Proposal for Streamline Tutoring

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Executive Summary

Over the past year, universities across the country have been forced to move their services online due to the coronavirus pandemic. During this time, these universities have shown their lack of development in online tutoring infrastructure. This shortcoming has left countless students stranded and may have negatively impacted student retention rates during this pandemic.

Our target customer is a university with a tutoring service for its students. Streamline Tutoring will be built specifically for use in higher education, with all of the features that are necessary for that use case. Streamline will integrate the tools that universities currently use with their tutoring to services to better the experience for administrators, tutors, and students.

Current competitors include TutorTrac and Engineerica. These solutions are expensive and are missing many of the modern features that universities need to manage their tutoring services.

Streamline aims to solve all of these problems. By eliminating the need for on-site servers through the use of the Amazon cloud, Streamline will cut prices by also eliminating the need for tech support and server fees. Additionally, Streamline will give universities the flexibility to mold the product to their current tutoring structure.

Gap in the Market

In the current market, the solutions for tutor organization are either outdated and difficult to use effectively or are not intended for the specific task of tutoring, and thus, do not have all the necessary features that universities require.

Universities that have tutoring services for their students would be interested in having a system such as Streamline Tutoring. They would convert because current solutions simply do not meet their administrative needs and are not intuitive for students to use, decreasing the reach of these necessary tutoring services to universities' students. Streamline would give universities the tools to increase efficiency on the administrative end and attract students to their tutoring services. This would help increase universities' retention rates and overall reputation.

Meeting the Market's Need

Streamline Tutoring will meet the market's need by providing an easy-to-use web application for universities' tutoring programs that includes all the features that such a program would need. Streamline will have a simple user interface so that students who have never used the system before will be able to access the tutoring services they need. Streamline will be compatible with existing software such as Moodle and Zoom to integrate structure that universities have already implemented.

Implementation

Management

Streamline Tutoring will be managed by its contributors, Rohin Gilman, Evan Schwarzenbach, and Stephen Watson.

Development

Streamline will be developed using the following technologies:

- AWS Cloud Computing Services (to store universities' information about students and their sessions),
- Google Web Toolkit (to build the website and user interface).

Marketing and Distribution

Streamline Tutoring will be marketed by first allowing universities to sample the software before subscribing. Distribution will be via the user´s browser of choice, no downloads are required to use Streamline.

Monetization

Monetization will be through a subscription model. Universities will purchase an annual subscription for Streamline Tutoring.

The Problem and Our Solution

Many of the current scheduling tools for universities' tutoring services have poor user interfaces, which cause confusion among students looking to schedule tutoring sessions online. Also, once students do figure out the interface, scheduling more sessions can feel unnecessarily tedious as classes are not remembered, so all information must be specified for each use.

Our solution, Streamline Tutoring, will provide a more intuitive and understandable website that will provide ease of access to tutoring sessions for students.

Additionally, current solutions also cause problems on the administrative side of tutoring services. They are inflexible and lack the features to upload information about multiple students or tutoring sessions at one time, severely decreasing efficiency.

Streamline will offer flexibility that allows university tutoring centers to eliminate these inefficiencies.

Industry Need for Our Technology

Streamline Tutoring will replace the current software solutions as the website to schedule tutoring sessions. Because many students will be looking for educational support, they will need an accessible website to provide a reliable and digestible middleman between themselves and their instructors.

Market Analysis/Primary Market/Secondary Market

The main competitors for Streamline Tutoring include TutorTrac and Engineerica, along with an assortment of solutions not intended for use in tutoring services. These software solutions are already instituted in many universities. Our main goal is to is to demonstrate how Streamline would be a better fit for universities' tutoring services than any of these solutions.

The primary market targeted by Streamline is large universities with an extensive centralized tutoring system. The secondary market would focus on smaller universities and private companies.

Marketing Strategies

Overview

Streamline Tutoring is looking to topple the monopoly that the current solutions hold over the scheduling system on college campuses. Since the current systems are substandard in their present states, we only need to modestly improve upon their design to justify a switch to our website. By offering a much better product, we will far surpass this low bar for success. We will also offer our services at a lower price because there is no other strong competition. The cost of developing a new user interface better than will be low, as we only need tools to create a host site and a database to store information for the universities. Our product will also be open to modifications and user feedback post launch.

Primary Customer Analysis and Entry Strategy

For Streamline Tutoring, our strategy is to provide a sample of our product to our customers, and with this opportunity, show how our host website is a superior tool for students to link with university tutors. If the customer then chooses to use our product, they will purchase the software that we provide on a yearly subscription basis. Once our product starts to gain traction among universities, we will see a large growth of adopters.

Core Competency

Streamline's core competency is creating an optimized host website so students can reliably find tutors and a database for universities to store information about students and their tutoring sessions. Streamline aims to be cheaper and more accessible than its competition while also being open to frequent additions and user feedback.

Sales Strategy

Pricing

After a university tries a sample of Streamline Tutoring, they will have the option to purchase an annual subscription to our software. We aim to have competitive prices that can undercut the market, so Streamline will get a few early adopters. Once we get these adopters, we expect

more customers to switch to our program as it will be priced cheaper while aggressively improving the services offered by our competitors.

Positioning

We are creating Streamline Tutoring to be utilized by universities with a centralized tutoring service.

Promotion

We plan to primarily utilize direct contact with universities with our product, but, as we get adopters, we hope to benefit from a conversational marketing scheme where universities that adopt our website will help promote it in the future.

Place

Streamline Tutoring will be able to run on any home computer or laptop in a web browser.

Competition

TutorTrac

TutorTrac is a tutoring appointment managing product of the Redrock Software Corporation that focusses on higher education institutions.

Engineerica

Engineerica is a company whose focus is building attendance tracking systems for academic institutions. Its solutions include academic center management software, classroom attendance applications, and conference and event tracking systems.

Development Strategy

We will develop our product in stages, beginning with forming a general idea of the functions we want our product to perform and the problems we want it to solve. We will then create a basic prototype of our product that we will continue to build upon as we hear customer feedback, until we have a product that performs all of its desired functions and satisfies students' needs.

Seed Stage

We will come up with ideas as to how we can make finding tutors and scheduling sessions seamless and easy, even for customers who have never used a tool like this. We will focus on the issues that customers do not like about TutorTrac and ensure that we find ways to solve these issues so that our final product is the obvious better option.

Startup Stage

We will implement all of our ideas into a prototype that contains all of the most basic functions of our final product.

Development Stage and Launch

We will build upon the prototype until it is a functioning, easy-to-use, good-looking product that competes with TutorTrac. Clients will be able to use the product and provide feedback so that we can address their issues with the product as needed.

Barriers

Some barriers that our product may face entering this market are:

- Competing with current solutions on the market
- Lack of customer awareness of our product
- Partnering with universities to build a strong customer base
- Technology and software creation
- May have to partner with other companies to improve integration with other products that universities are using
- Ease of transition for customers

Critical Risks

One critical risk in creating our product is that customers are unable to see why they should use our product instead of our competitors'. We must implement features that make our product an obvious competitor to draw universities away from their current system and introduce them to our new one.

Customer Discoveries

Interviews

The following questions were asked to LSU employees, student workers, and students who use LSU's tutoring software regularly via an online survey.

1. First and Last Name (7 responses)
2. How have you used tutor organization software (ex: TutorTrac)? (7 responses)
    - As a student (4/7 respondents)
    - As a tutor (or SI) (3/7 respondents)
    - As tutoring support staff (1/7 respondents)
    - As an administrator (1/7 respondents)
3. What software have you used for tutor organization? (7 responses)
    - CAS LSU
    - TutorTrac (3 respondents)
    - TutorTrac, AppointmentPlus (2 respondents)
    - TutorTrac, Accudemia
4. What features do you like about the software that you have used? What would you keep? (7 responses)
    - Schedule
    - It lists what exactly the student needs help within the class. It lists other tutors' availabilities so I can refer the students to other tutors if I am not available at a certain time
    - I like the visual timeline and the drop-down menu of all my courses to choose from.
    - It was easy to select my class.
    - How easy it is to make an appointment for someone and how easy we can just check everybody in from the schedule.
    - scheduling, course assignments for tutors, student information imports with course schedules, sections, faculty, etc.
    - the display of available times as intervals of 30 minutes
5. What do you dislike about the software that you have used? What would you change? (7 responses)

- Side bar with options is small, need friendlier interface
- I would have to manually select whether the student attended or missed the meeting. I can't click directly on the appointment to see the details; I have to click somewhere else.
- I dislike the look of the website and the excessive number of requirements before submitting my request.
- It didn't work very well. I didn't get any results and it didn't tell me why. It would have been easier to type in times than trying to use the timeline. The calendar feature also wasn't easy to use.
- The only thing that comes to mind is like when people do not make it to an appointment and we have to make sure that we mark them as not attended, like I wish it would just do it on its own at the right time.
- limited reports, streamlined SI session entries
- mode of selecting desired dates/times is not user friendly and difficult to navigate/understand. I would give this a more direct interface

6. What features would you like to see in tutor organization software (something that current or previous software did not have)? (7 responses)
    - Mobile app
    - Automatically selects whether student showed up or not depending on whether they clicked the link. Allow us to click directly on appointment.
    - Something fast and easy to complete. Also, something more accessible on mobile devices.
    - I would like for there to be an easier way to select a time and a date.
    - I would like to see a full day’s schedule on one page without having to scroll and I like how easy it is to alter some one’s schedule.
    - quicker more efficient group batch entries, easier ways to assign roles/responsibilities
    - As an SI, it would be useful to be able to see who scheduled appointments with me and at what time(s)
7. Would you be interested in a software package such as Streamline Tutoring, a website that would meet all of your tutor organization needs with a modern, intuitive interface? (7 responses)
    - Yes (3 respondents)

- Absolutely!
- Sure
- would be interested to see features

Conclusions

Our hypotheses were confirmed by the customer discovery experiments.