimum wages should meet the minimum cost of living in each city, state, or country** (Alkire, 2017). These initiatives ensure a sustainable salary in the U.S and Europe, as seen in Fig. 1 (Alkire, 2017).

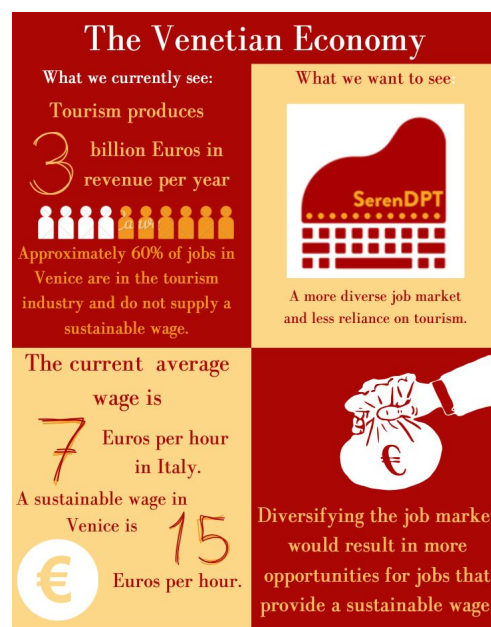


Figure 1: Infographic describing the demographic decline of Italy's resident population and SerenDPT's initiative to fight this problem.

However, Italy's current average wage is 7 Euros per hour, while a resident living in Venice needs a minimum of 15 Euros per hour. The living standard will vary from city to city, but it covers the basic needs that people need to live. For example, in some countries, the minimum wage is based strictly on paying a small grocery bill and covering the cost of housing, and sometimes it does not even meet these qualifications. Most countries based their living

standards strictly on food; however, due to Venice's housing issues, the cost of living is significantly higher (Alkire, 2017). The living standard in Venice covers social goals like going out and getting dinner with friends, family, or a significant other. These standards are "globally desired by an overwhelming majority of people" (Alkire, 2017).

The issue of wage is widespread across multiple industries in Venice, not just the service industry. According to a report by Eurofound, on average for low paying jobs, Italy pays the least compared to other European countries (Aumayr-Pintar & Rasche, 2020). In the annual review from Eurofound, it states that "the basic pay threshold should not go below 70% of the median of the wages set by the sectoral agreements by the most representative social partners" (Aumayr-Pintar & Rasche, 2020). **The current average wage per hour in Italy is 7 Euros, which is well below a sustainable salary.** There are debates in Cyprus, Italy, about introducing a statutory minimum wage that would be extremely beneficial to Italian residents (Aumayr-Pintar & Rasche, 2020). Minimum wage is not something that currently exists, and it would increase the standard of living in Venice immensely (Aumayr-Pintar & Rasche, 2020). The residents would then hopefully be able to afford a more liveable and hopefully comfortable lifestyle.

2.2 SerenDPT and Key Stakeholders

In our project, there are multiple stakeholders. The residents in Venice play a crucial role, and these residents have the potential to be positively affected by the H3 ecosystem, since the long-term goal of SerenDPT is to make Venice a more livable and sustainable place to live. The tourism industry also has a stake, as it needs to find a balance with the sustainability of the economy. SerenDPT is trying to diversify the market to not be reliant on this income, while still enabling tourism to be a part of the economy.

SerenDPT plays a central role as a significant stakeholder with the H3 Factory since the benefit corporation facilitates the H3 startup system, which will help achieve its goal of fighting the demographic decline. Venice and the economy's culture could stand to benefit due to the mitigation of losing local shops and small businesses to the tourism industry. **As SerenDPT works to diversify the economy through occupational opportunities and enriching**

programs, it makes Venetian residents more qualified candidates, which leads to a more sustainable job market. The environment could be positively affected since the job market diversification helps Venice move away from tourism. As a result, the reduction in tourism might even benefit environmental conservation.

SerenDPT is a benefit corporation that was founded in 2017 (SerenDPT, n.d.-e). SerenDPT stands for Serenissima Development and Preservation through Technology. This corporation **aims to develop an ecosystem to foster an innovative and technological based solution to Venice's current issues** (SerenDPT, n.d.-e). To achieve this, SerenDPT focuses on outreach such as web development, research, startups, and innovation. **By achieving its goal of diversifying the job market in Venice, SerenDPT could attract new residents and entice current Venetians to stay in Venice.**

The H3 Factory

SerenDPT aims to achieve their goals through their work with the H3 Factory. The H3 Factory is an ecosystem that facilitates innovation and helps supply the tools required to create and develop a successful startup. **The main goal of the H3 Factory is to create solutions to the city's problems from Venetian startups and even export these ideas to other locations in the world** (SerenDPT, n.d.-b). The H3 ecosystem is in an abandoned church complex which was originally founded in 1492 and consecrated in 1583 has been restored and converted to a three-story startup factory (see Fig. 2 below).



Figure 2: The H3 Factory space in Venice, Italy, with modern offices meeting the church's historical architecture.

The space includes offices, meeting rooms, coworking and event spaces, and more. **SerenDPT took over the space in 2018 when they won the proposal competition to revamp the**

complex with a goal to create a minimum of 100 well paid jobs before the 9 year time limit has ended (SerenDPT, n.d.-b).

Building on Past Projects and Partners

SerenDPT has assisted and produced two initiatives. The first, known as **DaAaB, is an app that combines many different digital platforms to give the most considerable amount of travel information in one location**(SerenDPT, n.d.-a). The app not only combines travel information but also includes the ability to buy tickets. DaAaB works by integrating each transportation company's existing infrastructure, thus connecting its user to a broader range of services(SerenDPT, n.d.-a). DaAaB is available on both the apple and google play store. Another App that has come out of SerenDPT is iZioleti. This app is a design that provides the reallocation of Venice addresses using the official naming system (SerenDPT, n.d.-ci). The iZioleti app was wholly designed and developed by the SerenDPT team.

The second initiative is a partnership with the **Jewelry Virtual Fair (JVF)**. This fair brings in "thousands of exhibitors and buyers of the jewelry market from all over the world" (Jewelry Virtual Fair, n.d.). This virtual fair is "the best place to buy and sell jewelry all over the world, share news, market trends and build a network of exclusive contacts in the Jewelry market" (Jewelry Virtual Fair, n.d.). **The website hosts showrooms, exhibitors, exhibitions**, and is partnered with VEGA Intertrade Exhibitions, jewelryAround, The Gems Jewelry and Precious Metal Confederation of Thailand(GJPCT), Thai Gem and Jewelry Traders Association(TGJTA), and The Istanbul Chamber of Jewelry(IKO) (SerenDPT, n.d.-d). The JVF website is dedicated to solely the jewelry sector and has been operating for over 30 years. By **working with the JVF, Venice is able to help turn some of the economy more towards the jewelry sector and away from tourism.**

2.3 How Startup Ecosystems Can Catalyze Success

The vision for SerenDPT and other development movements in Venice includes building a sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem (SEE). This network model depends on many contributing factors and the interaction between the elements themselves (Cohen, 2005). It is important to recognize common factors when distinguishing thriving ecosystems; this leads to the organic

success and sustainability of the H3 Factory. When combined, the elements of thriving ecosystems can produce SEEs that encourage new jobs, support favorable environmental conditions, focus on health, and ultimately reduce poverty and homelessness (Cohen, 2005).

Building Broad Networks

Networking is at the heart of incubation and accelerator models, and the networks can include multiple layers. Social networks are crucial to regional entrepreneurship. These networks support and facilitate startups, but they also build a network of potential stakeholders, particularly environmental startups. Not only do **stakeholders hold the potential to bear some of the financial burden** commonly associated with startups. This burden is often higher for green startups, but they also can provide expertise and insight on sustainability issues and community-specific challenges (Cohen, 2005). The financial burden is of particular importance for the tech industry, where the entrepreneurial ecosystem will not succeed without recognizing the tech relationship with the local community. By concentrating the industry into social networks, an organically forming ecosystem can grow as it becomes **connected with the regional community** (Krajcik & Formanek, 2015).

Informal networks may also provide advice and are often relied on by new businesses for mentorship and moral support. These networks include friends, families, and connections of the entrepreneurs themselves. Since the breadth of informal networks may be small, formal structures are also helpful for SEEs. Traditional systems include research universities, local government agencies, and other support services (Cohen, 2005). These appeal to the interdisciplinarity, legislation, regulations, and monetary funding that are often prevalent in thriving startup ecosystems.

Due to the interdisciplinarity of SEEs, **partnering with universities can provide a wide range of expertise**. A high-quality education and understanding of an entrepreneurial ecosystem, as well as fostering the ability to recognize and use successful business opportunities, is recognized as a “key factor” for innovative success (Krajcik & Formanek, 2015). Universities multidisciplinary approach to developing steps forward of sustainability (Cohen, 2005). This aligns with the United Nation (UN)’s sustainable development goals, or SDGs. While these

SDGs are passed at an international level, they are non-binding to countries affiliated with the UN, and this makes it difficult for consistent reinforcement of these sustainable ideas and goals. Research universities affiliated with growing businesses are able to devote resources to targeting these SDGs across multiple fields of expertise, and as environmental awareness grows, this becomes progressively more important from both an environmental and public relations standpoint (Biermann et al., 2017). This breadth of expertise also gives research universities the means to foster future community leaders by educating them to understand the relationship between business and the environment (Cohen, 2005).

Government has a significant influence in both local and global economies due to its power to foster preferable and entrepreneurial climates through its strong financial strength.

Governments can offer different tax rates and monetary incentives that mold an economic environment and have the connections to provide legislative expertise and cooperation. As a result, it has become increasingly important in recent years as sustainability becomes more prevalent, and the government has planned competitions offering rewards for green business plans and sustainable technological development (Cohen, 2005). Particularly in Europe, these **green initiatives have become prominent in economic development to align with the UN's SDGs**. These SDGs aim to build a metric to track and quantify sustainability progress, evaluate this progress, and apply this analysis to amend and improve the sustainability of developmental infrastructure (Lu et al., 2015). However, this becomes difficult with the flexibility granted to governments through the non-binding nature of these SDGs. As a result, UN SDGs' local implementation is almost exclusively done by the government and its ability to pass legislation that fosters these goals (Biermann et al., 2017). These legislative efforts to mold sustainable development's subjective standards can prove to be both detrimental and beneficial to startup ecosystems.

Therefore, a favorable government dynamic is crucial to startup economies, since the economic climate correlates with the success of businesses within that ecosystem, and green startups can receive additional financial and public support through government sustainability programs. Additional support in some of these specific fields can provide alternative professional support

services. Many startups benefit from seeking tax and legal help through consultants and other supplier organizations (Cohen, 2005).

Capital: Securing Investors and Resources

One of the biggest challenges for successful startups is finding startup capital. While startup capital is critical, especially for technological development, it is not easy to convince investors to invest in a startup business with little success history. However, conversely, it is also difficult for a startup to succeed without capital (Cohen, 2005).

Large corporations can be instrumental in acquiring this capital for a new entrepreneurial ecosystem. While it is more difficult for a startup to obtain considerable corporate funding, large corporations can also provide a SEE with qualified employees, essential to building a thriving startup ecosystem. Large corporations have experience providing training and skill-building for workers to become skilled and access pre-existing talent pools of qualified, potential employees (Cohen, 2005).

However, monetary capital often overshadows the crucial need for mindset. In an article about mind over matter in entrepreneurial ecosystems, Baluku describes psychological capital as "closely tied" to business success, referencing business relationships, financial discipline beyond finances themselves, and the relationships between employees and customers (Baluku, 2016). While Baluku acknowledges that **startup capital is necessary, he describes the self-efficacy and general resolve to succeed to be just as imperative**, if not more imperative. Since startup ventures are high-risk-high-reward, meaning it is a more risky investment but yields high profits if successful, it is necessary for a startup business, and therefore for an ecosystem, to have confidence in its service or product. As a result of startups being a risky investment, this mitigates the risk of losing members who seek the stability of a well-established, paying job, and fosters the entrepreneur's confidence in his or her ability to recognize and take advantage of business opportunities. In this manner, the business can acquire the conviction it needs to succeed through continued entrepreneurial activities (Baluku, 2016).

Siting: Technology Parks and Shared Regional Factors

Technology parks support growing technology businesses by creating a shared space consisting of office and meeting spaces, support services, and networking opportunities (Cohen, 2005). Most importantly, these networking opportunities yield vital mentor relationships and the ability to connect with experts in matters where the entrepreneur may be less knowledgeable (Krajcik & Formanek, 2015). These parks are especially helpful when located close to research universities, which allow the universities to offer its resources in a timely, accessible manner (Cohen, 2005). Technology parks often work closely with incubator programs, which help SEEs in their early developmental stage (Krajcik & Formanek, 2015).

The H3 Factory acts as a technology park for startups and members within the H3 Factory. When fostering a SEE, technology parks are most instrumental in building a collaborative, interactive atmosphere, and third places are beneficial for creating this innovative space. A third place is outside of the home and work and is considered a place of "a regular, voluntary, and informal gathering of people" (Rosenbaum et al., 2007). Third places are typically commercial spaces that facilitate networking and support systems for users who rely on the area for an intermediary between work and home (Waxman, 2008). Creating the **third place can introduce collaboration and idea transfer** between separate startup businesses within an economic ecosystem crucial to the ecosystem's success. Communal pooling of progressive ideas and shared expertise creates a more efficient, stimulating growth for all SEE businesses than if businesses worked individually (Rosenbaum et al., 2007).

Developing a collaborative third place relies heavily on the understanding of how collaborators interact with their surroundings and the dynamic of their everyday lifestyle. With the increase in the societal pace of commitments and occupations, it becomes increasingly difficult to be more mindful and aware (Karakas, 2015). Part of this self-reflection is realizing sincere passions and purpose for the work that is being done, which can be encouraged through workshops that provide opportunities to explore and experiment with new ideas and concepts. Having a shared space requires members of different backgrounds to recognize differences and still work together to achieve a common goal (Karakas, 2015).

Building a third place involves understanding customer relationships. These relationships are not limited to the human interactions between customers and staff, but also how the customer understands the space, the menu, and the interactions with other customers. Coffee shops are a common example of third places that “draw an identity” from the beverages they serve. Coffee is commonly associated with social interaction, conversations, and sometimes even political discussions, making the coffee shop atmosphere favorable to many businesses seeking to develop a third place. This is known as place attachment, where people develop relationships with a specific environment including emotional and cultural associations. For a collaborative space to be successful, the space must provide comfort and foster a feeling of belonging to the space, which forms attachments between the space itself and users of the space, which is often accomplished through the predictability of the setting and the regularity of members within the space (Waxman, 2008).

The physical aspects of a location are essential in creating the third place atmosphere.

Customers look for a space that is clean, well lit, has a pleasant smell, comfortable furniture, and includes an impressive or pleasant view of the outside. Cleanliness is considered to be the most important aspect of a third place from customer interviews and can be attributed to design in addition to regular upkeep by including furniture, floors, and surfaces where contamination is not noticeable or easily perceived. Designing a coffee shop creates the smell of coffee and bakery items that patrons often associate with light, social interaction and a safe, collaborative atmosphere. Adequate lighting allows members of the space to read and write easily, encouraging an innovative flow of ideas and collaboration. Comfortable furniture and views give customers the feel of a comfortable and unconfined space, which mitigates the pressures created by home or work life (Waxman, 2008).

Physical community factors influence the attractiveness of becoming involved in a startup ecosystem. The **availability and cost of local real estate, both residential and commercial, can deter potential members** of the startup ecosystem from becoming involved. The uncertainty of immediate earnings puts potential stakeholders at risk of holding an unsustainable wage for the regional cost of living. Transportation and accessibility to the SEE are geographical considerations that also affect the SEEs' attractiveness. Moreover, favorable locations may be

limited by public pressure to be more environmentally conservative, which restricts new construction (Cohen, 2005).

Regional culture can also be extremely instrumental to the success of a SEE. Studies from the journal article, "An Entrepreneurial System View of New Venture Creation," describe community culture as one of the only components regarded as critical to the system's development (Neck, 2004). This culture, similar to the community's physical infrastructure, also embodies the region's landscape and climate. More importantly, it considers its community members' interests and knowledge, which builds a different understanding of the community spirit and dynamic. Krajcik and Formanek describe entrepreneurs, and by extension their entrepreneurial spirit, as being shaped through the family, society, and culture of the local area, because the culture is influenced by the regional demographic's characteristics (Krajcik & Formanek, 2015). Some of these characteristics being national origin, geography, local conflicts, and politics. (Krajcik & Formanek, 2015). **A proper understanding of regional cultural factors allows a SEE to develop sustainability by following an agenda that supports the community's interests and as a result the SEE gains the community's support** (Cohen, 2005).

Learning from Failure

Similar to the success of a SEE, failure attributes to several factors. While regional initiatives to be more sustainable and green can promote a sustainable startup, efforts to mitigate environmental detriment through construction limitations can restrict building new spaces for startup business and technology parks. As previously mentioned, the 'chicken and egg' phenomena regarding investors is an additional point of failure: while capital is required for a healthy startup to begin, it is difficult to acquire investors when there is no history of success for the startup, often discouraging SEEs through potential investors' unwillingness to provide startup capital. Failure to consider any of the components mentioned above of success can be a component of loss for an entrepreneurial ecosystem (Cohen, 2005).

2.4 Case Studies: What We Can Learn from Incubator Ecosystems

Throughout the United States, technology hubs have been popping up ever since the success of Silicon Valley. As mentioned in the previous section, there are six components to a startup ecosystem (Cohen, 2005). These components have led to multiple thriving ecosystems such as Austin, Texas, Boulder, Colorado, and St. Louis, Missouri have also been trying to accomplish a similar ecosystem. These newly developed hubs can bring in **new businesses and encourage entrepreneurship within the community** (Asefi et al., 2020). Most of these hubs were established around a University to help the incubator build its connections.

Case 1. Austin

Austin, Texas, was specifically chosen because of the **accessibility to large businesses and growing startups** (Asefi et al., 2020). The city of Austin worked with the University of Texas to facilitate individual startups, which helped create an entrepreneurial ecosystem that benefited from these startups (Asefi et al., 2020). By working with a university, Austin's ecosystem fostered a space where **students and entrepreneurs could express new ideas and develop new startups**. As a result of the growing ecosystem, Austin has begun to attract more businesses to open up offices in the city.

Case 2. Boulder

In Boulder, Colorado, there is a very dense population of high-tech startups, along with a small number of incubators (Neck et al., 2004). Boulder is a city known as an entrepreneurial hub and can produce multiple successful startups (Asefi et al., 2020). The city continues to encourage new ideas along with spin-off startups based on larger companies. The environment allows **both small and large startups to work with each other** and continue to build on the companies that help to lead them to be successful.

Case 3. St. Louis

The entrepreneurial hub in St. Louis, Missouri, began as a case study to see how well a startup ecosystem could develop in an area not previously known (Motoyama & Knowlton, 2017). Arch Grants was a company that began to **host competitions and award prizes to the most promising startups to start and foster this ecosystem**. These competitions began in 2011, and

their goal was to make St. Louis an attractive place for new businesses and hopefully bring more jobs into the city. The study analyzed how each of the startups interacted and how they could thrive in this unique ecosystem. It concluded that for an ecosystem to be successful, **the different startups need to work with each other and share new ideas**, but they also need **support from the community and universities** (Motoyama & Knowlton, 2017). The success of the St. Louis, Missouri ecosystem represents that with the support of companies and help from the right programs and events, almost any startup can be successful.

Case 4. Europe

Europe is home to multiple thriving startup ecosystems. Specifically, in Poland, there are numerous entrepreneurial opportunities to participate in, along with different accelerators and incubators (Serwatka, 2018). In Poland, they have **both government support and various companies that help fund startups**. The Start In Poland program is supposed to help 1.5 thousand companies enter the Polish market by 2023 (Serwatka, 2018). As a result, this would help to create more innovative technologies in Poland. Similar to Start In Poland, SeedCamp is based in London, England, and is currently working with different startups to help them succeed (Serwatka, 2018).

In Italy, startup accelerators are considered a valuable support mechanism for the entrepreneurial startup ecosystem (Sarto et al., 2020). The entrepreneurial hub in Italy is relatively new due to the increase in the number of accelerators, which has gone from 12 to 27 in the last five years (Sarto et al., 2020). The spike in **the number of accelerators comes from the relationships between the startups** and specific programs' participation. Italy's economy is very innovation-driven due to the increasing number of startups (Sarto et al., 2020). The popularity of startups and the growing support from different companies continue to help Italy grow their entrepreneurial hub.

Case 5. MIT DesignX

MITdesignX venture accelerator is a program within the MIT School of Architecture and Planning that empowers students to work on innovative ideas and different entrepreneurship ventures ("About MITdesignX"). Since DesignX began in 2016, the program has produced

multiple other startups. In 2020 alone, the program is in the process of creating ten new startups ("Ventures").

One program that came out of DesignX in 2020 was the GoodStuff application. The application allows students to share items and skills within a safe university ecosystem ("Ventures"). This program meets a need for students who may not afford certain items and offer them another way to access them. The application plans currently show the ideas for the borrow and lend frames, which gives the user a good idea of how it will work.

When implemented correctly, these **entrepreneurial ecosystems can bring in more businesses and diversify the city's region** (Motoyama & Knowlton, 2017). For each of these cities, there was a different innovation system used. As a result, each of the studies showed how the ecosystem's forming and the data collected helps others create a thriving startup ecosystem. A study conducted on a successful startup ecosystem compared the success of an I-Reef model (Asefi et al., 2020). The structure of the model is the diversity of the players, along with environmental factors. This model helps identify how a thriving ecosystem works with the community around them (Asefi et al., 2020). The case studies revealed that **having a relationship with the surrounding environment leads to more successful businesses**. By having a relationship with the community and an established network, an entrepreneurial ecosystem will succeed.

2.5 Summary

The **Venetian economy is reliant on tourism**, which is unsustainable. Tourism does not provide the necessary salary for Venetians to afford to live in Venice, and jobs that give the wage, which makes Venice affordable, are few. SerenDPT is trying to provide **technological and innovative solutions to tourism issues using the H3 ecosystem to facilitate and incubate startups**.

SerenDPT has already started to impact Venice through the H3 space, DaAaB, and The JVF. Networking is one of the most critical pieces of a successful startup, along with capital, investors, and sustainability. Factors of successful startups include regional factors, including a need for the startup, the community's desire, and whether there are startup ecosystems and incubators nearby. Austin, Boulder, St. Louis, Europe, Italy, and MIT DesignX have all taken

these components in their ecosystems and used these pieces to facilitate success and make communities flourish, and well-paying jobs increase. Finally, entrepreneurial ecosystems can diversify a city's economy and bring in business.

Chapter III: Identifying Components of Successful Startup Incubators

Through our research of successful startup ecosystems, in combination with our background research, **we have determined eight components that make up a successful startup ecosystem**. The H3 Factory ecosystem already has some of these components, however we have recommendations for areas of improvement.

4.1 Methodology

Identifying and understanding the components of successful incubators and ecosystems is essential to the functionality and success of a startup ecosystem. Our team's preliminary research showed that **facilitating a startup ecosystem requires networking, capital, and many other foundational elements**. The team delved deeper into these foundational elements through semi-structured interviews with innovation experts.

Curtis Abel is the executive director of innovation and entrepreneurship at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and has a vast knowledge of incubators and startup ecosystems. By interviewing Abel, along with other experts, he was able to provide our team with an understanding of a startup's functionality. He also informed our group about what worked and failed in his past experiences. Our semi-structured interview guide for Abel is in Appendix A, and the notes from the interview can be found in Appendix H.

Our team also interviewed Monty Sharma who is the managing director of MassDigi. MassDigi is an extremely successful incubator of tech startups, specifically focusing on video games. Monty Sharma is extremely knowledgeable and pointed our team to other successful incubators that would be similar to what our team aims to foster at SerenDPT. The notes from the semi-structured interview can be found in Appendix K.

Current members of the H3 community were interviewed to understand how SerenDPT is running and what the H3 team has found through their successes and failures so far in their

process of running a startup ecosystem. The team used Zoom and email correspondence to conduct these semi-structured interviews and gain the verbal consent of the H3 Factory members to record and document responses at the beginning of each interview. The outline for these semi-structured interviews is in Appendix B.

Business owners provided additional information about components of success and potential points of improvement from personal experience. The information was extracted via in-person, ZOOM, and email interviews in accordance to the interview questions listed in Appendix C.

4.2 Results

From our team's literature research, the components of a successful startup ecosystem can be summarized in six major components:

1. **Networks**
2. **Legislation and Government**
3. **Capital**
4. **Inter-business collaboration**
5. **Geographical location**
6. **Local community and culture**

These components were **identified as components of success for both small businesses and startup businesses, as well as startup incubators and ecosystems as a whole**. After conducting further research including interviews with Curtis Abel and Monty Sharma the team developed a revised list of major components of successful startup ecosystems. After comparing SerenDPT to two Massachusetts based startup incubators and two Italian startup incubators the team was able to determine the areas where SerenDPT needs improvement. In order to simplify the results we put together a matrix that is located in Table 1.

	SerenDPT	EforAll (accelerator)	MassChallenge	Italian Brand Factory	Build It Up
Collaborative Space	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Research Universities/Partners	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Mentors/Networking Events	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Guest Speakers	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Community Events	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Investors	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Competitions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Updated Website/Effective Social Media	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Table 1: How SerenDPT compares to other successful startup ecosystems.

The **key elements** identified are: **a collaborative space, research universities, mentors, guest speakers, events, competitions, investors, capital, and up to date website and social media presence.** In order to facilitate improvement for SerenDPT our team has put together a list of recommendations in order to enhance their incubator in areas where they are lacking.

4.3 Analysis

Components of success identified in our research were corroborated through in person interviews with business owners, startup incubator experts, and researching individual incubators. **The areas in which SerenDPT needs improvement are: collaborative space, mentors, guest speakers, events, investors, and an up to date website and social media. Our team has put together recommendations for events and programs** that can be utilized to improve networking capabilities and introduce mentors and investors to the space. Our team also **created a new and updated website that can be taken over and run by SerenDPT** after our team is no longer working with SerenDPT. Our team has **also designed a coffee shop** that is intended to be utilized **as a collaborative space.**

Chapter IV: Designing a Third Place that Emphasizes Collaboration

Through a comprehensive literature review, a series of interviews, and an extensive visual space assessment, our team has developed a design proposal for the H3 Factory's pre-existing cafeteria and cavana space. While these spaces already provide the H3 members with a communal space, **our proposal is for the installation of a coffee shop, which will act as a third place that encourages use of this space and collaboration within it.**

5.1 Methodology

A third place is a space that is neither home nor work, which provides a collaborative atmosphere encouraging the exchange of ideas and the development of new relationships. Our team's designs transform the pre-existing H3 Factory cafeteria and cavana spaces into a third place for its members, and in the future, for the Venician community as well.

Collaborative and Appealing Design

A literature review was conducted to determine specific factors previously established as instrumental to designing a successful and collaborative third place. Our team is proposing a series of design recommendations by **utilizing previous measurements and schematics** of the relevant rooms and by applying interior design strategies. These measurements and diagrams are in the "Physical Spaces" presentation from our sponsor. Further dimensions were retrieved from computer-aided design (CAD) drawings created by previous VPC projects. These CAD drawings contained incorrect dimensions but correct ratios, and the "Physical Spaces" presentation had correct dimensions but only of entire walls, so the dimension of a single wall from the "Physical Spaces" presentation, which was dimensionally accurate, was used to build a ratio between CAD drawings' dimensions and real dimensions. This ratio was used to calculate all dimensions of the cafeteria and cavana, which is illustrated in the following figure:

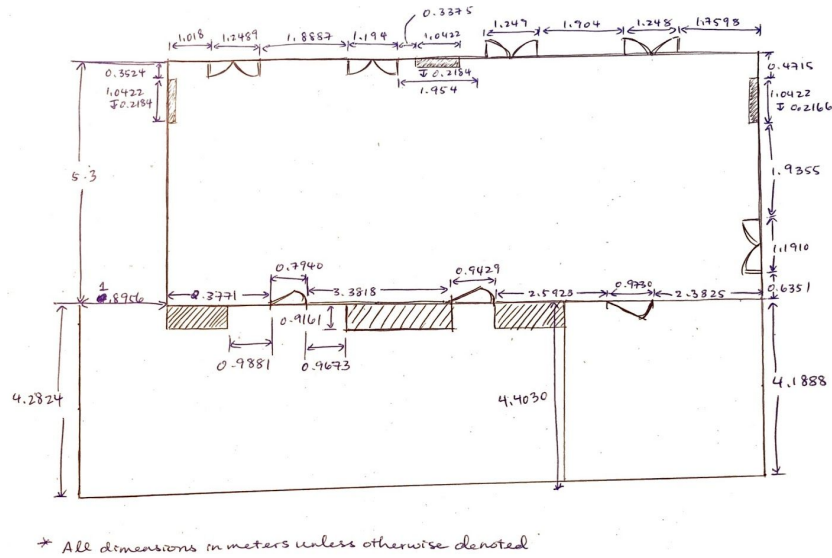


Figure 3: Rough floor drawing of cafeteria and cavana spaces with recalculated dimensions.

Through sponsor meetings, the team discussed the available budget and resources to determine what changes were possible. The information from these meetings was then used to devise a series of design recommendations for the space.

Design recommendations were proposed by creating 3D renderings using the web-version of SketchUp. Renderings were shown to advisors and sponsors for feedback, amended, and new models were made until a final design was reached. Design references included collaborative coffee shops, interviewing owners, and identifying favorable aspects of these spaces from sponsors' feedback. Examples of favorable atmospheres can be found in the following images of two coffee shops.



Figure 4: Photo taken for the space assessment of Ikonik Coffee



Figure 5: Photo taken for the space assessment of The Well Coffee House

These ideas were incorporated into the final renderings of the cafeteria and cavana spaces of the H3 Factory.

Assessing Local Interest

To ensure space is supported and used by a large body of users, it is essential to recognize what these users want and need in the room. Members of the H3 Factory partook in semi-structured interviews, and consented to record and document identifying responses from the interview. The

small size of this population makes interviews preferable to surveys, providing more specific and personalized feedback. These interviews consisted of open-ended questions asking about recent experiences using this space and what the H3 Factory workers would like to see come out of this space. Our team's interview discussion points are in Appendix D.

5.2 Results

3D renderings produced from SketchUp of the H3 Factory's cafeteria and cavana spaces are shown in the following figures:



Figure 6: Overhead view of 3D layout for both cafeteria space (top) and cavana space (bottom left).



Figure 7: Eye-level view of 3D-rendered design proposal for H3 cafeteria.

Notable features of the H3 cafeteria design include:

- **Whiteboard or chalkboard wall paint and bare walls, for collaborative brainstorming**
- **Optimized seating arrangements and table space without blocking entrances and exits**
- **Miscellaneous selection of furniture creates a comfortable, “home-y” atmosphere.**
- **Retaining location of sink mitigates need for plumber**
- **Addition of overhead cabinetry maximizes vertical space usage**



Figure 8: Eye-level view of 3D-rendered design proposal for H3 cavana.

The backroom, shown in the bottom right of the overhead view seen in Fig. 6, was not considered in the design process. While our project focused on providing a design proposal for the customer atmosphere, the backroom is expected to be designed at a later date with the purpose of functionality for this coffee shop, which is to be named Cosmic Cafe.

After assessing the renderings and considering the cost for materials, furniture, equipment and other necessary licensing, **our team estimates that initially starting the coffee shop will cost between €165,000 and €310,000.**

Information regarding Bean Counter Bakery and Cafe was retrieved from a fully-structured email interview with business owner Alice Lombardi and a semi-structured ZOOM interview with public relations manager Turku Hasturk. Lombardi's interview can be reviewed in Appendix E, and Hasturk's interview is outlined in Appendix G.

Information regarding Theatre Cafe was retrieved from an unstructured, in-person interview with business owner Bill Aldrich. Aldrich's interview is outlined in Appendix M.

Information regarding Garden Fresh Courthouse Cafe was retrieved in a semi-structured in-person interview with business owner Lisa Maniatis. Maniatis's interview is outlined Appendix F.

Information regarding the Worcester branch of Gong Cha was retrieved in a semi-structured ZOOM interview with branch owner Jason Vuong. His interview is outlined in Appendix I.

Information regarding The Well Coffee House was retrieved in a semi-structured in-person interview with co-owner Julie Love. Her interview is outlined in Appendix J.

The team reached out to members of the H3 Factory to assess their interest in the use of this cafeteria and cavana space but a **lack of response resulted in no additional input from this specific community.**

5.3 Analysis

After asking business owners to identify personal components of success for startup businesses and ecosystems, all responses supported the team's literature review. **Owner-identified components of success included the following: networking, legislation, government, capital, inter-business collaboration, location, and local community and culture.** The presence and absence of these components of successful startups from our interviewed businesses can be seen in the matrix shown in Table 2:

COMPONENT OF SUCCESS	Bean Counter Bakery and Café	Theatre Café	Garden Fresh Courthouse Café	Gong Cha	The Well Coffee House
Networking	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislation/Government	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Capital	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Inter-business collaboration	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Location	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Local community/culture	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 2: Matrix illustrating components of success (from literature review) that business owners attribute to their success.

During these interviews, **all businesses cited capital and local community as major components of success for their business.** This suggests that these components are of great significance to the success of startup businesses. The only feedback that was not applicable to the H3 Factory space was Lombardi's suggestion to acquire previously established businesses and other businesses' suggestion to choose a specific location, both of which are not an option for the H3 factory.

Notable content not shown by Table 2 includes the distinction between psychological and monetary capital as well as the weight of certain components of success over others. While every business cited capital as a component of success, **psychological capital, the resolve to continue working hard and pour genuine passion into a business, was cited as essential to every business's success.** While only some businesses emphasized monetary capital, every business owner described psychological capital to be of greater importance than he or she had initially expected.

The stress on the significance of local community and culture as a component of success also could not be illustrated in Table 2. **Local community and culture were consistently cited as most important** to a business or ecosystem's success. Specifically in catering a business to the local demographic, all businesses in Cohen's study on components of success in SEEs unanimously cited understanding the local community as the factor of greatest importance to startup ecosystems and businesses (Cohen, 2005).

Each space was also assessed for factors contributing to the level of collaboration encouraged by the space as identified in our literature review. The results of the assessed space with regard to these factors are shown in the following table:

Trait of Collaborative Third Place	Highland St. Bean Counter Bakery and Café	Grove St. Bean Counter Bakery and Café	Theatre Café	Garden Fresh Courthouse Café	Gong Cha	Thinking Cup	The Well Coffee House
Clean	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Aroma	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Comfortable Furniture	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Adequate Lighting	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
View of the Outside	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 3: Matrix depicting the presence and absence of collaborative third place components in assessed businesses.

All of the interviews and research were used to create a final design for a coffee shop that holds both the characteristics of a successful small business and showcases all elements of a collaborative third place. The final design space appeals to the wants and needs of our sponsor, SerenDPT, as communicated through Fabio Carrera.

The cafeteria space features blank walls, which can be covered with whiteboard paint, chalkboard paint, glass panes, or other surfaces to illustrate ideas and concepts. The cafeteria also features a multitude of seating options, styles, and a spatial layout that optimizes the occupancy of the space. This encourages usage of the space by a larger population than just the H3 members and offers these users the opportunity to choose the level of collaboration in which they would like to engage with one another.

The cavana features a more relaxed atmosphere with couch seating and decorated walls. In an effort to preserve the historical integrity of the brick walls, this space will not feature writable walls, and will instead be decorated with art. Paintings showcased will be of local artists, including H3 factory members, and will be changed regularly to feature a variety of artists. Collaboration is still encouraged in this space through engaging seating, the ability to hold a larger group in a mutual space, and a moving whiteboard for brainstorming. The cavana will serve as the ordering space while the cafeteria will serve as the space to fulfil orders and seat

customers. This coffee shop design for the sponsor-named “Cosmic Cafe” would provide the H3 Factory with a collaborative space to encourage the intermember interaction crucial to fostering the organic success of this ecosystem.

Chapter V: Plan and Develop Programs

Through our teams research, events and programs are essential to creating a flourishing incubator and accelerator ecosystem. Our team recommends hosting a variety of new events on top of the current programs they run. Our team also recommends creating a mentorship program to help bring new startups into the H3 Factory.

6.1 Methodology

The second objective is **planning and developing programs to foster the components of success in an economic ecosystem** based on interviews and research discussed in objective one. Using this information, **the team has helped develop programs that will provide opportunities for candidates and participants to expand and enhance their skill sets.** The team interviewed H3 Factory members, including Emanuele Barberio and Marco Bertoldi, about potential programs to foster the H3 Factory ecosystem's organic success. We obtained consent to record and document identifying responses from the H3 Factory members interviewed at the beginning of each interview. The interviews were semi-structured and the talking points our team plans to use can be seen in Appendix B. This data collection has provided a general idea of what programs and speakers would be most beneficial for the community.

The interviews assessed participant interest in professional development programs to enhance their viability as qualified candidates for various occupations. Potential options for developmental programs include certification courses, resume building workshops, hackathons, and team-building workshops that teach and encourage collaboration.

Through the interview with Abel and associates (Appendix A), we determined how to best foster and grow the startup ecosystem in the H3 Factory. To design programs most effectively the team has utilized this research to facilitate the building and development of a thriving economic ecosystem and incorporate the instrumental factors in its success.

6.2 Results

Through meeting with Curtis Abel, Monty Sharma, the H3 Factory members, Marc Devits, and local Worcester business owners. Our team has outlined events and programs that would benefit the H3 ecosystem. Currently the ecosystem hosts hackathons, climathons, collabathons, and sometimes holds art exhibits. **Our team recommends that the H3 factory hold networking events, art exhibits, guest speaker events, pitch contests, mentorship programs, and look into hosting a TEDx event.**

Networking events

The first recommendation is that the **H3 factory hosts networking events every other month**. These events will showcase local Venetian artists and will be catered by local restaurants. These events will feature a seminar or a guest speaker. **These will help gain traction with the local community members and get them engaged in the H3 ecosystem.**

Art Exhibits

Currently H3 has hosted an art exhibit in the ex-church space. Our team recommends that the H3 factory space should expand on this and **host an art exhibit every quarter** of different artists from the H3 community and other places in Italy, though mostly focusing on highlighting local venecian artists.

Budgeting and Finance programs

Through preliminary research and interviews our team has found that most people when working with a new business or startup most commonly desired knowledge on budgeting and finance. Our team recommends the H3 factory **hosting an accounting seminar for local business and startup companies.**

Guest speakers

So far, SerenDPT has had a few guest speakers but our team recommends that SerenDPT really focus on these guest speaker events. These **guest speaker events should coincide with the networking events and competitions held in the space.** This should be done by pulling guest

speakers from prominent entrepreneurs in Venice and the surrounding city to start. The team also came to the conclusion that these guest speakers should include members of already functioning incubators and accelerators like Build it Up and Italian Brand Factory. These **guest speakers should address a multitude of topics: accounting, mentorship, first hand experiences, hosting the VPC Co-advisor, possibly hosting MITDesignx, and also motivational speakers.**

Investing through events and programs

Currently SerenDPT aims to bring in venture funders and investors through their current programs which are collabathons, climathons, hackathons, and art exhibits. The team understands SerenDPT is currently seeking out venture funders and other investors for the types of businesses that they are launching through their initiative. **Currently SerenDPT invites investors to their current programs but by holding a pitch contest, which will be discussed as the next program, SerenDPT could really bolster their reputation as a place where investors can come to see proof of concept.**

Pitch Contest

A pitch contest will provide **a space where entrepreneurs can pitch new ideas in front of investors and other entrepreneurs to gain valuable feedback on their business ideas.** These pitch contests will not only give a great **opportunity for participants to network** but the winner of the event would win a cash prize. This event will **create buzz for potential investors and people thinking of becoming investors and would put SerenDPT on the map as a place where investors can go to look at new entrepreneurial ventures.** It is free to apply for the event and this will also help entrepreneurs gain exposure on their projects. This would also help the H3 factory get exposure in the community and bring in new projects to the space. Our team recommends that SerenDPT hosts a pitch contest once a quarter. These pitch contests will overlap with the mentoring program, discussed next, and networking opportunities to solidify events in and around investiture.

Mentorship Program

An important program that is essential to incorporate is a mentorship program. Our team recommends that the H3 factory runs a mentorship program. For this to be successful there will need to be three levels of membership. These will be comprised of people in **three ranges: just entering startups, 5 to 15 years in the startup industry, and people with 15 or more years in the industry**. SerenDPT will have to decide how many people they want to host in this program. The program would host a group event **every other month and in the off months there will be smaller groups of mentees and mentors and outside of organized events mentees and mentors will be expected to keep in contact with each other**. When the program meets as a whole the H3 space will use local restaurants to cater the event to help promote local Venetian restaurants. These events will also have guest speakers and speakers from within the mentorship group about their experiences in the startup world. The mentoring events would also utilize the networking events and programs.

TEDx

It is very difficult to run a TEDx event ignoring the money and sheer amount of work it takes. There are many rules to follow and you must obtain a license. If the organization is found in violation of any of these rules the license will get suspended immediately and the organization will be banned from hosting TEDx events. The following are the main rules you must follow and if you don't your license will be removed immediately.

- **TEDx events may not be used to promote spiritual or religious beliefs, commercial products or any kind of political agenda.**
- **TED does not grant licenses to individuals associated with controversial or extremist organizations.**
- **Organizers may not affiliate the TEDx or TED brand with other conferences, non-profits, NGOs, corporations or commercial endeavors.**

Also keep in mind that TED reserves the right to revoke any TEDx license at any time.

Renewal to organize a second TEDx event is not guaranteed.

TEDx Rules and regulations

<https://www.ted.com/participate/organize-a-local-tedx-event/before-you-start/tedx-rules>

There are many types of TEDx events the H3 Factory can run but given the H3 Ecosystem our team recommends running a Standard Event, a university event in tandem with Venice University, or a Business Event.

6.3 Analysis

With the information our team gathered we recommend that SerenDPT hosts the recommended programs through the H3 factory. **These programs will help improve the H3 factory ecosystem and will assist in bringing in new ideas to the incubator. These programs will also bring notoriety to the space and help H3 gain investors and a more widely known reputation as an incubator and accelerator.**

Chapter VI: Create Shareable Resources

Shareable resources will help create community awareness of SerenDPT, its goals, and opportunities it offers. The maintenance and user-friendliness of SerenDPT's social media presence allows its work to reach a larger population and connects SerenDPT with more resources and interested members of the community.

7.1 Methodology

Informational and shareable resources will assist in building awareness for the H3 Factory and its new programs. Our team updated and promoted SerenDPT's social media platforms, with SerenDPT intern Giulia Speri, to make the benefit corporation better known in the local community. The team also updated SerenDPT's website to incorporate current information in a more user-friendly manner to help boost awareness and the overall mission of SerenDPT.

To achieve this objective, our team interviewed our sponsor, SerenDPT, to assess their online presence's goals and needs. The team then gauged what SerenDPT considers visually appealing and how they wished to be perceived by the public. Our team used ZOOM to meet with Emanuele Wiltsch Barberio, Daniele Scarano, Luca Giuman, Filippo Rossi, Turku Hasturk, Robert Fizter, and Jennifer deWinter. By meeting with these individuals, our team developed a better understanding of specific programs that the H3 Factory is interested in providing. Interviews regarding business owners also dove into their experiences using social media platforms to promote their businesses. The team conducted additional interviews with referred public relations (PR) personnel for further guidance on the proper use and handling of these accounts. This information was applied to code, edit, and improve SerenDPT's pre-existing web presence. Gaining access to SerenDPT's social media accounts allowed the team to promote the corporation to the surrounding community and update the city on its progress and programs.

To help make the SerenDPT website more user-friendly, our team updated the website with **current knowledge and general updates**. The team also created and added more visually appealing infographics, such as the following infographic illustrating components of thriving ecosystems (Fig. 9):



Figure 9: Infographic for H3 Factory members to understand components of SEEs and the significance of each component.

Additionally, **the team created a user-friendly interface linking all SerenDPT social media and made the option to translate the website into different languages more apparent.** The goal was to make the website easier to navigate. By evaluating SerenDPT media's current state, we recommend the H3 Factory members look into a booster platform to promote SerenDPT within Venice and outside of Venice. Our team hopes this platform will boost SerenDPT's internet presence so that more people begin to learn about the benefit corporation.

7.2 Results

The interviews with the SerenDPT tech team gave us an exemplary layout of what they were looking for in the redesigned website. Daniele Scarano expressed to our team that he was looking for the website to give users an idea of how the ecosystem works and the projects currently happening in the H3 Factory.

The team also met with Turku Hasturk, the public relations manager for Bean Counter Bakery and Cafe, to discuss how to build a strong social media presence. We learned valuable information that helped our team begin creating a plan for SerenDPT's social media. Hasturk informed the team that the way to gain a larger following is to make sure the account owner regularly and frequently interacts with the followers. **These actions include replying to particular comments on posts or through Instagram stories.** She also told us that using

pictures taken by the people in the space or aesthetically pleasing images would help draw users to the page. Her most significant no for social media was **not using any stock images**; she informed our team that using these images makes users think that the account is tacky or unreliable.

The Website Layout

After these meetings, our team began creating an outline of the new SerenDPT site using a WordPress template. As the team began to transfer information from the old site to the new site, it quickly became overwhelming with putting each piece of information. As a result, our team met with co-advisor Professor Jennifer deWinter, the IMGD department head at WPI. She recommended the creation of two website maps. A **website map is a way to see the connections between what each button will accomplish**. The first map addressed the old SerenDPT site, and the second outlined how the team hoped the new SerenDPT site would perform. By creating these two maps, our team could better visualize the information needed and where on the site it should be placed.

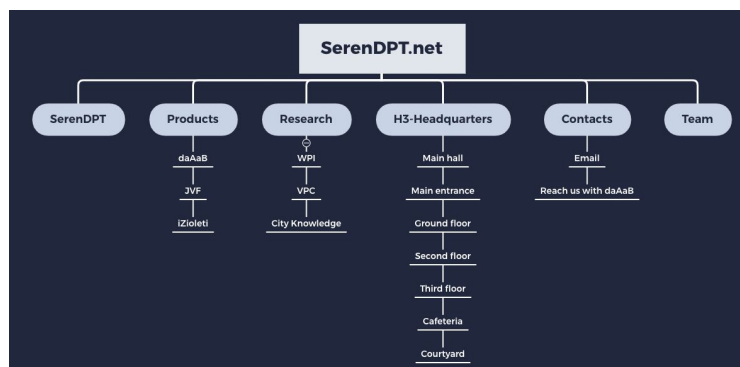


Figure 10: Website map of the ruby on rails coded SerenDPT site.

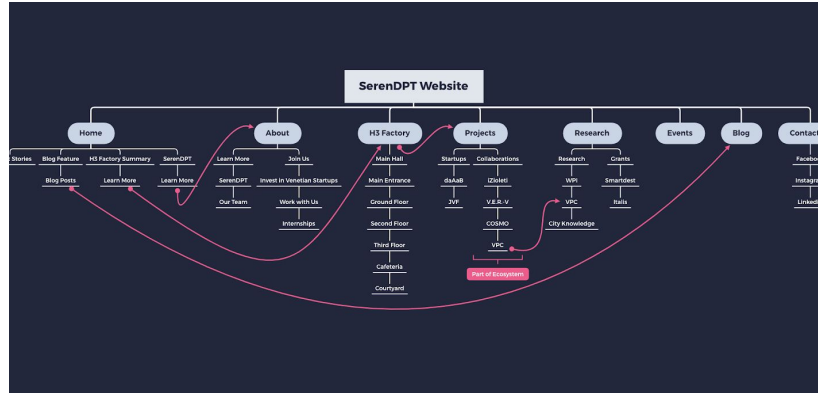


Figure 11: Website map of the new WordPress built site.

From these two maps, an outline of the new SerenDPT website was developed. We had someone from outside our project look over the site and compiled notes on what we should remove and what needed to be improved. The team also met with Robert Fitzer, the director of technology at 10Zig Technology, and gave our group additional notes on how we should organize the website's information. Fitzer recommended **organizing information in a table**, which gives the users a better understanding of what the site is trying to inform. As a result, our team took these notes and reformatted the Collaborations page in a 2x2 table format, shown in Fig. 12.

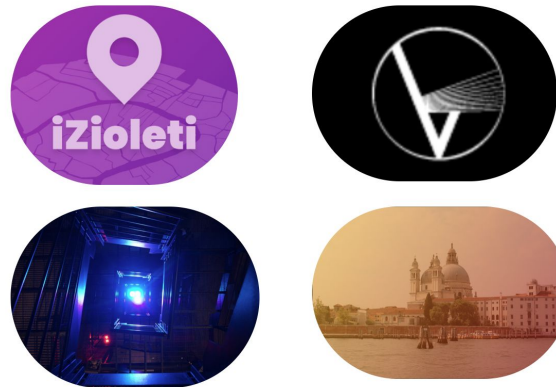


Figure 12: How we formatted the projects page based on Robert Fitzer's advice.

As the cursor hovers over the image for each of the different options, an overlay pops up. A short sentence about the image's corresponding program comes up with a link to a page with more information on the overlay.

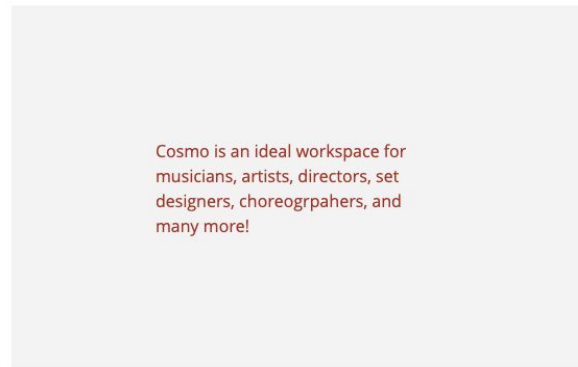


Figure 13: Hover overlay example on what is on each of the startups and collaborations.

Fitzer also discussed the content of our information and its impact. Fitzer told our team that getting a **big idea across in a sentence has a greater impact than describing this information in a paragraph**. Most users can be turned off if there is too much information to process.

The meetings and interviews our team had with the SerenDPT tech team, Turku Hasturk, Robert Fitzer, and Jennifer deWinter gave the group information that helped us achieve our goals for both SerenDPTs social media and the reformatting of their website. The final forms of both the social media and website can be seen in both figures 14 and 15 below.



Figure 14: On the left is the old SerenDPT site and on the right is the new site that our team created.

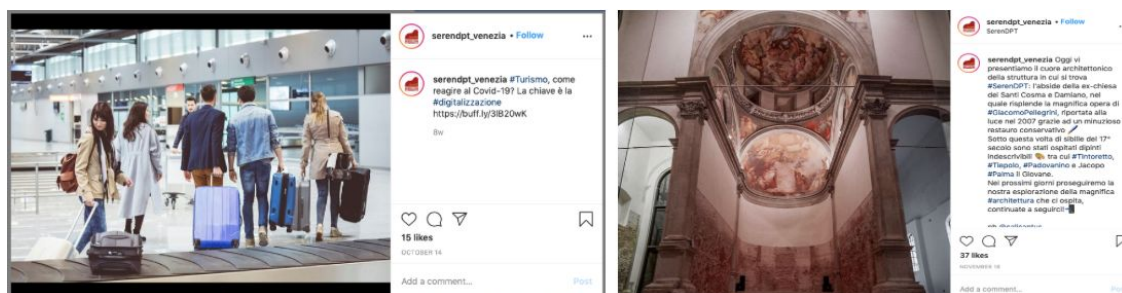


Figure 15: On the left is the old social media layout and on the right is the new reimaged social media

7.3 Analysis

With the information gathered, the team concluded that in order to have successful social media presence and a successful website there needs to be a plan.

The team worked with Guilia Speri SerenDPT's social media intern, **to create a plan** for both the SerenDPT and Venice Project Center Instagrams. Meetings with Speri were conducted about once a week and informed her of our team's information from multiple interviews Speri created a PowerPoint to plan social media activity, where each slide is an image and caption. She continues to update it, so there is a layout of posts.

A plan was created for SerenDPT with instructions **on the maintenance on the new SerenDPT website**. The plan explains how the WordPress theme is formatted along with methods on how to create unique layouts. This plan helps give the person a quick tutorial on how the site is set up and easy ways to edit and add to the website.

From the plans created by Giulia Speri and our team, we hope the SerenDPT team can take our suggestions and build on them. The goal is to help SerenDPT gain a greater following and web presence by following these plans.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

The H3 Factory project aimed to build a comprehensive understanding of the components of success in startup ecosystems. This understanding was applied to our interviews involving the H3 Factory members to design enriching programs and events that foster the overall ecosystem's organic success within its surrounding community. By using our methodology, our team worked with our sponsor, SerenDPT, to develop these programs and create plans to promote them through their web presence, which was also to be improved. Within the H3 Factory, startups and members will benefit from a collaborative, innovative cafeteria space, which was designed to be a third place that encourages collaborations. Overall, the team hopes the H3 Factory project contributes to SerenDPT's long-term goal of mitigating the demographic decline in Venice's resident population, and our team is very extraordinarily grateful to have worked with SerenDPT and the Venice Project Center.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide for Curtis Abel

Curtis Abel and associates semi-structured interview questions

1. What have you found to be the most beneficial to startup ecosystems?
2. What startup ecosystems have you been a part of?
3. What are the main failures of startup and startup ecosystems?
4. What are some important experiences you have had while working with incubators?
5. Who are other connections you have within the startup ecosystem community that you think we should reach out to?

Appendix B: Interview Guide for H3 Factory Programs of Interest

H3 Factory members semi-structured interview questions to determine programs of interest

1. Programs that would benefit the community the most
2. Potential speakers of interest
3. What events would you like to see that would be useful?

Appendix C: Interview Guide for Business Owners

Interview questions for owners of small businesses regarding their business as a startup, components of success, and consideration of interior design for information applicable to collaborative cafe design.

Questions about the business:

1. What do you believe to be the most important considerations when starting a new business?
2. What do you consider most successful about your business now?
3. Were there points where you failed or feel you could have done better when starting your business?
4. What did you find most difficult when starting a business and how did you overcome this?
5. What do you think attracts people to Bean Counter?
6. What is your experience using social media to promote your business?

Questions about budget:

7. How much money, or how many customers, is required for your business to break-even?
8. How much money did it cost to start your business?
9. Are you able to provide an average number of customers you receive per day? Before and after COVID? Are there specific days of the week there is a higher average number of customers?

Questions about interior design:

10. How would you describe the atmosphere and style of Bean Counter?

11. Why did you choose this look and interior design?
12. How do you think it affects your business now?

Question about developmental program(s):

13. Most importantly, what resources (e.g. programs, events, educational seminars) do you think...
 - a. Could have helped you start your business in the beginning?
 - b. Could help your business grow today?

Appendix D: Interview Guide for H3 Factory Opinions on Use of Cafeteria space

Semi-structured interview questions for H3 Factory members to determine interest and ideas for use of cafeteria space

1. Personal experiences using this cafeteria space
2. Likes and dislikes of the space
3. Ideas for improvement and use of the space

Appendix E: Interview with Alice Lombardi

Alice Lombardi, owner of Bean Counter Bakery and Cafe.
27 October 2020, via email

1. What do you believe to be the most important considerations when starting a new business?
 - The most important consideration for starting a new business is to buy or acquire an existing and successful business instead of starting from scratch. You will always have income the minute you open the door.
2. What do you consider most successful about your business now?
 - Although I purchased the original Bean Counter, I am able to expand on the bakery business and branded my products to be one-of-a-kind, unique, and high quality.
3. Were there points where you failed or feel you could have done better when starting your business?
 - My delay in keeping up with social media. I did not get into it until only this year (especially Instagram). I simply did not have time to plan for Instagram and FaceBook. Had I known how successful it is, I would have spent a lot more time and resources to develop it.
4. What did you find most difficult when starting a business and how did you overcome this?
 - Most difficult is learning to rely on professional services instead of trying to do everything internally. For example, it took a while before we hired a payroll service even though we have a full time Office Manager. We had developed our own internal system which worked okay but with more employees, it is definitely worth paying for a payroll service.
5. What do you think attracts people to Bean Counter?

- We are a destination bakery for many of our clients. The bakery items are from original recipes, most of which I personally developed, so you can not find it anywhere else. We offer gluten free, vegan and gluten free cakes and cupcakes and baked goods that our customers say “doesn’t taste” gluten free or vegan. We also offer personal and custom service for our bakery orders. We also do not say no much.
6. Tell me about the interior design of Bean Counter:
 - How would you describe the atmosphere and style of Bean Counter?
 - Why did you choose this look and interior design?
 - How do you think it affects your business now?
 - Our newest location at 270 Grove Street in Worcester is our new flagship bakery which I will talk about here. It is light, bright, and airy. I kept the color mostly white so the bakery items will pop. This is the only location that I did hire an interior designer for. I would describe the atmosphere as casual and elegant. Both customers and staff enjoy the new look and business has responded well.
 7. **Most importantly**, what resources (e.g. programs, events, educational seminars) do you think...
 - Could have helped you start your business in the beginning?
 - Could help your business grow today?
 - Most importantly, I would have invested much more time and resources in social media marketing. I underestimated its potential. I am confident that as we are now more social media focused, our business will continue to grow even faster. We are already seeing a faster return as a result.

Appendix F: Interview with Lisa Maniatis

Lisa Maniatis, owner of Garden Fresh Courthouse Cafe

27 October 2020, in-person

- Lisa, owner of GFCC
- Personal relationship with lots of customers
- Serve MCPHS and WPI students, courthouse workers
- With this type of business, you really have to love it to be in it

Questions regarding startup

1. What was the most important to you when getting business started?
 - Want restaurant close to courthouse
 - Started September, opened December
 - Resemble courthouse atmosphere, want to warm and trendy
 - Mother owned restaurant near Clark in 80s, worked with her for 10 years, 20 years later she has own business
2. Most successful about business now?
 - Fresh, clean friendly service
3. Hardest parts opening restaurant
 - Fear of not succeeding
 - Makes 90% of own soups and specials, gets up at 4am to come in every day
 - Customers been coming for 13 years

- Put a lot into this (emotional and financial), want to see this succeed
- 4. Points where you could've done something better?
 - If I was to open on the weekends and focus on that
 - Don't do that rn because she doesn't want to work 7 days a week
 - Open 5 days a week
- 5. What do you think attracts people to this cafe?
 - Location, my food, and our service

Questions about interior design

- 6. How did you decide on the setup of the kitchen, like how we can watch you cook?
 - Process of how you order
 - Order, walk down, by the end of the line, you pay
 - Make sandwiches and salads in front of you
 - Noisy open kitchen, but people like to see that you're clean and you can't hide anything
- 7. Anything you put great thought into to make optimal use of space
 - Had help designing it
 - Had experience with parents' restaurant, knew what she was doing
 - Experience of owning and working at a restaurant
- 8. What do you wish you had done differently?
 - Dishwasher is exposed, maybe another sink for accessibility
- 9. How do you think aesthetic and interior design affects current customers?
 - The people she gets are because of location, not because of business style
 - Businesses around her also contributes to her customer body
 - Other businesses closed on weekends, less business on weekends
 - If she had pushed and advertised, it could have been a greater income
- 10. Part of our project is working on promoting startup businesses on behalf of our sponsor. Your community outreach?
 - She has FaceBook and Instagram, these are basically all she does, she doesn't know them well
 - Benefit from having these platforms, doesn't know to what extend
 - Started getting into it when COVID started, got some responses, not much
- 11. Delivery?
 - Uber Eats, Doordash, GrubHub
 - Take 25% of sale
 - They have their own delivery as well, she sometimes delivers herself, costs to hire delivery person, but still better than 25%
 - These platforms of food delivery do act as social media as well
- 12. Is there any program you feel like your business could benefit from? Resources? Resources you wish you had along the way?
 - Accounting information
 - Advice for other businesses:
 - Know your demographics, your clientele
 - Have to have creativity
 - How do these restaurants decorate? Lisa did all her decorations herself
 - More homey vibe - have to pick a theme

- You can't be everything for everyone

Lisa: What are you doing with the info I have given you?

- We're designing cafe in Italy
- We're going to apply this info

Who's going to run the cafe?

- SerenDPT, run startup incubator called H3 factory, in Venice, Italy, want to bring people in from outside
- Point of serenDPT is to bring new jobs
- Overtourism, sustainable residence, bring in new population
- SerenDPT wants to fight demo decline resulted from over-reliance on tourism
 - Not sustainable wage, causing people to leave
- Balances tourism with rest of economy

Lisa: Could do this in many areas, e.g. Greece, travel to Greece all the time

- Everyone going to larger cities, forget smaller cities

Appendix G: Interview with Turku Hasturk

Turku Hasturk, Public Relations Manager for Bean Counter Bakery and Cafe

4 November 2020, via ZOOM

Tell me about what you do for Bean Counter.

- Started around March last year, didn't get ramped up until this summer and started taking their own photos
- Greater following on FaceBook for older generation
 - Older people really like to interact with businesses

What influences how you manage social media?

- Instagram editing

What is most important in organic growth of a social media presence?

- Post regularly
- Interact
- You can enter usernames in websites to show expected interaction rates for someone with that many followers
- Messes up algorithm if you buy followers

What did you find to be the hardest obstacle to overcome?

- Slow initial growth
- Creating a brand. Stick with a brand at this point
- Messaging local businesses in the area to connect
- When bigger accounts follow you, they give you a little more clout

What advice would you give to new businesses starting a social media presence?

- Features for specific businesses
- Instagram takeovers

- Tours of the space
- Look at what other people in this industry are doing for social media
- Instagrams that promote jobs and nonprofits?
- Follow organizations that H3 works with

Any last tips? Do's and don'ts?

- Post often and Daily
 - Instagram's algorithm doesn't work that way to post infrequently
 - Use the story a lot, make them interactive
 - The more people interact, the higher you rank
- Use Lightroom app
- Follow businesses around with similar initiatives and interact with them frequently
- Make business project and ambition crystal clear in brand
- Send examples of photos that we want describing what we want in photos
- Walk them through how to take photos

Don't

- Post stock images
- Attention catching images, even if it doesn't have to do with the organization itself

Glazy Susan - opened this past september

- Wife and husband team
- Sell out every morning
- Young and good social media presence

Appendix H: Interview with Curtis Abel

Curtis Abel, Executive Director of Innovation and Entrepreneurship at WPI

11 November 2020, via ZOOM

What is your background?

- Phd material science
- From pittsburgh
- Wanted to go pre med
- First generation
- Went to carnegie mellon
- Chemical engineering undergrad
- Did research in material science
- Masters and phd in material science
- MBA at cornell in consumer brand marketing
- Startups didn't work out
- Business or engineering?
- Got a job at WPI pursuing his passion

What startup ecosystems have you been a part of?

With workshops and programs

Looked at incubators in the Boston area

Difference between incubator and accelerator

-Incubators: really early stage startups, create value proposition

- Getting started out of the gate
- Will take equity out of your company, in exchange for their services
- Mentorship, programs, connections all in exchange for equity
- Universities: pay tuition so they do not take equity, use resources to develop startup then sometimes they will take equity
- Accelerator: been developed for about a year, getting funding and growing business in a sustainable way

What are the main failures of startup and startup ecosystems?

- Both startups he worked on failed because of teams

Who are other connections you have within the startup ecosystem community that you think we should reach out to?

- Is going to send us information about Boston, Worcester and New England incubators for us to reach out to and look in to

What programs have you run that you felt were beneficial?

- **Inspire innovation with apprentice approach**
- **WinterSession**
 - Interactive hands on
 - Alumni, faculty and students -> networking
 - Build as many mentors as possible
- **Tinkerbox**
 - Twice a year, seed money, \$500-\$2000
 - An idea that may solve a problem
 - Money to create prototype
 - Group projects along themes, get mentors to discuss goal setting
- **Innovation Challenges and Hacks**
 - First in the past summer
 - Only for students, develop solutions for preventing spread of virus, while maintaining and improving educational experience
 - Empathy workshops, how to bring idea to life, how to pitch an idea
- **Speed Networking**
- **Student- Led Ambassador Program**
 - In the works, students to apply for funding to support programs for I&E
- **Apprentice Courses**
 - Produces students that hit the ground running that develop apprentice courses

Skills and Development Programs

- Mentors in residence
- Workshops and speaker series
- Embark
- Summer weekly goal setting
- Goat Tank
 - Try to inspire women to engage in I&E activity

- Leads up to shark tank type of challenge
- Something that creates value
- Turnout has been limited
- Maker and rapid prototyping workshops
- Supporting courses and grants

Build Capabilities

- Tech advisors network
- Challenge- pipeline is very small
- More projects and startups to enter
- I&E awards
- Partnerships
- Seaport programs
- Hackathon group- hack at wpi every january -> companies and organizations for prompts and problems

Other:

- Presentation he gave to the board:
- Innovation and entrepreneurship
 - 90% of executives - long term success
 - One in three employers look for entrepreneurial experience and mindset
 - Recognizing opportunities, taking risk, manage ambiguity
 - Be able to hit the ground running and always learn
 - **85% of jobs haven't been invented yet**
 - Odds are you won't be in a job that actually requires your major
 - All about adapting and reinventing
 - Keeping current with skills
- Are you satisfying unmet needs?
- Entrepreneurial mindset does not necessarily mean building a business
- Most jobs are being created through startups aged 0-5 years
- WPI mission
 - Entrepreneurial action, about community to create impact maker-> the skills necessary
 - Sustainable value creation through an empathetic soul
 - Design thinking -> developing solutions to feel the pain or need that you're trying to solve for
- Does not have to create business to create progress
- Culture is about the people, need to inspire and continuously innovate, project based learning, research and global presence, a lot of startups fail because of teams
- Business development in corporations among many other things
- Working with faculty to do experience based things that stick
- Trained faculty in all departments
- Working with students on projects
 - Bring community together and give each other feedback
 - Use students as resources and be student led
- Leverage project based learning model
- How are you differentiating your business?

- Who are the competitors?
 - Think about solutions that are different than what others are offering
- WPI students know how to work on a team and that is huge
 - Manage conflict and challenges
- Inspire, Develop Skills, Capabilities for tech startups
- Manage business, develop offerings
 - No difference than doing it as a startup
 - Upper management vs. investors

Appendix I: Interview with Jason Vuong

Jason Vuong, owner of Worcester branch of Gong Cha

13 November 2020, via ZOOM

Questions about the business:

1. What do you believe to be the most important considerations when starting a new business?
 - Time horizon, how long do you project project to be finished from building to opening
 - Starting capital
 - Depending on space, who your builders are? How well do they work? Look at their past work
2. What do you consider most successful about your business now?
 - Bringing something different
 - Long overdue diversification, bring different cultures together
3. Were there points where you failed or feel you could have done better when starting your business?
 - Design part actually
 - Put a lot of initial capital into designing the space and in the end it didn't turn out the way they wanted it to
 - Had to start from scratch twice
4. What did you find most difficult when starting a business and how did you overcome this?
 - The way the store turned out, they caught it in time that they didn't have to make a ton of major changes
 - Contractor still working with them despite starting from scratch in terms of design
 - Maneuvering old design into new design; doesn't feel like entirely starting from scratch
 - If I stop now, I'm going to have nothing in the end
5. What do you think attracts people to Gong Cha?
 - The name speaks for itself
 - Open and common space
 - Get work done there, real cafe vibe, for students or workers, parents of conservatory, etc.
 - Peaceful, quiet environment
 - Kept a lot of original building features, valuable history of Worcester
 - Shows appreciation for Worcester history

- Maddy: did you have to get anything approved by the city?
 - No, did a lot of internal renovations, which is up to them
 - Had to go through historical society for signs since they're putting signs into wall, integrity of building can fall apart
- 6. What is your experience using social media to promote your business?
 - All they did was social media
 - Have their own platform on Instagram, Twitter, FaceBook, Yelp
 - A lot of support from community
 - Worked in bank before, built a big network in Downtown area, which helped spread on social media
 - Lived in Worcester, worked across the street at commerce bank

Questions about budget:

- 7. How much money, or how many customers, is required for your business to break-even?
 - To give easy number, per day need to make \$500 (roughly 100 cups) a day to break even, everything else goes towards repaying loans
 - Calculate housing expenses with income
- 8. How much money did it cost to start your business?
 - Everything all in, about \$230,000, mostly due to franchise related fees
 - Good faith fee that we want to open franchise with them
 - Bank helped after that
- 9. Are you able to provide an average number of customers you receive per day? Before and after COVID? Are there specific days of the week there is a higher average number of customers?
 - Pre-COVID: measure by cups, expected around 300-350 cups on average daily
 - Because of COVID, average is 230-270 daily
 - Saturdays and Fridays busier
 - Sundays people buy for the week
- 10. Other:
 - \$230,000 all in, kept some of money in case ran into speed bumps
 - Nothing has gone wrong so far
 - In case need to change things up with equipment
 - Have 6 months revenue of employees

Questions about interior design:

- 11. How would you describe the atmosphere and style of Gong Cha?
 - Calm, tried to put in color schemes that weren't too loud
 - Take in environment without it shouting at you; neutral colors
 - Including back of kitchen to distract from work
- 12. Why did you choose this look for the interior design?
 - When customers see open concept, more susceptible to coming in, fits a little of everyone's taste
 - Not tailored to one specific demographic
 - Liked the bones, wanted to bring light to space without covering it up
 - Looked at space more than the demographic

13. How do you think it affects your business now?

- Get a lot of reaction when customers walk in
- See that it's clean, bright, calming
- Kept tin ceilings, brick walls exposed, maintain old features of building

Question about developmental program(s):

1. Most importantly, what resources (e.g. programs, events, educational seminars) do you think...

- a. Could have helped you start your business in the beginning?
 - b. Could help your business grow today?
- More government aid
 - COVID aside, new business owners don't typically do well
 - They're new, don't know what they're doing in terms of book-keeping

Attributions to Gong Cha instead of branch itself

- Not wanting to hang around in other Gong Cha spaces
- Can still grab and go
- Option of relaxing a bit at individual franchise
- Make people want to come back for atmosphere

Appendix J: Interview with Julie Love

Julie Love, co-owner of The Well Coffee House

13 November 2020, in-person

1. What do you believe to be the most important considerations when starting a new business?
 - Get to know your audience and environment
2. What do you consider most successful about your business now?
 - How we represent ourselves to customers and community
 - Try to set themselves apart
 - Friendly, fast, and clean
 - Non-profit: goal is just to exist and give to community
 - Coffee, love, community motto
 - Space can be used by community
 - Food drive, they'll help collect
3. Were there points where you failed or feel you could have done better when starting your business?
 - Pioneered the non-profit coffee shop, not a lot of research
 - Look at some out of state
 - Serve about 2,000 people a day
 - Turned out to be a lot more people than they expected
 - Didn't know how many people they would need to staff, thought they would need 2-3 but ended up needing more than they thought
 - Did not do enough research
 - Underpriced some of the items

- Did not give themselves enough credit
- 4. What did you find most difficult when starting a business and how did you overcome this?
 - 100% not realizing how much personal time it would take, husband and wife heart and soul are in this place
 - Still is a challenge especially with COVID
- 5. What do you think attracts people to The Well Coffee House?
 - The environment really attracts people
 - Did everything on a budget, bought things at a yard sale, had work donated, spray painted the lights
 - Has a very homey atmosphere
- 6. What is your experience using social media to promote your business?
 - She does her own social media, her own Facebook
 - Learned a lot, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter
 - Would need someone who is qualified and that she trusts to help her
 - More into photojournalism
 - Most of their followers are people who already know them, she's done some classes
 - Dos and don'ts for social media
 - No politics
 - Will talk about different things that have happened in the community
 - Do tributes to the holidays
 - Tries to keep it local and light, along with being encouraging
 - Boston is very diverse
 - Their coffee shop represents diverse community

Questions about budget:

- 7. How much money, or how many customers, is required for your business to break-even?
 - For us to breakeven, about 200-300 guests a day
- 8. How much money did it cost to start your business?
 - They only pay taxes on their space, if they actually paid it would be \$56k a month
 - They have started four coffee shops
 - South Station: \$30k - \$40k, maybe \$50k
 - Hard in Boston to find a space big enough and affordable
 - A baker needed someone to come in and do the coffee
 - Ended up building a space next to them, bakery left and South Station let them stay
 - The space is now closed, but South Station is building them a new location
 - Current space did not have to do much build out, about \$20k in addition to supplies
- 9. Are you able to provide an average number of customers you receive per day? Before and after COVID? Are there specific days of the week there is a higher average number of customers?
 - Average number of guests per day is approximately 300
 - Best days are usually Fridays, people hang out longer
 - Saturdays are good days but very sporadic

Questions about interior design:

10. How would you describe the atmosphere and style of The Well Coffee House?
 - Eclectic atmosphere
 - Warm and inviting
 - Inclusive to conversation and getting work done
 - Different artists displayed in coffee shop, have about two in the shop now
 - Have had a total of 4 artists
 - Switch out about every 6-8 months
11. How do you think it affects your business now?
 - People really vibe with the space
 - More outlets are always a plus
 - Environment is pretty easy

Question about developmental program(s):

12. Most importantly, what resources (e.g. programs, events, educational seminars) do you think...
 - o Could have helped you start your business in the beginning?
 - o Could help your business grow today?
 - Basic marketing class
 - Doing well but could do better
 - Their roaster helps others actually start coffee business
 - Crimson Cup roasters, has business in Ohio
 - Has a good book, 7 Steps...

Appendix K: Interview with Monty Sharma

Monty Sharma, Managing Director of MassDigi
19 November 2020, via ZOOM

1. What have you found to be the most beneficial to startup ecosystems?
 - o First you have to define startup ecosystem
 - i. They are not made
 1. They leverage existing things
 - ii. Have to think about what you mean by startups
 1. High growth technology based ideas
 - iii. Investment does not show up.
 - o What assets do you have to work with because you have to have those before they can work
 - o We are closer to the E for all model
 - i. Funded by a guy who made a money in the telecom boom
 - ii. Set it up in mass canada and india
 - iii. Try to take the average person and start whatever kind of business
 - o The question is how much money do you want to make
 - o Scale the size of companies
 - o Find a synergy within the community
 - o Mass digi

- How are you going to sell your product?
- Sandbox based on lean business model
 - i. Partnering people with real experience with people in morocco
 - 1. People in morocco give the lay of the land and ppl here give info on marketing
- Trying to build the capacity for them to work without you
- Taken 9-10 months to start and are in their second cohort.
- The company can't need a lot of real estate
- Has to be high revenue
- Has to be able to be remotely
- Trying to build local entrepreneurs which is e for all
- There is no one best practice
- Want to do as little as you can to help them
- Have to get used to letting go of a good idea
- What are the fundamental problems
 - i. The attitude towards entrepreneurship
- One solid success is someone who did not go under in six months
- Need to hand feed the viable companies
- How much do your parents love you in terms of being able to receive funding
- What is your runway
- What is the path you can follow
- Lean business model
- Real high growth startups
- Understanding your customers and understanding your value proposition
- Want to see a small group of people who are desperate for the product and then build from there
- No random acts of marketing
- In finding customer segments
- Not understanding there customer is the biggest issue
- Business is easy to understand the hard part is knowing when to do what
- Never know why in classes need to get people to understand why and focus on the customer needs
- Startup is not a version of a small company
- Dont build stupid products
- Focus on scope
- Figure out the pathways for a few businesses to start then u figure out the way
- Focusing on the customer and understanding what the customer needs
- https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dsSBbm18NFyoK-gw_vXbfnUwv9MwKxaz/view?usp=sharing
- Business in your passion
- Focusing on the customer
- Talking about examples
- Focus in on what we are trying to do
- E for all***
- Want to go where there are lots of money and where its to the advantage of people with money to spend the money

2. Who are other connections you have within the startup ecosystem community that you think we should reach out to?
 - Ryan
 - Already put us in contact with 3 CEO's of successful startups to meet with
 - i. Florian
 - ii. Ross
 - iii. Elise

Appendix L: Interview with Marc Devits

1. What is your company and how did you start this company?

My co-founder and I came up with the idea for Double Robotics when we were both working at other jobs. I was working on medical device hardware (at Syntheon), and David was doing contract iOS app development work for various companies. With the advent of the app store, we had a short-lived idea to build a kids toy that had a companion iPhone app. Through his contract work, David recognized the need for a better communication tool for remote workers. A few other "telepresence robot" solutions were on the market, but none were affordable or provided a good experience. With our combined hardware and software experience, and the things we learned from the toy project, we realized that we could build a better, less expensive robot that used the iPad for the brains. All we had to do was add wheels. We built some early prototypes and posted some videos that were discovered by a few large companies in need of a solution like ours, and that's when we decided to start working on this idea full time. Around the same time, we were fortunate enough to get accepted into YCombinator's Summer 2012 batch, which helped solidify our new company.

2. What did you find to be the most beneficial to your company working in a startup ecosystem?

It's hard to pinpoint one particular thing that startup ecosystems help with. YCombinator was very good at scraping away all of the ways founders waste time when starting a company, keeping the founders focused on the goal of building something people want. In the early stages, you should only be doing two things: building your product and talking to customers.

3. What startup ecosystem were you a part of and how long were you a part of that ecosystem?

Interestingly, at the time we applied, we knew one of the YC partners had already designed and was selling one of those earlier, expensive telepresence robots. When we first came up with the idea of applying to YC, we emailed him directly to see what he would think. We were caught by surprise when he wrote back very enthusiastically, saying our product was exactly what he would build if he were starting over today. We applied, interviewed in person, and we were accepted in May of 2012. When our YC batch ended, we were able to raise some money from angel investors thanks to the endorsement of some of the YC partners who saw our progress over the summer. We moved to California, hired our first employees, and shipped our first robot a few months later. Even though YC was only a few months long for us, we're still part of the network they have built, and they foster a community of very helpful peers.

4. What are some important experiences you have had while working in the incubator?

Since we attended YC in 2012, we were fortunate enough to work directly with Paul Graham on a few occasions. He once told David and I that we are "Two Wozniaks without a Job". We had our heads too deep in product development, and we needed to spend more time talking to customers. I remember being insulted at first, then telling myself "Yeah, he's kind of right."

5. What types of programs, events, and speakers were most beneficial to your company and what programs, events, and speakers do you wish the startup incubator had?

Every week they would host a dinner with a prominent guest from the startup world. Getting to hear the trials and tribulations from founders of companies like AirBnB, Instagram, Pinterest, and Groupon was very validating and inspiring. The culmination of each YC batch ends with a Demo Day, where almost all notable investors attend to watch each company pitch their product. Most of the startups would leave demo day with multiple investor meetings booked or term sheets ready to go.

6. Who are other connections you have within the startup ecosystem community that you think we should reach out to?

It's been a while and we don't maintain super close communication with any of our YC batch, but I do know the BattleBots community has a few other startup founders who have been through similar stages. Off hand, I know Leann Cushing has or had a startup. I believe Adam Bercu and Charles Guan are still working on a product as well. I think Will Bales probably knows more of these people than I do.

Appendix M: Interview with Bill Aldrich

Bill Aldrich, Owner of Theatre Cafe

26 October 2020, in-person

General

- Successful startup business; expanding to have new restaurant beside Hanover Theatre
- Has five kids all grown up
- Extraordinary customer service
- Very personal, individualized relationship with regulars very good for business
 - Great for small business such as coffee shop
- Running business for 10 years as of October 28th, 2020
- Bill's components of success: (aligns with our literature review)
 - Capital
 - Knowing your community
 - Fully recognizing legislation
 - Location

Layout of Theatre Cafe

- Small cafe, nervous with use of space
- 22 seats initially
- Counter was moved back and everything was behind wall

- COVID hit → reduce seats, open up kitchen
 - Accommodate to making more food
 - Expected from increasing delivery means
- Working on own delivery app
- Never closed during the pandemic
- Many essential workers are their regulars
 - City workers, city hall, firefighters, local businesses and banks
- Past month, business has been picking up again
- Adapted space to COVID
- Regulars keep his business afloat
- Speakeasy in the back

Center Stage Bistro

- Old office space will become Center Stage Bistro, Bill's new restaurant
- Expand kitchen
- Opening up some drywall to expose brick
- Raise ceiling
- \$75k-85k for his new restaurant's renderings so far
- Lease does not charge rent until business is up and running
 - Pay rent after the space has been open for three months (grace period)
 - Huge help for COVID: they are not able to open anything or work on restaurant, but the space is reserved for them
 - Not making any revenue for Center Stage Bistro yet, this lease is huge help

Appendix N: Important links

Click [here](#) to see the Website Maintenance plan

Click [here](#) to see a concise and engaging Booklet form of our paper