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Day dream

Initial Operation Plan for the Volq solution

This paper describes how we are going to make the Volq project up and running with founding and finally promote it to be a fully self sustain and highly profit commercial project. About the commercial project, it will be described in another paper. This paper will divide the operation of this project into many phases. And it will define the input, the activities, the outcomes and the structure of our team of each phase.

CLASSIFIED

# Introduction

The Volq project is a social startup project that many metamorphoses into a fully profitable commercial business. Volq will be a startup relies fully on bootstrapping. This means no invest form anyone that is outside our team. Since this business idea will not attract any angles or VC. But we are expecting to generate revenues within 9 months after bootstrapping. The revenues will by a charity founding from government agency which will be one of the beneficiaries of our solution. Of course the society will be the biggest beneficiary from the volunteer activities. Later, with the founding from the government, we will develop and expand our business, to develop a fully commercial solution and start our company. If we have money left from the government founding we will be bootstrapping again, but soon we will need to rise founding from VC to grow rapidly. The plan after we start bootstrapping our commercial company is beyond the scope of this paper.

# Operation Phases

## Why Phases?

Because Volq is a social startup, it cannot be found by old ways. And during the different stages, we will have different scales and different beneficiaries. And what the beneficiaries will provide us varies greatly. The way of working with them is very different as well.

## What Need to Plan In Different Phases?

There are lots of things to be concerned during the operation. Strategies, political issue, develop concentration and founding. To avoid being distracted we list the following points.

We have to clearly address the following points:

* The expected input;

What we need from the outside to get our project moving.

* The main costs;

According to our main activity, what’s the main cost?

* The main activity;

What we are doing during this phase. The thing we should put our max effort on.

* The expected outcomes;

The expecting outcomes of our main activities, the product we are going to ship, the contract we made.

* The beneficiaries we will work with

We need to analysis the beneficiaries, address what’s their interests, what they can provide, what we need them to help, and the obstacles that prevent them from helping us.

* The performance measurement.

The numeric measurement of how well we are doing.

* Trigger to the next phase

The trigger event or milestone to the next phase.

### The Actual Phases

According to the nature of the Volq project, we well have the following phase in sequence:

* Base Building

This phase is when we shut the door just coding, regardless the client’s interest.

* Initial Market Developing

During this phase we will still be coding. But we will spend some effort going out meeting our initial customers.

* Small Scale Operation

When we have met our client and have a deal, we spend our effort on making our product into the shape that our customers really want. But more important is to operate the system to get users making it more active. A thing that may get ignored is during this phase we also start to develop our next customers, and be prepared to expand.

* Scale Expansion

During this stage we have acquired our large customers, and have the ability to expand to large a scale.

* Full Scale Operation

This is when we get sufficient founding, and the help of the government and behind the scene, we start our commercialization program.

# Base Building

## Introduction

This phase is when we started our dreams. During this phase we focus on developing the base functions of the Volq. We have a vision of the market a vision of how we are going to make the volunteer fun thus benefit the society. We do our own homework and design the project. We use our own effort and time to develop the system. No customer feedback is needed, because we do not have the time to reach out to our customers. During this phase the most important thing is to deliver a usable system as quickly as possible.

## The input

At this phase, there is little needed to be input.

**The Biggest input and most precious one is our time.** And an office, some PC and internet connections.

We spend our time on coding and designing. Making PBIs and implement them one by one. Get a usable web site and a mobile app.

## The main costs

At this stage there is nothing to be considered as costs.

## The main Activities

Coding, of cause is the main activity during this phase.

Making PBIs, product design are also very important.

The CEO should also study the market in order to design the product to fit in the market, as well as to get a preliminary strategy against early customers.

## The expected outcomes

At the end of this phase, we will get, a basic gamified volunteer system, an android app for volunteers, a android app for organizers.

To be precise, we will finish every PBI in sprint 1, 2, 3, and already start sprint 4. We will have a demo system deployed on server, with test users and activities.

## The beneficiaries we will work with

There is simply not any.

## The performance measurement.

Since the main activity is coding, the performance measurement will be PBIs we finished. We will use easyBacklog as statistic tool.

## Trigger to the next phase

As long as half of the PBIs in sprint 4 is finished, app for volunteers are usable, the next phase start.

## Time span

2014.9-2015.1.

This phase is expected to be short. As short as possible. but the lack of experience in developing slows us down a lot.

# Initial Market Developing

## Introduction

It would be meaningless if our system does not have any users. At this stage we will start going out to look for customers. The develop work is still under going at this phase.

## The input

At this time there are still not external input needed for us. The main input is our time, spent on coding, designing the pitch and going out pitching.

## The main costs

At this stage there is nothing to be considered as costs. However, if we are going out pitching, we may have transport expense. If we have diner, this is a cost.

From this point it is good to start basic finance and accounting. These are very essential skills needed along our way to successful entrepreneurship.

## The main Activities

At this phase things start getting complicated.

First, we need to continue coding to deliver a usable more important not buggy and user friendly.

Meanwhile, the CEO in last phase has already studied the early customer. In this phase he must come up with a pitch plan and prepare the pitch.

And most importantly the CEO will go out and meet the early customers, in this case the university authorities that in charge of the volunteer.

We will try to make a deal with the early customers, and bring back feedback to improve our product.

## The expected outcomes

We will have a ready to go public Volq system deployed, not buggy, user friendly good looking, and mobile app for both volunteers and organizers.

Pass 1000 users stress test.

We have made a deal that the university authority “校团委”.

What deal? The minimal resources we expected from them:

* Use the Volq as the official volunteer platform;
* Help us to reach out to other university authorities that deals with volunteers, or may by other universities, give us referrals;
* Give us volunteers that will help us operate the Volq.

The optional:

* Give us a office if we have volunteers that works long hours for Volq;
* Some founding so we can upgrade our server or give some rewards to the volunteers.

## The beneficiaries we will work with

This time we will meet our early customers. We are social startup it is better to say beneficiary than customer. The beneficiary at this phase is the “校团委” of the HUST. They are in charge of the volunteer activities in HUST.

### Their interests

The “校团委” is in charge of volunteers. To be precise, the “华中大大学生社会实践中心” under the “校团委” is in charge of managing all the volunteers and organize activities.

Their interests at least their job is to get recruit volunteers, create meaningful activities, making both the volunteers and the beneficiaries of the volunteers happy.

Let’s take a little insight. What they really interesting is create more impact. If the volunteers felt that their life is more meaningful, then it is creating positive impact on the volunteers. If the activities really helped the others, then it is creating positive impact on the society.

They just want: more people know them; more become volunteers; more and larger activities are organized; more people talk about them really making the world a better place, the leaders to regard them as very helpful to society. May be they need more founding. If the above is met the leader may grant more founding. More founding allows them to expand which is one of their main interests.

### What they can provide

They have very limited resources. The most convenient resource is **volunteers.** Volunteers here do not refer to the users of the Volq, but volunteers that helps the operations of the Volq.

Referrals to other authority that deals with the volunteers, this is very important. This allows us to operate Volq smoothly since we can get others to organize more frequent activities.

Office in DaHuo building, this is necessary if there are volunteers working for Volq.

Founding, I guess if only we have helped them to get more money, can we get the found. The money I guess will be used mainly on going to restaurant. If there will be some left over for us to get a bigger server it will be great.

### What we need them to help

The same as those listed in the expected out comes.

### The obstacles

This kind of university authority is like to be very prudent and lazy. Then may tend to stick with what they have now. A good thing is that other universities already have this kind of system, but we don’t. So they do not need to discard anything they have accustomed to. The effort for them to use our system is low.

## The performance measurement.

Since the main activity is coding, the performance measurement will be PBIs we finished. We will use easyBacklog as statistic tool.

Another performance measurement is meetings with the customers.

The organization user agreed to use Volq.

## Trigger to the next phase

All PBIs in the sprint 4 are finished;

We have a deal with the “校团委”.

## Time span

2015.1～2015.2（1.15～2.7, going out time）

# Small Scale Operation

## Introduction

In this phase we will have the Volq running public. The main users are HUST students. And the “校团委” will work with us to bring frequent and meaningful activities.

## The input

At this time there the major development is finished, the Volq is in regular operation.

To operate the Volq we need:

A server with both china telecom internet connection and education net connection;

A server, just using 231;

A domain name;

Volunteers to help us to contact the organization users and work with them to create activities;

Volunteers to help us to contact the other authorities in HUST or other universities to get more organization users;

Optional:

Office in DaHuo for our volunteers and our developers;

Founding to by some reward for our volunteers or upgrade our server;

## The main costs

The main cost will be running the activities which are out of the scope of the Volq, and will be covered by the Organization users.

Another big expense is the when the volunteers going out the generate transport fees. This needs to be covered.

Domain name cost money.

The server may need up grade.

## The main Activities

Basic function of the Volq development is finished.

Now the main activities are:

* Organize frequent and high quality activities;
* For a team to contact other authorities, to expand our organization users and geographic coverage;(market team)
* Train volunteers, so they know how t user and design activities and related stuff such as badges;
* Form a team that is responsible to the content of the Volq project (content team);
* Form a team to acquire user, to promote Volq, use the web domination method to promote on all kinds of social media (sales team)

The development is still undergoing:

* To slowly design more PBIs according to users feedback;
* To slowly design PBIs to bring more fancy functions and better user experience;
* To fix bugs;

## The expected outcomes

* A user friendly and good looking site and mobile app that can sustain 5000 users.
* Separate product and development environment;
* 3000+ registered volunteer users
* 10 organization users (may vary)
* 15 person\*day volunteer work force
* Regular activities (avg. 10 activities/month)
* Site SEO done, social media setup
* **Deal with 20 organizations, important**
* **Detailed analysis of the cost and server stress when going full scale**
* Standard procedures and documents about making content like: designing activities, feed, badges.
* Many actual meaningful badges.

## The beneficiaries we will work with

Besides the “校团委” mentioned in previous section, there are new beneficiaries in this phase.

Volunteers for Volq;

Volunteer users;

Organization users;

### Their interests

The NGOs want real really social good while government wants reputation and the volunteers want fun.

* Volunteers for Volq;

They are initially chosen by “校团委”, or they volunteers themselves. They may have strong interests in new and fancy IT stuff. So to tell and show them the advances of the Volq is important. They will feel like they have involved in a social program power by hi-tech. they need to feel the importance and meaning of what they have done. Give them some special badgers is a good way. Some may just want to spend some off class hours or get free food.

* Volunteer users;

There are 3 main interests: one is to do social good, to serve the people; they want to be involved in social activities making friends and have good time; last but not least, they want to try out this new gamification system, like trying some new online games. We have to keep pump new functions and content, making the Volq a viral phenomenon.

* Organization users;

There are interested in get more social impact. This can be done by creating more activities and get more volunteers involved. To get more impact means the Volq need to have a bigger social profile. News report and other forms of promotion are needed. They also hope our solution to do some manager work for them, so they need to do less paper work. But if the system requires much effort to use they’d rather not using it. As mentioned before, they are lazy. So we will provide volunteers to teach them how to use this. And make the using the Volq not much of a difference from what they used to.

There a kind of organization users called NGO users. They are interested in helping people that really need help. They want our solution can really get some volunteers that are willing to help. This is what Volq is supposed to do.

### What they can provide

For “校团委”, the same as the above section

* Volunteers for Volq;

This is very important. They can provide us with work force, to help contact the organization users, help create the activities, help us to designing badges and train the organization users. Also if we have to make some activities for Volq like some promotion activities, these volunteers will be our only usable work force. **But those involve decision making is not the job of volunteers. It must be done by the board. And the core of the Volq program is not touchable by anyone outside the board.**

* Volunteer users;

They can provide us with social profiles. If we have many users and they have positive comments on us. It is very good for our expansion. And they may create a viral effect making the Volq expand rapidly.

* Organization users;

They are the most important users. They are the core of volunteer activities. Their activity directly affects the volunteer activity frequency and quality which affects everything. They also can give us referrals to other organizations, which is a key to expand as well. They may also donate some money if we have done great help for them. This money is important to scale up our servers and team.

The NGOs are our allies they cannot only provide us with social profiles and referrals to government authorities.

### What we need them to help

The same as they can provide.

### The obstacles

* Volunteers for Volq;

They have limited spare times. If we recruit too many manage and training will be a problem. And they tend to be more like social people, we are like tech people. The communication will be a bit of a problem. How to communicate with them is a key.

* Volunteer users;

We have to provide them with new and interesting content or they will go away. This group of people is quite friendly.

* Organization users;

If the system requires much effort to use they’d rather not using it. As mentioned before, they are lazy. So we will provide volunteers to teach them how to use this. And make the using the Volq not much of a difference from what they used to. We have to make sure this system is reducing their work load not adding them.

## The performance measurement.

* PBIs finished;
* Number of Meetings with customers;
* Number of The organization user agreed to use Volq;
* Numbers of volunteers for Volq;
* Number of Volunteer users;
* Number of activate users/day;
* Number of activate users/month;
* Activities created per month;
* Participants per month;

## Trigger to the next phase

Have a large enough social profile (ambiguous)

2 or more organization users out this university have become active users.

Volunteer users reached 3000 (may vary)

Volunteer work force > 15 person\*hour/day

## Time span

2015.3～2015.5

# Scale Expansion

## Introduction

In this phase we are doing preparation to bring the Volq to wider public. It will be targeting as the volunteer platform for the city Wuhan. This put great pressure on everything. Thing from this point is getting really serious and no turning back. Proper team must be built and founding is the number one issue of this phase.

To be simple, the most important goal in this phase is to get founding.

## The input

Volunteers for Volq, will help contact various government agency as market team; will help to promote Volq on social media as sales team.

A small amount of money is needed in public relationship, and advertising.

Office for long hour volunteers.

## The main costs

The main cost will be the expense on public relation and advertising.

The operation of the Volq will approach a flat top stage. Steep user increase is not expected. So cost on server will not be a big cost.

## The main Activities

The operation of Volq will be smooth and routing at this phase. Develop is always under going. And content generation can be done mostly by volunteer and the CEO is freed to do rise founding.

* **Market Team:** Calculate the needed amount of founding. Going out as the market team to contact government agency like “文明办”, “市团委” , try to persuade them into users of Volq, try to rise founding.
* **Sales team:** The sales team will keep advertising Volq via social media, and in this phase start using traditional media like TV or street stand to advertising Volq.

**Content team:**

* Organize frequent and high quality activities;
* More related content like badges feed;

**Develop team**

* To slowly design more PBIs according to users feedback;
* To slowly design PBIs to bring more fancy functions and better user experience;
* To fix bugs;

## The expected outcomes

* Founding!!!
* Larger social profile
* Organization users 1.5 times the last phase;
* More actual meaningful badges and other content.

## The beneficiaries we will work with

Besides the “校团委” Volunteers for Volq, Volunteer users, Organization users, mentioned in previous section, there are new beneficiaries in this phase: **The government agencies.**

### Their interests

The government agency is very difficult to work with. Their interests are in two perspectives: the money, and the job itself.

About money I am sorry to say we are not able to get them any. Maybe if there is an official project granted about the Volq, they may get some money from us. But that, compared to the money they get from constructing roads is less than a fraction.

About the job. They may just want they keep getting paycheck. So if nothing happened they are happy.

But some leader may be interested in get a reputation. Especially in Wuhan, the government had a really bad reputation for the road construction. If they can use some advanced social program to rebuild some of their reputation, they may be want to have try. And Wuhan wants to be the “文明城市”, this is a big big need for a system like the Volq.

### What they can provide

* The government agency can provide founding.
* They can provide referrals to organizations the needs volunteer services, which can bring a steady grows in organization users and activities.
* They may promote and advertise us in traditional media.

### What we need them to help

The same as they can provide.

### The obstacles

The biggest obstacle is they are lazy and not willing to make any changes. To overcome this, we need to make using our solution as simple as possible, and make the benefit of it more appealing to them. And we will try to reach to the leaders of them who are more concerned about the reputation and social impact and are affected little by the adoption of this system. We must make them our alliance. If they have made the decision the lower level agency will have to listen.

Another obstacle is the referral. The government will not let you walk in and present your solution, or they may not pay any attention listening to is. So get a good referral is very important. A good referral may come from a old organization user in HUST. Or some acquaintances happen to now the government people.

## The performance measurement.

* Founding raised;
* PBIs finished;
* Number of Meetings with customers;
* Number of The organization user agreed to use Volq;
* Numbers of volunteers for Volq;
* Number of Volunteer users;
* Number of activate users/day;
* Number of activate users/month;
* Activities created per month;
* Participants per month;

## Trigger to the next phase

Enough founding is raised.

## Time span

2015.5～2015.6

# Full Scale Operation

## Introduction

When we reached this phase we can define the Volq project as partially successful. We have founds, we can finally do something big. And prepare our team to go commercial.

## The input

Same as last phase, volunteers for Volq, will help contact various government agency as market team; will help to promote Volq on social media as sales team. Since we have founds we can do all this in a much bigger scale. But be careful this is not supposed to be a major use of the founding. So volunteers are still very important.

Founding is the most important input for this phase. It will be used to cover the costs of this phase; the costs will be discussed in the next section.

: not the volunteers or the founders. They will work full time as developers, content, sales and market team. We may need approximately 3, and each may carry multiple job roles.

Offices: very likely to get a small and free incubator office.

Regular income: late into this phase we may start to charge the organization users, ask them to pay “tax” to us. This will be an extra founding for us.

## The main costs

The main cost will be listed as following: (detailed analysis will be in a separate document)

Buy or rent new more powerful servers for full scale operation.

Network bandwidth upgrade

Hire some employees. None of the volunteers or the founders will receive pay check, only employees will. Approximately 300-600 k for them a year. This will be the biggest costs.

## The main Activities

You may not have guessed, the main activity in this phase is developing.

In this phase we are trying to give the Volq better user experience, more powerful backend to sustain enormous user load, more flexible activity modes, even easier to use for both volunteer and organizers. It will be 100 times better than the volunteer project needs it to be. We get prepared for commercial in this phase.

We also have to make a clear plan for the commercial solution. This is the first thing to do in this phase. We design what we will be like, what service will we provide, the main customers, how we get into the market, how we generate revenue and when, where do we get founding.

In this phase we are also going out to find investors or partners that are interest to put Volq in a fully commercialized business. This is part of the marketing process.

Beside this, we have to run this as volunteer solution, the same as last phase, but we will need more volunteers of hire some employees to work with the organization user and generation more content. In this face we will make creating activities even easier.

## The expected outcomes

* Larger social profile
* Organization users 10 times the last phase;
* 50 times the volunteer users.
* More actual meaningful badges and other content.
* More powerful system

## The beneficiaries we will work with

Beside the beneficiaries listed in last phase, business people in this phase.

### Their interests

The interests of NGO, Government and volunteers’ interests are discussed before. NGOs want real really social good while government wants reputation and the volunteers want fun.

At this phase the government may feel reluctant to use the Volq, since they may already get extra founding via support Volq projects. The only interests they may have maybe that they want bigger social profile and hove organized more and larger activities, thus they can ask from higher level government agency to grand them more found.

The NGO will remain the same on interest all the time. They want help people and get bigger profile so they can help more people. We will try making the Volq system easier to use and bring more meaningful content to it. Remember the NGO and this type of organization users are truly our allies.

* The business people:

This is new in this phase. They are interested in one thing: the money. This is to say they care about our team capability, scalability, the market, the profitability.

They are not interests in volunteer. So we have to pivot. As I said we are going to make Volq a gamified system for people going out to shops. We encourage them to go out to malls, shops, restaurant by making this a game like experience and fun. We can also track their activities and make a universal membership. There may be a virtual currency system. The detailed pivot plan will be in a separated document.

### What they can provide

* The government , volunteers, NGOs are discussed in previous sections
* The business people will provide the following very important things:
  + **Founding**, vast amount of money. This will allow us to expand rapidly and that’s what they expected. Although expand is our primary goal, but we may not accept institutional investment. Because they may tend to make our company no longer ours.
  + **Consulting services**. They are our target market, they know much better about the shops the malls and their customers than us. They can provide us some valuable information. But be careful, they know less about gamification, that’s our job to design the product.
  + **Referrals to the customers.** Like the government organizer users, they are do not like changes. If there is a referral it would be much easier.

### What we need them to help

The same as they can provide.

### The obstacles

For the business people there are the following obstacles:

* **They do not trust us**: we do not have a big profile, they just doubt our team ability, we have little to prove ourselves. The only way to overcome this in the previous phase, we build a big and successful social profile, getting award, large active users and activities, big founding and etc. Also, we need to provide a clear business model telling them we have the solution.
* **They do not need us**: this is a big obstacle, we have to persuade them. They are satisfied with the current situation, they already have a member or loyalty programs. We need to studies the business, knowing in which way we can improve their revenue, by how much and at what cost. This relies on our business model.

## The performance measurement.

* Expanse per month
* PBIs finished;
* Number of The organization user agreed to use Volq;
* Numbers of volunteers for Volq;
* Number of Volunteer users;
* Number of activate users/day;
* Number of activate users/month;
* Activities created per month;
* Participants per month;
* Business partners have positive view on Volq

## Trigger to the next phase

To be defined

## Time span

2015.6～?