



Business Systems Innovation Labs

Pre-lab Pre-flight Checklist

“Distinctive, Impressive BizTech Student Blog”

Max, a Marketing student at SJSU, is taking Intro to Bus Systems & has to write a class blog. One day, she stumbles into a Silicon Valley startup adventure & invites you to follow along.

Prep: What do you need to start?

- ☑ To get the most out of this pre-lab: focus, use your imagination & put yourself in Max’s shoes so you don’t just read it—you *experience* it.

Learning Objectives: What to “get”

- ☑ Get up to speed on the concept of innovation & the innovation ecosystem:
 - Know how & why Silicon Valley came to be the modern-era innovation epicenter of the world
 - Know the innovation industry’s core concepts (Scalability, New Markets, Disruptive Technology, etc)
 - Know the lingo & acronyms of innovation (“geeks & suits”, “unicorns”, IP, VCs, MVPs, B2B/B2C, etc)
- ☑ Develop a context for the labs to make them more meaningful and memorable:
 - Get to know Max, a student just like you, who shows some drive & reaps rewards
 - See how entrepreneur & startup stories play out with people just like you
 - Begin to “get” how needs drive innovation & give rise to technologies to answer them and more
- ☑ Get how/why personal branding can/will impact you & what you should do about it now

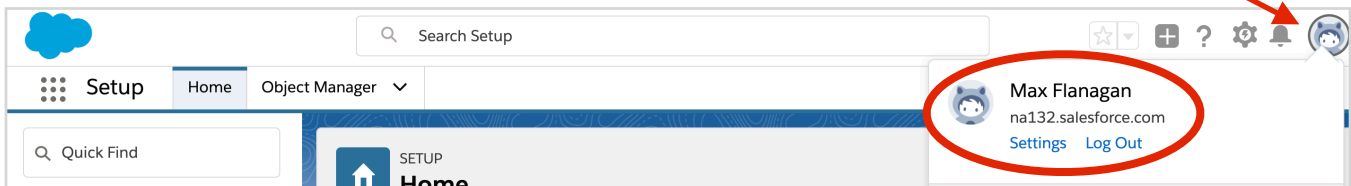
Deliverables: Get your points

As you work through the labs, you’ll encounter a number of places marked with this symbol in the margin:



telling you to stop & take a screenshot to submit for credit. For each lab, these stopping places are listed out, by step number, here in the **Deliverables** section of the cover sheet. In this Pre-lab there are no step numbers, just 10 min of light reading, but there is one deliverable marked to submit at the very end.

Note: Make sure your name appears on every screenshot! Just hit the little character icon at the top right corner for a popup that shows your name. If it covers some of your work, np—just zoom out your browser until the popup doesn’t cover anything important. (Command-minus for Macs; Control-minus for Windows)



Tips: Get more

The links embedded in these labs have been specially selected to give you chances to dig deeper & enrich your experience with more knowledge & understanding. Follow them & see what else you can learn!

Resources: Get some help

Help is always available at MaxzPlace—The Max Labs Project Student Support site: <http://tiny.cc/maxhelp>

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 BUSI 88 (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's a real thing. Found this site, [NerdWallet.com](#)—nerds on smart ways to manage your money and it actually does seem semi-useful. There's this post about "[8 tips for building your personal brand](#)" & apparently there's a bunch of stuff we should be doing—like I should be making my social media stuff more "professional" (mature/boring) 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 capital of **innovation**” and creates more new technology stuff than anyplace else on this planet (or any other). Weirdly, I always knew Apple, Facebook & Google were around but, growing up here, it just seemed normal. Ok, so no, it's “special” that way. Got it. But why & so what?

Other places with lots of smart people hanging around hotshot universities have a bunch of high techs too—Boston, etc. But Prof says it all started here, back in the old days because of 3 things:

1. brainiac profs at Stanford (boo) inventing a lot of the stuff needed to make computers +
2. rich investors around here got wind of it & wanted to make money off the stuff +
3. bunches of engineers hanging around (due to Stanford again) to build the stuff to sell

All that's still here today—the great Silicon Valley vortex keeps drawing in more & more, and tons of the world's coolest stuff keeps getting churned out.

Prof says the big thing here is **entrepreneurs** (people who own/run their own biz) & **startups**. The classic story is a couple of geeks building something cool & new (innovating) in a garage using their own money or borrowing from their uncle or whatever and then hitting the big time (& the way-big \$\$\$).

Seems legit—found these pics of the garages around here where famous companies were born: HP (Hewlett & Packard), Google, Tesla, Square & the one where **Steve Jobs & Wozniak (the “Woz”) built the first Apple computer in 1976**. (Jobs sold his VW microbus and Woz sold his HP calculator to get the cash to build it—*true story!*)



APPLE WAS BORN IN THIS GARAGE

So Sili-Valley's full of entrepreneurs & wannabe's, but here, 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**.

Never really thought about this until now but here's the thing—dry cleaning isn't too scalable. You clean one shirt and you get paid for cleaning one shirt. You wanna get paid for 5, you gotta clean 5. Prof says **intellectual property** (everybody here says “**IP**”) is scalable. IP is some knowledge or idea or music or...software (bingo)—something you create that has value but it isn't a physical thing. It's a lot harder to create than a clean shirt or a car tire, bc you've gotta be really creative & smart and come up with something new & unique (ie *innovative*) but once you make it, you can sell a zillion copies for hardly any extra cost, if people want them. *That's* how you “clean up,” so to speak, in \$\$ terms.

And if you open a dry cleaner's, you're not "**selling into a new market.**" The demand for dry cleaning isn't going to explode anytime soon. (Maybe it already did once way back when *that* was a new technology in like, the Bronze Age?) On the other hand, the market for iPads didn't even exist in 2009 bc iPads weren't a thing. Then when they came out, get this—Apple sold 300k *on the first day*. Yeah. And one 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. It's called "**disruptive technology**" because it changes how things are going suddenly, seismically, rather than the usual (boring) incremental evolution of most stuff (blah).

So that's the dream. I get it. Not in my future personally, but good to know, I guess. Wednesday, we're supposed to get into the database/app stuff and then Memorial Day weekend. See you after that.

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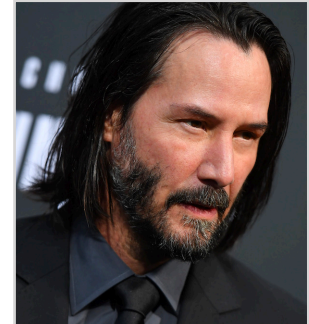
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Max's Distinctive, Impressive BizTech Student Blog

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)

So much has happened!

So that entrepreneurship meeting last night, right? I went & they were talking about **“suits & geeks”** & how Intuit (the Quicken company) got started here way back in 1983. This guy, Scott Cook, an MBA (a “suit”) got the idea of making virtual checkbook software and went over to Stanford with a flyer that said “Programmer Wanted for Innovative PC Program” and the first guy he ran into was a computer engineering student (a “geek”) that wound up becoming the co-founder (Tom Proulx). They made a ton of money and Microsoft tried to kill them, but they never could. Pretty amazing. Found this [vid of Tom Proulx telling the story of how they met](#).



ILLUSTRATION BY HALLIE BATEMAN

Anyway, on the way out I was chatting with the girl sitting next to me and telling her that I didn't get all the crazy terms they were throwing out like “VCs” & “angels” & “NDAs.” She showed me [this article](#) making fun of the “valley wag” of buzz words going around out there in startup-land and I was lol (for real). (It was from [Pando Daily](#), a site she love for news about S/V startups, etc.) Then...she told me she was a “suit”! (an MBA, student-version) and she has a “geek”! (a CS grad student) and they're working on their own startup! They've already got a **prototype** (“proof-of-concept”) version 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 make it 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 dough away for fun—they get a share of the **equity** for it. That means, they become part owners, so get some control & they will 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, when they pitched, 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 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)! She said she had heard about SF & thought it might be something they would use in the company someday anyway.

Then she crinkled up her forehead for a minute like she was thinking rly hard & finally said...“You want to work on that for me?” 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 just to get started). “I don't have the time to mess with it myself. Can you just take that idea and 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. But she's paying me \$200 to make the prototype and then she'll decide where we go from there. (I didn't tell her that I would pay her \$300 just for this chance.) Crazy!

Anyway, I've got to make this rly cool and I'm super-scared, but super-excited bc...well, that's obvious I guess. Wish me luck. Full send!

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In her next blog posting, Max starts showing you how she builds out her app, giving you steps to follow along the way. In the end, she wound up putting together a website with extras & help for anybody who gets stuck. Check out the Help FAQ & Forum at www.MaxzPlace.com:

