Culminating Experience Reflective Paper:

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Summary of the Project

PlayBack represents the ideal music platform for unsigned artists to not only promote their music to their audience but also make the money they deserve from their work. To correct the monetary dilemma of artists not receiving their fair share of revenue from their music, we will be giving our artists 80% of the revenue generated on our platform. This is a significantly higher percentage than applications like iTunes and Spotify are currently distributing. In addition to providing these services to unsigned artists, we also have various perks for fans interested in music discovery. We are providing these users with an opportunity to not only discover new music from independent artists, but also give them access to all of the artist's related creative content.

With the consolidation of artist deliverables, PlayBack gives fans the ease of finding everything they need from independent artists in one place. Our service looks at providing a curated selection of music from unsigned artists all around the globe to avid listeners through a unique interface that allows search based on genre but also country of origin of the content creator. The content featured on the catalogue will be monitored internally, therefore playing a great role in building a Playback footprint and brand identity. This way, PlayBack will be able to differentiate itself from its competition by focusing on the quality of the catalog rather than on its volume. It will be a careful blend of Artist & Repertoire of unsigned work and music discovery, made available on a digital platform. Through future partnerships with national radio stations, PlayBack will be able to enhance the most popular artists' exposure on a national and international level. The service will be available to the users and artists either for free or for subscription; thus unlocking additional features.

Subscribing provides the fans with access to exclusive artist related content such as handwritten lyric sheets or admittance to the songwriting or recording process. We are not only providing fans with the ability to get all the content in one place, but also providing the gateway for the fan to be a part of the creative process of an artist. This way, the fan feels as though they have an integral part in the creation of the music they like and the artists they

want to support. In addition to the valuables received with the premium service, the user gets the opportunity to act as somewhat of a 'pre' A&R scout for the platform. This means that they are able to suggest their personal favorite independent artists to be featured in the PlayBack catalogue.

People appreciate it when they don't have to go through a lot of trouble to get what they want. With Playback, you take out the effort the fan has to put forth to discover an artist in every way available. When a fan feels like their time and opinions have been made a priority, they have a connection with the artist and they will spend the extra time they are left with maximizing it by discovering the value in the artist and becoming long time and loyal fans. Our goal with PlayBack is to take the hassle out of music discovery for the fans while helping unsigned artists make a career out of their music.

Plan of Action

To be fully prepared to compete, a full understanding of our potential competitors was necessary. This was not only limited to other streaming and downloading sites, but also to every company dealing with the distribution of media. These ranged anywhere from Spotify to Ticketmaster. Having a clear consideration of the various strengths and weaknesses our opponents hold assisted us in the development of our platform. We focused on the ease of user functionality, accessibility, partnerships, cost structures, along with key and outsources activities.

Functionality

In order to get a clear representation of what was needed for the platform to function smoothly and how our clients and users will receive it, it was vital to get a reading of our target audience. Without listening to the voices of our potential users, the platform has a higher risk for failure. To collect this information, we conducting a survey with questions regarding what our users like and don't like from existing sites and services while also inquiring what they would like to see in a platform such as ours. With our existing data we

will received from our independent research, we were be able to formulate questions to get the necessary data from prospective users.

Competitive Analysis

Through the analysis of our researched data and our target market, we were able to formulate a basis and foundation of the business.Learning from the successes and mistakes of our competitors will assisted us in developing our platform in the best way. Also, through the input of our potential consumers, we can design our platform to not only have all the elements desired by the fans using the site, but also to make it user friendly.

Layout & Design

After all the necessary research has been conducted, the prototype of the site will be created. While the site will not be in its final form at the end of this year, it will be able to demonstrate the basic ideas and amenities that PlayBack will contain. In addition to the website version of the platform, a mobile application will also be created. We will utilizing the prototypes as a form of user testing to get an idea of the experience the fans have while using our platform.

The prototype will also assist us in the marketing of the platform. Giving our users an opportunity to have a trial with our site and have them assist in the creation of the platform in some way. This adds to PlayBack's notion of involving the fans in the creative process of a project.

Partner Involvement

To ensure that all aspects of the platform were not only functional but also constantly developing I built PlayBack with my classmate, Jad El Alam. While both of us handled different characteristics of the platform, we still collaborated on some features together. In regards to the look, feel, energy, and culture behind the company, Jad and I worked together to create an environment that resonates with the values and ethics held by PlayBack.

Once the initial foundation was laid, our other main sector of working together

stemmed from market research. Investigation and examination of our potential target market for the platform as well as the creation of survey questions are done together. Jad and I believed our knowledge of similar and very differentiating groups of people, our questions regarding pricing, layout, accessibility, additional features allowed us to tailor the platform to the needs and wants of our customers. Also, because our potential consumers were be pulled from a variety of areas and backgrounds, we had a greater chance of a clear and diverse market representation.

Results

With this premise in mind, my culminating experience partner Jad El Alam and I have created a business plan for our project. While the actual construction of the business plan was done in my second semester with Jad along with my team related to the Entrepreneurship and Innovation class, the development of the idea started from day one. To get a clear understanding of who we will be targeting and what method was the best way to get their attention, extensive research has been done on how people discover, share, store, and value music.

We had to consider what experiences were lacking in the current way people access music. By designing a transparent two way flow of communication between the artist and the fan, we aim to help maintain a relationship from the beginning of their careers to when they have more recognition. Selecting unsigned artists allows us to be able to take away the third party of a record label and allow them to connect directly with their audience.

Since we are not only focusing on people who enjoy music, we also made sure to note how artists promoted their music in a market that is dominated by mainstream acts. Taking note of the various methods used by unsigned artists, we wanted to see the pros and cons of what is currently available and how we could fill the gap. We decided upon the plan to advertise to advertise to college and unsigned musician communities in order to get artists interested and create a buzz. We decided it will be most beneficial for our primary vehicles of promotion to be press, radio, and online/mobile platforms.

In addition to assessing our market, it was also essential to determine what we will need to have a functional, diverse, and dedicated team to help PlayBack come to life. Jad and I have decided to keep the group that we chose to work with on the development of the platform in our Entrepreneurship and Innovation class. With Jad acting as founder and CFO and myself as co-founder and CEO, the remaining key shareholders of the company will be Jeremy Carrion as the Chief Marketing Officer, Jane Kim as the Head of Artist Relations, and Neda Shahram as Head of Legal Affairs. We believe that this team of people are ones that are not only hardworking and knowledgeable in their fields, but they also provide different perspectives of thought. Having a diversified collection of minds working towards the betterment of the platform, PlayBack will be able to mold itself into a unique brand that tackles a multitude of issues in the industry.

At the end of the year, I was able to develop a the layout for our website application and build a prototype for the mobile application. While the website is not functional, it will act as a physical representation of what the functioning site will look like. The mobile application, however, is a working application built for iOS build with XCode. This application will be built upon to create the final product of the mobile application format of the platform.

Next Steps

While the first draft of our business plan is complete, Jad, myself, and the rest of the PlayBack team will take a one year hiatus from prepping to fully launch the platform. We would like to take this time to fully study and research the field of digital platforms as well as develop a working startup capital amongst ourselves. We have prepared an agenda of how we plan to launch.

First, we will need to ensure all the necessary resources to get the platform going. This includes the application and approval of a small business loan and the opening of accounts. This monetary assistance will provide the stability needed in starting a new business. Once we can guarantee sources of money, we will use our gained assets to

finance the trademark of the company, P(l)ayBack.

Next, the full development of the platform will commence. The draft of the prototype that was previously created will be used as a layout in the creation of the official platform. Third party website developers will be utilized in this task to take on the necessary coding and computer science knowledge needed in the development process. We will also need to hire application developers to assist in making a mobile version of the platform available through the use of smart phones. In this stage, the testing of the platform will occur as well.

These two aspects will play off each other in the sense that by ensuring the platform is functional while also containing all the necessary features desired by our potential users. To make sure we can assure this promise, we will once again be utilizing these future fans and artists to test the platforms and have their voices be heard. Not only are we pushing the value of having the users involved in the creative process of a finished process, but we are also creating awareness of our service and our brand through our target audience. The establishment of partnerships will follow the testing process. With a finished product to show potential partners and advertisers, there will be a greater likelihood of support.

Finally, we will implement a sleeping period to take the time needed to develop, test and complete the platform. Through this process, we will be able to gather the necessary information to ensure the functionality of the site. After a year's time, the official launch of the platform will commence.

Budget

I am in charge of calculating the budget for the software and application development. Currently, I am taking on the role of website developer. I intend on building a website that will look and function on a very basic level. The main reasoning behind the site will be to provide an example of what we want the platform to look like and how we want it to function.

To guarantee the use of the domain name, I will register the address "playbacknw.com.uk" through the domain hosting website uk.godaddy.com. To further

protect the use of our domain name, we will also purchase similar names to ensure the integrity of our platform. These additional domain names will include the following: playbacknw.net, playbacknw.info, and playbacknw.org. To cover the expense of the private domain registration, business registration, and domain ownership protection for three years approximately £35 will need to be paid each month.

After securing the domain, I will then determine the amount of time and money needed to develop the website coding as well as the mobile application. As well as figuring out the budget needed to create the platform, it is also necessary to configure the costs behind maintaining it. Considering my background in coding, I have a good sense of time and more realistic results regarding the time of completion and the amount of work needed to make it look as desired by our team. While a basic website created by me will take around 30 hours of completion, one created by a professional developer will take around 60 hours of work. That will estimate a cost ranging from $1,500 to $2,000. To cut costs, it will be beneficial for us to hire a developer to join the team so we could just get the service taken care of by having them on our payroll rather than having to pay outside people.

Contribution to the Discipline

PlayBack serves as the saving grace for unsigned artists and music lovers as a whole. As of now, the music industry is based on a superstar economy where the majority of the focus, time, and money is being put into big, well known artists. No other platform makes unsigned artists a priority and assists them in getting any recognition for their music. This is simply because the current industry don't have the funds to take a chance on an artist that is just starting out when they can just milk one of the cash cows on their rosters. We take the difficulty out of promoting the music of these up and coming artists by pairing them with a fan base that essentially find joy out of supporting artists they believe in both emotionally and financially.

We allow our music aficionados to get rewarded for doing what they like to do anyway. With our subscription feature enabling these fans to participate in the selection

process of who gets displayed on our platform, we are providing an the experience of choosing the music you like to be available where you want it while in turn expanding the exposure of these new artists. This feature is not available on any other platform. The get satisfaction out of feeling as though they had a helping hand in the development of these artists careers.

In addition to assisting with the promotion of these artists and increasing their fan bases, we are also making sure that they are receiving a reasonable monetary return for the sale of their content. While there are other platforms that allow the artist to keep 100% of their generated revenue, they don't assist in any promotional or supportive acts for the artist. PlayBack has a hand in the overall development of these artists while still paying them what they deserve by giving them 80% of their sales made from our platform. PlayBack also aids in the long term success of these artists by connecting them with partners such as the national and college independent radio stations that will increase the range of their audiences and get their music out there.

PlayBack is putting a focus on the people in the music industry that are actually working for what they want by making their job easier. There is a significant amount of undiscovered talent that shouldn't fall by the wayside just because no one is willing to help them. Even with the current news of YouTube removing indie artists from their platform, it is evident that the current industry is only focused on the artists that are dominating the charts and have the support to charge whatever they want for their content. PlayBack wants to change the music industry from a popularity contest of who has the most money to throw around to an enterprise dedicated to the promotion of quality music from hard working artists no matter their background or financial ability.

Personal Impact

Working on PlayBack for the whole year has confronted me with a variety of scenarios both expected and unexpected. Everything from internal team conflicts to conflicting schedules, managing this project has been a whirlwind. Even though some of

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these situations weren't the best to be in, I had to learn how to work past them and think in the best interest of the company. Handling people with many ideals as well as being from different backgrounds of living and study it was a challenge to figure out how to appeal to everyone's different working styles while focusing on the goals of PlayBack. Team management skills were essential in allowing the project to evolve into what it is now.

While there were some discouraging times, I had the ability to take what I had learned in my classes throughout the year and apply them to PlayBack. Courses like Global Leadership and Management as well as both of the entrepreneurship classes allowed me to interpret how teams work together and make certain accommodations as far as delivery and change management to make sure the project went smoothly. This was one of the main differences from Berklee Boston and Berklee Valencia, I finally got to see how bold words in books or case studies were able to apply to a real life working situation.

Working on this project has really given me insight into what I want out of the music industry as well as what I am willing to give. PlayBack has reassured my faith in the fact that people still see a value in supporting the art of talented musicians and helping their careers grow and prosper. I know that this platform will be able to change the lives of people who just want to make a career out of what they love to do.