Venture Capital and Marketing with K8 Ventures

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Organization: K8 Ventures
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Executive Summary

I completed an internship with K8 Ventures, a Venture Builder Studio in Chicago. I had the opportunity to work on projects for K8 as well as P3rceive, one of their major portfolio companies. My time with the company has allowed me to learn about a variety of business procedures, techniques, and terminology, in addition to what it takes to develop a company.

Business Context

K8 Ventures is a Venture Builder Studio that takes companies from an idea to a profitable, established company. In traditional venture capital (VC) firms, startups and small companies reach out to investors at VC firms for funding in exchange for equity in their company. K8, being a Venture Builder Studio, is different; K8 owns and invests in all of their portfolio companies from the moment they are started until they are sold. Investing in these kinds of early-stage companies enables K8 to take a larger share of equity, and thus allowing them to take a number of traditional risks out of VC with managerial roles in their companies. K8 is currently developing a number of companies including P3rceive, BAMM!, ZiRO, and FutureSightIQ. I was heavily involved with P3rceive where I engaged in branding, market research, data mining leads, and more. Additionally, I was able to work on projects for K8 and Generation Z Unleashed, a blog I co-founded during my time with the company under the guidance of my business mentor and K8 Ventures Managing Partner and Founder, Kurt Johnson, which has given me the opportunity to apply the skills I learned from working on P3rceive to my own endeavors.

Project Description

Depicted below are the projects I worked on for K8 Ventures and P3rceive.

P3rceive:

P3rceive is an AI business forecasting software. Under the guidance of my P3rceive marketing mentor, Maca Navas, P3rceive Marketing Operations Manager, I developed marketing plans and created marketable material. I became familiar with tools such as Mailchimp, an innovative platform for email marketing. This platform enabled me to create and optimize sales pipelines. Some of the emails I have created in Mailchimp that are a part of a sales pipeline are shown in appendix 4.

Additionally, I got experience creating email campaigns for A/B testing. The purpose was to see which email campaign out of two options would perform better when sent to contacts. The majority of these contacts came from target audience research that I conducted. I went through the LinkedIn followers of

P3rceive, P3rceive's executives, and filtered through investor information on internal databases to compile contact information which would later be implemented into the P3rceive email marketing campaigns.

In addition to email marketing, I helped develop social media content. Maca encouraged me to think differently, prioritize quality over quantity, and overall challenged my ideas to shape my skills, abilities, and mindset when creating marketable content. Every week, I would create and schedule posts to be uploaded to social media via Hootsuite, a social media management platform. A LinkedIn post I created is shown in appendix 3.

K8 Ventures:

During my time at K8, I had the opportunity to found a blog called Generation Z: Unleashed with fellow classmate, Rosario Picone, and friend, Kiran Johnson. Under the guidance of Kurt, I have been able to approach developing the business professionally with skills currently in my possession as well as skills gained with the experience. This has been the great opportunity for me to apply what I have learned from Maca with P3rceive. This is our website: https://www.genzunleashed.com/.

Crunchbase and Pitchbook are the 'Facebook' of investment platforms. Crunchbase is an open source platform to explore both private and public companies. Anyone can view a company's funding and investment information, people in leadership positions, etc.. Pitchbook is a subscription-based platform where similarly, you have access to the main attributes of investment firms. K8 maintains a profile on both platforms primarily for marketing to prospective investors. I assisted in updating various information on these platforms and in doing so, I was able to gain a better understanding of finance and investment terminology.

When I started at K8 Ventures, K8 did not have all emails and hosting billing centralized. This meant that there were organizational inefficiencies because each subsidiary of K8 was using separate hosting and billing services. Additionally, K8 and its subsidiaries did not have a centralized location to store files due to the lack of centralized billing. Thus, I researched, outlined, and proposed the process by which this issue would be solved. The proposal I created is attached in appendix 1. Additional ways I have been able to contribute to K8 is through smaller projects such as trademark and award research. The first page of this research document is in appendix 2.

Project Research

Key Questions I was asking myself:
1. How can I help P3rceive appeal to its target audience?
2. How can I meaningfully contribute to K8 but also apply skills gained from K8 and P3rceive to a personal project?

When starting at K8, I was quickly tasked with developing a marketing plan for P3rceive. I started identifying and becoming familiar with the target audience and exploring the potential ways P3rceive could appeal to that audience. Maca provided me with ample information about the software and its various unique features. Once I understood that P3rceive simulates business sales based on a number of different factors such as how much staffing, resources, leads, etc. a business has, I was encouraged to think beyond the literal features that the software has and more about the implications of P3rceive. The company is a pioneer in its field which means it is harder to 'get out there' and earn the trust of customers as a useful tool and reputable company; people don't know the impact the software can have. Thus, I first researched prospective investors because they can better identify P3rceive's potential given that they are more familiar with what is and is not on the market. P3rceive wanted to come in contact with them in regards to becoming investors. Maca also informed me that we would want to be looking for beta customers. To aid in this process, P3rceive started having a promotion where if someone became a beta customer, they would be at the disposal of a lifetime discount. I then had to think about what a P3rceive user might look like in terms of what kind of job they would have and what industry they could be in. Sales planning executives and financial officers of companies from all industries are typically those who lay out the sales plan for the future, so I decided to target them as potential beta customers.

First focusing on how to get a list of investors, I talked with Kurt, and he recommended I go through his LinkedIn connections which were largely investors and people with the financial potential to invest. I downloaded all 2400+ of his connections and compiled a spreadsheet with everyone who listed contact information. Next, I focused on how to get a list of executives from various industries. Kurt was able to supply me with a list of company websites from a database; it featured a wide variety of industries such as aerospace and aircraft product and part production, construction and architecture manufacturing, and many more. Those kinds of industries tend to be more complex and interconnected, so I thought we could market P3rceive to them as something to help them become more efficient. I went through all of the websites for CFO or other executive contact information and compiled them. This was a helpful learning experience in that I got a good idea of where to look when trying to contact a company. At that point, I had a list of investors and company executives, but P3rceive also needed beta customers from the general public and to appeal to leaders from whichever business they associated with. This list was created by combining P3rceive's social media followers with people who individually signed up for email updates, whether through P3rceive's website or social media.

This came down to the careful crafting of email campaigns and sales pipelines. Maca introduced me to the process of creating a series of steps that eventually led to a

group of prospective customers. That is, in essence, a sales pipeline. The steps were emails, and the platform I used, Mailchimp, tracked engagement with these emails. I created a few versions of three-stage campaigns to conduct A/B testing which is essentially where two different versions of an email campaign would be sent out, and the levels of engagement would be compared. As Neil Rackham mentions in *Spin Selling*, I would only change a few aspects at a time to keep things consistent. The emails shown in appendix 4 were a part of the campaign with slightly higher levels of engagement, but we are still in the process of seeing the results of this testing. These email campaigns were sent to the lists of business executives and general interested people that I previously created. I also created some newsletters and lifetime discount emails independent of sales pipelines that were sent after interacting with certain features on the website.

Regarding social media itself, I was able to pull knowledge from *Likeable Social Media* by Dave Kerpen. I was initially curating marketing content for both Twitter and LinkedIn. However, since P3rceive's target audience is largely business professionals, it was declared best to solely focus on LinkedIn. Maca has been diligent in coaching me with content post creation. When I started this internship, I was creating around five posts each week, but I have since transitioned to creating one post each week. This is because Maca emphasizes quality over quantity as well as being able to think outside the box. At first, I struggled because it is a different way of thinking, but as Eliyahu M. Goldratt states in *The Goal: A Process of Ongoing Improvement*, "Since the strength of the chain is determined by the weakest link, then the first step to improve an organization must be to identify the weakest link." Thus, I converted my struggle into a unique way of thinking about marketing, one that helped me generate ideas better. This answered my first question because I was able to target and expand P3rceive's identified market and cater to them accordingly.

Given that K8 has been able to provide me with so much guidance and opportunity, part of the second question asks how I could contribute to K8. One way was through updating Crunchbase and Pitchbook which, as mentioned earlier, are valuable investment platforms. It is important for prospective and current investors to be able to access K8 on such platforms because it gives a sense of transparency. K8 is uploading and updating information such as funding and investments, people in leadership positions, etc. which help keep investors in the loop. I assisted in updating various information on both platforms. In addition, I engaged in projects such as trademark research. This has provided me with the opportunity to learn a lot about trademarks by spending a lot of time studying their guidelines, pricing, application timelines, possible conflicts, etc. while also contributing to K8. The first page of this research document is in appendix 2.

Another way I contributed back to K8 was through consolidating their billing and file hosting. Not having this feature meant that there were organizational inefficiencies. Our plan was to transfer P3rceive emails hosted by BlueHost to GoDaddy so that all billing was under one host, and everyone would also be storing related files in Microsoft Teams. We began this process when I started my internship, researching and proposing a plan for how this consolidation could work. Throughout my internship, I have been heavily assisting with the execution of this plan. After encountering multiple unforeseen

setbacks and delays, the consolidation is a week or two away from being complete. The K8 team and portfolio company members look forward to the completion of this process since it will allow for better communication and overall organization of the company's files. I am grateful that I have been able to engage with such tasks and projects that are valuable contributions to K8.

The second question also asks how I was able to apply my new skills to personal business endeavors. As mentioned, I had the opportunity to found a blog called 'Generation Z: Unleashed' with two other friends. Under the guidance of Kurt, I have been able to develop the business from a professional standpoint. I have been able to apply my knowledge of email marketing with Mailchimp and A/B testing as well as creating marketing plans, quality social media posts, and utilizing Hootsuite. I am prompted to expand my skill set by thinking about all of the details that go into running a business. We have been able to identify our driving purpose and portray it through a mission statement, brand ourselves and develop a website that would sufficiently represent us, create a cycle by which we would generate our blog posts, have the opportunity to reach out to people and companies for interviews, events, and collaborations, which all in turn help develop professional communication skills. Additionally, this blog contributes to my understanding of my generation's consumer habits, which will be valuable for my future endeavors in business.

Key Learnings & Recommendations

With the completion of tasks such as market research and content creation, I have been able to become more efficient and familiar with important tasks in business. Being incredibly hands-on with P3rceive has given me the opportunity to learn skills such as researching and understanding a company's target audience, creating marketing plans, and creating marketable material. Also, in a way, I have been reintroduced to the power of the internet. There are so many softwares accessible online that do incredible tasks, such as HootSuite which automatically posts to social media for you, and Mailchimp which allows you to create and send customizable email campaigns while also tracking user engagement. I am grateful for the opportunity to learn how to use and optimize these kinds of tools because not only can I now apply these skills, but they also make me more prepared for future endeavors. Working on P3rceive has also given me the opportunity to sit in on interviews with P3rceive board members. I have been able to listen to their incredible business journeys, gain interesting insight about business procedures as well as their unique business mindsets cultivated from their experiences. Additionally, I had the opportunity to be on board with K8 when P3rceive launched to market which was incredibly exciting. I got a sense of what it takes to officially launch a company and in the coming months, what it takes to keep growing, because the launch is just one of the first steps. I also got a thorough introduction to the world of venture capital when working with Crunchbase and Pitchbook. Gary Scheier, my finance mentor and K8 co-founder and board member, generously took the time to sit down with me and explain various VC terminology. A large majority of these terms and processes were on Crunchbase and Pitchbook, so it

ensured I was not mindlessly plugging-in information. He honored my curiosity and desire to learn VC terminology and processes. One of the terms I learned was *seed*, which is an early stage investment. I was later browsing articles and saw one which talked about seed investing, and I thought it was awesome how I had learned what it meant during a lecture with Gary hours earlier. Finally, I have had the opportunity to not only develop myself as an entrepreneur and business woman but as a writer as well. Kurt has given me feedback on every Generation Z Unleashed blog draft I have produced which has been incredibly helpful. I was previously not aware that using words such as 'definitely', 'all', 'everyone', etc. can undermine my argument; I also did not notice how redundant some of my sentences can become with using 'additionally' and 'also', for example, in the same sentence. In a world where communication is key, I am grateful for the coaching I have received to become a better, more articulate writer. My advice to K8 would be to continue to implement email campaigns to keep P3rceive's audience growing. Their social media choice of LinkedIn is sufficient and explanatory, but I would recommend they look into even more platforms in the future.

Reference List

People:
> Kurt Johnson: business mentor, K8 Ventures Managing Partner and Founder
> Maca Navas: marketing mentor, P3rceive Marketing Operations Manager
> Gary Scheier: finance mentor, K8 co-founder and board member

Literature:
> *Likeable Social Media* by Dave Kerpen
> *Spin Selling* by Neil Rackham
> *The Goal: A Process of Ongoing Improvement* by Eliyahu Goldratt

Appendices

1. Consolidation Project Proposal

Bluehost to GoDaddy Consolidation

Introduction:

K8 Ventures does not currently have all email and hosting billing centralized. This means that each subsidiary of K8 uses separate hosting and billing services, which causes organizational inefficiencies. Additionally, there is not a centralized location to store files for K8 or their subsidiaries due to the lack of centralized billing. The following plan focuses on fixing these issues for P3rceive and K8 Ventures.

P3rceive currently has three active emails, info@P3rceive.com, maca@p3rceive.com, conor@p3rceive.com, and one website. The website will remain unaffected as the domain is transferred; the P3rceive.com developers have given approval for the transfer. These emails need to be transferred from being hosted by Bluehost to GoDaddy to consolidate billing and file storage. The entire process for these emails to be moved will take approximately two weeks, and there will be no interruptions in service. After they have been transferred, the emails will be using the Online Essentials plan; this means they will have access to Microsoft Teams, K8's file sharing platform. Not only will this transfer give P3rceive members access to P3rceive and K8's public files, but it will consolidate billing for K8 Ventures.

Timeline:

Wednesday 4.15.2020
1: The intern team emails GoDaddy with a request to transfer the three stored emails that need to be transferred.
2: Payment is required
3: There is a four day wait until GoDaddy begins transferring the stored emails.

Monday 4.20.2020
GoDaddy begins transferring stored emails between the Bluehost and GoDaddy servers.
1: Once GoDaddy has started, it will take seven days to complete the transfer.

Monday 4.27.2020
At this point, the emails have been transferred to GoDaddy; now GoDaddy will transfer the domain registration.
1: The intern team will again email GoDaddy with a request to transfer the domain registration
2: There is a one week wait for GoDaddy to finish the process of transferring the domain.

Monday 5.4.2020
All three emails will be transferred.
1: Website developers need to update the domain registration on the website

Costs:

P3rceive's contract with Bluehost ends in 4 months (August); it is currently billing at $30 a month. We are able to recoup a portion of the money remaining on the contract.

The pricing structure below details the price of three mailboxes using Online Essentials, which is needed to access Microsoft Teams. The conversion costs have been waved; the prices below outline the cost of having the new mailboxes with GoDaddy for one year. These are not publically available, the intern team had to negotiate with GoDaddy to achieve these rates.

The following quotes are for the next (one) year of service with GoDaddy, and represent the cost of the transfer:

Domain Transfer Fee:	$7.99
Mailbox with Online Essentials:	$95.88 ($7.99 per month x 12)
Mailbox with Online Essentials:	$95.88 ($7.99 per month x 12)
Mailbox with Online Essentials:	$95.88 ($7.99 per month x 12)
Total before tax:	**$295.63**

2. Trademark Research

Trademark Rules:
-Two companies can file trademarks on a word with the same spelling/pronunciation only if they are in different sectors.
-If both companies are in the same sector, they may be pronounced the same but spelled differently
-If a trademark is dead, it can be reclaimed.

Trademark Pricing:
-**Lawyers:** typically charge a flat $950 for legal work
    -If the product is not currently for sale, it will need to be for sale within a year. There are extra fees associated with this, an extra flat $250
-**Government:** The government filing fee is $275 per class/industry that the trademark will apply in. This is only if your product is already for sale
    -If the product is not currently for sale, it will need to be for sale within a year. There are extra fees associated with this, an extra $100 per class to the government.
-**Most Trademarks are registered in at least 2 classes, we may need more or less depending on the product. All prices were calculated with only 2 classes which seems to be the reasonable minimum, all trademarks can include more classes. (Add an extra $275 per class to the total cost)**

Names:

(REDACTED):
Status: Available

Conclusion: This will be relatively easy to trademark, there should be no major issues or complications. Because Calendar Crusher is already released, we will not have to worry about extra government/lawyer fees.

Timeline from the time we submit application: 12 months
    Application Review: 6 months
    Publication: 3 months
        To finish the application process, publication in an official news source is required.
    Certificate of Registration: 3 months
        It will take about 3 months for the USPTO offices to actually release the final certificate
Cost: $1,500*
    $950 flat filing fee: Average price from law firm
    $275: Class 1 government filing fee
    $275: Class 2 government filing fee

If product is not being sold, extra $100 per class and extra $250 to lawyer.

(REDACTED):
Status: Complicated

Search link:
http://tmsearch.uspto.gov/bin/showfield?f=toc&state=4810%3Aq3x5ay.1.1&p_search=searchss&p_L=50&BackReference=&p_plural=yes&p_s_PARA1=&p_tagrepl%7E%3A=PARA1%24LD&expr=PARA1+AND+PARA2&p_s_PARA2=ZiRo&p_tagrepl%7E%3A=PARA2%24COMB&p_op_ALL=AND&a_default=search&a_search=Submit+Query&a_search=Submit+Query

Possible Conflicts:
1: 88632319
    -Same spelling, different capitalization
    -mobile app sector; Ride sharing app
2: 88768879
    -Same spelling, same capitalization
    -Business assistance, Clothing
3: 87474488
    -Same spelling, different capitalization
    -Cosmetics, Telecommunication Services
4: 87775104
    -Same spelling, different capitalization
    -Computer Hardware/Software, Media Production

Conclusion: It looks like this will be viable, but it will be more difficult than the others because there is a lot of usage of the (REDACTED) word. The only one we that raises any concern is 88768879 because of identical capitalization, but they are not involved in a separate sector.

Timeline from the time we submit applicaiton: 18 months
    Application Review: 6 months
    Response from USPTO: 6 months
        Becuase there are other existing names, they will most likely come back and ask for more details on our differentiation. This can take up to 6 months
    Publication: 3 months
        To finish the application process, publication in an official news source is required.
    Certificate of Registration: 3 months
        It will take about 3 months for the USPTO offices to actually release the final certificate

Cost: $1,500-$1950*
    $950 flat filing fee: Average price from law firm
    $275: Class 1 government filing fee
    $275: Class 2 government filing fee
    If product is not being sold, extra $100 per class and extra $250 to lawyer this is represented by $1950 figure.

(REDACTED):
Status: Available

Conclusion: This will be relatively easy to trademark, there should be no major issues or complications. Because (REDACTED) is already released, we will not have to worry about extra government/lawyer fees.

Timeline from the time we submit application: 12 months
    Application Review: 6 months
    Publication: 3 months
        To finish the application process, publication in an official news source is required.
    Certificate of Registration: 3 months
        It will take about 3 months for the USPTO offices to actually release the final certificate
Cost: $1,500*
    $950 flat filing fee: Average price from law firm
    $275: Class 1 Government filing fee
    $275: Class 2 Government filing fee
    If product is not being sold, extra $100 per class and extra $250 to lawyer.

(REDACTED):
Status Available

Conclusion: This will be relatively easy to trademark, there should be no major issues or complications. Because (REDACTED) is not released, there will be additional costs to the trademark process. If a trademark is filed, the product must be released within one year or else the trademark will be closed.

Timeline from the time we submit application: 12 months
    Application Review: 6 months
    Publication: 3 months

        To finish the application process, publication in an official news source is required.
    Certificate of Registration: 3 months
        It will take about 3 months for the USPTO offices to actually release the final certificate
Cost: $1,500-$1950*
    $950 flat filing fee: Average price from law firm
    $275: Class 1 government filing fee
    $275: Class 2 government filing fee
    If product is not being sold, extra $100 per class and extra $250 to lawyer this is represented by $1950 figure.

(REDACTED):
Status Available

Conclusion: This will be relatively easy to trademark, there should be no major issues or complications. Because (REDACTED) is already providing service, we will not have to worry about extra government/lawyer fees.

Timeline from the time we submit application: 12 months
    Application Review: 6 months
    Publication: 3 months
        To finish the application process, publication in an official news source is required.
    Certificate of Registration: 3 months
        It will take about 3 months for the USPTO offices to actually release the final certificate
Cost: $1,500*
    $950 flat filing fee: Average price from law firm
    $275: Class 1 Government filing fee
    $275: Class 2 Government filing fee
    If product is not being sold, extra $100 per class and extra $250 to lawyer.

(REDACTED):
Status Available

Conclusion: This will be relatively easy to trademark, there should be no major issues or complications. If (REDACTED) is already in business, then the cost will be closer to the $1,500. If (REDACTED) is not founded yet, the cost will escalate to $1,950 and business must start within a year.

Timeline from the time we submit application: 12 months

3. LinkedIn Post

P3rceive, LLC
p3rceive 63 followers
4mo • 🌐

You deserve software that is:
- Easy to use
- Agile and flexible
- Reduces time to insight
- Allows easy handling of a high volume and variety of data

Because awesome people deserve awesome software. We are p3rceive: financial simulation software.

4. Sales pipeline emails