

Max's Distinctive, Impressive BizTech Student Blog

Wednesday, August 24, 2016

First Day in BizTech Class

Hi. Brand new BizTech class student Max here. (I'm a girl—officially “Margaret.” Long story.)

Just your average student in Bus 188 (Intro to Business Technology Systems Something) at SJSU (San Jose State University). Vegetarian. Love classic movies. Not really techie. *Definitely* not nerdy. But our prof seems cool so this class might be ok. Better than Macro, way. (blah)

So what *is* this? Prof says we have to blog what we learn in here—we need to start developing a “personal brand,” like our “digital us” that’s out there online b/c when we’re graduating and applying for jobs, they’ll be checking us out that way, especially in here in Silicon Valley.

So this is “blog practice” (plus counts for participation points) and prof says we have to try to be “distinctive & impressive,” hence my uber-clever blog title. We shall see...

Ok, so I actually Googled up “personal brand” and it does seem for real. I found this site, [nerd wallet.com](#). It’s smart nerds on smart ways to manage your finances & such. Anyway, it actually seems pretty useful and there’s this blog post there entitled “[8 tips for building your personal brand](#)” and...

...so, yeah, according to their posting, it turns out there’s a bunch of stuff I should be doing like making my social media stuff less...*un*professional. So I just now went back over what I wrote here & I capitalized and un-abbreviated my usual, cool abbreviations, etc. Guess it’s better. More mature. More professional. <sigh>

But distinctive & impressive? Ok, guess I’ll have to keep working on that part...

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Max's Distinctive, Impressive BizTech Student Blog

Monday, August 29, 2016

Day 2 – “Innovation Central”?

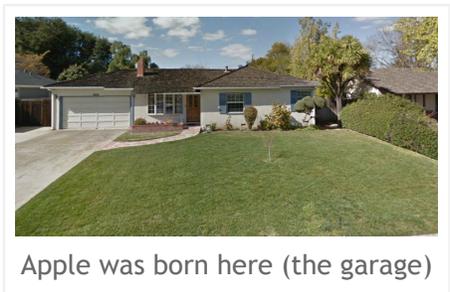
So, today’s big idea? Apparently Silicon Valley is like the “world capital of **innovation**” and creates more new technology stuff than anyplace else on the planet. Funny, being from San Jose, I always knew about Apple & Facebook & Google being around but somehow, growing up with it, I never really got that here was all that much different from anyplace else. Ok, guess I can be clueless. *Occasionally.*

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

1. the brainiacs at Stanford (boo) inventing a lot of the stuff to make computers +
2. rich investors wanting to make money off selling the stuff +
3. bunches of engineers around to build the stuff to sell

Today, those are all still here, in spades—the great innovation vortex keeps drawing them in and tons of the world’s coolest stuff keeps churning out.

Prof says the big thing here is **entrepreneurs** (people who own/run their own biz) & **startups**. The classic story is a couple of dudes building something cool & new (innovating) in a garage using their own money or borrowing from their uncle or whatever and then eventually hitting the big time (& big \$). Guess it’s really true—here’s [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!*)



So the Silicon Valley’s full of entrepreneurs & wanna-be’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 b/c 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. Harder than a dry cleaner’s to get it going (gotta innovate) but if it does go big, 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 deal-dry cleaning isn’t too scalable. You clean one shirt and you get paid for cleaning one shirt. You wanna get paid for 2, you gotta clean 2, etc. Prof says **intellectual property** (everybody says “**IP**” here) *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. Its a lot harder to create than a clean shirt or a car tire, b/c you gotta be creative, smart and come up with something new (*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 cleaners, you're not "selling into a new market." The demand for dry cleaning isn't going to explode anytime soon. (Maybe it already did way back when *that* was a new technology in... the middle ages?) On the other hand, the market for iPads didn't even exist in 2009 b/c iPads didn't exist. Then when they came out, get this—Apple sold 300,000 *on the first day*. Yeah. And one million in the first two months. And 15 million by the time the iPad2 came out.

Now *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 anyway...Prof says we should go to a meeting of the entrepreneurship club next week & we get extra credit so I'm there. Will let you know...



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Max's Distinctive, Impressive BizTech Student Blog

Saturday, September 3, 2016

Data Central (Plus Salesforce...Plus Dreamforce)

So yeah, it's September 3rd. Saturday. I get that. Labor Day Weekend, no less. Ok, ok. I do have a life. I do. Seriously. But I want to get this down "on paper" before I forget b/c it turns out I actually get this database stuff, suddenly, whereas before it seemed pretty random. On Wednesday, Prof started out with this statement "*data is something that tells something about something*" which sounds *totally* random but then turns out it makes sense. Like, today, in 1965: "9/3/1965" is data (something) that tells us the birthday of (something about)...Charlie Sheen (something...*else...ahem*).

Prof says for most of human history, we just had to remember data in our heads. Then for the last couple 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 database systems & they can actually use it to do something useful for us. You know, like remind our FB friends to text us "Happy B-day", or tell us which celebrities were born the same day, or peg us as GenZ for spam about concert tix for Pink. (please, no!)

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—got to have that, bottom line, to do things, smart things, cool things. Pretty much everything we live off of now (ok, celeb b-days is lame but Uber, Shazam, whatever) & that's where databases come in. They're just the systems that let you manage the data for the systems that need it to do the stuff we want. That data and those databases are at the core of it all & sets what they 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 b/c it's **B2B** meaning biz-to-biz (they sell to businesses, not like Apple which sells mostly to *consumers*—that's **B2C**). Salesforce is this "cloud-based service" (*yes*, database at the core), that 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).

Not sure what this "cloud-based" stuff really means but guess we will find out b/c we're getting up close & personal with it in this class. (We're using these [free lifetime accounts](#) they give to, well anybody apparently, bc they want people to learn it. Prof says the free version's got all the stuff, pretty much, but you have to pay to make it big enough to use for a real biz). Never thought I would say this, but I'm actually looking forward to trying it out. Must have a fever?



Born 51 years ago, today. OMG!

Oh, and it turns out Salesforce runs this mega week-long conference/party for their users every year just up in San Francisco (their “HQ”). They call it “Dreamforce” and like 170,000 (!) people show up which completely obliterates the city, apparently. (Uber is like 3X that week.) Celebs like Mark Cuban & Will.i.am show up & U2 is playing this year. We get extra credit for going so I may Caltrain up to the city & check it out. I am a Bono fan, admittedly, but unfortunately the expo pass that I can afford (the free one) doesn’t include the concert. Rats!

So this class is actually turning out to be cool & I’m not saying that just b/c you will read this, prof. ;)

K, fan-people. All caught up for now. Back to the 3-day weekend. Next time you hear from me, I will have extra credit points in the bag from that entrepreneurship club meeting next week. We shall see...



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Max's Distinctive, Impressive BizTech Student Blog

Wednesday, September 7, 2016

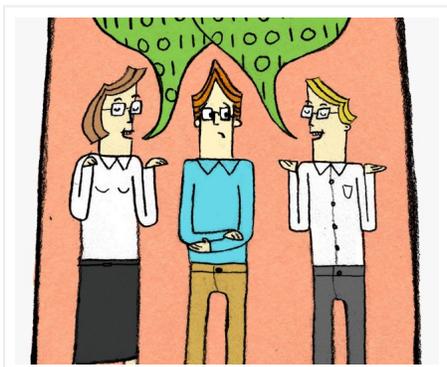
OM*G—I'm in a Startup! (kinda, sorta)

So much has happened!

So that entrepreneurship meeting last night, right? Hang on. First—I know, last time I said I have a life. I do. Sometimes. Often, even. But not last weekend. I confess. So after my last posting I started wondering about that Salesforce stuff & I wound up trying out that free account. I got in but had no clue so I Googled this “build your first app” tutorial on the Salesforce site & tried it out. So...here's Crazy Thing #1—in like 45 minutes I had my own working mini-database & app. 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 **ing app! I know. Insane. But honestly, it was pretty easy. And now I'm finally getting this cloud thing. Here's the deal...

Salesforce (calling them “SF” from now on to save 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 any browser (Safari, Chrome, FFox) on whatever (Mac, PC, 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, they store your data, on their computers...in “the cloud.” So far, so good.

Ok, now Crazy Thing #2: I went to the meeting & 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 gal sitting next to me and telling her I totally didn't get all the crazy terms they were throwing out like “VCs” & “angels” & “NDAs” and 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—that part's a

secret). But they think it'll be a **disruptive technology** and their dream is to make it to “unicorn” which is Silli-Valley-speak for a startup worth \$1B. (Rare, like almost imaginary.)

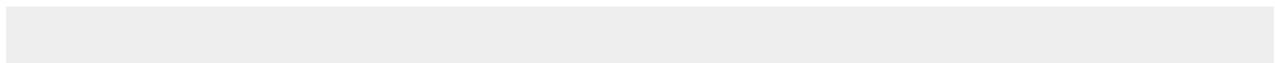
Now they have to “pitch” their idea to VCs (turns out those are “**venture capitalists**”—companies of rich investors) and to “**angels**” (rich *individual* investors) to get money to build an **MVP** (**Minimum Viable Product** which is like just the basic features but enough for early adopters) & then launch the biz. Here’s the catch: the investors don’t give the \$ away—they get a share of the **equity** for it. That means they become part owners, so get some control and 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 for real first. A little scary, but...

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

So, then I said that that sounded like something she could whip up quick in SF. She was blown away that I knew about it (didn’t tell her i just found out myself like 2 hours ago) and 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 hard & finally said...“You want to work on that for me?” I was like “uh, yeah” 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). And, you guessed it—*that* was Crazy Thing #3.

So I’m a busy bee. Not getting any equity, but I’m 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 that I would pay *her* \$250 just for this chance.) Crazy. Anyway, I’ve got to make this really awesome prototype app and I’m super-scared but super-excited b/c...well, that’s obvious I guess.

Wish me luck. I’ll post up what I figure out next...



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