BuiltSteady Strategy

# Vision

BuiltSteady empowers people with the tools to live organized, stress-free lives.

# Purpose

There are countless products and tools available that are aimed at productivity and organization, but our experience is that helping people get organized and keeping them organized is a problem that hasn’t yet been adequately solved. At the same time, some aspects of the problem do have good solutions (for example, online calendars, social networks, sharing documents and structured data, etc) and we want to actively leverage these solutions as opposed to reinvent the wheel. This document describes the subset of this problem space that we aim to address, the customers we aim to target, how we differentiate, and how we make money.

# Target Customer

Our focus is on helping people manage their personal lives. While we aspire to build a product that appeals to a broad range of people, we are targeting moms as our initial demographic: not only do they have their own lives to worry about, they also manage the rest of the household. In our opinion, this is the demographic that has the deepest unmet need. That said, this demographic also presents some challenges: moms aren’t the most tech-savvy audience, making it more difficult to reach them with a digital solution; moms don’t have the same level of confidence and trust in social media (notably Facebook), which makes it more difficult to create viral distribution among that user base; and moms are difficult to sell to – they strongly prefer free solutions.

# Problem Space

There are three primary user problems we are trying to solve:

## Making Tasks Actionable

Breaking up complex tasks into a sequence of actionable steps is a cornerstone to getting things done. While there are hundreds of productivity tools inspired by the GTD methodology, we know of no solutions that actually help you do this. Yet much of what we have to do every day in our personal lives looks remarkably similar to what others like us face. Our goal is to create the definitive community for users to discover and share their “recipes” of how they break down complex tasks into actionable steps.

While we can create first-party content that seeds this for common scenarios, we cannot hope to cover enough scenarios on our own to create a useful resource. We need help from our user community to capture and share the “long tail” of content. Our goal is to capture the collective wisdom of our community by letting people create Activities, catalog the steps they use to accomplish these Activities, and share their Activities with others.

Much like other communities that thrive on user-generated content such as Wikipedia, Quora, and Stack Overflow, a fraction of the overall user base contributes content, and those contributors are motivated by building reputation within the community. Our strategy for fostering a vibrant community is to employ the characteristic elements of reputation:

* create a quantitative reputation score for users and potentially a set of “achievements”
* make it trivial to contribute user-attributed content
* make it trivial to find user-generated content that is annotated by user and reputation
* allow users to up-vote and possibly down-vote content
* provide a ladder of administrative privileges for users as they cross reputation boundaries

We will need to seed the community by annotating some (most? all?) of the “built-in” content as community contributions, as well as find a set of “mavens”, preferably people that are well-known organizational experts, to become active members of the community.

## Making Task Completion Fun

One of the biggest issues that traditional to-do apps face is that they fail to generate ongoing engagement. A user may be initially excited by a new app with a slick UI, but every time they bring up the app, the same droll tasks appear. Unless the task is something that really needs to get done, it just clutters up the list, and before long, the app itself evokes negative emotions in the user’s mind – “I hate bringing up this app because it keeps reminding me to clean the garage”.

Our goal is to break this cycle by making task completion psychologically rewarding. We aim to do this by introducing gaming mechanics into the product, and transforming the mundane Activity cycles into the “game of life”:

* each user is represented by an avatar that they can customize
* the avatar changes based on the Activities that the user registers for, and based on whether these Activities are completed: for example, if the user didn’t get their hair cut this month, the hair grows humorously long. Taking care of your avatar means taking care of your Activities.
* similarly, the “home” and “auto” categories of Activities are represented by avatar “accessories”: for example, if the user doesn’t take care of their Activities, tires go flat, lawns overgrow, and so on.
* if these features prove popular/successful, we could potentially add and monetize a virtual goods marketplace.

All of these ideas are meant to increase user engagement with the product. Additionally, solving the “Making Tasks Actionable” problem by helping break complex tasks into simple steps directly contributes to solving the engagement problem: because the steps are simple and actionable, users experience success more often, which brings about the positive emotional feedback that is required to get sustained engagement.

## Local Discovery / Search

Finding (local) providers you can trust is a huge source of procrastination in getting something done, yet this is a problem with no satisfactory solutions. Angie’s List, Groupon, Yelp, and RedBeacon all try to address this space with various solutions and different business models, but none tap into the most important resource – recommendations from friends and neighbors. At the moment, the “state of the art” for neighbors that are trying to share provider recommendations is a general Google/Yahoo group that is set up and managed by the neighborhood techie. Providing a “social” angle to local search is an untapped opportunity that Bing is just starting to internalize and scratch the surface of.

We aim to squarely address this space by creating a social network of friends and neighbors that live in the same area and have similar Activities, who can help each other by sharing the information around how they get these Activities done. This social network is bootstrapped on top of Facebook, but ultimately extends beyond local friends by providing an anonymized summary of data from local users who may not be otherwise related to the user through a traditional social network.

Typically, each Activity that is done by a provider will have three ways to search for that provider:

* Find local providers via a localized geo-search
* Find out what providers Friends are using
* Find out what providers people in your area are using

Ultimately, there are classes of verticals (e.g. ordering flowers, booking a table at a restaurant, etc) which we will implement directly instead of doing a generalized search. This is also an opportunity for back-end providers to plug into our intent platform.

# Customer Acquisition Model

With consumer-facing applications, the only viable choices are a viral customer acquisition model or a paid customer acquisition model (where the customer lifetime value is higher than the cost of acquisition). We aim to acquire customers through a viral spread. There are three vectors that we believe will help spread the product:

* Finding out what providers friends are using is the most powerful recommendation engine for satisfying local tasks. The user has a strong incentive to invite their friends to use the product because this feature is only as good as the number of local friends they have that are also part of the network. We will bootstrap this network by allowing users to ask their friends on Facebook for provider recommendations, and allow the user to invite the friends that respond.
* Sharing content with others is a powerful way to get more value out of the content you’ve already created. By connecting with the friends that are already members of our community, a user increases the value of the assets they create. This in turn creates further incentive for them to invite other users that are not yet members of the community.
* Collaborative Activities are another way to attract more users. A complex task that requires coordination of steps across multiple people would require these people to sign up.

# Business Model

Aside from premium games, the traditional transactional model is dying away. Consumer products today typically operate on a freemium business model – a base offering is free, and a premium / unlimited version is typically monetized via a monthly subscription. Alternatively, in-app premium content / virtual goods can be bought or unlocked via an in-app payment.

The other popular consumer business model is a free, ad-supported offering. These offerings typically annoy their users with untargeted ads / offers, and are often combined with ad-free versions that do cost money (either using a transactional or subscription model).

The last business model is based on obtaining commissions for qualified lead generation. Affiliate programs and networks are the notable examples of this, but Groupon and AirBnb are also examples.

We believe the business model for monetizing the productivity space is lead-gen. Given our product’s heavy dependence on creating a vibrant community, we must remove all friction and psychological barriers for users to enjoy using our product. This rules out charging users for transactions or subscriptions (with the possible exception of in-app virtual goods). However, every piece of data the user gives us about their Activities and their unaccomplished intents presents an opportunity to help that user accomplish that intent by matching them up with a provider that wants to earn their business. Moreover, the user is psychologically in the frame of mind of getting stuff done when they are using our product, and therefore particularly receptive to offers to help accomplish their intent. In this way, we aim to build a product that is much more like Google (where sponsored links are perceived as content because users are often trying to buy something) than like Groupon (untargeted offers) or Facebook (the user is not in a frame of mind to buy something).