
BUSINESS SERVICES
OPERATIONS RESEARCH EVENT



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Description of the Business:

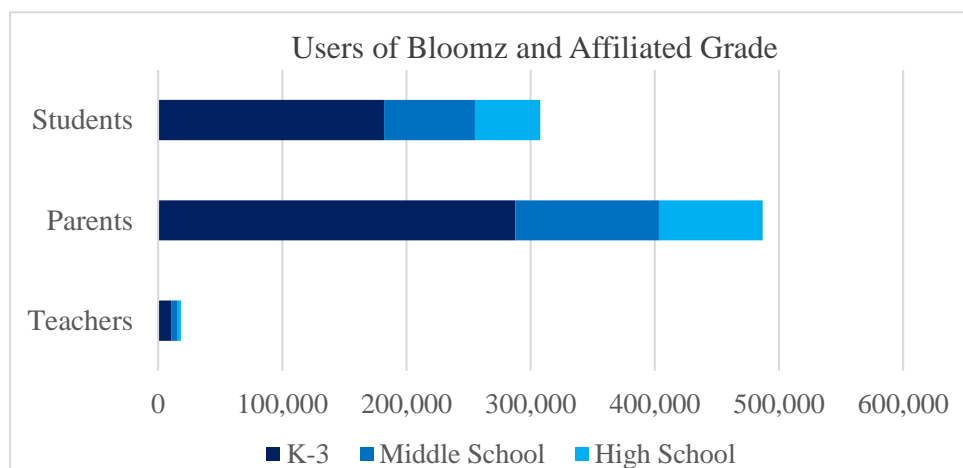
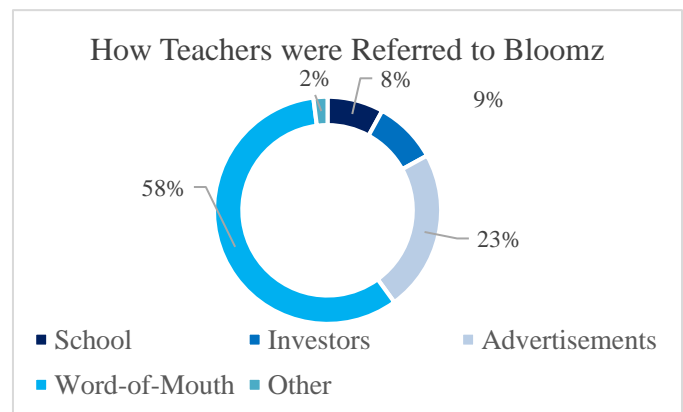
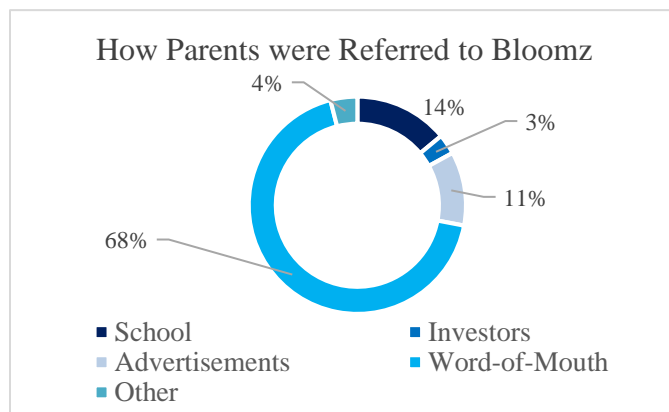
Bloomz began as a startup in 2015 by Chakrapani Appalabattula to bridge the gap between teachers and parents, allowing for a clearer understanding of their students' learning abilities. Bloomz specializes in parent-teacher communication as well as include features to organize events, message between teachers and parents, and keep track of students' progress. Over the years, Bloomz has received funding from numerous sponsors and generated a user base of hundreds of thousands around the world. Bloomz offers a mobile application as well as a website system to keep track of the class.

RESEARCH PROBLEM:

As a hired consultant for Bloomz, we have been tasked with researching Bloomz's current promotional plan and use of Social, Local, and Mobile promotional strategies. This paper will detail a plan to help Bloomz to further develop these strategies.

Research Conducted		
Research Method	Date(s) Conducted	# of People
Manager Interviews	October 24, 2016	2
Employee Surveys	October 24-28, 2016	7
Focus Group	October 28,30, 2016	9
Secondary Research	October 29, 2016	N/A
Customer Interviews	October 2016	1,600

These surveys were conducted to see which features were prevalent in the application. The Bloomz team could see how users reacted to new and existing features to visualize possible improvements or additions.



Many Bloomz users are associated with elementary school. This is still an area for improvement as older students are a large potential customer base for Bloomz.

Research and Data Conclusions

1. The Bloomz application on iOS is slow but also more popular.
2. Middle and high school students are not primarily targeted by Bloomz.
3. The number of customers referred to by social media is low.

Proposed Goals

1. Increase the number of Bloomz users by 80% in school districts in two years.
2. Increase number of trial users that stay with the app by 20% in two years.
3. Increase revenue by 60% in one year.

Proposed Actions

1. Communicate between teachers and students
2. Localize marketing strategies
3. Advertise to middle school and high school students
4. Streamline app to make it easier to use
5. Sell In-App purchases

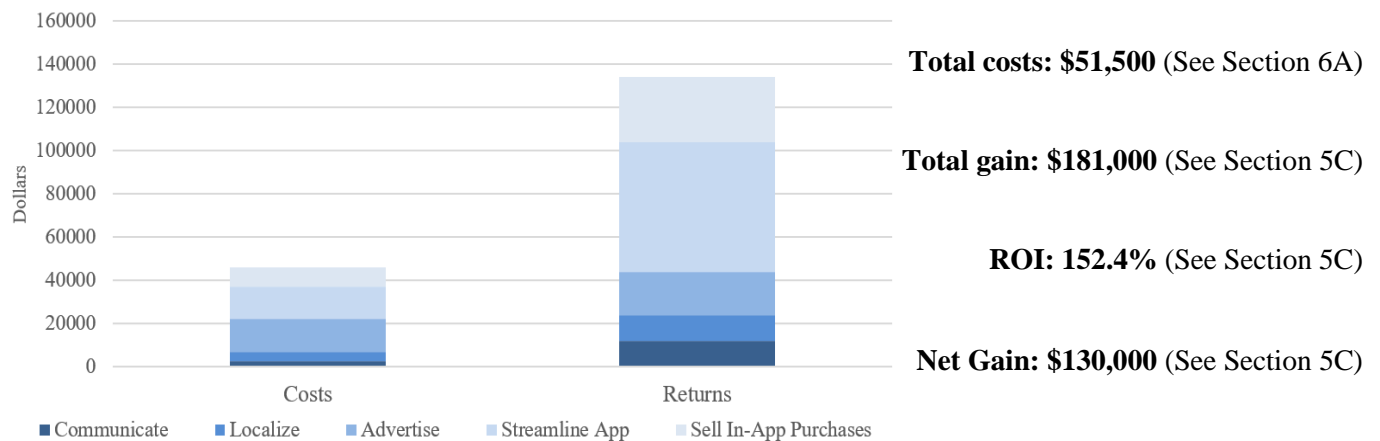
Recommended Activities

Activity	Implementation Date	Focus Goal Met
<i>Include Student Profiles</i>	March 14, 2017	1 & 3
<i>Advertise App on Small Local Websites and Newspapers</i>	February 1, 2017	1
<i>Advertise to Middle/High School Students: Social Media</i>	March 1, 2017	1
<i>Streamline App</i>	February 15, 2017	2
<i>Sell In-App Purchases</i>	April 15, 2017	3

Overview of Costs

Activity	Cost per hour	Time/Criteria	Number of Employees	Total Cost
<i>Communication</i>	\$50	50 Hours	1	\$2,500
<i>Localize</i>	\$300	15 Articles	1	\$4,500
<i>Advertise</i>	\$15	1,000 Hours	1	\$15,000
<i>Streamline App</i>	\$100	45 Hours	1	\$4,500
<i>Sell In-App purchases</i>	\$15	1000 Hours	2	\$15,000
<i>Outside Consultant</i>	\$10,000	One-time Fee	1	\$10,000

Costs and Returns of Project CLASS



A. Description of the Business or Organization

MISSION STATEMENT:

Bloomz’s mission is to help teachers save time and to keep parents in the know; using “The Three Cs”: Connect, Coordinate and Communicate.

Bloomz was founded in April of 2015 by Chakrapani Appalabattula. This application was created to bridge the gap between teachers and students outside of school through communication. Appalabattula created this website and application with the help of the head designer, Edmond Yu and in May of 2015, the application was released to all Lake Washington School District (LWSD) schools but the app’s usage also started to boom in the schools located outside of the LWSD. Soon, the students and teachers of adjacent districts began implementing Bloomz into everyday classroom activities.¹

Bloomz is a mobile application that allows teachers to communicate with the parents of their students. Teachers can share the student’s progress in the class and update the parent on what is going on in the class. Planning events and parent meetings can all be done in the app and Bloomz will notify all included parties about the event. Students can also submit homework to teachers for a grade. If an academic emergency occurs, parents and teachers can message each other through the app. Overall, the Bloomz app can keep track of all academic information, making all academic life easier.

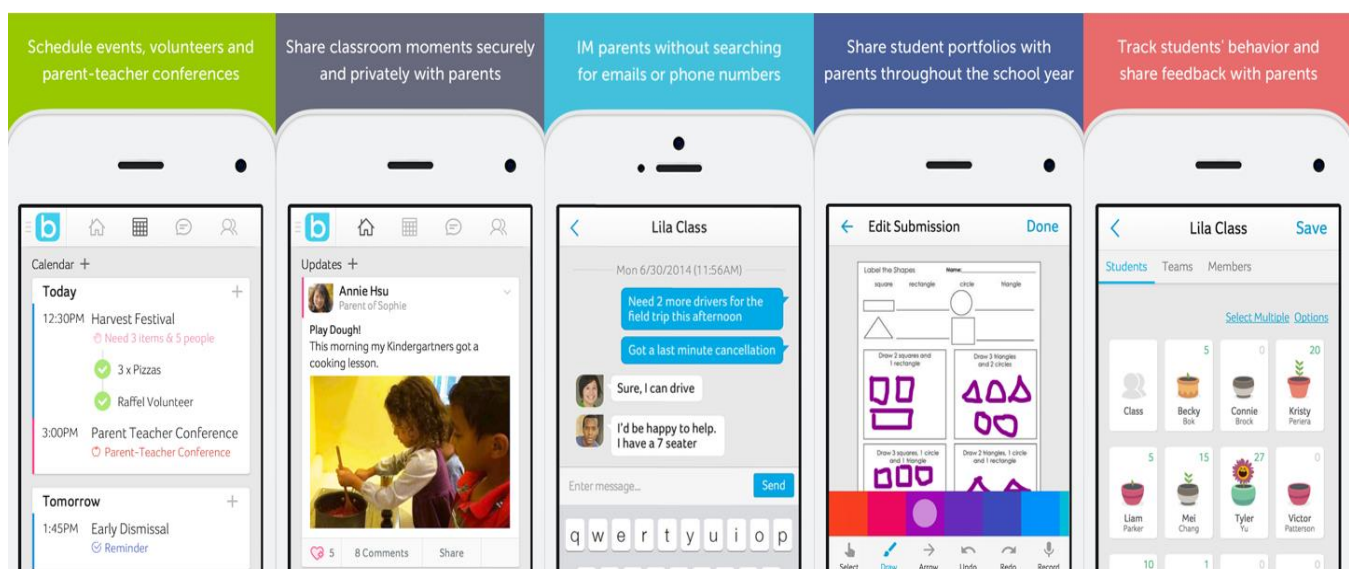
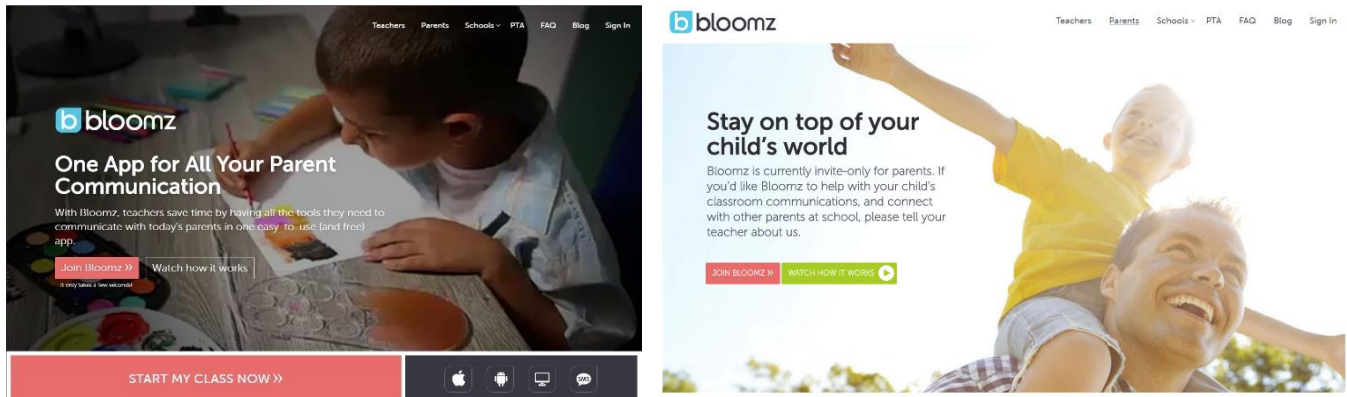


Figure 2.1

¹ <https://www.bloomz.net/about/>

As of now, Bloomz has only two different profile types implemented into its application and website. **Teachers** in school have all the features shown in Figure 2.1. They can manage multiple classrooms at one time. **Parents** do not have all the features shown in Figure 2.1, they only have limited features, such as tracking their child's behavior, instant messaging, and scheduling events.



From left to right, teachers and parents' page under the Bloomz' website.

Additionally, Bloomz markets towards a mass of schools in the same district, as well as markets to districts as a whole. For the school districts, Bloomz allows schools to trial the application and website for months at a time, to see whether Bloomz will be a good fit. The schools sign-up through a Google Form application, and will get an email back on information following their implementation process.

Competitors:

Bloomz' competitors consist of ClassDojo, Remind, and Google Classroom. ClassDojo's main features include student profiles as well as customizable "monsters". The teacher can track participation and the students can receive feedback on their behavior. Remind's campaign is mostly based on mass texting as well as blogging assignments. Google Classroom allows for students to turn in assignments and have the teacher grade them. Although these companies are more well-known than Bloomz, Bloomz contains more features and allows for a better user experience.



B. Description of the Community

Bloomz specializes in parent-teacher communication, competing with Google Classroom and ClassDojo, which are similar applications. However, Bloomz offers features that neither application has implemented, such as keeping track of students' progress, events, and assignments. Bloomz is primarily targeting elementary school teachers and parents.

Economics:

Bloomz's economics change with the location of its product. As the economy is growing, more people are interested and able to invest in new markets. Technology is being used increasingly as cheaper and more advanced smartphones are released each year. The largest employers in the region are Microsoft, Amazon and Boeing². These high-tech employers attract many people to come across the country to get a job in Northwest Washington, raising the population of educated, wealthy, and skilled workers. **The higher population means an increase in the number of schools in Washington as well as the number of students in any one school.**

This leads to more funding for school programs, such as implementing technology into every classroom, which encourages teachers to use mobile applications to keep track of their classroom activities. The unemployment rate in Redmond is low, at 3.4%, which is 1.5% lower than the average rate in the rest of the U.S. However, in Washington, the unemployment rate is 5.7%, proving that the LWSD would be more susceptible to technology implemented in schools.

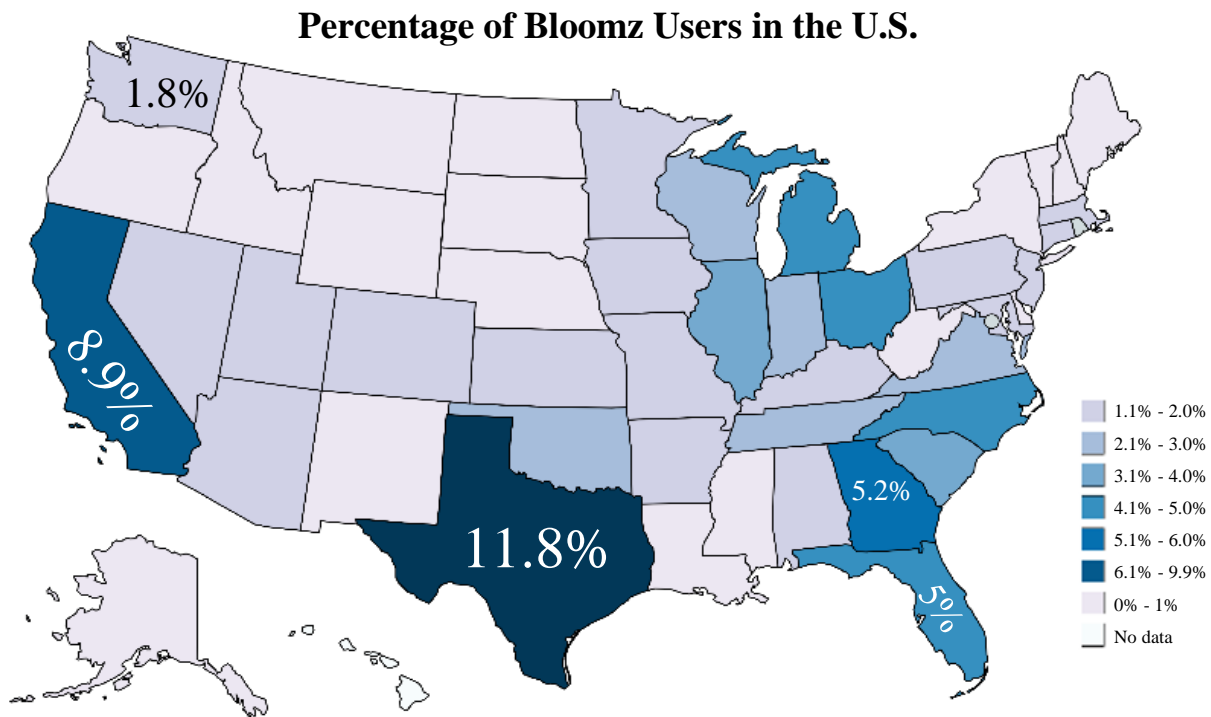
Unemployment Rates in U.S.	
Area	Unemployment Rate
Redmond	3.4%
Washington	5.7%
Pacific North West	4.9%
U.S.	4.9%

Figure 2.2

Because the unemployment rate is so low in Redmond, parents are able to fund their child's education as well as fund programs in schools to improve school uses of technology, such as computers in class.

² <http://www.edc-seaking.org/service/economic-data/economic-basics>

Geographics:



The map above shows that at least 31% of Bloomz's users are located throughout California, Florida, Georgia and Texas. Texas holds the highest number of users at 95,924 people with 11.8% of Bloomz's total users and California is at 72,350 users, which is 8.9% of total users.

California and Texas' unemployment rates are relatively low, at 4.8%³ and 5.1%³, meaning their states would be more receptive to new ideas. They are also more likely to have technology in their schools, which increases the user base for Bloomz.

Demographics:

The City of Redmond, where Bloomz headquarters is located, includes a relatively high percentage of families, where household sizes are still increasing⁴. In 2013, the median income of U.S. households was more than \$50,000.⁵ U.S. public school teachers reported that they used technology in their classrooms 69% of the time⁶.

³ <http://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/state-unemployment-update.aspx>

⁴ <http://www.ci.redmond.or.us/our-community/demographics>

⁵ <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2014/acs/acsbr13-02.pdf>

⁶ <http://sylviamartinez.com/teachers-use-of-educational-technology-in-u-s-public-schools-2009/>

Mobile-Device Usage for School Work, by Grade Level

Figure 2.4

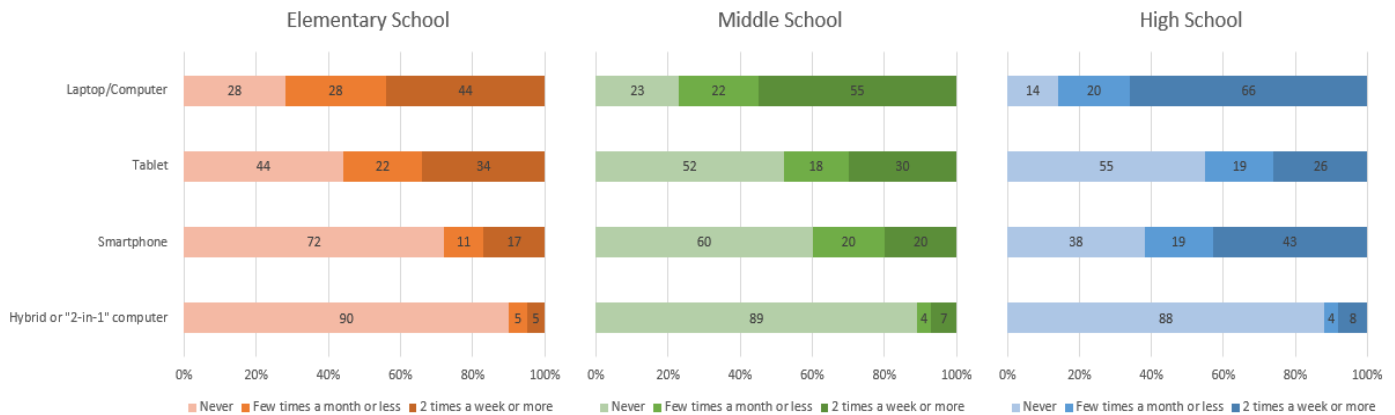


Figure 2.4 shows the use of technology in various levels of schools. As seen above, most elementary students use a laptop or computer two times a week or more. Elementary students can use their laptop or school computer to check their Bloomz account because they are using laptops more. 61% of students in high school and middle school use their laptop at least two times a week.⁷ This number can be decreased if Bloomz's application holds all information of upcoming homework and events, which pushes the students to use a smartphone more, making the number of laptops and computers decline.⁸

Socioeconomics:

In the past 10 years, many people have started spending a significant amount of money on technology. It is said that more than 65% of Americans own a smartphone and most are technologically literate.⁹ Education is valued in America, and especially in Redmond, where incomes are high. Americans also value being social and connected to the outside world. The Bloomz application capitalizes on both and offers a communication protocol between educators and parents.

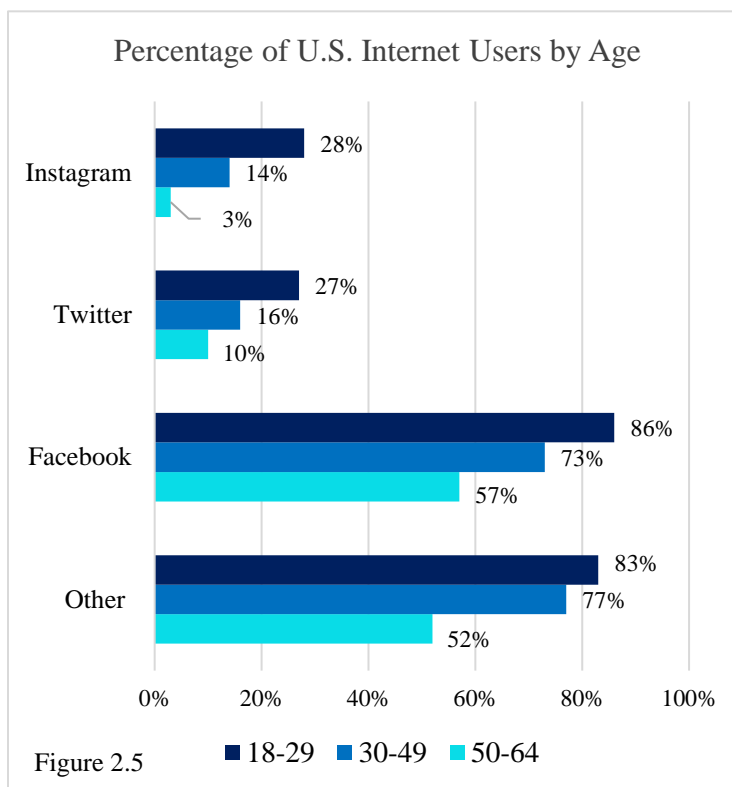
In Redmond, as more offices open, the average income increases. With higher incomes, neighborhoods slowly become wealthier and more open to newer ideas. This luxury affects the well-being of schools as well. Schools improve exponentially, starting with basic funds, such as food, basic facilities and rooms, then leading to secondary funds, such as technology, field trips, busses and clubs.

⁷ Data found from the averages of the table above

⁸ <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/03/the-schools-where-kids-cant-go-online/387589/>

⁹ <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/10/29/technology-device-ownership-2015/>

Figure 2.5 shows the percentage of adults in each age group that use social media. Facebook is the dominant social media platform for users of all ages. Younger adults use social media more than older generations, so Bloomz has difficulty marketing toward older parents/teachers. This trend also suggests that younger parents and teachers will adopt social media as it becomes more prevalent in society, so Bloomz will likely be able to target a larger market in the future.



C. Overview of the Business or Organization's Current Promotional Strategies and Practices

SoLoMo is a philosophy of marketing that targets the local market through the internet. Most businesses that use this strategy are small and focused on maximizing profits on the local scale. These companies market using social media platforms and make sure that their business information is accessible from a mobile device. The three aspects of SoLoMo are interrelated and build off each other. Used together, they help a business target an internet-connected audience through modern technology.

Current SoLoMo Strategies:

As of now, Bloomz barely has a social media presence. They are on Facebook but do not spend much effort developing their account. They only have about 5,000 likes, which is miniscule compared to the 812,000 users it has (see page 13). This is a good idea because following a small educational company on social media is not a preference of some people, and Bloomz is targeting students in elementary to middle school and their parents, who are less active on Facebook (see Figure 2.5). Bloomz' Twitter page only has about 2,000 followers, which is an area for improvement. Their followers tend to not like posts, and just view and close the post.

Current Promotional Strategies:

Bloomz's strategies for local marketing include advertising at schools and asking teachers to promote Bloomz in their classes.

Bloomz maintains its Twitter page with regular posts about its application and "how-to" tips on the website and app. The Bloomz team posts at least twice a week, getting about 30 likes on each post. It has about 2,000 followers.

They have an active Facebook page with over 5,000 followers on the page. Bloomz is aiming to reach out to principals and even school district administrators to implement this application into daily use for students. Bloomz is an app/website based company, and their application includes features such as agenda setting, messaging within classes, planning events and even seeing a student's progress in class.



Bloomz' Facebook page

The number of users referred to Bloomz through social media is low, as seen in its lackluster social media posts. Users do not feel engaged when scrolling through Bloomz' social media pages and the posts are not designed well.

RESEARCH PROBLEM:

As a hired consultant for Bloomz, we have been tasked with researching Bloomz's current promotional plan and use of Social, Local, and Mobile promotional strategies. This paper will detail a plan to help Bloomz to further develop these strategies.

A. Description and Rationale of Research Methodologies Selected to Conduct the Research Study

Interviews, surveys, and focus groups were the best research options, as the manager alone provided insight on the company for the coming years, and employees and customers revealed their attitude towards Bloomz. The focus group discussed issues with Bloomz's advertising campaign through social media and their first impressions of the company through the website and mobile app.

Manager Interview:

The CEO of Bloomz, Chakrapani Appalabattula, was interviewed with forced-choice and open-ended questions to provide understanding of Bloomz's SoLoMo strategy. Appalabattula also gave insight towards Bloomz's current promotional strategies and provided a budget for marketing improvements.

Employee Survey:

Each of Bloomz's seven employees received the employee survey. The survey focused on the effectiveness of SoLoMo media in general and the employees' suggestions for Bloomz's advertising to reach new markets. Employees were also asked about the current strategies Bloomz uses and their opinion on the effectiveness of Bloomz's current marketing plan. *See Appendix B for Employee survey.*

Focus Group:

The focus group consisted of Bloomz's CEO, employees, and some of its users. The group was left to discuss their ideas thorough and precise responses. The respondents mainly talked about their opinion on various elements of the social, local, and mobile marketing strategies and their suggestions for improving Bloomz's website and application. The respondents also provided data about their behavioral characteristics, especially in relation to technology. The purpose of the focus group was to provide insight into the success of Bloomz's SoLoMo strategy. *See Appendix D for the Focus Group topics.*

Secondary Research:

Secondary research focused on Bloomz's SoLoMo strategy. Bloomz's Facebook and Twitter accounts were analyzed for relevancy to customers and conversion rates. Additionally, analytics on

Bloomz's website were explored. Information about Bloomz's competitors, such as ClassDojo, Remind, and Google Classroom, was found publicly available on the internet. Demographics of Bloomz's target markets were found online through sources such as the U.S. Census and the City of Redmond government website.

Customer Survey:

Since Bloomz did not want to inconvenience their customers with surveys, Appalabattula provided Bloomz's own surveys that were conducted in the past month. Bloomz's users were asked about the application and how they were referred to Bloomz. Customers were also asked about the performance of the application and possible improvements. This survey consisted of force-choice questions, relating to customer satisfaction and how users were referred to Bloomz.

B. Process Used to Conduct the Selected Research Methods

Manager Interview:

The CEO of Bloomz, Appalabattula, was interviewed in person on October 24. He provided a detailed analysis of Bloomz's marketing strategy and its relation to SoLoMo, as well as statistics about the Bloomz app.

Employee Survey:

Employees of Bloomz received surveys in person on October 24, 2016. Seven out of seven surveys were returned completed the same week. These surveys targeted the workers' perspective of Bloomz's current plans for marketing using SoLoMo, as well as possible upcoming strategies.

Focus Group:

The focus group consisted of the CEO of Bloomz, two employees, two parents, two teachers, and two third grade students. The group had a discussion on October 28, 2016. Later, on October 30, 2016, a focus group of potential customers consisting of parents and students was assembled. Questions about Bloomz's SoLoMo strategy were open-ended to encourage thorough responses. In total, the two focus group sessions took three hours each.

Secondary Research:

Bloomz's website was used to conduct secondary research and was conducted on October 29, 2016. Due to a desire to not cause an inconvenience to customers, Bloomz was not willing to send out additional surveys to their users. Instead, Appalabattula released data from Bloomz's own surveys that were conducted in October 2016.

Customer Survey:

These customer surveys were conducted by Bloomz themselves. Within ten days of distribution through the app, 1,600 surveys were returned out of 812,910 users. Customers were generally asked only forced-choice questions to provide insight into how Bloomz was being used in the school environment and at home, as well as general customer demographics and socioeconomics.

Research Conducted					
Research Method	Location	Date(s) Conducted	Length	Surveys Sent	Returned
Manager Interviews	Headquarters	October 24, 2016	1 hour	1	1
Employee Surveys	Headquarters	October 24-28, 2016	1 week	7	7
Focus Group	Headquarters	October 28,30, 2016	3 hours	N/A	N/A
Secondary Research	N/A	October 29, 2016	1 week	N/A	N/A
Customer Interviews	N/A	October 2016	N/A	812,910	1,600

IV. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY



A. Findings of the Research Study

Manager:

The interview with Appalabattula provided insight into the marketing strategies used. Bloomz has a social media presence, albeit weak, on both Facebook and Twitter. **Appalabattula said:**

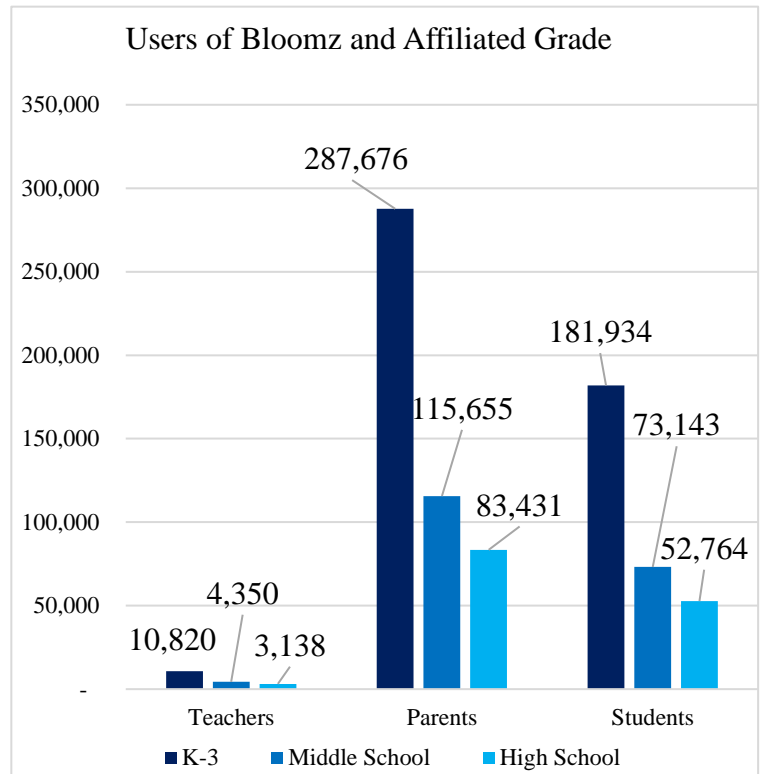
“We do not focus our marketing strategies on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram because parents are not willing to follow an education-based company on social media.”

As Bloomz' Facebook and Twitter lacks engagement, viewers tend to ignore Bloomz's posts. This situation calls for more appealing posts also targeting students instead of only teachers and parents. The trend on page 7 suggests that older generations tend to avoid social media while younger adults turn toward

social technology for communication.

Appalabattula explained that Bloomz gets a large portion of its revenue from school districts using the app. To target the school districts and schools as a whole, Bloomz offers in-person training sessions. School districts often request trial versions of Bloomz, so representatives from Bloomz go to the schools and demonstrate to teachers and administrators how to navigate and use Bloomz.

Appalabattula additionally provided demographic information on Bloomz users. Only 1.8% of Bloomz users are situated in Washington while the most users are in Texas, California, or Florida. As of October 2016, there are **812,913** active users of Bloomz worldwide, including students, with most users falling under the K-3 age group. Bloomz primarily uses word-of-mouth marketing to reach new users. Teachers recommend the application to their colleagues, who recommend it to other friends.



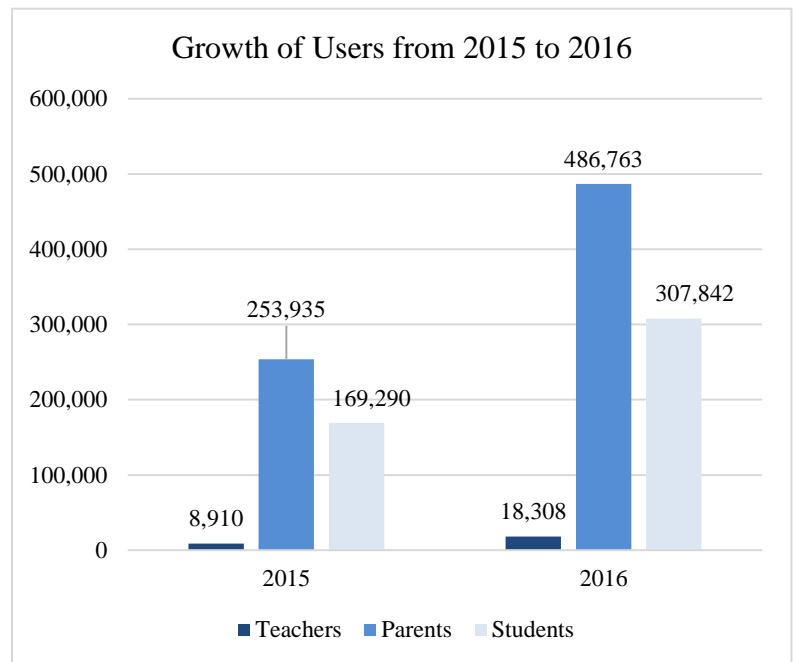
Appalabattula stated:

“We do not market towards students because without a teacher, a student cannot use the application.”

The application and website are targeted towards parents and teachers, as they are the only users with access to it (student users have access to a limited version of the application). Due to the product not focusing on students, Bloomz’ Facebook posts are not relevant to students, and are focused towards parents and teachers.



This year, 242,226 new users signed up and have become active users of Bloomz. Bloomz’s customer base is increasing and is bound to reach one million by December of 2018. The metric of user signups can be used to see which marketing techniques are performing the best. As of now, the word-of-mouth promotional strategy has been the most successful.



Appalabattula explained:

“Our users are increasing greatly; however, they can increase even more if we introduce customizable profiles/avatars for students to enjoy.”

As stated before, Bloomz does not target towards students. However, the CEO believes that streamlining the application to involve student profiles will ultimately engage students to use the application. This activity will be discussed further on page 19.

Employee Survey:

Employees often get personally involved with schools and districts using Bloomz to educate teachers about the application and answer questions or concerns. However, employees at Bloomz felt they were mostly “disconnected” from the social media of Bloomz, showing that

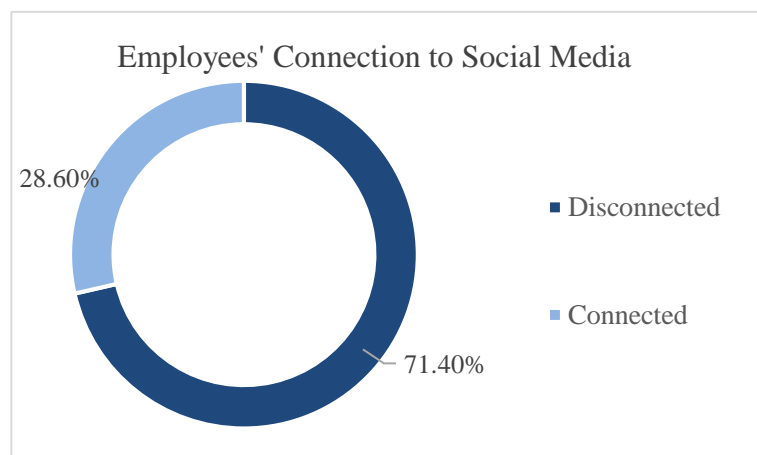
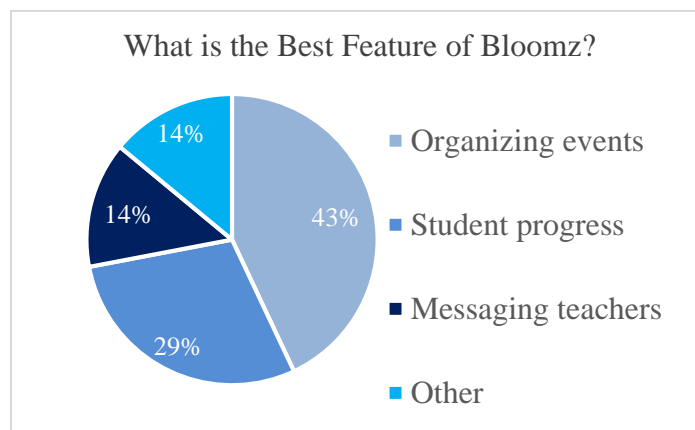


Figure 4.3

Bloomz does not value social media as much as employees at other businesses.

To most employees, organization and planning of events and conferences between parents and teachers is the best feature of the app. Around 29% thought “Seeing your student’s progress,” and 14% thought that “Being able to message your teacher or parent” was the best.

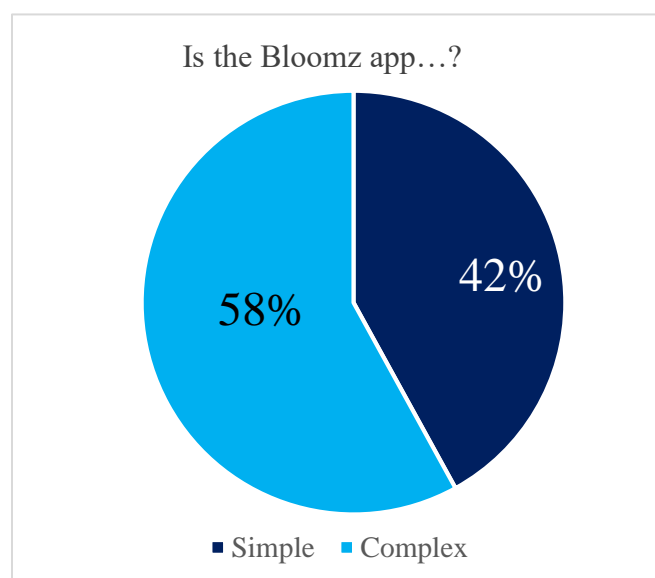


According to employees, conversion of users into loyal customers is the most important facet of Bloomz’s current marketing plan because Bloomz’s adverting success is a result of strong word-of-mouth communication by loyal users. When asked about improvements to the application, most employees suggested improving the experience of Bloomz on the iOS platform.

Focus Group:

The focus group, consisting of potential and current customers, discussed the strengths and weaknesses of Bloomz’s social marketing strategy. Participants came to a consensus that while Bloomz fills a niche within the application industry, Bloomz does not promote itself as effectively as it can. Bloomz is largely unknown to the public, even within teacher circles.

Examining Bloomz’s website and application, 42% of the interviewees found it easy to navigate and find important information. However, the actual application itself proved much too complex for easy use. Customers on an iPhone also mentioned that the slowness, while Android users did not notice any speed-related problems. Comparing to *ClassDojo*, potential customers said that Bloomz was more focused toward parents, so Bloomz would not be as successful in higher education, where there is less of a need for parent-teacher communication.



Looking through Bloomz’s Facebook page, interviewees noticed that some posts were not strongly related to Bloomz and suggested that posts stay relevant towards the target market. Furthermore, the majority of participants said that the Bloomz’s Facebook is not very helpful in recruiting potential customers, because nowadays, Facebook is rarely used for education. Customers say they would most likely recommend the app through word-of-mouth over social media since personal promotion is more credible and Bloomz’s social media is very “irrelevant” to users.

Secondary Research:

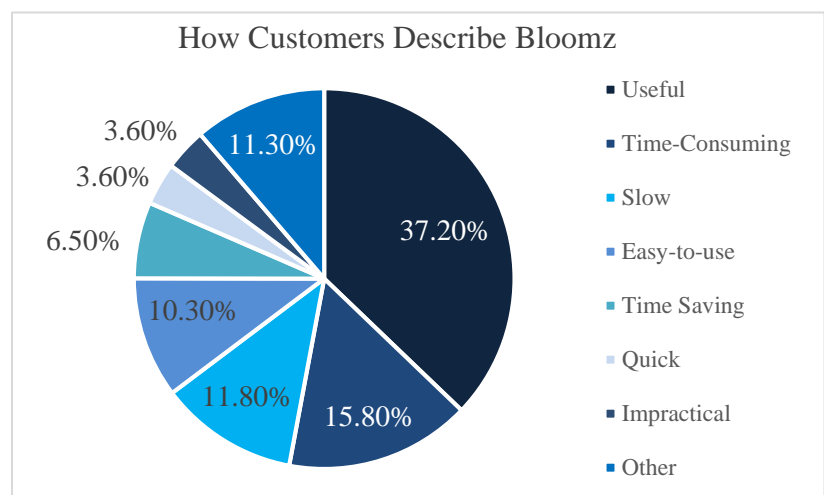
Secondary research was conducted through research on *Business Insider* and Bloomz’s competitors, such as *ClassDojo* and *Google Classroom*. Bloomz’s internal data was also utilized. ClassDojo uses a very successful avatar system that allows young students to customize their own “monster” profile icon. Google Classroom uses a website to keep track of teacher related events.

According *Business Insider*, iOS users spend more money on items than Android users, on average. Bloomz must capitalize on this opportunity to increase its user base and ultimately, its revenue.

Customer Survey:

Overall, according to Bloomz’s customer surveys, teachers are more satisfied with Bloomz than parents because educators are more accustomed to the application due to daily usage. Almost 70% of teachers say that Bloomz has saved them at least an hour per week. The chart below shows that about 16% of teachers using Bloomz reports that the app is time consuming, but effective in the long term.

The majority, 58%, of Bloomz’ users that were teachers were referred to Bloomz through word of mouth, 23% were referred through advertisements, 9% through investors, 8% through school affiliation, and 2% through another source.



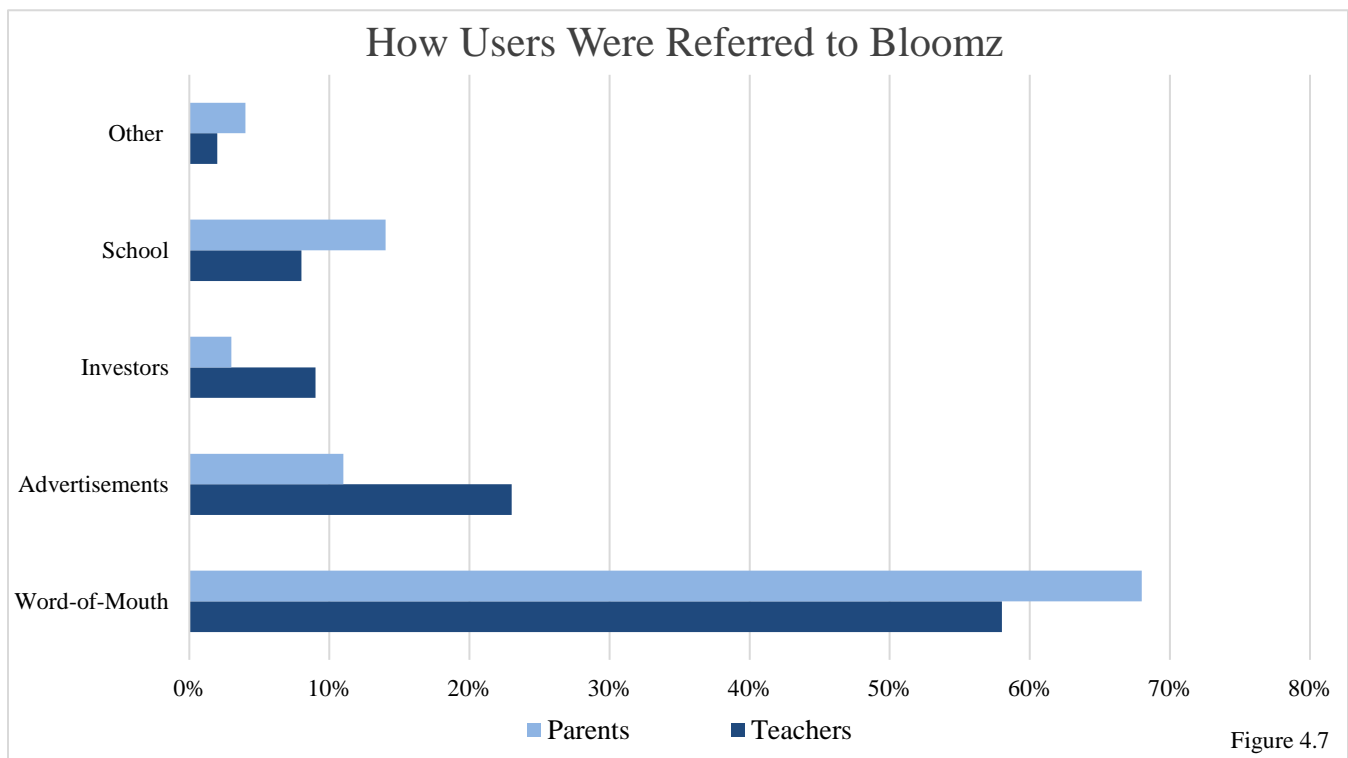


Figure 4.7

Figure 4.7 shows that Bloomz’s dominant promotional strategy is word-of-mouth. 68% of parents were referred to Bloomz through the words of their peers, and 58% of teachers were referred to Bloomz by this same method. Bloomz has two different options: exploit this personal promotion style, increasing their customer base, or focus on the other promotional styles, such as advertisements or social media. Diversifying marketing strategies will bring new types of customer bases as well as spread the user base out more, instead of bringing in the same audiences.

B. Conclusions Based on the Findings

Research conducted through surveys and interviews led to the following conclusions about the effectiveness of Bloomz’s SoLoMo marketing.

1. Bloomz are targeted towards parents and teachers, not students.

As stated on page 4, Bloomz’ website only contains three pages, schools, teachers and parents. As of now, students are able to sign up for a class, however, they can only check weekly participation – and cannot engage in the same activities that parents and teachers can – on the application. The app is lacking in student engagement, and their Facebook and Twitter, even less so. Their social media posts are targeted

towards parents and not appealing in the student's perspective.

2. Middle and high school students are not primarily targeted by Bloomz.

Students are less targeted than parents on social media, however, the middle and high school students that use social media more than younger students, are especially lacking in engagement. Less than 10% of teachers and parents that use Bloomz have a child that is in middle or high school. This could steer the creators of Bloomz to put all their efforts to raise this percentage or keep their focus on elementary students only.

3. The number of customers referred to by social media is low.

Less than 20% of customers found out about Bloomz through social media. Competitors to Bloomz have higher conversion rates due to their social media. Bloomz' dominating referral method is word-of-mouth, which is an area that does not need improvements as of now.

S.W.O.T. Analysis:

An overall analysis has been conducted through a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis. The SWOT analysis is divided into an internal section and an external section. Internal factors include People, Resources, Innovation/Ideas, Marketing, Operations, and Finance factors for a PRIMOF analysis. External factors include Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, and Environmental/Ethical factors for a PESTLE analysis.

S.W.O.T. Analysis for Bloomz with P.R.I.M.O.F. Elements

Internal Factors	Strengths	Weaknesses
	People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No fixed office hours, so employees have more flexibility and more people are available at different times. All employees have experience with their profession and at least a Bachelor's degree Strong interpersonal relationships. 	People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no organized marketing department, so marketing strategy is lacking. Not many users of Bloomz. Bloomz faces difficulty expanding due to lack of users.
	Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not rely on other businesses to provide materials. All resources needed are found on technology. Easy to acquire resources because of their resources being found on technology. 	Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not rely on other business to provide materials, so they do not have a business relationship with raw material manufacturers. Does not specially educate the employees that post on social media about marketing. Bloomz's only product is the Bloomz app.
	Innovation/Ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application and website are modern. Bloomz's website is search-engine friendly and mobile-friendly. Bloomz is an award-winning app. 	Innovation/Ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most employees are not familiar with SoLoMo marketing strategies. Bloomz's app is too complex for casual users. Bloomz app on iOS is slow, according to focus group participants.
	Marketing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has strong promotion through word-of-mouth (68% of parents and 58% of teachers are referred by a friend). Marketing targets elementary and middle school teachers, who are most likely to use Bloomz. Provides how-to-use-Bloomz materials. 	Marketing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media is usually not effective. Does not have a marketing department. Bloomz's social media posts do not focus on only Bloomz-related news. Only targets parents and teachers, not students.
	Operations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily an application based company, so it is already integrated with SoLoMo. Encourages employees to help and communicate with customers. Available on both the iOS and Android store. 	Operations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not available on the Windows Store. 5% of phone users use Windows OS. The majority of users use Bloomz on an iOS device, where the Bloomz app is reported to be slow.
	Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hundreds of investors make Bloomz's funding easy. Users are attracted to Bloomz because of the free application. Smaller businesses have fewer expenses. 	Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bloomz is a free app, so little revenue generated so far. Makes no money through in-app purchases. Does not have a subscription feature for whole schools to sign up.

S.W.O.T. Analysis with P.E.S.T.L.E. elements

External Factors	Opportunities	Threats
	Political <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bloomz has users all over the world. Stable government will foster growth in education. Could obtain grants from government initiatives for funding education. 	Political <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bloomz is not well-known, especially outside the U.S. Bloomz does not have any political influence. Government attempts not to associate themselves with small private businesses.
	Economic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The U.S. government provides a lot of funding for education. People are more willing to invest into start-ups. Technology usage within schools has increased 20% in the past 10 years. 	Economic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consumers said they may choose more established competitors over Bloomz. <i>ClassDojo</i> is more widely used. <i>Google Classroom</i> is backed by a very well-known and reputable company.
	Social <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education is highly valued in the United States. Technology blogs are influential in convincing potential customers to buy. Numerous credible organizations have praised and endorsed Bloomz. 	Social <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many teachers and parents prefer the traditional method of sharing information as opposed to using technology. Bloomz's Twitter presence is weak. Bloomz and the industry of parent-teacher communication apps are relatively obscure.
	Technological <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technology usage in classrooms is increasing. More money is being spent on mobile apps. Advancing technologies in Android Operating Software and iOS allow better features in Bloomz. 	Technological <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some schools do not have accessible technology in their classrooms. Bloomz cannot be successfully used by families that do not have access to technology. Bloomz is not integrated with Windows Phone OS.
	Legal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal law requires that all children must be enrolled in a school. Bloomz complies with federal law concerning usage of data about minors. Bloomz's current marketing is legal and Bloomz does not falsely advertise. 	Legal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some school districts cannot allow teachers to use Bloomz because Bloomz's privacy policy is not compatible with the policy of the school district. The Bloomz app could be hacked and private data of users could be leaked. Bloomz should be mindful of laws when expanding to foreign countries.
	Environmental/Ethical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not harm the environment because Bloomz does not use natural resources. Bloomz is a free application, which increases downloads. Does not advertise unethically. 	Environmental/Ethical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bloomz is a free app, so no money generated. Bloomz sends resources to "help" teachers that are not related to Bloomz. The Bloomz app requires an internet connection, which may not be available due to a severe storm.

A. Objectives and Rationale of the Proposed Strategic Plan

Project CLASS (acronym for *Communicate, Localize, Advertise, Streamline, and Sell*) will increase the number of users by taking advantage of word-of-mouth promotion style.

Goals/Objectives

1. Increase the number of Bloomz users by 80% in school districts in two years.
2. Increase number of trial users that stay with the app by 20% in two years.
3. Increase revenue by 60% in one year.

First, Bloomz will **increase Bloomz usage by 80% in two years**. Taking advantage of the word-of-mouth promotion style will increase the number of schools using the application. The manager surveys and focus group findings showed that Bloomz does not target the student population effectively. Customers in the focus group mentioned that they did not feel a personal attachment to Bloomz as a result of its marketing strategy. Secondly, Bloomz can **increase the number of trial users that are retained 20% in two years**. According to data from employee surveys, schools that request a trial of Bloomz sometimes reject the app because the app is too complicated to use, especially on Apple's iOS platform. Simplifying the user interface will decrease the negative feedback given by making the Bloomz app's learning curve more reasonable. Improving the performance of the iOS application will keep users pleased. Thirdly, Bloomz can **increase revenue by 60% in one year**. Users of Bloomz find the most value in seeing the progress of students. With a simple in-app purchase system, Bloomz can improve the features of the app that pay the most. This will persuade new users to test the application as well as interest students with customization of their character in Bloomz.

B. Proposed Activities and Timelines

Project CLASS (Communicate, Localize, Advertise, Streamline, and Sell)

Communicate between teachers and students

Localize marketing strategies

Advertise to middle school and high school students

Streamline app to make it easier to use

Sell In-App Purchases

Project CLASS will allow Bloomz to implement plans to increase usage and revenue of Bloomz through social, local, and mobile marketing. The plan will begin on June 1, 2017 and continue indefinitely. The strategies to increase SoLoMo include:

Communication between Teachers and Students

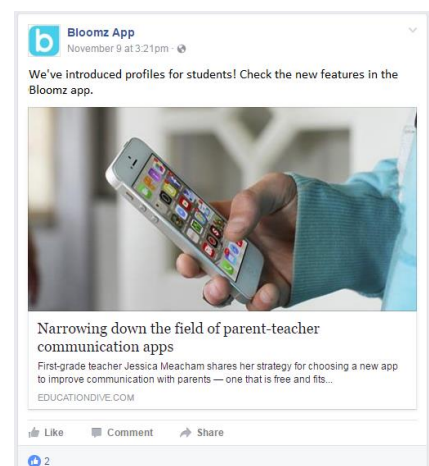
Bloomz will increase communication between teachers and students in the first step of Project CLASS. By extending the app to include the creation of student profiles as well as parent and teacher profiles, Bloomz will drastically expand their customer base. Adding the option to create a class group chat, if students need to communicate to their peers all at once, will be another selling point of Bloomz.

Localize Marketing Strategies

Bloomz currently does not advertise on local media such as newspapers or blogs. As the success of Bloomz has been primarily based on word-of-mouth promotion, establishing a personal connection with customers and encouraging them to spread Bloomz around is the most effective marketing strategy. Sponsoring an article acclaiming Bloomz's revolutionary new academic communication methods to appear on a technology blog like TechCrunch would raise awareness of the app to potential customers. To complete step two of Project CLASS, Bloomz must avoid advertising on local newspapers and move towards technology blogs and small local websites to feature Bloomz.

Advertise to Middle and High School Students

Students aged from middle to high school are not being targeted by Bloomz's current marketing strategy. By creating marketing strategies that apply to older students, Bloomz can profoundly increase the app's user base through students' requests to use it in class. Based on secondary research, social media is the most effective method of advertising to students. About 60% of the customers participating in the focus group identified Bloomz's Facebook profile to "lackluster" and, in general, not interesting. To complete this step in Project CLASS, Bloomz must advertise on social



media and design posts that appeal specifically to students. Social media posts such as the mock Facebook post on the right are useful to customers because they explain new features and invite potential customers to try out the app.

Streamline App

Currently, the Bloomz app is complicated. Employees involved in the creation and design of the app stated that they knew the “ins and outs” of the app only because they were very involved in the design process. On the other hand, customers expressed their frustration with the time it took to complete a simple task. Streamlining several core functions, such as posting a picture or blogging to parents by using a simple, standalone button would increase the ease-of-use. This simpler version would increase the conversion rate of trial users, as the foremost reason that trial users in schools gave for declining Bloomz was that the app was too complex.

Sell In-App Purchases

By introducing new customizable avatars to the app, students will be encouraged to use the application. The four avatars at the right are mockups for custom profile pictures that could be bought with an in-app purchase. As well as increasing customization for characters, adding various premium items unlockable only through a premium membership or a one-time-fee would increase sales.



Implementation of Activities

See the table on the next page for a summary of activities.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Start Date</i>	<i>End Date</i>	<i>Summary</i>	<i>Focus Goal Met</i>	<i>Implementation Date</i>
<i>Include Student Profiles</i>	Jun. 1, 2017	Jun. 1, 2019	<p>6/1/17 – Announce new feature to all customers through app and social media.</p> <p>6/14/17 – Deploy new app with student profiles onto app stores and website application.</p> <p>6/1/19 – Evaluate success of student profiles for future use.</p>	1 & 3	June 14, 2017
<i>Advertise App on Small Local Websites and Newspapers</i>	Jul. 1, 2017	Aug. 1, 2017	<p>6/1/17 – Start to create ad-campaigns that are specific to the area.</p> <p>6/1/17 – Modify ads as needed.</p> <p>7/1/18 – Evaluate success of advertisements for future use.</p>	1	July 1, 2017
<i>Advertise to Middle and High School Students on Social Media</i>	Jun. 1, 2017	Jun. 1, 2019	<p>6/1/17 – Post on social media targeting older students</p> <p>6/1/18 – Modify as needed.</p> <p>6/1/19 – Evaluate success of advertising program for future use.</p>	1	June 1, 2017
<i>Streamline App</i>	Jun. 1, 2017	Jan. 1, 2019	<p>6/1/17 – Announce new features and changes to customers</p> <p>6/15/17 – Deploy new app with student profiles onto app stores and website-application</p> <p>6/28/17 – Reevaluate app for feedback</p> <p>7/1/17 – Modify as needed. Repeat cycle of reevaluation every month until end date.</p> <p>3/1/19 – Evaluate success of student profiles for future use.</p>	2	June 15, 2017
<i>Sell In-App Purchases</i>	Jun. 5, 2017	Apr. 1, 2018	<p>6/5/17 – Announce new features that will be available at a premium.</p> <p>6/15/17 – Deploy new app with in-app purchases.</p> <p>12/1/17 – Modify as needed.</p> <p>5/1/18 – Evaluate success of in-app purchase program for future use.</p>	3	June 15, 2017

C. Proposed Metrics or Key Performance Indicators to Measure Plan Effectiveness

Project CLASS will monitor certain Return on Investment (ROI) factors to measure the effectiveness of these SoLoMo changes to Bloomz.

The growth in the number of Bloomz users will be measured by the number of sign-ups for the Bloomz app or service. If sign-ups have increased 80% by the end of two years, Project CLASS will be considered a success. This year, there have been 769,400 sign-ups, so if in the second year, there are 615,500 sign-ups, Project CLASS will have been successful. Bloomz's revenue scales with the number of users, so the 80% user increase should correspond to an 80% revenue increase of \$40,000.

Trial user growth can also be measured with Bloomz's internal analytics. Last year, there were 138,530 successful trials out of 176,230 total trials, for a 78% success rate. As Project CLASS aims for a 20% increase, if there is a success rate of 94% for Bloomz trials, the plan will be considered a success.

In 2015, Bloomz generated \$72,000 in revenue, so if in 2017, Bloomz generates at least \$115,200 for a 60% increase, Project CLASS will have been a success. The total predicted increase in revenue is \$130,000.

Activity(s)	Goal	Current revenue/cost (per year)	Revenue gained or cost saved
Communication between teachers and students Localize marketing strategies Advertise to middle school and high school students	Increase the number of Bloomz users by 30% in school districts over two years.	Current number of users: 345,600 teachers and 423,800 parents for a total of 769,400 users . Current revenue is \$50,000 .	Users gained due to extending app to include students: 615,500 users . Projected revenue gained is \$40,000 .
Streamline app to make it easier to use	Increase number of trial users that stay with the app by 20% over two years.	Number of successful trials: 138,530 people , a 78% of the total trials. Current revenue attributed to trials is \$20,000 .	Streamlined app estimated to increase successful trials to 94% , and money from each trial for a total revenue increase of \$60,000 .
Sell in-app purchases	Increase revenue by over 60% over one year.	Current total revenue from purchases is \$0 .	In-app purchases will increase total revenue by \$30,000 .

These three goals will be evaluated after the end date of Project CLASS and the total revenue generated from this plan will be calculated to be around \$130,000. The plan's effectiveness will be measured by the success in achieving the three objectives set, and with a projection to determine the stability of the plan. The ROI for this project is 152.4%.

VI. PROPOSED BUDGET



A. Costs Associated with Proposed Strategies

Project **CLASS** and the activities proposed to achieve the three objectives outlined that will be addressed by fitting them under an affordable budget.

Improving communication features on the Bloomz app will need the help of Edmond Yu, the Head Designer. Approximately 50 hours will be required to complete the app's redesign. Paying Yu at \$50 per hour to complete this task, Bloomz must spend \$2,500.

Localizing Bloomz's through website and blog endorsement will cost about \$300 to ask the website owners to publish about Bloomz. Bloomz will need at least 15 articles to significantly increase Bloomz's customer base. This sponsoring strategy will cost a total of \$4,500.

Advertising to middle and high school students will work with the help of Melissa Kaiser, Head of Community Relations. Appalabattula estimated that this new advertising strategy will take about 1000 hours and paying Kaiser at an additional \$15 per hour, this section of Project CLASS will cost \$15,000.

Streamlining the app will need the help of the Head Designer, Edmond Yu, with Appalabattula as a manager. At \$100 an hour and taking around 45 hours to streamline the app, this activity will have a total price of \$4500. As well as using Yu, an outside consultant will be hired to help improve the app. The total price of streamlining the app will be \$14,500.

In addition to gaining revenue from further transactions, in-app purchases will increase the number of users who use the application and thus, the revenue gained. Implementing in-app purchases within the Bloomz app, similar to improving communication features, will again require Yu's help. The

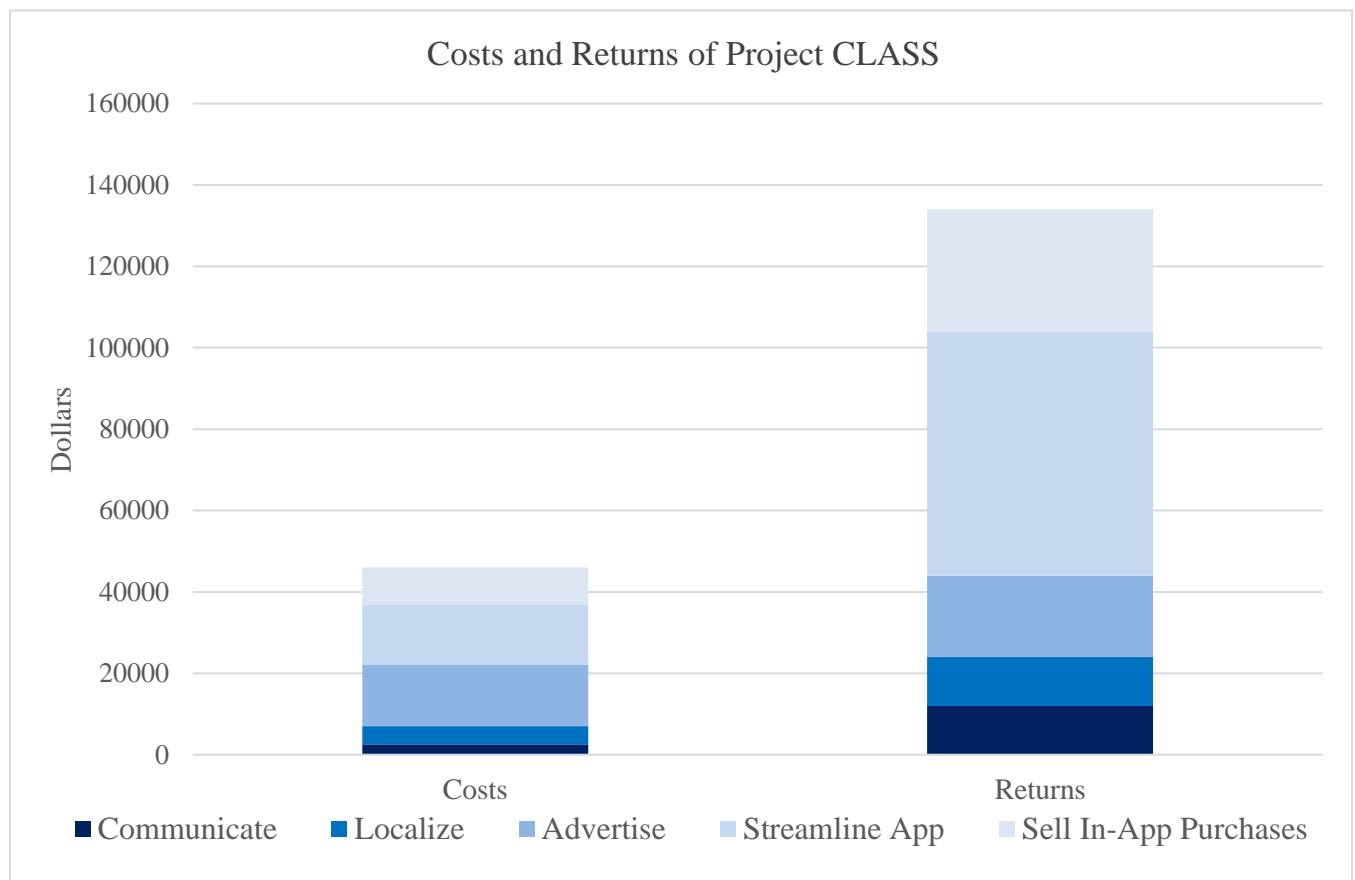
Head Designer estimated that this new feature would require around 1000 hours of work. Paying Yu at an additional \$15 an hour, this activity will have a total cost of \$15,000.

With Bloomz's budget being \$100,000, this plan is \$48,500 under the budget for the plan.

Ultimately, this makes Project CLASS superior to another plan that will cost more money to execute.

The Overview of Costs				
Activity	Cost per hour	Time/Criteria	Number of Employees	Total Cost
<i>Communication</i>	\$50	50 Hours	1	\$2,500
<i>Localize</i>	\$300	15 Articles	1	\$4,500
<i>Advertise</i>	\$15	1,000 Hours	1	\$15,000
<i>Streamline App</i>	\$100	45 Hours	1	\$4,500
<i>Sell In-App purchases</i>	\$15	1000 Hours	2	\$15,000
<i>Outside Consultant</i>	\$10,000	One-time Fee	1	\$10,000
				Total Costs will be \$51,500

RETURN OF INVESTMENT (ROI) GRAPH:



Total costs: \$51,500

ROI: 152.4% (See Section 5C)

Net Gain: \$130,000

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"King County Economy." *Economic Basics*. Economic Development Council of Seattle & King County, n.d. Web. 20 Sept. 2016.

Martinez, Sylvia Libow. "Teachers' Use of Educational Technology in U.S. Public Schools: 2009." *Sylvia Libow Martinez*. N.p., 13 May 2010. Web. 04 Oct. 2016.

Ross, Terrance F. "When Students Can't Go Online." *The Atlantic*. Atlantic Media Company, 13 Mar. 2015. Web. 04 Oct. 2016.

Appendix A: Manager/Owner Interview:

1. How long have you worked on Bloomz?
2. What promotional strategies are you currently using? Are you using SoLoMo?
3. How well are the strategies working?
4. How well is Bloomz marketing using social media such as Facebook and Twitter?
5. What is your budget for new strategies and improvements to your marketing plan?
6. What is your current revenue and how are you planning to increase your revenue?
7. Do school districts request trials or demos of Bloomz? If so, how do they work out?
8. How far has the Bloomz application reached geographically? Are most Bloomz users situated in Washington? How spread out is the distribution of users?
9. How do people learn about/join Bloomz? For example, are they recommended by a colleague or were they introduced to it by social media?

Appendix B: Employee Survey:

1. What is your job?
2. How many years have you worked at Bloomz?
3. How many hours do you work every week day (on average)?
4. How often are employees such as yourself involved in sending messages from Bloomz's social media?
5. How often do customers or potential customers respond to your social media profiles?
6. How often do you check in with a school that uses Bloomz to see if there are any questions or problems?
7. How do you test out new ideas for marketing or product design?
8. In your opinion, what is the best feature in the Bloomz app?
 - Organizing and planning events
 - Seeing your student's progress
 - Being able to message your teacher or parent
 - Announcing students' homework and/or projects
 - Other:
9. What is one thing that you would like to see Bloomz fix or add to their app/website?
10. What is something that would improve Bloomz's marketing strategy or the Bloomz app?

Appendix C: Focus Group Topics:

1. First impressions.
2. Usability of app.
3. Usability of website.
4. Competitors.
5. Marketing strategy.
6. Social media marketing.
7. How can Bloomz get more users?

Appendix D: Secondary Research:

For Parents:

1. Overall how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Bloomz? *Rate from 1-5 stars*
2. Which of the following words would you use to describe Bloomz?
3. How likely is it that you will recommend Bloomz to a friend or colleague? *(not likely) 1 – 10 (extremely likely)*
4. In addition to receiving messages from your teacher, please select other things you use Bloomz for.
5. Since Bloomz was used in your kids' classroom, do you feel more connected to school news and activities?
6. How were you referred to Bloomz?
7. In your opinion, can better communication between school and home improve your child's performance at school?

For Teachers:

1. Overall how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Bloomz? *Rate from 1-5 stars*
2. Will you be using Bloomz in the next school year?
3. Which of the following words would you use to describe the Bloomz App?
4. How likely is it that you would recommend Bloomz to a friend or colleague?
(not likely) 1 – 10 (extremely likely)
5. Which grade do you teach?
6. What type of school do you teach at?
7. Has parent engagement in your classroom increased since you started using Bloomz?