Group Case Memo: Jason Calacanis

1. How did Calacanis create resources that were of value to powerful players in the startup and venture capital world?

* Jason Calacanis provided a platform for startups where they could present their ideas and attract investors. Using his blogs and podcasts he provided information and opportunities to entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs to network and learn from each other. He created a large network of angel investors and others involved in the startup ecosystem. He created a funnel of investment opportunities, most oriented around early-stage start-ups.
* He also started a podcast called “Week in startups” which featured entrepreneurs and experts in the startup industry which provided immense knowledge for anyone wanting to start their own ventures.
* He also started several other initiatives such as:
  + LAUNCH festival: designed for companies that had a product and were in the market and wanted to scale.
  + Founder university: 2 day course focused on teaching founders how to scale a start-up , how to raise funds , and gave access to top lawyers and other industry experts.
  + Angel university: 1 day event that brought together early-stage investors and founders to mingle and network.
  + Accelerator program: Cohort of 7 companies who pitch their ideas to a panel of investors.

1. What behavioral science principles did Calacanis employ, and does he still use to build power in the worlds of investing, entrepreneurship, and startups?

* **Competitiveness, persistence, resilience, boldness, risk taking ability**: Calacanis’s early experiences of “being bold” – from talking his way into Fordham University to negotiating financial breaks – shaped his mindset. He continued to embrace boldness and creativity throughout his journey.
* **Get out of your own way:** Don’t belittle your efforts. Present yourself with utmost regard and the world will take notice.
* **Value Creation:** Calacanis is known for creating valuable resources. His events, such as influential incubators and networking gatherings, weren’t just about connecting investors and entrepreneurs. They also provided entertainment, emphasizing the importance of combining business with pleasure.
* **Networking and Relationship Building:** Calacanis’s events served as powerful networking platforms. Entrepreneurs can follow suit by actively building relationships, connecting with influential individuals, and creating a supportive ecosystem.
* **Risk-Taking:** Calacanis’s willingness to take risks – whether investing in startups or hosting events – contributed to his success. Entrepreneurs can learn from this by embracing calculated risks, exploring new opportunities, and not fearing failure.

1. Is there anything Calacanis has done or is currently doing that you see yourself as unwilling or unable to do?  Why?

* **Asking for help**: Calacanis was not afraid of asking for help from almost anyone. He was willing to cold call and stake his reputation on the line. I on the other hand fear of getting rejected either for new ideas or getting turned down for help.
* **Not Following Chain of command**: Calacanis was relentless in his efforts to get what he wanted. I am not too sure how my efforts to reach out to my departments head will be looked upon. My immediate boss might think that I am trying to bypass him and not follow the chain of command.
* **Cold calling**: Fear of rejection or being avoided. People might think I’m desperate for help.

1. What lessons are there from the case that you can apply, either now or on graduation?

Reflecting on Jason Calacanis’s journey, there are valuable lessons that can be applied both during the academic journey and beyond graduation:

* **Don’t be afraid to ask for help**: Calacanis was not afraid to reach out to people and ask for help. He would not second guess his approach, and this helped him make genuine connections. After asking for help he would follow the advice. Many times, we ask for advice but fail to act upon it.
* **Embrace Boldness and Creativity**: Calacanis’s audacity to think big and take unconventional paths led to his success. As I navigate my academic and professional life, I shouldn’t shy away from bold ideas or creative solutions. Innovate, challenge norms, and explore uncharted territories.
* **Resource Creation and Value Addition**: Calacanis didn’t just connect people; he created valuable resources. Being mindful of how I can contribute beyond the expected will help in the long run. Whether it’s organizing events, sharing knowledge, or building networks, focus on adding value to others.
* **Entertainment and Engagement**: Calacanis understood the power of entertainment. In your interactions, whether it’s presentations, group discussions, or networking, aim to engage and entertain. Memorable experiences leave a lasting impact.
* **Networking and Relationship Building**: Calacanis’s events were networking goldmines. Prioritize building genuine relationships. Connect with peers, mentors, and industry professionals. Networking isn’t just about business; it’s about fostering meaningful connections.
* **Calculated Risk-Taking**: Calacanis embraced risks. Be open to new opportunities, explore uncharted waters, and learn from failures.
* **Learn from Failures and Iterate**: Calacanis faced setbacks but used them as stepping stones. Learn from failures, iterate, and adapt. Failure isn’t the end; it’s a chance to refine your approach.
* **Combine Passion and Business**: Calacanis blended business with pleasure. Find joy in what you do. Passion fuels persistence and resilience.
* **Stay Curious and Lifelong Learning**: Calacanis’s podcasting journey reflects curiosity. Keep learning, stay curious, and seek knowledge beyond textbooks. Lifelong learning is a superpower.
* **Build Your Personal Brand**: Calacanis’s brand became synonymous with entrepreneurship. Cultivate your personal brand through consistent effort, authenticity, and a clear message.
* **Adapt to Changing Landscapes**: Calacanis evolved with the times. Be adaptable. Industries change, technologies advance, and trends shift. Stay agile and embrace change.