*Status*

**Product:** Developed and validated

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

**Intellectual Property:** Provisional Patent

**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

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

**Background Problem (250 Words)**

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 of innovation is silo-ed thinking. Departmental silos, program silos, functional silos, and cultural silos – impede innovation at organizations from taking place (i.e. Medici Effect). If silo-ed thinking is innovation’s greatest barrier, inter-disciplinary communication is its greatest driver1.

This is an urgent and very real problem. Much research from Prof. Piskorski (HBS)2, Anthony J. Bradley (VP at Gartner Research)3, among other premier research groups has been done in this space. When one analyzes why Kodak’s market share has significantly dropped, or why Apple has exploded with success, the existence or the lack of silo-ed communication is at the center of the conversation.

In one line – we aim to solve the problem of lack of communication and collaboration across silos in organizations, associations, institutions, among others.

[1] Johansson, Frans. “Medici Effect” [2] Piskorski, Mikolaj Jan. "Social Strategies That Work." Harvard Business Review 89, no. 11 (November 2011): 116–122. [2] Bradley, Anthony J. “The Social Organization.” Harvard Review Press

**Solution (250 Words) We need to shrink by 30 words**

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

Tree.st is an online application that can create “custom made” searchable directories and social networks for businesses and organizations. Unlike Yammer or Linkedin, Tree.st was designed for complex transitory populations in mind. Tree.st gathers community-specific qualities from each member within an organization and enables everyone to find each other with a feature-rich search engine. For example, in the MIT Tree.st community finding all the current “MIT Graduate” students who research “Computational Biology,” and are “Parents”, and live in “Central Square,” and tend to study at “Building E54” – takes only a second. Further, creating a group that unites all the students that match those specific criteria takes one-click – allowing one to create the world-first social “smart” group – a group whose members are updated automatically. In the two months we have been live at MIT more than 10% of the graduate students have voluntarily provided their data and began searching for one another.

Tree.st was architected from the ground up conscious of organizational science techniques. For example, individuals mostly collaborate in environments where reputation can be gained4. Consequently, Tree.st is the only social network that (1) is not only adaptive to any organization, but (2) keeps track of the social actions of its members and rewards them with points via rules defined by the organization. In essence, Tree.st allows organizations to use gamification within their custom Tree.st communities to incentivize employees to collaboratively pursue goals that will drive business value. Features such as these are abundant in Tree.st. In essence, unlike Yammer, Facebook, LinkedIn, among others – Tree.st was designed to unite members and generate innovation within an organization.

[4] Nowak, Martin A. “Evolution of Cooperation” Scientific American July 2012

**Business Model (250 Words)**

Tree.st monetization strategy will initially follow a B2B SaaS model, followed by an on-premise solution for enterprises. Later, we might create public facing Tree.st communities for niche-populations via an advertisement model

Since Tree.st gathers and stores micro-level details of individuals in organizations – the customer switching cost is also very high, leading to a high customer lifetime value. Of the businesses we are currently running pilots, their number one concern is data safety. Consequently Tree.st will never be able to serve advertisements in its private communities.

Since we launched the MIT Tree.st community we have been approached by a number of businesses and organizations. These come in two forms: (1) businesses that want the software and data within their firewall, and (2) those that want a quick turnkey solution.

We will first approach the turnkey solution desiring organizations. For these, we will require a one-time setup fee between $500 to $10K, and a yearly fee per member -- between $2 to $10 – depending on which modules they would like turned on. After generating some cash flow via the B2B SaaS model, we plan to create an in-house solution and slowly pursue a B2B Enterprise model as well. We leave public facing advertisement based niche-social network as a last resort.

**The Team (200 Words)**

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