Please read over these first 5 posts from a class blog, started in 2019, by a student just like you in a class just like this.

Great story. Lots of good ideas & we will build off it, literally! -Prof

Max's Distinctive, Impressive BizTech Student Blog

Wednesday, August 21, 2019

First Day in BizTech Class

Hi. Max Flanagan here. (I'm a girl, btw—"Margaret," officially. Long story.) Just your average Marketing student stuck in BUS188 (Intro to Business Technology Systems Something) at SJSU (San Jose State University). Love all dogs & some cats. Favorite snack: chili/cheese fritos+chocolate chips (try it!). Classic movie binger (but no, not "Mad Max", hah). Not at all techie. *Definitely* not nerdy. But so far, our prof seems ok, so this class might turn out to be…well, better than Macro, at least. We'll see…

So what's *this*? Prof says we have to keep a blog of what we learn in here & we need to start developing a "personal brand," like our "digital us" that's out there in Internet-land because when we're graduating & applying for jobs, they'll be checking us out that way, especially in here in Sili-Valley. So it's like "blog practice" (plus counts for participation pts). Prof says we should try to make it "distinctive & impressive," hence my super-original & clever blog title.

So I Googled "personal brand" & apparently it actually is a thing. Found this site, theinternhustle.com with this internship/career readiness coach, Jenna, and she actually does seem cool/helpful. She has this video on her YouTube channel "Personal Brand for Students – Instagram Bio Makeover" & apparently there's a bunch of stuff we should be doing—like I should be making my social media stuff more "professional" (mature-blah) and yes, ok, distinctive and/or impressive. Easier said than done but hey, it's first day, right?

That's 252 words (2 over required) so got my points & for now at least, I'm actually acing BizTech. Hah!

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Max's Distinctive, Impressive BizTech Student Blog

Monday, August 26, 2019

Day 2 - "Innovation Central"?

So, today's big idea? Prof says Silicon Valley is like the "world **innovation** capitol" & creates more new tech than anyplace else on this planet (or any other). Weirdly, I always knew Apple, Facebook & Google were in the hood but, growing up here, it just seemed normal. Ok, so no, it's "special" that way. Got it. But…how did this happen?

Apparently, high tech started here, back in the day, when brainiac profs at Stanford invented a lot of the stuff needed to make computers + rich investors living here got wind of it & set out to make money off the stuff + bunches of engineers from Stanford were around to build the stuff to sell. Suddenly tons of people were making tons of money & it was the CA Gold Rush all over again but it's still going today, churning out the cool stuff.

Prof says the "special sauce" here is **entrepreneurs** (people who own/run their own biz) & **startups**. A couple of geeks build something cool & new ("innovative") using their own money or borrowing some from their uncle, etc & they hit the big time & the way-big $$$. Crazily, it's for real–check out the garages around here where Google, Tesla, Square, HP & Apple were "born." (Steve Jobs had to sell his VW microbus & Steve Wozniak sold his calculator for the money to build the first Apple computer in 1976–true!)

So Sili-Valley's full of entrepreneurs, but most of them want to create/run/grow a tech startup as opposed to, say, a dry cleaner's. Prof says that's bc they can make so much more money–astronomical amounts, if they can make it to the big league. It's like a huge gamble, though. (A startup that gets to $1B is called a **unicorn** because it's so precious and rare.) Harder than a dry cleaner's to get it going (gotta innovate), but then if it does go big, then you're golden. Two reasons for that, according to Prof: 1) **scalability** & 2) **new markets**.

Here's the thing–dry cleaning isn't scalable. Clean one shirt and you get paid for cleaning one shirt. Prof says **intellectual property** (everybody here says "**IP**") *is* scalable–some idea or music or...software (bingo). Harder to produce than a clean shirt, bc you've gotta come up with something new & unique (ie *innovative*). But if you do, it costs you almost nothing to make/sell it a zillion times over. *That's* how you "clean up," big time.

And if you open a dry cleaner's, you're not "**selling into a new market**." The market for iPads didn't even exist in 2009 bc iPads weren't a thing. Then when they came out, Apple sold 300,000 *on the first day*. Yeah. And a million in the first two months. And 15 million by the time the next version came out. *That's* selling into a new market, big time. Something like that is called "**disruptive technology**" because it changes how things are, suddenly, seismically, rather than the usual (boring) incremental evolution like most stuff (blah).

That's SV in a nutshell! Next class is database/app stuff. No class Monday (Labor Day)–yay! Catch you after that.

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Max's Distinctive, Impressive BizTech Student Blog

Monday, September 2, 2019

Data Central (+ "Salesforce")

So, I know. Class blogging on a 3-day weekend. I do have a life (sort of). But I want to get this down "on paper" before I forget bc it turns out, I actually get this database stuff now all of a sudden, whereas before it seemed kinda random. Last class, Prof said *"data is something that tells something about something"* which sounded *super-*random, but then it sinks in and now it makes sense. Like today, in 1965: "9/2/1965" —that's data (something) that tells us the birthday of (something about)…Keanu Reeves (something...*else*...*ahem*).

Prof says for most of human history, we just had to remember data in our heads. Then for the last few thousand years, we could write it down and look it up again, at least. Now for the last like 50, we can stick it into computer databases & the apps can use it to do something truly useful, eg telling us which celebrities have b-days today (or pegging us as GenZ & spamming us relentlessly for Billie Eilish tickets—enough already!)

So data, well, being able to store it, look it up when you need it, or change it when the something about the something changes—you gotta have that to do pretty much everything we live off of now (ok, celeb b-days is lame, but Uber, Instagram, Waze…whatever) & that's where databases come in. They're just the systems that let you manage the data for the apps that need the data to do the stuff we want them to. That data and those databases are at the core of it all & it sets what the apps can and can't do so...good to know.

Now in class we get to mess around with database stuff ourselves using **Salesforce,** another hot high tech, but not so famous to us bc it's **B2B** meaning biz-to-biz (they sell to businesses, not like Apple which sells mostly to us consumers—that's **B2C**). Salesforce is this "cloud-based enterprise technology" companies use to do all kinds of stuff, but especially to "manage" (read "boost") their "relationships" (read "sales") to their customers (other businesses that buy their stuff).

For this class, prof says we're using their **platform**—"a collection of tools & services you can piece together to build a database and apps to do whatever." And supposedly, Salesforce is like just "**clicks not code**" so in theory, non-techies like yours truly shall cope.

Never thought I would say this, but I'm actually kinda looking forward to trying it out. Maybe I'm getting weird in my old age? Honestly, this class is actually turning out to be…well, intriguing, at least. (Not saying that just bc you will read this, prof—lol).

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Max's Distinctive, Impressive BizTech Student Blog

Monday, September 9, 2019

What I built last weekend (+ Janet Jackson?)

I know, last time I said I have a life. I do. Sometimes. Often, even. But not last weekend. So I started wondering about that Salesforce stuff & I wound up trying it out. Turns out, they have these free accounts anybody can get bc they want tons of people to learn it, so their customers can find enough people to hire to run it for them. And there's a TON of free tutorials on their website and so…in like 45 minutes I had my own working mini-database & app. I know. Bizarre, but true.

It was data about fake people at a fake company and I could enter them on my Mac and see them on my phone & the other way around, like...I made my own mobile freaking app! I know. Insane. But honestly, it wasn't rocket science. Wasn't even computer science. Zero science. It was…actually easy & kinda fun. And now I'm finally getting this cloud thing. Here's the deal...

Salesforce (calling them "SF" from now on, just to save some time) doesn't sell software. They sell services, data-based services, like storing & looking up & doing stuff (especially selling things) with data. And the services are delivered through the Internet so on any browser (Safari, Chrome, FFox) on whatever (Mac, PC, iPad, smartphone). So you can get their services wherever on whatever, long as you're connected to "the cloud" (all the servers & software & data & stuff sitting out there on the Internet). They run the software and store your data on their computers...in "the cloud."

Apparently, this has worked out well for them. They just put up the tallest building on the west coast of North America for their HQ. And prof told us about this mega week-long conference/party that they throw for their users in San Francisco every year—"Dreamforce". 170,000 people show up, which completely obliterates the city, obviously. Celebs like Mark Cuban & Will.i.am show up & they bring in like U2, Bruno Mars, Janet Jackson, etc to entertain the crowd. How much does one have to pay to get Janet Jackson to play at your own private party? These SF guys are clearly onto something bc they're making waaay too much $$.

Ok, so Wednesday will be weird. There's a meeting of the Entrepreneurship Club and guess who would never dream of going to such a thing, but is? Prof "encouraged" us. Hey, extra credit is one of the most powerful motivating forces known in the universe.

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Max's Distinctive, Impressive BizTech Student Blog

Thursday, September 12, 2019

OM*G – I'm in a Startup! (kinda, sorta)

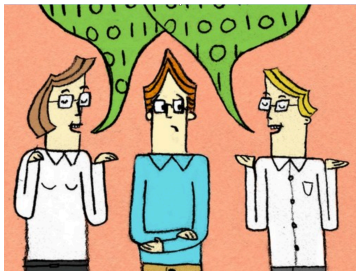

Illustration by Hallie Bateman

So that entrepreneurship meeting was last night & I just randomly sat next to someone–turned out to be an MBA student, Riley. She was cool & super-nice & I told her I didn't get all the crazy lingo they were throwing out like "VCs" & "angels" & "NDAs." So she pulled up this riotous article How to speak Silicon Valley: 53 essential tech-bro terms explained & I was lol (for real) but it did help!

Then...she told me she was working on a startup herself! She was the "**Suit**" (what they call the business half of a startup pair) and she has a "**Geek**" (the techie half, Linh, also a grad student but in CompSci). They've already got a **prototype** ("proof-of-concept") app to show potential investors how it would look & work. (She wouldn't tell me what "it" is—apparently that part's a secret). But they think it'll be a **disruptive technology** and their dream is to wind up with a **unicorn** (remember?).

Now they have to "pitch" their idea to VCs (turns out those are **"venture capitalists"**—companies of rich investors) and to **"angels"** (rich individual investors) to get money to build an **MVP** (**Minimum Viable Product**) which is like just the basic features, but enough for early adopters) & then launch the biz. Here's the catch: the investors don't just give the bank away for fun—they take a share of the **equity** for it. That means, they become part owners, so get some control & they get a percentage of the big payoff if/when there is one. That's their big gamble, so they really grill you to see if you're the real deal first. A little scary, but...

Anyway, bottom line—she was talking about needing an app to keep track of their **pitches** (the meetings where they show their prototype to investors & try to convince them). She needed to track stuff (data) like the contact info, the date of the pitch, how much equity & $$$ they talked about, and whatever notes about how the meeting went. And, of course, she wanted it on her phone so she could access it wherever.

So, then I said that sounded like something easy to whip up quick in SF. She was blown away that I knew about it (didn't tell her I just found out myself like a week ago!) and was like "You want to work on that for me?" And I was like "hah, when do I start?!" But before I even got that out, she said "I can pay you. We have some **bootstrap** funds ($$ of their own they each kicked in to get started). I don't have the time to mess with it myself. Work up a prototype by next week?" ("uh, no, but yeah, but…yikes!"—inner voice, thank goodness).

So, game on! Not getting any equity, but I am a paid employee (sort of), a "contractor" actually. $200 for the prototype & then she says we'll see. (Didn't tell her I would pay her $300 just for this chance.) Crazy! I've got to make this rly cool and I'm super-scared, but super-excited bc...well, that's obvious, right? Wish me luck. Full send!

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Spoiler alert: she does it!

Next post, she shows you how so you can too! Stay tuned...Prof