*<http://generalcatalyst.com/elements-strong-business-plan>*

*Status*

**Product:** Developed and validated

**Validation**: 10% of MIT graduate student population, around 800 registered members finding one another

**Intellectual Property:** Provisional Patent

**Marketing site**: <http://www.tree.st/d/welcome>

**Demo of core features**: <http://www.tree.st/d/how>

**Goals for February:**

1. Build commercialization site
2. Customer acquisition validation
3. Create fund-raising deck
4. Go on a dog & pony show to show VCs what we are doing and that we are officially going start a fund-raising period February-May… yada yada

**---------- ACCELERATE APPLICATION ---------------**

**What track should we focus on?**

**Background Problem (250 Words)**

We aim to start solving the problem of poor communication across silos by creating custom-made searchable directories for associations, and institutions, among others. Today’s searchable directories are prehistoric, locked in the age of telephonic white-pages where members can only search for one another by name, email, telephone number, organizational position, etc.

As globalization removes national barriers, companies compete more and more on a global level. As a consequence, the innovation these companies generate will be the greatest differentiator between winners and losers. The greatest barrier to innovation is silo-ed thinking. Departmental silos, program silos, functional silos, and cultural silos – impede innovation at organizations (i.e. Medici Effect). If silo-ed thinking is innovation’s greatest barrier, inter-disciplinary communication is its greatest driver [1].

This is an urgent and very real problem. Much research from Prof. Piskorski from HBS [2], Anthony J. Bradley (VP at Gartner Research) [3], among other premier researchers [4] have focused on this space. Yet, few applications have applied conclusions from science into business practice. When one analyzes Kodak’s decline, or why Apple has exploded with success, the existence or the lack of silo-ed communication is at the center of the conversation.

[1] Johansson, Frans. “Medici Effect ” HBS Press. [2] Piskorski, Mikolaj Jan. "Social Strategies That Work." Harvard Business Review 89, no. 11 (November 2011): 116–122. [3] Bradley, Anthony J. “The Social Organization.” HBR Press. [4] Nowak, Martin A. “Evolution of Cooperation” Scientific American July 2012

**Solution (250 Words)**

Tree.st <http://www.tree.st>

Tree.st is an online solution that creates “custom made” searchable directories and social communities for businesses and organizations. Unlike Yammer or Linkedin, Tree.st gathers specific details from each member within the organization and then enables everyone to find each other via a feature-rich, patent-pending search engine. For example, in the current MIT Tree.st community finding all the current “MIT Graduate” students who research “Computational Biology,” and are “Parents”, tend to study at “Building E54” – takes only a second. In a Tree.st community for lawyers, finding a lawyer who practices “litigation,” has worked with “NGOs,” has passed his bar exam in “Nevada,” and who also speaks “Japanese,” could be done with a few clicks.

Tree.st’s patent-pending technology also allows members to create “Smart Groups” – groups that unite all the members of an organization that match specific qualities, such as in the examples above. This is the world’s first social grouping algorithm that dynamically updates itself as a population changes, making our technology ideal for heterogeneous and transitory populations, such as universities, associations, conferences, hospitals, consulting groups, large organizations, etc.

In the two months that Tree.st has been live at MIT more than 15% of the graduate students have voluntarily provided their data and began searching for one another. Today’s social discovery tools need a re-awakening. Ark.com (Series A $4M, 2012) is developing a social discovery tool for the consumer web; Tree.st is creating social discovery tools for businesses.

**Business Model (250 Words)**

Tree.st monetization strategy will initially pursue a B2B SaaS model, followed by an on-premise solution for enterprises. Later, we might create public facing Tree.st communities for niche-populations (i.e.: patient populations, meetup groups, etc.) where users pay-by-usage via the gamification tools already embedded in Tree.st.

Another benefit of Tree.st’s business model is that we gather very unique details from individuals in the organizations that are our customers; this makes the customer’s switching cost very high, leading to a higher than normal customer lifetime value.

Two months ago when we launched the MIT Tree.st community we were approached by a number of businesses and organizations – including the Peter Thiel Foundation [5]. We were approached by two types of businesses: (1) businesses that wanted the software and data within their firewall, and (2) those that wanted a quick turnkey solution and were willing to embrace a SaaS model.

We will first approach organizations looking for a turnkey solution. For these, we will require a one-time setup fee, a monthly fee between $500 to $10K, and a monthly fee per member – between $0.50 and $5. After establishing initial cash flows via the B2B SaaS model, we plan to create an in-house solution and capture B2B Enterprise clients.

[5] Peter Thiel, Founder of PayPal.com

**The Team (200 Words) --** Why is your team the right team? What experience or qualifications do team members have that will help your business achieve success? \* (200 word limit)

1. What do you expect to be able to demo in February? \* (100 word limit)
2. Provide a short timeline of activities your team will complete between now and February. \* (150 word limit)