Let’s make a plan ...

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Don’t believe me because;

• I’ve never written a good business plan
• I am an engineer
• I don’t have an MBA
• I just do what I think is right, react later
• I have lots of smart people who help me
• I have never had a major exit
The stuff I worked on...

- **HelpShare** (angle funded)
- **Microsoft** - Hosted Exchange, MS Anti-spam, Exchange 2003, Mobile SDP (think iPhone app store)
- **Message Gate** (VC - Polaris EIR)
- **MOD Systems** (strategic VC)
- **Jump2Go** (bootstrap/customer funded)
- **Zooppa, h-farm, Wishpot** - advisor
- **Evri and Gist** (VC)

*Lessons learned: it always takes longer, pick a customer you want to embrace, Know your own space*
Why are you writing this?

- Form follows function;
  - To win a competition
  - Practice for a future idea
  - **To raise money**
  - **To run the business**

- Less is more,
  - 10 slide pitch deck (PPT)
  - 1 page overview - make it tight and compelling
  - Excel for operations and finances
  - The plan is more for you than them (ops vs. biz)
Strategy - magic quadrant

- Create the vision that is big enough
- You can only change 1 thing/quarter
- This is your elevator pitch
- Say it and listen to the response
- Refine, refine, refine...

Lessons learned: it should not be complicated
Mad libs...

(Company name) is focused on (customer). We deliver (features)/(benefits). We will monetize by (business model) and our better than the (current solution or competitor).

Gist is focused on business professionals, saving them time and delivering key insights aggregated from social networks, social media and news in one integrated solution. We charge end-user subscriptions and are more dynamic than LinkedIn, more comprehensive than Google Alerts and more integrated into the users workflow than stand alone web solutions.
Strategy - know your customer

- Personify your customer
- Focus on pain vs. opportunity
- Economic buyers vs. users
- Know 10-50 by name
- Sell them your PPT
- Make sure they pay
- Understand their toolset/integration

Lessons learned: this is the fun part and you should love it, iterate quickly
Market sizing

- **Bottoms up**
  - Bob does X
  - Bob is like Sue
  - I know Bob and Sue and they will buy and promote
  - There are lots of Bob and Sue in my broad population

- **Tops down**
  - Analysts
  - Media
  - General populations

- **Competitors**
  - Public filings
  - Press announcements
Product

- Make it look like it exists
- Hire a good designer
- Why is this hard to copy?
- Fancy graphs, numbers... demonstrates that this is hard!
Aspirin or Vitamin

- Pain is more valuable than opportunity
- Quantify the pain in smart ways ($, time...)
- Use real examples that translate broadly
Team

- How close are you to doing it again...?
  - Role
  - Industry
  - Connections
  - Synergy across the team
  - Requirements of the business

- The best advisors/investors are only one small step away from conflict of interest

- Value = 5(passion) + 2(brains) + 1(experience)
You are the VP of Marketing

- Make yourself a brand and thought leader
  - Goto and present at conferences
  - Become a guest contributor

- Communicate online and in-person
  - Blog (1-2 per month)
  - Twitter (1-2 per day, blend of personal, content and business)
  - Facebook (connect to Twitter and your blog)
  - LinkedIn

- Understand what resonates, the message the space and timing, the competition

- Sell, Sell, Sell your idea and yourself
Operations

- Plan and Pitch in PPT (lies), Operate in Excel (truth)
- Time bound and list your goals - stay honest with yourself
- Deliver email status updates every 2 weeks to your investors/board/advisors
- Always cut yourself off one quarter earlier than you need and 2 quarters before you think you should

*Lessons learned: good entrepreneurs will make too many sacrifices*
Operations
- know your keys areas
- can you do the job
- who do you need to hire

Cash
- how much do you need
- when does it run out

Customers/users
- cost to acquire
- cost to support
- can you make money
- where do they come from

Triangulation
- does it make sense
- aligned with standards
- can you achieve it
Raising capital

- Angles take just as much time as VCs
- Your plan is your plan
- Plan - Promise - Prototype - Product - Performance
- 25-50% of the investors decision is out of your control
  - Wrong space, wrong size, wrong partner, wrong metrics, wrong time, already invested, once burned...
- Do your homework, but interview your investors as well
- Know what you are looking for (skills)
Investment summary

- This round
  - What do you need?
  - What will you do with it? (be specific)
  - How long will it last?

- What else do you want from your investors?
  - Skills
  - Connections
  - Experience
  - Location
Summary

- Stay focused on the customer
- Presentations and documents should help you run the business
- Focus on tangible results vs. big plans
- Build a passionate team that loves what they are doing
Know More About Who You Know.

Gist helps you build stronger relationships by connecting the inbox to the web to provide business-critical information about the people and companies that matter most.

Sign Up.

Full Name  
Email  
Sign Up

1/29/2010
Dashboard – what I need to know about my network
Profile - 360 degree view of my key contacts, automagically
**MS Outlook** - *delivering Gist value in context (email)*
Salesforce (CRM) - starting the customer conversation...
Lotus Notes - delivering Gist value in mail, calendar, contacts...
iPhone (mobile) - just what I need to know, in one click...
Tools that cost very little money

- Open source stack
  - Prototype + LowPro, Ruby/Rails, Java, AMQ, MySql
  - Textmate/Netbeans, SVN, Rspec, CruiseControl

- Google is our friend
  - Google Domains (mail and docs)
  - Google forms (interview and VC feedback tracking)
  - App engine - web site hosting
  - Analytics - web data tracking

- **PBWiki** - corporate plans and broad strategy, **Unfuddle** - bug and feature database and **Skitch** - screen caps and comments

- Soft Layer - hosting, Amazon S3 - storage

- **Survey Monkey** - end user surveys, **Vertical Response** - keeping the beta users engaged and **GotoMeeting** - presentations, **TweetDeck** - monitoring the Twitter stream