Launching Your Startup

Professors:

Brendan Burns, Dave Lerner
TA: 

Mondays 2:15pm-5:30pm

Location: The Design Lab @ CU, Riverside Church Room 430

Prerequisites

- Interest in discovering how an idea can become a real company

Pre-Assignment

Submit a short powerpoint deck with MAX 3 Slides that communicates the following:

- The problem your startup solves and how it will solve this problem. Who experiences these problems primarily? What key benefits (value proposition) will your customers derive if they use your products or service

- The team (can be just you), detailed background on each member, and why it is particularly suited to addressing this problem successfully
9/9 – Class 1: Welcome

Lecture

• Class overview and expectations, teaching team introductions, expectation setting

Introductions for half of the class

• Give your 30 second pitch to the class and
• Tell the class why (and why not) is your team suited to build this product/tackle this problem

Lecture

• People, Team, Founders, Ecosystem

Assignment

• Part 1: Detailed exploration of the competitive landscape around your product/idea:
  o Current participants
  o Substitutes
  o Who do you think is the best alternative today, why?
  o Elaborate on current value proposition
  o Competitive advantage
  o What do you think will drive value and the winners longer term?
  o How might this market evolve in 5 years?
• Part 2: Your team
  o What is your self-assessment (and personal interests), strengths/weaknesses
  o Ideal team composition
  o What kind of culture will you try to build/develop
  o What are your ideas around accountability?
  o Success examples
  o Not so successful/failures you have been exposed to
  o Sitting here today, what do you hope the team looks like 1 year from now?

Reading

Founder/Market Fit by Chris Dixon
9/16 – Class 2: Intro to Design Thinking

Introductions (continued)

- Give your 30 second pitch to the class or
- Tell the class why (and why not) is your team suited to build this product/tackle this problem

Lecture

- Intro to Design Thinking (Adam Royalty, Designer-in-Residence Columbia University)
- Building skills for conducting customer discovery

Assignment

- Come to next class prepared to talk about who you assume your customers are
- Talk to 3-5 potential customers
- Solidify your team, come to office hours if you need help forming or finding a team
- Send out your weekly update email

Reading

*An Introduction to Design Thinking*

9/23 – Class 3: Need-Finding & Re-Framing

Lecture

- Need-finding and Re-Framing (Adam Royalty, Designer-in-Residence Columbia University)

Workshop

- Exercises

Assignment

- Perform at least 10 interviews of potential customers
- Synthesize what you learned and share in your update email
9/30 – Class 4: Building a Product While at Business School (“hustling”)

Panel: CBS grads who built product while in school

Drew Silverstein, founder, Amper Music

Luis Sanz, co-founder, Olapic

Liz Wilkes, founder of Exubrancy

Assignment

- Come to the next class with an exhaustive list of tests against your problem statement. These tests should be quick/easy/manual.
- Build a simple prototype

Reading

Lean Prototyping a Practical Guide

DS by Paul Graham

10/7 – Class 5: “Tooling Up”

Lecture

- Brian Sirkia, founder, tool guru
- Will take class through a practical immersion into all the tools, sites, resources available and particularly useful to startup teams

Workshop

- Exercises
10/14 – Class 6: Prep for Demo Day

Speakers:

Jeremy Miller, founder of FSA Store

Kevin Carroll: How to Present!

Workshop:

• Preparing and iterating on your prototype and pitch for DEMO DAY
• Feedback sessions, pitch prep

Reading

Early Beta

The 10X Product Launch

Your First Customers

10/28 – Class 7: DEMO DAY

Workshop

• Demo what you’ve been working on in front of NYC investors and Entrepreneurs

Assignment

• Come to next class prepared to give a two minute pitch for you company
• Optional: Make a fundraising deck

Reading

Demo by Nate Westheimer
11/11 – Class 8: RAISING MONEY

Lecture

- “Time, People, Money” with Dave Lerner and Brendan Burns
- Raising Money in NYC: Raj Patel, serial entrepreneur, EIR at Techstars NYC

Discussion:

- Technique

Assignment

- Come up with a list of pressing legal questions regarding your startup

Reading

A Simple Approach to Pitch Decks

11/18 – Class 9: Startup Law

Lecture

- Startup Law seminar with Charles Torres from Perkins Coie

Workshop

- Are you ready to incorporate? Do you have a founder’s agreement? If so start now.
11/25 – Class 10: Venture Storytelling

Lecture

• Storyteller’s Arc with Adam Royalty
• Venture Storytelling (Dave Lerner and Brendan Burns)

Workshop

• Iterate on your story and pitch

Assignment

• Get ready for your final presentation

12/2 – Class 11: Final Presentations

1st half of class presents

12/19 – Class 12: Final Presentations

2nd half of class presents