http://www.mit100k.org/accelerate/registration.php

[*http://generalcatalyst.com/elements-strong-business-plan*](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 ---------------**

### Track

Web/IT

### Short Answer Questions

**1. What problem(s) are you trying to solve? How do you know this is a real problem faced by businesses or consumers? \* (250 word limit)**

In today’s global economy, one of the greatest differentiators of successful companies is their ability to (1) retain great talent, and (2) use that talent to drive innovation. Innovation is highly dependent on team composition and effective collaboration. Despite the saturated market for enterprise collaboration tools (i.e., SharePoint, Yammer, Basecamp), there are few tools that aid in the process of team formation (Appendix A).

Managers have few tools at their disposal to discover the best human capital when forming innovation or problem-solving teams. Today, managers form teams by asking colleagues for recommendations, or at best by consulting organizational charts from different business units. When one analyzes Kodak’s decline, or Apple’s success, the existence or the lack of effective teams that drive innovation is at the root of the conversation.

Another aspect of successful companies is talent retention. Companies are suffering from high turnover rates because they lack the tools that generate a higher sense of belonging for their employees. Research has shown that strong common interest within organizations improves employee retention. For example, a “gluten-free yoga lovers” group allows those employees to connect and create meaningful experiences, thus improving their satisfaction.

This lack of “social discoverability” within an organization is an urgent and very real problem. It is clear that this problem will become more apparent and complex as companies merge and acquire one another, expand globally, and deploy teams remotely. Companies that resolve this problem will inevitably gain a competitive upper-hand.

**2. What is your solution to this problem? Is any other business attempting to solve this same problem? If so, why is your solution different? \* (250 word limit)**

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

Demo videos: <http://www.tree.st/d/how>

Tree.st will fill in the gap of social discoverability within organizations to help managers to form effective teams, and allow employees to form meaningful communities.

Tree.st is a patent-pending, social discovery tool for organizations -- an internal feature-rich searchable directory -- that allows anyone in an organization to easily find others by combining a customizable array of attributes (Appendix B) in a search criteria. Designed for private networks, Tree.st can adapt to any organizational structure, integrate with existing collaboration platforms (e.g., Yammer, Basecamp, SharePoint), and scale easily.

We identified an unmet need, built an amazing product, and received great confirmations. Tree.st has been live at MIT for only two months and already more than 10% of the graduate students actively use the platform. The Peter Thiel [1] Foundation requested us to build their own community for their mentors and mentees.

As well, we have received numerous requests from other organizations indicating their need for a “Smart Group” feature. Tree.st’s “Smart Group” algorithm generates groups that instantly and automatically update their member base as an organization changes. This ensures that new members that match a set of qualities can be found instantly within an organization (Appendix C).

Social discovery tools need a reawakening. Ark.com (Series A $4.2M, 2012) is developing a social discovery tool for the consumer web; Tree.st is creating social discovery tools for organizations.

[1] Peter Thiel, PayPal Founder

**3. Please explain your business model (i.e. how will you deliver on your value propositions)? \* (250 word limit)**

Tree.st will initially pursue a B2B SaaS (Software-as-a-Service) model, followed by an on-premise solution for enterprises. Overall, the businesses that have approached us have been interested in two solutions: (1) an on-premise solution where the Tree.st platform is hosted on their servers, and (2) a quick turnkey solution that can be delivered as an online service.

We will first approach organizations looking for a turnkey solution. Price wise, we will require a monthly fee between $100 to $1K, and a monthly fee per member – between $1 and $5 (similar to other SaaS services [2]). After establishing initial cash flows via the B2B SaaS model, we plan to create an on-premise solution for enterprises.

Of all the organizations who currently experience the unmet need of an elegant social discovery tool, we have selected our initial customer segment to be:

* Professional service firms (950,000 total in US)

Our secondary customer segments will be:

* Professional associations (90,000 total in US)
* Educational institutions and alumni association (6,700 total in US)
* Medium to large engineering and design firms (2,500 total in US)

Overall, the market size of our initial customer industry is quite large and the current competition is in the form of band-aid solutions with very limited features.

[2] Basecamp.com, Bloomfire.com, Yammer.com, among others.

**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)

Our team’s diversity, experience and qualifications, will deliver results exceed expectations at every milestone.

Omid Sadeghpour

Technical Lead, Sloan MBA 2013

First employee of a startup with $4M Series A, and $22.5M Series B. Brings many years of startup, software development and product development experience.

Alexander Romanov

Software Development, Sloan LGO MBA 2013

Experienced engineer, previously responsible for satellite launch campaigns. Brings large-data software development, and testing and profiling experience.

Lucy Zhao

Bus Dev & Marketing, Sloan MSMS 2013

UX expert specializes in Corporate Innovation; lead Kickstarter campaign to $56K+. Builds strong brands, marketing campaigns, and continuous product improvement.

Shailesh Mittal

Sales Lead, Sloan MBA 2014

Engineer; 4yrs corporate banking at HSBC Bank in the chemicals sector. Co-founder of an investment partnership with former Northwestern professor. Brings to the team much startup, sales, and financial experience.

Socrates Rosenfeld

Sales Lead, Sloan MBA 2014

US Army Apache Helicopter Pilot; MIT Dean's Fellow; member of "Military Top 40 Under 40." Great team leader and presenter, will focus on day-to-day operations of the team and sales.

Jan Widmer

Legal, Sloan Fellow 2013

Lawyer with 10+ years of experience with high-tech startups, great negotiator, and will help the team with all legal topics.

1. What do you expect to be able to demo in February? \* (100 word limit)

* A commercialization site for Tree.st where potential customers can see/read demos, videos and use cases
* 10-20 paying customers or letters of intent
* Substantial database of hot leads to close in the coming months
* Large of volume of buzz through social media, blogs, and other articles
* A more scalable infrastructure of Tree.st’s database pooling mechanism
* An administrative dashboard for Tree.st community owners so that customers can self-serve their requirements
* Results from our “Dog & Pony” show to different angles and VC groups in Boston and the West Coast

1. Provide a short timeline of activities your team will complete between now and February. \* (150 word limit)

November & December

* Build Angel/VC contacts
* Build Customer contacts
* Solidify Pricing Model
* Develop a more scalable infrastructure of Tree.st’s database pooling mechanism
* Create an administrative dashboard for Tree.st community owners so that customers can self-serve their requirements
* December 7th, Presentation at Bain Capital’s Fast-Pitch Series

January

* Company Incorporation
* Develop Branding & Sales Package
* Create marketing, advertising, and social media campaigns for coming months
* January 15: “Dog & Pony” show to showcase Tree.st to angels and VCs
* Sales Presentation, demos, and customer acquisitions
* Continuous product development and improvement

February

* “Dog & Pony” show for official first round of funding