VENURE IDEAS @ EPFL

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Doodle AG
Doodle

The problem
The solution
The advantages
Any takers?
The problem

- A group has to agree on a date/time
- The group could come to an agreement by e-mail, SMS, phone, etc.
  - tedious
  - time-consuming
  - error-prone
The solution

Poll: Monthly Meeting

This is an example date/time poll. Learn more ...

Summary: 3 participants, 0 comments, 0 files

John has created this poll.

“When do you have time for our monthly meeting?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mon 9</th>
<th>Tue 10</th>
<th>Thu 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>morning</td>
<td>afternoon</td>
<td>9:00 AM - 11:30 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>OK</td>
<td></td>
<td>OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>OK</td>
<td>OK</td>
<td>OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordi</td>
<td></td>
<td>OK</td>
<td>OK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your name

Count 1 2 1 3 2
Save
# The advantages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KISS</th>
<th>welcoming</th>
<th>multicultural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Keep it simple, Sevinç! | • No registration  
• No installation  
• No cost | • More than 25 languages  
• Language-dependent date and time formats  
• Time-zone support |
Any takers?

- Late 2003:
  a few users in the Zurich area

- Early 2009:
  more than three million users worldwide
  about 800k of which in Switzerland

- In the future?
  the world's population is about 1000x Switzerland's population …
Show me the money

New Economy! → No Economy?
The Cost of Zero Cost Advertising Freemium
Free services and free products need to be financed, too
The Cost of Zero Cost

- The difference between 0 and X feels bigger than the difference between X and 2X.
- How expensive would a Web service feel that was free once?
# Advertising

## Advantages
- The advertising pie is big
- Advertising works well for a few services and products

## Disadvantages
- User $\neq$ Customer
- The competition is bigger
- Advertising works badly for many services and products
Freemium

- Free: basic features are free
- Premium: advanced features cost

Doodle offers two premium services:

- B2B: Branded Doodle
- B2C: Premium Doodle

- Flavor: x uses (in y time) are free, further uses cost
In the land of the blind the one-eyed man is king

Starting up
Before incorporating

- Attend courses:
  - http://ifj.ch/
  - http://venturelab.ch/
- Write a business plan
- Look for free money:
  - http://venturekick.ch/
After incorporating

- Read “Founders at Work” by Jessica Livingston
- Don't lose your sleep
- Keep working on your business plan
- Keep looking for free money
Software

- Before licensing any software, check whether you can subscribe to the MS Action Pack and/or participate in MS BizSpark/WebSpark:
  - https://partner.microsoft.com/switzerland-de/40016455
  - http://www.microsoft.com/web/websitespark/

- Secure critical data:
  - http://www.truecrypt.org/
  - http://subversion.tigris.org/
Coaching

- Apply for CTI Start-up:
  http://www.ctistartup.ch/

- Apply for Venture Leaders:
  http://www.venturelab.ch/dt/vLeaders.asp
  "I was worried that we would waste time on chitchatting and sipping cocktails. As it turned out, «venture leaders» is an intense business-training program that will help me much better face various challenges that still lie ahead for our company."
Users and customers

- Listen to your users and customers
  - Good support for your users and customers is good research for you
  - "Everything is resolved...thanx so much for your help...that is, if you're a real person and not a computer generated response."

- Learn about their problems, not their "solutions"
  - "If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses." Henry Ford
Financing: family & friends

- Let your family & friends only invest in your company if they understand that it is likely that they will never see their money again.
- The terms of financing must be in writing.
Financing: BAs & VCs

- Don't sign any term sheet, participation agreement, etc. without the blessing of an expert of your trust

- Valuating a start-up company is not an exact science
  - Too high a valuation is not necessarily an advantage

- Be clear about whether you prefer active or passive investors

- http://thefunded.com/funds/item/5936
Financing: BAs & VCs

- Business Angels
  - Build to Flip

- Venture Capitalists
  - Swing for the Fences
Recruiting

- First-class people hire first-class people. Second-class people hire third-class people.
- "Here’s a tip from someone who has read thousands of resumes. When you’re applying to a startup, or a software company with less than, say, 100 employees, you may want to highlight the Banging Out Code parts of your experience, while deemphasizing the Middle Management parts of your experience."

http://www.joelonsoftware.com/items/2009/01/02b.html
Get rich—but don't die trying

- You can found a company to make boatloads of money
- You must not found any company only to make boatloads of money
Keeping it simple since 2003

+ Christoph
+ Benjamin