

[Transcript] My First Million / University of Michigan Students Pitch Us Their Startups For \$5000 Prize Money

By the way, you like how he was like, so sharks,
you wanna come take a swim in the maritime industry?
These kids are the best.
This is the greatest thing I've ever seen.
I thought this was gonna be stupid.
These guys are so much better
than anything we've ever done with this.
They are so talented.
I feel like I can rule the world.
I know I could be what I want to.
I put my all in it like no days off on a road.
Let's travel never looking back.
All right, what up?
We got a special episode.
This is like a Shark Tank style episode.
So this is the My First Million Pitch Competition.
We got the University of Michigan.
So Wolverines are here.
We got five companies, I believe.
Each company's gonna have two minutes to pitch,
a five minute Q&A,
and the winner will get \$5,000 at the end,
as decided by me and Sam,
whoever is the best at pitching.
And little do people know this.
This is how I became an entrepreneur.
I was gonna be a doctor,
and then I entered a pitch competition at my university,
and I won that baby for 25 grand.
And that was what got me on the path
of entrepreneurship altogether.
I would have never, ever, ever done startups
if it wasn't for that competition
that we randomly entered.
So this could be kind of for somebody out there.
This could be their break too.
So here we go, University of Michigan Pitch Competition.
First up, who is it?
Jake, so Jake from Aria, is that right?
Yes, hey guys.
What's up, all right, two minutes is all yours, go.
Cool, so hey guys, my name's Jake.
I'm the founder of Aria.

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We're bringing e-commerce abilities to in-person shopping.
And so as an e-commerce business owner myself,
we know quite a bit about our customers,
such as who they are, what they're interested,
and how they engage with our business.
And so this type of information
informs all aspects of our operations,
from developing new products,
and then driving more sales.
And so the question that comes to mind is,
why aren't these same necessities
available to retail business owners?
Why is this limited to just e-commerce?
And this happens because the source of the transaction,
which is the bar code.
At Aria, we're making a new type of product code
that brings e-commerce abilities to retail.
So this is called OneTag.
It uses radio frequency identification.
This is the same type of technology
in contactless credit cards and garage door openers.
And it recently became affordable at a mass scale.
And OneTag is super versatile.
There's a lot of uses for it.
It costs pennies to manufacture,
and it's printed on a sticker to attach to merchandise.
So by replacing the bar code with OneTag,
retailers unlock new capabilities in a variety of things.
I'm gonna go into one example now.
So this is a traditional retail setup.
You have your products,
and then you have bar codes,
and each one is individually scanned.
Instead of that,
let's just replace all of these bar codes with OneTag.
So now a shopper can just bag all items as they shop,
and then they can pretty much just walk
through an antenna,
which instantly scans all of their items at once.
And then payment can be done through a kiosk
or a quick self-checkout,
or through an app that uses something called UltraWideBam,
which is a new type of technology

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that's brought to iPhone as recent as 2019.
And so this pretty much tracks the location of the customer,
and shows what products they purchased
and how they purchased it.
And so you can pretty much walk out
and then payments instantly process as you walk out,
just like Amazon Go.
So what this does in addition to autonomous checkout,
is it brings a bunch of e-commerce capabilities to retail.
So now we have an e-commerce profile
for a bunch of offline purchases.
And this allows us to do abandoned car recovery,
personalized product upsells,
in-depth shopping data, and subscription reorders.
There's also loss prevention built right in.
And then the location accuracy of RFID is super high.
So inventory management is pretty easy.
All you really have to do is put an item
in its proper location.
And then if an item is ever misplaced,
area pretty much will map the entire location
of all these items.
And so instead of arduous stock checks,
you can pretty much just instantly know
where things are misplaced and address those directly.
And so yeah, that's my product.
This is one tag, it's checkout, security, and inventory,
all in one product.
And most importantly, it brings e-commerce abilities
to retail.
Jake, what type of e-commerce store do you own?
I own a sex chocolate brand.
What is it called?
It's called Tad's Chocolate.
Oh, yeah, we've talked about you a fair bit
on the pod, I think, right?
You've got like a crazy Instagram
or TikTok or something like that.
Yeah, we go viral on TikTok pretty frequently.
Yeah, that's cool.
Wait, you're in college?
I am, I'm a sophomore now.
My God, okay.

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Cool.

All right, a quick message from our sponsor.

You know, I was thinking about the shortest day of the year earlier.

And while we technically have the same amount of time as every other day of the year, the lack of daylight makes it feel so much shorter, which is exactly the same kind of feeling as working with disconnected tools.

Our workday is the same length as always, but before you know it, we spent three hours just fixing something that was supposed to be automated.

Thankfully HubSpot's all-in-one CRM platform can serve as a single source of truth for managing your customer relationships across marketing, sales, service operations with multiple hubs and over a thousand integrations and an easy-to-use interface.

HubSpot lets you spend less time managing your software and more time connecting with your customers.

Learn how HubSpot can help you grow your business at [HubSpot.com](https://www.hubspot.com).

All right, so Sam, what do you think?

So, yeah, so I've talked to a few companies in this space.

I know there's a few people trying to attack it.

And some of them I think are actually quite big.

One of the most interesting, so basically, Jake explained it in a more sophisticated way.

I'm gonna explain it in a more dumb way, which is this little tag goes into clothing and you know the clothing's history and you could track it and things like that.

And I saw a company that was doing this with high-end luxury goods.

So I don't know if this was their customer, but basically this would get sewn inside of a Louis Vuitton purse.

And how people buy and sell used purses, you could see where it originally came from, who originally bought it.

And as a collector of like old stuff,

I thought that was awesome.

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I thought that was great.
So it's interesting technology to me.
I don't really know this market that well,
but I do think there's a few people doing this, right, Sean?
Well, I think you are looking only
at a little niche use case.
It seems like to me what they're doing is
they're trying to take the Amazon Go store.
Like Amazon's like, hey, what if there was a grocery store
where you could walk in and just walk out?
There's no checkout process, right?
That's more efficient, it's more convenient.
And it's lower cost because you don't have to, you know,
employ all these checkout folks at the store.
And they're trying to just provide that as like anybody,
any store should be able to have that if they want
kind of the next level of self-checkout
as I think what they're trying to do.
And so I think that's a cool idea.
I think it takes a lot of boxes.
So technology that really wasn't possible,
wasn't cheap enough until a few years ago.
I like that.
These little, I don't know if they're called,
I don't know if these are NFC chips or whatever,
but like the very cheap like pennies of these like,
the pennies like pennies now to manufacture
or add these little chips to any kind of goods.
So I think that's really great
that that's now possible, it wasn't possible before.
I think it's clearly cheaper, faster
for the person who's doing it.
But I do have some problems with your pitch.
So I'm gonna give you like three bits
of pitch feedback for you, all right Jake?
So the main things I would have said in the pitch
is basically like, you have three major ways
that you could have presented this.
Number one, you could have shown a barcode
and just been like,
can you believe this hasn't been upgraded
in like a hundred years?
Like this is the same thing we've been using for 75 years.

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We got iPhones, we got all this crazy stuff,
all this amazing technology,
but the barcode is still the same.
And like you could have presented it from that angle.
Like the barcode is outdated,
we're revolutionizing the barcode
and the barcode's on everything.
So like that's how big this idea is gonna be.
The second thing was basically like,
we're taking the Amazon Go checkout
and we're making it available to any store, right?
That's a very simple way for me to understand
what you're talking about.
Then the third thing is that you have a really cool
backstory with the chocolate stuff.
So you could be like, I'm Jake, I'm a sophomore in college.
This year I sold \$4 million worth of sex chocolate.
I'm an entrepreneur, I'm a hustler.
I don't think my career is gonna,
I don't think sex chocolate is the big idea for me,
but it led me to what I think is the big idea.
And already I'd be hooked,
because I'm like, who is this college sophomore
that sold \$4 million of sex chocolate?
Like, tell me more, right?
So that's my pitch feedback for you.
On that side, and the actual idea itself,
the part I felt was lacking was the go-to market.
So this was all about technology, technology, technology.
But how are you gonna get customers?
And are these stores gonna be willing to revamp?
Are customers gonna understand what the hell's going on?
And I think that's where this technology,
that's where this company like this was struggled,
but you didn't really talk about that at all.
So can you talk about how are you gonna go get
your first 10 or 100 customers?
Have you done that already, or how are you gonna do it?
Absolutely, yeah.
I'm talking to customers right now.
It would pretty much be,
there would really be no retrofitting for a store.
The first MVP would be pretty much an iPad kiosk

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that's self-checkout.

But they have to tag every product, right?

They do, yeah.

But a lot of retailers, especially small retailers, don't even use universal product code.

They have to tag bar code.

So it's not really an increase in labor.

And the way I'm envisioning for the MVP is customers already have to check out somehow.

They go to the front desk,

there's an iPad there that says Instant Checkout.

They put their bag there and pay with credit cards.

And then soon you could add in things like

antennas with that, the inventory,

and then ultimately it's hard to just check out with an app.

So who are you going for? Like small stores,

big stores, grocery stores, clothing stores,

huge brands, who are you going for?

I'm thinking clothing stores and convenience stores, at least initially.

So convenience stores give a lot of the benefits of the just walk out stuff, the convenience stuff, and then clothing stores prioritize the e-commerce abilities a lot more.

To be able to retarget customers and be a little bit more pointed with the way they're selling things.

Jake, how old are you?

I'm 20.

How big is Tabs?

It's actually less than four million.

It's about \$2 million this year.

Got 800K profit and we started a year ago today.

So for how young and how impressive you are,

I've got incredibly high standards because you're like, you're amazing.

I mean, you're a certified badass with your background and how young you are.

Thanks.

I am shocked at how much you're screwing this up though, like with this pitch because...

First you build them up and then you talk them down.

Well, my standards with him are so high

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because I would invest in a lot of things
that this guy does just because he's him.
I think if you're that young and you're this successful
already, like you clearly have some type of it factor
and you're amazing.
I think though that when Sean nailed it when he said,
I don't, he didn't say it this way,
but basically this isn't really a tech problem.
Like the tech exists and you're gonna be working on that.
This is a distribution and marketing problem.
Can you just get this in the hands of the right people?
I don't have a lot of experience selling to like
convenience stores and things like that.
I think that would be a pain in the ass
unless you got like a 7-Eleven or something like that.
But like, I think going like from store to store
to store is gonna be the worst.
But anyway, I think this is like a distribution
and customer acquisition problem.
It's a sales problem.
It's a sales problem.
And like if you're gonna sell to a convenience store,
like the dude who owns the convenience store
is working there.
People will tell you how much he thinks about efficiency, right?
Like he just sits there all day and like,
if you're like, hey, you have 4,000 SKUs on your shelves,
could you just add this tab to it?
And then when a customer comes in,
you could tell them just to walk out.
He'd be like, actually it's fine.
They just, I actually want them to come to the front counter
so they buy a five hour energy also and a lot of ticket.
And like, I don't want them to just walk out.
That's like half the revenue.
And so, you know, I think that if I was you,
what I would say is who needs this the most?
Well, I guess if I was you,
I'd probably actually lean on your strengths.
You're like good at TikTok and shit like that.
Like you're good at shit that like old people are bad at.
And you're doing a product that old people would be good at,
which is basically enterprise sales,

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going to a Kroger and showing them that with this increase in efficiency or retargeting or whatever, they're gonna get, you know, it's a 4% impact to their operations. And that's a huge number for them. But that takes, that's like a year long rollout or whatever. I think the SMB sale problem is gonna be pretty tough here. So that's what I would say is the weaknesses, but really cool idea. And the good thing is I do think this is inevitable. Like I do think this is where all retail is going. It's the how is it gonna get there? That's sort of the challenge. And so, you know, that's the opportunity also. I think it's definitely gonna be challenging to acquire the first initial customers. The way this works though is it gets easier over time. So you could build leverage with brands and have them install the tag itself. This is obviously a long-term goal. But once it's, you know, similar to a UPC and where it's applied at checkout, the barrier to entry for a retailer to carry area or carry one tag in their store is virtually the same. And a lot of these benefits are actually pretty relevant to retailers. It's not really like this kind of archaic, like old thing. So I think it's definitely gonna be challenging to like go door to door and pitch. And I think there definitely would need to be some sort of investor or person that could intro me to a bigger chain where we could like do a rollout of this that's much more efficient. But yeah, I mean, you're definitely right. It's gonna take some legwork to get someone on board. If I was you, there's a thing called Walmart Labs. You should check out. So Walmart has basically a giant innovation department or at least they did. I don't know if this is still around, but like they acquired a bunch of startups. They put like millions and millions of dollars into Walmart Labs where they were gonna like experiment

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with technology because Walmart's the biggest retailer.
For them, 1% matters a lot.
And I would go talk to them and be like,
hey, here's what we're thinking about.
And I think that conversation will be pretty illuminating
to figure out like, you know, what's the appetite?
What are the concerns?
How would they realistically, you know,
how would you realistically get this into store?
So that'd be my suggestion as a next step.
And I actually think that a lot,
I know I'm currently filming this in Austin right now.
HGB has like an innovation lab.
I think Costco, I imagine would Sam's Club,
which is also Walmart does.
But I think that as a 19, 20, 21 year old person
with a really successful background,
I think you actually have this massive advantage
to go to some of these like executives
at some of these big companies, these gray-haired executives
and they would meet someone like you
and they're like, you're special.
Like it's my job to like collect interesting talent
and like be on the latest and greatest
and know what's happening.
I don't know if you're gonna pull this off,
but like I wanna be in business with you.
And I think like three out of 20 people
who you talk to would give you a chance
just because of your success and your age.
And I think that you should use every advantage you have.
Do you think I go to big retailers initially
versus small?
I have 100% would.
I would go big right away.
I think big retailers think about this stuff in a more,
like they need to be innovating
and these efficiencies mean a lot more to them.
And they can sort of mandate these rollouts.
So I think that's the play and Sam's totally right.
There's gonna be the executive who's like, love this.
You're gonna be like, wow, he loves the technologies.
He's gonna be like, he's gonna tell you he's gonna be like,

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you gotta meet my son.
He needs to be more like you.
And it really like the draw is gonna be
he wants his 18 year old son to hang out with you
so that he could be more like you.
And like, that actually could get you a long way.
That actually happened to me several times in my life,
basically between 18 and 24.
I got so many either investors or intros
or things like that just because people just thought
it was endearing that I was this young kid
who believed in this stupid thing and was going for it
and was clearly smart and gonna do things later.
And they just wanted that energy around them.
They wanted to like support it.
They go, I just want a piece of the action.
I don't know what it's gonna be,
but like when you see like anyone who's like at the top
oftentimes they'll be like, I appreciate young hustlers
who are like, they're gonna be the real deal.
I see myself in you, whatever it is.
And they build a relationship and I would 100% use that
because there's like this like five or six year window
when you're still considered a prodigy
and you should just like pounce on that.
Right.
Thanks, Jake.
Thank you guys.
Thanks, Jake.
All right.
Who's next?
We got Anant from internet activism.
By the way, that guy's pitch was like a freaking
Pixar movie or something.
It was like animated in Figma like kids these days.
They got the tools, man.
I don't even know how do you do that?
Have you ever even seen that before?
No, it was good.
That was impressive.
This one looks good too.
I like internet activism.
I'm clicking on your deck now.

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I like your hacker design.
It's cool.
All right.
Thank you.
All right.
My name's Anant Sinha.
I'm the CTO of an organization called internet activism.
So currently the world is online.
Over 64% of the world has access to the internet
and the world's poorest communities.
People are more likely to have access
to a cell phone than a toilet.
But still the internet's potential
when it comes to distributing humanitarian software
is heavily underutilized.
In response to this, internet activism
is the first nonprofit that's solely dedicated
to developing software in response
to humanitarian disaster.
So now I'm going to walk you through a couple examples
of what this actually looks like.
In March 2022, we launched a website
called Ukraine Take Shelter.
This is essentially like Airbnb for refugees.
We connected refugees with potential hosts.
And over the last year we've been able to house
over 100,000 refugees, which is \$10,000 in spend.
How did you track that?
You know for a fact you put them in their home?
Yeah.
Another example of a project we worked on
is the world's most popular coronavirus tracking dashboard.
This was launched in January 2020
before COVID-19 was officially a pandemic.
It was used by over 600 million people.
It was recognized by Dr. Fauci as an invaluable resource
in distributing COVID-19 information.
We were also recognized as being able to compile
coronavirus data faster in the CDC
and sharing it with the general public.
And now moving on to what we're doing right now.
We're building on an app called Hyperlocal.
This essentially allows people to message each other

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just using Bluetooth.

So if you don't have access to data or Wi-Fi or cellular service, you can still message others using Bluetooth.

Even if they aren't right near you, we can carry, store, and forward messages.

So messages can hop between people across large distances.

This app is completely decentralized.

It's censorship resistant and it's secure.

And we envision this to soon be a vital part of the modern day emergency toolkit.

So the central thesis for our organization is being low cost, having a quick response time, and having building with small teams.

We're going to build out an entire suite of products that we can tweak in the matter of days or hours to respond to crises around the world.

And our main goal is to bridge the gap between the tech sector and humanitarian organizations.

Our leadership consists of the, can you go back.

Our leadership consists of the world's leading internet activists, exited founders, and highly talented designers and developers.

We're all young, ambitious, and we build really, really fast.

And when crisis occurs next, we'll be ready to respond.

Move on to questions.

Wow.

Wow, that was incredible.

These people are fucking amazing by the way.

Who are you?

How old are you?

21.

And you're in college?

Yeah.

Why?

I'm asking myself that question, too.

Probably going to take a gap semester or a permanent gap semester starting next month.

Are your parents immigrants?

They moved to the US back in the 90s, and they just actually moved back in June.

Dude, OK, so this is amazing.

Well done.

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From the start, the pitch was amazing.
The world's poorest communities are more likely to have a cell phone than access to a toilet.
That is a great attention grabbing, grabbing by the throat type of hook.
And then you backed it up.
And you were like, we're going to do this thing.
We're going to basically develop a nonprofit developing software for the humanitarian disaster.
OK, sounds interesting.
But you've actually done it.
So super impressive that you guys did this Airbnb thing and you housed 100,000 refugees.
I remember using this coronavirus tracker that you guys made.
So that's kind of amazing as well.
And it sounds like.
How much traffic did you say that one got?
It had over 600 million users and a peak daily active 36 million users, 34 million daily active users.
And how did it get so popular?
What did you do?
Did you just release it to the world or did it just went?
Or was there any growth and marketing around it?
I believe it was because of how early it was released just before John Hopkins started publicly aggregating all the data and releasing it.
We just had an advantage of being one of the first people to compile all this data and share it with everyone.
Again, this was in January 2020.
So this was three months before the pandemic officially began.
This was just in the early stages of the pandemic.
And so you said this.
You show this leadership team, which is three people.
How many people are there total in your group or your org that actively do stuff?
Currently, there are five people.
Wow, so you're a five person team.
All of you guys are like college age, is that it?
Yeah, everyone's in between the ages of 19 and 21.
Have you made any money from any of this?
Government grants, donations.

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We're a 501 C3.

So we're going to be raising over the next few months.

OK, so our grand vision right now is

we're just going full force with the nonprofit right now.

So these are like a couple of cool projects.

But this is small in comparison to what we're

going to do over the next few years.

We want to build out an entire suite of tools

so that whenever a crisis occurs, we can just tweak it

and then quickly deploy in a matter of hours or days.

If you're like current nonprofits,

the amount of time it takes to respond to a situation

and it can be months, it can be years,

we want to be able to do that in hours.

Yeah, how many nonprofits are run by hackers?

No one does this.

That's why.

So we worked on these projects in the past

and we're like, why is no one else doing this?

We see how powerful the internet is in terms

of distributing these solutions.

We see that can literally save lives.

So if no other organization is going to do it,

we're going to do it.

But why is there an incentive for a for-profit investor?

This isn't for-profit.

This is more we're going to be taking donations

for a nonprofit organization.

But is there a way?

OK, maybe there's a philosophical reason

why you're doing it, which is totally cool.

I won't debate you on that.

But if.

No, we can talk about that.

If we do make this a for-profit company

and we're going into countries where we're establishing

a presence, we're becoming their central means

of communication, if we come across as a for-profit company,

people are going to question what our main incentives are.

Again, we're not trying to distribute this in one

or two countries.

With the app that I was discussing before, Hyperlocal,

I'm just going to walk you through that app real quick.

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Basically, it allows people to just message each other using Bluetooth.

So if a government shuts down Wi-Fi access like we're seeing in Iran right now, you can still message people close to you or across an entire city. You can balance message across everyone in between you and that person who has their app downloaded, even if their phone is off.

So if we come.

This has happened before, right, these mesh network messaging apps.

And they kind of took off, I remember, when at festivals where there was no service, and then in some disaster zones, they were using these.

The thing is that most of these mesh networking apps, their UI and UX, sucks.

We're going to improve that.

And they don't have store and carry.

So say you're standing near me.

I can message you pretty easily.

But if I want to message someone who's a mile away, my message cannot get to them.

What we're doing is essentially, first of all, our messages are completely encrypted.

But say I want to message someone who's on the other side of the city.

If I want to message them, every person I come across, they will store my message and be like, Anand is trying to message this other person.

So once they walk across other people, they're also going to be carrying my message until it eventually reaches that person.

So you're able to create a virus effect and spread messages and create entire decentralized networks and cities.

What are you and your team motivated by?

Why are you doing this?

We want to have a positive impact in the world.

Basically, we know that there are existing solutions that can help out people around the world.

We know that we can potentially save lives or just make the world a better place in general.

But just to reiterate, this is not a profit making thing.

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And that is not your intention ever.

You're just doing this because I imagine it's incredibly fun and because you just want to make the world better.

Is that right?

Yeah, basically, look, if you see that there's

a problem in the world and you know

that you have the means to create a solution for it,

if you walk away from that solution,

our entire team would basically be bystanders.

And our team isn't bystanders.

Man, this was great.

You're a visionary.

I mean, I think this guy's fucking badass.

Yeah, I think what you guys have done is amazing.

I think that it's really cool to see a nonprofit that's just

driven by a handful of builders, like engineers,

hackers, for lack of a better word,

and not going to lie, going to be a hard pitch to beat.

So I'm just going to put that out there.

The bar is currently high.

So our team is five people, but we're

planning on scaling this as fast as possible.

Half of our team right now is full-time students.

I'm a computer science student here at University of Michigan.

I have a lot of workload, but as soon as this semester ends,

this is all we're going to be working on.

Why hasn't University of Michigan been like, dude, bail.

Here's money.

You're good.

That would be a good question for the university.

I don't know.

But both of the first two pitches

got the My First Million bachelor's degree.

You've got to be a badass from us.

You don't need to finish school.

One thing you should do, though, is you should shout out.

Because people listen to this podcast.

If there's somebody at a school right now,

or a young person who's like, dude, that's awesome.

I want to help them out.

How do they find you guys?

Yeah, OK.

There is a website, internetactivism.org.

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If you go to that, you can find or contact information and reach out to us directly.
All right, internetactivism.org.
All right, meet them.
We get it.
You're saving the world for it.
All right, good.
You're perfect.
We love you.
You're amazing.
But by the way, he hit him with the, if you don't want to sell sugar water.
Exactly.
The one I'm just drinking to coke.
Amazing.
Dude, these guys are so much smarter than us.
These guys are amazing.
Dude, I was picking my boogers at that age and eating Chick-fil-A.
And now I still eat Chick-fil-A. I just stopped picking boogers.
Like, these guys are so far ahead of where I was in college.
That's insane.
It's noon on a Friday.
I was gearing up for the nighttime bar run for my hot dog stand.
Like, I was chopping onions in my kitchen, getting ready for the 2 AM hot dog rush.
These guys are so, to build a website that has 600 million people visit it, that is outstanding.
This is just, these guys are crazy.
I don't get like the whole, I would urge him.
I mean, I could go either way.
I would urge him to have a for-profit way of doing this.
No, no, no.
He's doing it perfectly.
What are you going to live on grants your whole life?
I mean, how does it work?
First of all, like, there's a lot of money and government grants out there.
It's not like we're going to be starving or anything.
We can still afford to sustain ourselves.
Yeah, you'll be fine.
This is like, you know, when people go to Teach for America for two years, like, go work for internetactivism.org.

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And you'll come out the other side, you know,
in a good spot.
Don't worry about that.
All right, so let's do the next one.
Next one is, Jordan is going to pitch us Yo-fi.
By the way, I'm inspired.
I want to quit this.
Enjoy that.
If I get to hop in for two seconds, I'm Bobby.
And also, like, anyone who's watching this,
we are a group of entrepreneurs.
This is built for students, by students, in my community.
These people are my best friends.
And if you want to, like, get involved with these people
in any sort of way, like, feel free to reach out to me
at b-h-o-u-s-e-l-u-m-i-c-h dot e-e-u.
We're building communities like this across the country.
And we want your help if you're a college student or a young
person that's excited about making things.
But I'll let the next guy go.
Yeah, let's do it.
All right, Jason.
Jason's mom's going to pick him up.
He's got a physics class.
He's got to go, too.
Let's go, come on.
All right, let's do it.
What's up, Jason, from what is it?
Seafarer?
Seelfair?
Seafarer.
And from Minnesota.
All right, hit it.
You got two minutes.
Awesome.
Ahoy, Sharks.
This is Seafarer.
payroll and onboarding software for ships.
Let's just jump right into the problem here.
Paying the 2 million global seafarers is really hard.
Average ship is made up of people
for more than three different nationalities,
meaning you deal with disparate local bank accounts,

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currencies, and regulations.

That's why the current solution is literally paying these people in US dollars cash and or sending slow and often delayed swift transfers.

On top of this, the documents that seafarers need to provide and that ships need to process are arduous and painstaking to go through.

Take a look at this, Sam.

I can see your face right now.

You're having flashbacks to the DMV when you try to renew your license.

It's an absolute disaster to go through these documents.

We're talking vaccinations, professional certificates, sailing history.

You name it, they have to provide it.

One seafarer I talked to once had to print out 700 pages of documents just to get hired on a ship.

By the way, what's a seafarer?

Are we talking like workshops or what?

Yeah, we're talking merchant mariners.

So any ship that's out in the ocean, primarily those like transporting goods and services, but outside like leisure as well as military ships.

Yeah, awesome.

So what are my brother and I working on to address this problem?

We're taking a two-pronged approach to this solution.

First is with the payroll solution.

We're talking multi-currency, low FX fees, direct deposit to local accounts, and a mobile-first approach that will bring this industry to the modern era.

This will improve record-keeping and financial management for these ships and will eliminate the risk of having cash on board.

I'm sure many of you have seen the movie Captain Phillips and know this problem at hand.

Second is we're working on an onboarding solution.

For ships, this will be a single place where they can have a document upload where our software will scrape those documents to determine eligibility, explorations,

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and everything else a ship needs to know,
saving them money.
Seafarers will love it too,
as it'll be a one-stop shop for them to store their documents,
track their certifications,
and have an employment record at hand.
So sharks, why now?
There's two compelling reasons
why this can happen right now.
First is that fintech infrastructure
over the past few years has exploded.
Never has it been easier, faster,
more efficient, and more reliable
to build a cross-border payments company.
Second, internet adoption on ships is finally growing.
If you didn't know,
lots of these ships didn't have access to internet
until recently.
With the dropping costs of satellite internet
and Starlink from Maritime launching in just this July,
we see it really exploding.
On top of this,
there's a labor shortage of seafarers right now,
which is putting pressure on shipping companies
to provide internet
in order to attract labor to work for them.
So sharks, I'll leave you with a quote
from Captain Jack Sparrow.
And in the meantime,
I'm happy to answer any questions that you have.
— Bravo, man.
You guys are all great.
This is way, like, we had stocks.
We did this with stocks,
and it was like these, like, you know,
people who have been working in the workforce for years,
and some of them already successful entrepreneurs.
This is way better.
— This is way better.
— Yeah, this is really good.
What was your name again?
Jordan?
— My name is Jason.

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Okay, Jason.

Jason, I'd like to invest in your company.

So I don't know if you're gonna win this pitch competition or not, but I'd like to invest in your company.

So...

— All right, let's set up a call next week.

— No call.

I'm in.

The call is done.

This was the call.

And I'm in.

I don't know if you have an entity or a corporation, but you need to get one and send me some wiring details, because I'm in on this idea.

This is a, you know, one of my best investments was a company called Deal.

That's basically like a payments solution for contractors around the world.

This is like a niche that no payment companies get to really like kind of focus on the unique aspects of this.

None of the modern companies are gonna do this.

You know, I think because there's probably a bunch of nuances that are specific here, it seems like you could go in and, you know, you found a problem that most people aren't even really aware of.

Like, I didn't even know what a seafarer was for the first two minutes of the presentation.

You know, so I doubt most entrepreneurs are even looking at this.

The question, of course, is how big can this be?

So let's just do some math here.

Two million, two million,

what do we call, I'm not calling these guys CTRs.

Yeah, I can walk you through the TAM calculations if you aren't quick.

Yeah, so what is the, how much money can you make if you get like, you know, whatever, let's say, you know, some reasonable amount of like, if you had a tenth of that.

So if you had 200,000 of these people

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using your platform, what would you be generating?
Okay, yeah, so 200,000, we're charging \$10 a month.
Okay, so that's \$2 million every single month,
times 12, that's 24 million in ARR
if we capture 10% of the market.
But you also have to realize
that we're gonna be charging and sort of monetizing,
not just based off \$10 per person per month.
We're also gonna be taking 25 to 50 bips on FX
as well as getting floating interest
on payroll deposits before they're sent out.
So I would say that-
How do you know we like it when people say bips?
Yeah.
That's, that's Sam's safe word.
Okay, so I think I'm clear, I'm in on this.
I will invest in this company.
Sam, what are your thoughts?
My breath has taken away.
These guys are awesome, man.
Like the reason this is great
is this guy's pitching a Seafar B2B software.
But at the bottom of a slide, he says,
Alexa, play, I'm on a boat by Lonely Island.
Like the dichotomy here of going on
of just a bunch of dumb ass shithead young kids
who are fucking geniuses and incredibly successful.
I'm all about it.
I said earlier in the first pitch,
you do a good job pitching to some older executive
who just wants to be around you guys.
That's exactly how I feel right now.
So your brother says five years to AWS.
Is this your brother who's older and out of college?
Yeah, in a computer engineering degree,
he's been working at AWS for five years.
And so this is currently just an idea, right?
You don't have a product,
you don't have any customers or anything like that.
Yep, idea phase.
Did you work with Bessemer?
Yep, I worked at Bessemer Venture Partners last summer.
Did you pitch them this?

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No, I did not pitch them this.

Why not?

They primarily do series A,
but I'm happy to talk to some of my partner friends there
after this.

Why didn't, how'd you come across this idea?

Yeah, yeah.

So my brother was actually born in Indonesia.

He spent a lot of time there.

And you might know them as like a global shipping hub.

So he actually became friends with this guy named Dennis.

Long story short is Dennis handled a lot
of the payroll paperwork that has to be processed
by these shipping companies.

And he would talk to my brother basically every day
about the pain points he faced.

So we decided we should tackle this
to help alleviate some of Dennis's pain here.

Is that how you know them, Sean, Indonesia
as a shipping hub?

Yeah, I lived in Indonesia.

I didn't pay attention to any of this shit.

I met a guy named Poppy who was importing cotton.

I was like, whoa, shout out to Poppy.

If he's listening somewhere, yeah, I still remember you.

So how will you sell this?

So who are you going to go to?

And is the guy going to have gangrene on his knuckles
and be like, what are you talking about, apps?

Who are you going to be selling this to?

What makes you think you could sell it?

Yeah, for sure, for sure.

So I know I look pretty young here,
but I do have a past life on doing sales
at several early stage successful software companies.

I'm most notably patch.io, join them pre-seed.

They're now at series B.

So I've put in my 1,000 cold calls,
put in my 100,000 cold emails.

So I'm pretty confident that I can get on the phone
with someone and sell something.

I will say that people were targeting, right?

This is a fairly concentrated industry.

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A lot of the shipping companies control lots of like market share.
So it's pretty long sales cycles, enterprise B2B sales cycles, but I directly reach out to sort of those working in the offices of these shipping companies, get them on the phone and sort of kick off that cycle.
I'm projecting six to 10 months for the average sale cycle for these bigger companies.
But obviously we're going to work our way down to SMBs later on.
Jason, I'm so hot and bothered when you talk to me like this. Did someone script this for you?
Why are you saying all the right things?
All right, so this is great.
Jason, email me, Sean at SeanPurry.com.
I'm investigating this company.
I can't wait.
This is really, really interesting.
Well done.
Good pitch.
All right.
By the way, you like how he was like, so sharks, you want to come take a swim in the maritime industry?
These kids are the best.
This is the greatest thing I've ever seen.
I thought this was going to be stupid.
These guys are so much better than anything we've ever done with this.
They are so talented.
Also, if this is like the bar, if this is the normal bar of college entrepreneur, then like, you know, like I feel like we were playing basketball back in the days when they had like short shorts and nobody could use a left hand and like it was a beach basket for a hoop.
It's like, oh, wow, these guys can jump.
Yeah, it's like we just like LeBron just learned how to lift weights.
Like that's what this feels like.
I don't know what's happening.
For my sake, I'm hoping this next one sucks.
I really hope he sucks just so I feel better.
This guy, Jason, was supposed to go last, but he just interrupted and grabbed the mic,

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like conated with Taylor Swift because he goes,
hey, bro, can I take this over?
I gotta run to class.
Like, can we just reiterate that?
If I was university, is this University of Michigan?
They seem like a fairly progressive school.
If I like was these guys and I heard what was happening,
I would say, bro, it was like, don't go to class anymore.
Here's here, we got you covered.
Do this stuff.
By the way, I want to do this with like every university now.
This is amazing.
I need to know if it's just the University of Michigan thing
or if this is like the caliber of entrepreneurs.
Jonathan, what should we, if you're another university,
if you're somebody at a university listening to this,
how do they get in touch with us to do this at their school?
It is definitely partially a Michigan thing.
And I will say like, the biggest problem is
the universities don't facilitate this.
It took me like two years to meet every single one
of these killers and like we come together bi-weekly
to bring together these kinds of conversations
and to build together.
And who's like, that didn't exist.
Bobby, are you organizing this thing?
I'm Bobby, yes.
I'm a student as well.
Yeah, this is a community of entrepreneurs,
like 200 strong at this school.
We meet bi-weekly and just enjoy each other.
No context of like paying dues, like monthly membership,
like screw that.
This is not a club.
This is just a group of killers
that enjoy spending time together.
Bob, this is not even.
Dude, he's got a good pitch, man.
That's really wrong.
This does not exist at other schools
and the schools that like,
pretend like they have these crazy entrepreneurship programs
like no hate on Michigan entrepreneurship.

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Like there are some upside,
but like they can't build this, right?
Like this has only existed
because I spent every waking moment at this school.
Like anytime anyone tells me they're building something,
I go and find them.
Bob's the new scooter, Ron, man.
What the hell?
Dude, who are you?
You need to come on, my first million.
I would love to help put this on other schools.
Like our mission is to bring this sort of community
to schools across the country, right?
Like build, ground up, four students, five students,
screw the preconception of having to do anything,
like come and be together and like make cool shit.
All right, Bob.
Put George, that was incredible.
It was also just the bi-weekly killers.
There's a great band right there.
Yeah, it's like a doo-wop band from the sixties.
But go ahead, put Yo-Fi on.
I want to hear from Jordan Shamir.
Yeah, no, thanks for having me.
I guess I'm the senior citizen here.
I'm a master's student, so a little bit older.
But if we go to the next slide,
one of the things we were working on in a previous life
is we were all working on digital identities.
How can these brands create, you know,
meaningful, consistent relationships with their customers?
Customers are always changing,
but one of the things that we saw is that
our understanding of who customers are digitally
is really complicated.
We can't interact with them.
We can't see them.
We can't see what they like.
And so one of the things that we did is we actually worked
with some of the world's largest brands, right,
working in the bot mitigation teams.
I don't know if y'all like sneakers
or anything along those lines.

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One of the things that we saw is that through all of our experience in e-commerce, but just larger brands in general, is that everything you consume digitally is being skewed because everyone has multiple personas or multiple identities online. So whether it's intentional being bots, frauds, resellers, et cetera, or unintentional, right? We've all used multiple different email addresses to get 10, 15% off discounts. And this creates a huge issue for both brands and consumers, right? From brands, I don't know how many customers that I have are unique. I don't know which products to build because it's being skewed by these multiple personas. I over forecast inventory, these still a bunch of dead stock, but also as consumers, right? We all know what's going on with Taylor Swift or we've all lost sneaker drop. We've all paid way too much for a concert ticket that we wanted to go to. The reason it happens, it's not because other people are beating you, it's because people are programmatically beating you with bots. And the second thing that we see that's just fascinating is that the notion of omnichannel has changed drastically. You're not just competing Nike vs. Deedis. You're also competing Nike vs. DTC, Nike Dick's Sporting Goods, Nike Unauthorized Resellers. And these Unauthorized Resellers are actually costing brands millions of dollars a year, even Dumb Dumbs Lollipops, like the ones that you get from the hospital or the doctor is actually being arbitrage and it's costing them millions of dollars a year. And then we kind of know about these fake profiles on Twitter and these social media sites that we've seen, or even if you live in New York, Austin, LA, if you try to go to your favorite restaurants, big reason why they're booked is that the moment they come online, they're taken and resold somewhere else.

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So what we've done is we've actually created a platform, like in a digital identity platform, we're in real time without interacting with the user, we rank every order between zero and 100. So we kind of use this real time graph networking clustering to be able to find all these patterns of randomness and associations between individuals. And we create these really nice graphs to be able to say, okay, well, these are bots, these are bad actors, these are duplicate accounts. And so we actually work with some of the largest neighborhood sneaker stores in the world to help them prioritize, hey, I got a whole bunch of raffle entries, right? I got 400,000 raffle entries for 50 pairs of shoes. How do I use this to acquire new clients or prioritize existing ones? How do I choose? Because today what they're doing is they're just randomly giving it out and people aren't actually buying them because people aren't even checking the email addresses that are going in. So we've been actually working with a lot of this from bad actors perspective, but one of the new things that we've been able to see with this, which has been really cool, is helping brands actually find their best customers. So kind of through using the same clustering technology, we've been able to say, who are your most influential customers, right? How are they not just their individual lifetime value, but what we think. Can we pause? Can pause, I think that might be over the two minutes. So Sam, can you tell me what this guy does? What is the business? Yeah, you're missing your one-liner, my friend, but basically it's a software that has 160 features that analyze in real times the patterns of randomness and similarities at the customer transactional product company. It's confusing, dude. Can you explain it, Jordan?

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Can you explain it to me like this?

We help blank customer, who's your customer?

What type of person or business?

Brands and, oh, we help brands and retailers.

More specific, like give me one example.

Like we help shoe brands or something?

Yeah, we help brands like Nike to prioritize their best consumers for limited release products and also clean their data by pulling out kind of all the crap that goes in.

So prioritize their top customers.

You basically, you tell Nike who their top customers are?

We would say like for sneaker drops and limited release products.

Like, hey, these are the new clients that you can acquire cheaply or here are the clients that you can actually prioritize that.

This is actually something meaningful compared to one person putting like 10,000 or 100,000 entries via bots to get those products.

So you just prevent bots from buying shit online?

We prevent.

And then what we also do is we actually kind of clean the data downstream.

So we flag all of those accounts that can get pulled out of the CRM system that are kind of bloating the CRM system.

So like one of the things that we see from a lot of our clients is that they way overspend on the products that they use like Klaviyo or kind of CRM products because a lot of the entries in there aren't actually legitimate.

So when I'm actually making decisions around how many products should I buy or how many products should I make, what are people buying, is actually being skewed based off the amount of what's in there?

Is actually just a bunch of duplicate versus actually unique consumers.

OK, you are not the best at explaining your own company, but you're not horrible.

I kind of get it after you explain it a bunch.

And that's all good.

I think you can improve that.

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But do you have any, even on your website, man,
I'm going to be honest, it's a little challenging to understand.
But I saw that you have a book demo thing.
Do you, are you booking demos?
Do you have a product?
Are people buying it?
Yeah, we have about 25 customers right now.
That's impressive.
What's the revenue?
The revenue right now, when we convert to revenue,
is going to be around 15K MRR.
But it's free now is what you're saying.
It's free right now.
Who's using it?
Do you need notable customers that are anybody we would know of?
I guess based off the area you're in,
we work with a lot of local sneaker stores.
So like in San Francisco, we work on with a couple
of same in Seattle, same in Canada,
so mostly local sneaker stores.
Do they love it?
And be honest, do they love it?
Do they like it?
Or do they think it's just OK?
They love it.
I mean, right now, we're providing from our cost of value.
We're providing for like, if we're charging them \$1,000,
one of their stores, we're providing \$10,000 in net new revenue
that we're acquiring in for them a month.
OK, OK.
Honestly, it's tough to give you feedback
because the pitch was so confusing.
So it's really difficult to try to suss that out, right?
Like just from the beginning, like Sam said,
you need your one-liner or your one-sentence description
so that people need to have a clear picture in their head
at the beginning of the presentation what the business
does.
So here's your first slide.
Your first slide said, Yo-Fi, keep business human.
All right, cool.
No idea what you do.
Then I go to your second slide.

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It's a team slide, experts at transforming data into recommendations.
Our passion is keeping customer interactions authentic and meaningful.
Still have no idea what you guys do.
Then slide three, everything is digital and you've been impacted.
And it says something about ticket sellouts and fake social media and brand loyalty is harder, OK?
Still don't know what you do.
And then the last one, which is prioritize and reward your best customers.
We help you understand your customers and streamline every interaction.
I feel like there's 50 different ways that that could mean 50 different solutions.
And so, and then the last slide is just your title again.
So that was the whole pitch.
And so that's the that's I think the challenge here is for me, at least, I'm not able to really give you any useful feedback except for except for to say, I think you got to like flip this on its head and say, we're Yo-Fi and we help, you know, we help businesses figure out who the most valuable customers are.
For example, this is a shoe store.
The shoe store does drops every Friday, but it's having this problem, which is blah, blah, blah.
And that's a common problem.
So we give them this app that shows them a screen like this.
And these are all the top customers.
They push this button and our app costs \$1,000 a month.
And look at this, we have 25 customers.
And on average, we make them 10 grand a month and additional revenue.
And we also save them an additional \$1,000 a month because of the bloated CRM and like, they don't actually need those contacts in there.
And then all these other reasons.
Yeah. And then, you know, then you could go on.
And here's why, you know, we even found this problem because we've spent our career doing this, blah, blah, blah.
Right. So I think that's how I would try to reorient this pitch if I was you.

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But the good news is, is as you got into it
and we were able to like work hard to kind of find
the gold and all the dirt,
you had some good shit in there.
It does actually seem like an interesting product.
It's pretty impressive that you're,
have all these people using it.
You're saying they love it.
I have no idea if that's true,
but you're saying they love it.
That's really interesting.
That's hard to do with the software product
when you're just working on it part time.
So it seems actually fairly interesting.
I think your branding is kind of cool,
but your messaging needs a lot of work.
Yeah, that's helpful.
Yeah. And that's been our hardest thing is like,
we kind of matured is like getting the messaging spot on
cause like we do a little bit more, right?
We started with sneaker bots.
Now we've kind of expanded more to digital identity.
So having like a streamlined messaging of like,
what we do that's like a one liner is,
but you're, I think you're making a common mistake,
which is we do a bunch of things.
We don't have just one customer.
We have like five, five different types of customers.
And we do, we have a hundred features in our app.
So we do a bunch of things.
So what you do is you try to create this giant umbrella.
That's a catch all like we help customers,
we help brands understand their customers
or streamline their customer interactions.
And the problem is nobody knows what the hell that means.
So instead you should go way narrower and be like,
whoever your most of the 25 clients,
is there one type that's like, you know,
the majority or half a half of the customers
is it shoe stores, sneaker stores?
Yeah, right now it's a, yeah, sneaker store and beauty.
So I would start by saying, we help stores do X.
For example, we have 25 customers right now

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and half of them are sneaker stores.
Sneaker stores have this problem, blah, blah, blah.
You talk about that.
You say, but it's not just sneaker stores.
Cause yes, sneakers do drops, but so does Taylor Swift.
She does drops too.
And so does this brand.
They do drops too.
And they all have that same problem.
Right.
And so that's kind of how you should explain it
instead of trying to do this like umbrella thing.
Okay, cool.
Thanks so much.
We got the, we got one more, I believe.
Yeah.
We got, we got Dolan from deal dog
that's going to take us home.
Dolan from deal dog.
All right, wonderful.
Go for it.
Awesome.
So my name is Dolan and I created deal dog.
So deal dog is an exclusive campus marketplace.
We launched this semester at the university of Michigan
beginning with student football tickets.
And since then our traction has been good.
We have over 2,000 verified Michigan students on the app.
And those 2,000 students have processed
over \$93,000 of student tickets.
Additionally, with some traction numbers,
two thirds of those tickets that have been listed
on deal dog have been sold to other users
and we're growing in the next few months.
So what's the core problem?
Essentially the way students buy and sell things
on campus now is they go to group me
or Facebook marketplace.
Those are filled with bots and scammers.
And basically it's just a mess.
Next they need to go to a platform like LinkedIn
or Instagram to message the other person
or verify the legitimacy.

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Finally, they need to transact payment
and there's friction between do you sell,
do you use cash app?
There's a chicken in the egg problem
versus who sends the item first and who pays first.
And overall it's just a complete mess.
So what makes deal dog different?
First of all, we verify your UMish email
so you can't get into the app
unless you have a verified student email.
It's a centralized place to find relevant items to students
along with tools like filtering, sorting and searching.
So here's an example on the left
of what our app looks like if you were to log in
versus on the right,
this is the current state of the market
filled with scammers and et cetera.
So what makes deal dog actually different?
So our app has gamified tools
that turn student pain points into fun experiences.
One of which that I demonstrated here
is our tool called Final Offer.
Basically, if you're dealing with somebody
they're wishy-washy, you can't reach agreement on price.
You can use our Final Offer tool
to send them your best offer.
If they reject it, the conversation's over.
And if they accept it, you agree to sell them that item.
This is highly scalable
because when we expanded to new markets,
we can add tools into this toolbar
exactly like you do with iMessage
to help solve those needs.
So how does this scale?
There's two ways.
One of which is we're gonna expand
to different categories on campus.
We just launched the clothing and have great success.
Our approach is to build things from the ground up
instead of cloning other markets.
And again, with our chat tools,
integrations we're thinking about
are to integrate on top of the APIs

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of existing clothing platforms
so that for instance, if you wanna find Michigan gear
you can't find exactly what you're looking for on our app.
It'll redirect you to an existing platform.
And although we may lose that particular sale,
we wanna make that buying experience as easy, fast,
and safe as possible for students.
So our future plans are to expand to new campuses.
We're gonna build on top of the dominant ticketing APIs
that exist in the market today.
And additionally, we're gonna have an ambassador program
so we can scale even faster
both at Michigan and at other schools.
Does this exist now or is this just an idea?
So this exists now.
It's been live for about two months just at Michigan.
We wanted to really validate our hypothesis
and see what works with students and what doesn't work.
Did you think he was making up the traction numbers or what?
I didn't see it, wait.
First slide.
He's like, we have 2,000 students,
98,000 of GMV and that's in two months.
That's pretty impressive.
Huh, okay.
And what was your take on that?
You take 10%?
Yes, so one of the things that we wanted to hold off on
is actually implementing the payments.
We've already built it,
but we didn't wanna implement it yet
because we're so new.
We thought it'd be a point of friction for students
to be like, hey, we're launching this new app.
By the way, what's your credit card number?
Put in your banking details, stuff like that.
We wanted to really get the product down first
before we started actually taking money
between the two parties.
When we do, it's gonna be between 5% and 10%
of whatever the transaction is.
Okay, all right, cool.
Thanks, Sean, what do you think?

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Yeah, I think it's cool.
I like some of the product details.
Like I love the final offer thing.
I think that's great.
And I get it that like, you know, Craigslist,
Facebook marketplace, these things are like lower trust.
So having verified student IDs,
I think it's just great
because it creates this like trust bubble.
So I really liked that.
I don't know how big this gets.
So that'd be my kind of question.
I don't really like these kind of like small
take rate businesses where you take 5% or 10%.
Then you'd need the number to be massive
on the transaction side in order for you
to like make a lot of money.
So I think that's my only question is just like,
I think this is a really, it's a useful product.
I think it's a cool project to work on.
I wouldn't personally invest in this
because I don't think it can be that big.
You would have to basically take a Facebook path
where you would say, we're gonna go get every college
or we're gonna dominate that college.
It's gonna be like the way that you transact
in a trusted environment.
And then you say, okay, but it's not just colleges.
Now we're gonna do neighborhoods
because we can send postcards out and verify
that you live at the address like next door does.
And we're gonna, you know, you'd have to really believe
that like two or three more miracles
are gonna happen for this to be big.
So I think that's my only knock on it,
which is not really like, you know,
not every business has to be absolutely massive.
But it's just, when I invest, I try to obviously slant
towards things that I think would be big.
But it's a network's effects.
This business involves a network.
So in order for it to be successful,
everyone needs to be using it.

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So my problem is not with Dole and the entrepreneur.
My problem is with this market.
I think that even if you are a 10 out of 10 entrepreneur,
this is just like social apps.
Even if you're a 10 out of 10 entrepreneur
and you have 10 out of a 10 execution,
it's just like, it's so challenging to make this work.
You're going for like a four out of 10 opportunity.
Yeah, it's just so hard
because you're competing with Craigslist.
You're competing with Facebook Marketplace.
Now you're gonna be competing
with the other incumbents that have raised
hundreds of millions of dollars
that are, I think, mostly failing.
Like what was that thing called?
OfferUp. OfferUp and Lego or something like that.
They bought billboards.
They did everything they possibly could.
I don't think it's caught on.
And it's like, well, the entrepreneurs,
I bet, were really great.
They've raised hundreds of millions of dollars.
So capital wasn't an issue.
And yet they still can't beat Craigslist
which is just 30 dudes in an apartment working at,
which is, I know this
because I rented their apartment.
It was like a crappy apartment
and just 30 guys who are hippies.
And they're just like, well,
you're just not gonna beat us
because everyone already uses this.
So it's like, it doesn't matter how great you are.
And so it's really, really hard.
You have so many things going against you.
And I wanna invest in things that have tailwinds.
And I just don't think that no matter how great you are,
you're gonna catch a tidal wave.
I think you're always gonna be paddling,
upstream on this one.
Yeah, really good points.
We certainly have a lot to prove.

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One of the things that we wanted to do is A, begin with college campuses. The reason being is because, at these big, large state schools, you got a student body of 50, 60,000 people competing for 10,000 tickets. And in that exact niche, the math really makes sense. But I do agree in a lot of other cases, it might not. One of the things that we're expanding to working on, if I may, is a lot of these items that we're working on, whether it be tickets, secondhand goods, services, subletting, the core mechanics of those can be distilled down and then scaled to other things. So for instance, if a campus group has a concert, they bring a DJ, whatever the case may be, they can use our app and underlying ticket technology to distribute that on campus. And so again, it doesn't solve your core issue of, you know, it's a incredibly difficult market. It certainly is. Dude, I think that makes it worse, actually. I think that one of the few ways that these, one of the few ways these businesses can work is by like being very niche. So you have Poshmark for women's clothing. You've got Grail for men's streetwear. You know, there's like dozens of these that are like pretty big companies. I think Poshmark is a multi-billion dollar company. Thread-up, I don't know what their niche is, but some type of like clothing for a certain genre of person. I think that when you appeal to everyone, you appeal to no one. And I think that in really to make this work, you'd have to select like, I'm sure that there's, what's the one call for sneakers, stock X or something like that. Yeah, coat, yeah. Yeah, like these are huge businesses because they just focused on one thing and it's far easier to have a wedge where you start with a small group of people

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who are passionate and care about them
and get them to use it versus,
well, we're gonna do tickets
and then we're gonna do this and then we're gonna do this.
It's like, no man, I think you can just build a big thing.
You just focus on this one thing.
And so appealing to everyone.
So sublets, so apartments and then tickets
and then you had clothing on your deck.
I think that's actually, in my opinion,
turns me off even more.
Not again, not entirely on you.
I just think that like,
there's just so many things outside of your control.
You know, like Seafar was gonna compete against like paper.
You are gonna compete against Zuck, Craigslist
and like hundreds and billions of dollars
who have invested capital into this.
I just don't think it's not a safe bet.
It's not a good bet.
Yeah, really good points there.
Something to work on for sure.
By the way, I would say like when I was in college,
our first idea was-
It's always this, this is roommates.
Well, no, this would have been better than my first idea.
The one we did straight out of college
was like a sushi restaurant chain.
We tried to create a restaurant chain.
And like, it was the same thing.
We could be 10 out of 10 execution,
10 out of 10 creativity.
Like fundamentally like restaurants are like,
you know, sort of like a two out of 10 opportunity.
It's like one of the worst types of businesses
you can try to start.
And you know, so we had a point where a year in,
we were like, cool, we won this business bank competition.
We can do this.
It's not that we can't do it.
We're having success with our first location,
but like we got to remember,
this is just our first idea.

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Maybe we're more entrepreneurs than we are restaurateurs.
And maybe this first idea is the one
that got our wheels turning,
but let's not commit more years to something
if once we recognize that this is a two out of 10 opportunity,
we should just say, okay, cool.
Let me just be a college kid.
Let me have my opportunity, my time back,
and let me put it on another better opportunity.
And so that's what I would do if I was you.
But just FYI, getting \$93,000 of transactional value,
a transactional volume is super, super, super impressive.
That is amazing.
So maybe you can prove us wrong and be like,
and you said two out of three of tickets,
you just be like, look,
we're just gonna build a different stub hub
and it's gonna be better because we're marketing wizards
and who knows why it's gonna be better.
Maybe you're gonna prove us wrong,
but \$93,000 and 2,300 users in three months,
incredibly impressive.
That is wildly impressive.
So you're also a superstar.
I'm just gonna, I don't know if you're gonna pull it off
in this genre, but we'll see.
Yeah, awesome.
Thank you guys so much.
As a closing note, like if you have any advice on this,
it seems like the other people that do use our app,
you know, they almost exclusively use it
to sell their tickets and other things.
Awesome.
If you decide not to bail, I would stick with tickets
and stick on that for at least one year
and talk to users constantly and see what happens,
but I would stick with tickets.
And I wouldn't even worry about expansion.
I would just figure out what makes them come back
over and over and over again,
because I imagine if I had a look into stub hub
and seat geek, cack is the biggest issue.
And I'm just guessing I've not researched this.

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Yep.

All right, Dolan, thank you so much.

And guys, that is it.

We pick a winner now.

So that is the, my first million presents,
University of Michigan pitch competition,
super impressive caliber of entrepreneurs.

Like I said, love this community.

You know, Bobby, Bobby, my bi-weekly killer.

Good job putting this group together.

We got to pick a winner.

So, Sam, how do you want to do this?

I think, well, so let's talk about like who's in the top three
and then you and I slack with me.

I just slack to you, my top two.

You and I slack and just tell me what you want to do.

And I'll tell you if I approve and I agree with your vote.

But basically, let's go in order.

So third runner up or like, you know,
maybe my top three, I guess, I just give you,
give you three in random order.

So I liked Seafarer.

Like I said, I want to actually invest in that.

I think that that's a really cool idea going into a boring,
boring industry that's painful, complicated.

And I think, you know, not going to be easy to sell into,
but if they do, very easy to get locked in.

And I think they can make money doing basically payroll
for the shipping, you know, shipping industry
for people who work on ships.

So I really liked that idea.

Internet activism was super impressive.

They, you know, have built a website
that got 600 million users.

They built an Airbnb thing for Ukrainian refugees
that had 100,000 people stay, you know, in homes.

That's kind of is just crazy ludicrous.

And that's a career maker, just that.

I mean, that number and just the idea of a nonprofit
that's not driven by, you know,

what nonprofits are driven by today,
which is sort of like fundraising and sales and marketing.

It's like, we're hackers.

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We just build stuff that's going to help people.
And that's what we do.
And I really kind of resonate with that.
I've seen the power of that.
One time the guy who was investing in our ideal lab,
he was like, hey, I want to do this thing
for this charity I support called Charity Water.
You know, but instead of just giving money,
what if we gave our talent?
What if we built something?
And we built a charity website that was designed to go viral.
It was like, could you make charity go viral?
That was the mission.
We spent three months on it.
And I remember we got, I don't know,
five million people to like come visit the thing.
And we raised I think 800,000 for the cause.
And so like, I've seen how builders can help charity
in a way that's kind of unique.
And then also Jake from Tabs Chocolate
who's doing the NFC tagging thing.
I thought that was another good one.
I think it cut below the other two,
but honorable mention, what do you think?
I agree entirely.
I think Jordan just did a really good, bad job of pitching.
And but I actually think that that business
is actually really intriguing and could be great.
I think it's just a boring software company that I like.
I think it could be a really great business,
but he was so bad at pitching that it ruined the fact
that it's a cool company, I think.
And I actually think that he's got,
he doesn't have as much traction as internet activism,
but if he does actually have 30 or however many said,
20 customers using his software,
I think that's a fairly pretty big deal
because it seems kind of hard to sell into them.
So I sent to you what I think should be the winner.
It's the last thing I said, do you agree or not agree?
I don't agree.
I think it should be this other one.
What do you think?

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Okay, so let's just say who the top two are.
Yeah, top two, we got our seafarer and internet activism.
So let me explain my perspective here.
So internet activism, fucking amazing.
This guy made me want to quit and join him.
My issue with him, not him,
my issue with giving them the money
is they already have a great thing going
and they're kind of crushing it.
It feels weird giving this money to a nonprofit.
I'd rather just give them my own personal money,
but he is so impressive that I was,
this guy's gonna be on the cover of Fortune or Forbes,
I think in the next five years.
So I would be fine giving them money,
but seafarer, it's an idea, man.
We could just be the first money in
to actually make them like build something.
So that's why that's interesting.
Yeah, I feel the same way,
but I think for seafarer,
I would put my personal money in as an investment,
but I think for the prize money of this,
I think that if we put it into internet activism,
it's gonna save lives.
And honestly, he was of the bunch.
He was the most missionary.
And you could just tell, for example.
The guys are visionary.
All these other people,
I feel like if I talk to them six months from now,
they could be working on something completely different.
And that's totally normal and okay,
especially if you're in college, I actually encourage that.
But when you know, you know,
this guy was kind of aggro where he was like,
you know, yeah, I could go work on a CRM tool
or whatever, but like, you know, if that I'm doing this,
and that is something I really, really respect.
I don't think he was looking for validation.
I think he was trying to get the word out.
And so that I respect that.
Dude, I looked up one of the co-founders

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of internet activism on Twitter
and his background picture was Mark Zuck,
given the middle finger.
And I used to have that same background.
And so I'm on board, man.
I agree with you.
We'll give it to internet activism.
I think that they are awesome.
I think all the folks here were incredibly impressive.
Dude, the one that we shit on the most, I think was Deal Dog.
The guy got \$93,000 in transactional value in three months.
Like no one does that.
Very impressive all around kudos to everybody.
And I gotta say,
we're not picking internet activism for the do good.
Like the guy's pitch was dope.
His first line where he's like, you know,
people in poor communities have more access to cell phones
than they do to toilets, right?
His pitch was good.
His traction was good.
We built things that have gotten
hundreds of millions of visits, right?
His idea was a big idea,
an encrypted messaging app that can't be shut down
basically an unstoppable messaging app
that's gonna help people in certain places, right?
And I think he was the most committed founder.
That's why not because it's a charity.
Just give him the money.
I also think he's a shithead.
I think these guys are shitheads.
I think that these guys are like the good type of shitheads.
I think that they're the people who I'm a gravitated towards.
I like people who just like,
and frankly, a lot of these guys had that vibe.
I mean, Tab's chocolate from Jake definitely has that vibe.
They have this like attitude of like, screw it.
I'm just gonna do this and we're just gonna see
what we're gonna see what finds out.
Yes, and I love that mentality.
This guy just displayed it the best
for this in this particular case,

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but these guys all had this like punk rock vibe that I love.
So that's everybody in this room right now.
Every single one of these people.
Even the pitch man had it.
Yeah, even the emcee,
he was like shitting on the traditional clubs
and like other like official organizations.
And he's like, no, we're the underground,
we're the underground real ones.
And I respect that, that attitude is great.
This reminds me, I mean, they were further along than us
and smarter than us.
But when you and I were like 23, 24, 25,
hanging out at your office at Monkey Inferno,
we surrounded ourselves with these types of freaks.
And a lot of them have gone on to build
literally 20 or \$30 billion worth of companies.
You know, Jack Smith, your boy, Fur Con.
Like these guys have built like huge,
Ryan Hoover, all these guys have built
some really huge companies.
And these guys were mindless of us.
And I think that it's actually,
I hope send us to University of Michigan.
They're blowing it, man, by not empowering you guys.
So I think that's crazy.
Yeah, send me a hoodie.
I'm wearing a Michigan hoodie on the next pod.
I'm a fan now. Me too.
You know who else came from University of Michigan?
Was our boy, Michael, from Future,
who's a total that has this exact same vibe of just.
One of the first members of this organization,
whatever you want to call it.
And this is credits to these guys and gals.
This is not credit to University of Michigan.
This is all these people are what makes this special.
We love University of Michigan, we do.
And we're going to take every single last resource
until we leave this place.
But until then, all right.
Well, I admire you folks.
I think you're awesome.

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I think the listeners, hopefully this gets
hundreds of thousands of listens.
We'll see.
I think this is going to be a hit.
But yeah, you're awesome.
So thank you.
Shawnee, you got anything to say?
We're out of here.
No, that's it.
That's the pod.
Good job, guys.
Very impressive.
I feel like I can rule the world.
I know I could be what I want to.
I put my all in it like no days off on a road.
Let's travel, never looking back.