Syllabus - January 12-16, 2015

Columbia B8799-035: The Lean Launch Pad

Instructors: Steve Blank & Bob Dorf

Co-Instructors: Asha Saxena (CEO of Future Technologies, Inc) & Alicia Syrett (Founder and CEO of Pantegrion Capital)

Credits: 3

Teaching Assistants: Nathaniel Kelner

Days and Times: Monday – Friday 9:00 am – 5:30 pm (or earlier finish)

Main Auditorium: TBD

Break-out Rooms: TBD

Video Lectures: Udacity EP245 (How to Build a Startup)

Texts: The Startup Owner’s Manual Blank & Dorf

Business Model Generation Osterwalder & Pigneur

Prerequisite: Interest in discovering how an idea can become a real company and participation in all steps of application process described on page 4.

Application: Team member bios; venture concept overview.

Goal: An experiential learning opportunity showing how startups are built.

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Mandatory Pre-class Preparation:

Reading/Viewing Assignment for day 1 of the class

- Course Strategy: HBR - Why The Lean Start-Up Changes Everything
- Watch Udacity EP245 lectures 1 and 1.5A & B
- Read: Business Model Generation: pp. 14-49
- Startup Owners Manual: pp. 1-84 intro to customer development
- Look at: presentations http://www.sleshare.net/sblank/tagged/Columbia/

Before You Show Up in Class

- What’s the difference between search and execution?
- What is a business model versus business plan?

On January 12, 2015 - Day 1

- What is the business model canvas?
- What are the 9 components of the business model canvas?
• What is a hypothesis?
• What is Customer Development?
• What are the key tenets of Customer Development?
• What is the right way to approach customer interviews?

Assignment for Day 1
• Interview 10 customers before the first day of class (see Customer Visits below)
• Prepare your team’s presentation using the business model canvas (see Presentation Guidelines below)
• Come with a customer contact/visit list (see Customer Visits below) for the week, with at least 4 visits planned/scheduled for the afternoon of January 12.

Presentation Guidelines for Day 1
• Prepare a 2-slide 5-minute presentation: See Slideshare for examples (above)
  Slide 1: Title Slide
  Slide 2: Business Model Canvas

Customer Visits
Each team must make 10 or more customer/industry contacts per day starting Monday, after our first session (you will be dismissed at by 2:00 PM on Monday and have all morning until 12:30pm on Tuesday through Thursday and until 12pm on Friday to conduct actual customer discovery interviews).

Come with a customer contact/visit list that will last a week, with at least 4 visits planned/scheduled by January 12.

Teams will find it very helpful to meet before class begins. The team can identify customer/industry contacts to target, review/discuss its business model canvas, and begin to refine their initial business model based on a review of the Udacity EP245 Lectures 0, 1 and 1.5 and reading in both texts.

Course Description
This course provides real world, hands-on learning on what it’s like to actually start a high-tech company. This class is not about how to write a business plan. It’s not an exercise on how smart you are in a classroom, or how well you use the research library to size markets. And the end result is not a PowerPoint slide deck for a VC presentation. And it is most definitely not an incubator where you come to build the “hot-idea” you have in mind.

This is a practical class – essentially a lab, not a theory or “book” class. Our goal, within the
constraints of a classroom and a limited amount of time, is to create an entrepreneurial experience for you with all of the pressures and demands of the real world in an early stage start up.

You will be getting your hands dirty talking to customers, partners, competitors, as you encounter the chaos and uncertainty of how a startup actually works. You’ll work in teams learning how to turn a great idea into a great company. You’ll learn how to use a business model to brainstorm each part of a company and customer development to get out of the classroom to see whether anyone other than you would want/use your product. Finally, based on the customer and market feedback you gathered, you would use agile development to rapidly iterate your product to build something customers would actually use and buy. Each day will be a new adventure outside the classroom as you test each part of your business model and then share the hard earned knowledge with the rest of the class.

**The Flipped Classroom**

Unlike a traditional classroom where the instructor presents lecture material, our lectures are online at Udacity.com. Watching the assigned lectures is a *required* part of your daily homework. We expect you to watch the assigned lectures and we will use time in class to discuss questions about the lecture material.

**Class Culture**

Startups communicate much differently than inside a university or a large company. It is dramatically different from the university or large company culture most of you are familiar with. At times it can feel brusque and impersonal, but in reality is focused and oriented to create *immediate action* in time- and cash-constrained environments. We have limited time and we push, challenge, and question you in the hope you will quickly learn. We will be direct, open, and tough – just like the real world. We hope you can recognize that these comments aren’t personal, but part of the process. We also expect you to question us, challenge our point of view if you disagree, and engage in a real dialog with the teaching team. This approach may seem harsh or abrupt, but it is all part of our wanting you to learn to challenge yourselves quickly and objectively, and to appreciate that as entrepreneurs you need to learn and evolve faster than you ever imagined possible.

PLEASE NOTE: all presentations prepared for the class will be posted on slideshare.net.

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PLEASE NOTE: all presentations prepared for the class will be posted on slideshare.net. (see intellectual property overview at end of syllabus)

**Amount of Work**
This class requires a phenomenal amount of work on your part, certainly compared to many other classes. Projects are treated as real start-ups, so the workload will be intense. Getting out of the classroom is what the effort is about. You will be spending a significant amount of time in between each of the lectures outside your lab talking to customers. If you can’t commit the time to talk to customers, this class is not for you.

This class is a simulation of what startups and entrepreneurship is like in the real world: chaos, uncertainly, impossible deadlines in insufficient time, conflicting input, etc. This class pushes many people past their comfort zone. It’s not about you, but it’s also not about the class or the teaching team. This is what startups are like (and the class is just small part of what it is really like.) The pace and the uncertainty pick up as the class proceeds.

**Team Organization**
This class is team-based. Working and studying will be done in teams. You will be admitted as a team. Teams must submit a proposal for entry before the class begins. Projects must be approved before the class.

Team projects can be software, physical product, or service of any kind. The teams will self-organize and establish individual roles on their own. There are no formal CEO/VP's - just the constant parsing and allocating of the tasks that need to be done.