

THE LIIST:

A BUSINESS PLAN FOR THE ONLINE SOCIAL COMMUNITY FOR COUPLES

By

LOGAN RYAN STONEMAN

A Thesis Submitted to The Honors College

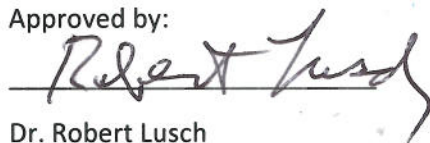
In Partial Fulfillment of the Bachelors degree
With Honors in

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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Approved by:

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert Lusich", is written over a horizontal line.

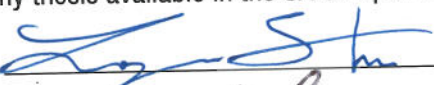
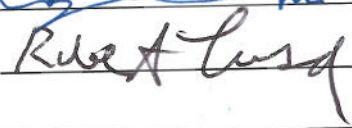
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McGuire Entrepreneurship Program

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Abstract

This project details the business plan of The Liist, an online social community for couples. The Liist was developed by four seniors (Logan Stoneman, Colby Matzke, Hector Rosales, and Shauna Williams) over the past 12 months as a part of the McGuire Center for Entrepreneurship program. The Liist seeks to relight the spark within each relationship by providing a hub of user-generated date ideas, relationship advice, and other rewarding content geared specifically at couples. Monetized by affiliate marketing and affiliate e-commerce, The Liist was a top 6 venture in the 2014 New Venture Competition. The business plan includes, among other critical success factors, The Liist's business model, target market, marketing research, competition, timeline, and financial projections, which all prove the viability of the venture.

Group Project Disclaimer

The roles and positions of the aforementioned group partners are detailed within the business plan. As the Marketing Director, I, Logan Stoneman was largely in charge of sales and growth strategies, marketing campaigns, and overall vision & positioning of the venture.



www.theLiist.com

Colby Matzke – General Manager - *Management Major*
Hector Rosales – Financial Manager - *Economics Major*
Logan Stoneman – Marketing Manager *Marketing Major*
Shauna Williams – Operations Manager - *Marketing Major*

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This Business Plan contains financial information, forecasts, funding needs, use of funds estimates and opinions of possible future performance of a student-initiated prospective business and was prepared as part of the presenting students' participation in the McGuire Entrepreneurship Program at the Eller College of Management at the University of Arizona. While the students will present this Business Plan and discuss financial aspects of their prospective company, they are doing so solely for academic purposes only and no offer for sale or solicitation of an offer to purchase any "security" (as defined in the Securities Act of 1933) is made hereby.

This Business Plan contains proprietary and confidential information regarding The Liist. The receipt and acceptance of the Business Plan shall constitute an agreement by the recipient that the Business Plan shall not be copied, reproduced, modified, or distributed to any third party, either in whole or in part, without the prior written consent of The Liist, that all information contained herein shall be kept confidential, that the recipient shall not reveal or disclose to any third party without the prior written consent of The Liist that the information has been made available to the recipient.

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Executive Summary



The Liist is an addictive and engaging online social community for established couples, monetized by affiliate marketing and local “date-destination” businesses. We seek to relight the spark within each relationship by providing a hub of user-generated date ideas, relationship advice, and other rewarding content geared specifically at couples. Our engaging platform will capture users by providing at-home date ideas and potential date-destinations (restaurants, music venues, theatres, etc.) that we can provide a niche of new and repeat customers. Initially revenues will be through affiliate marketing; through selling items for at-home dates, and through the marketing of “date-destinations”.

Founders



COLBY MATZKE

General Manager

Background in small business development, the retail industry, and food service industry.



HECTOR ROSALES

Finance Manager

Background in finance, app development, analytics, and economics.



LOGAN STONEMAN

Marketing Manager

Background in sales strategies, branding, marketing event planning, and sports management.



SHAUNA WILLIAMS

Operations Manager

Background in project management, event planning, sales, digital marketing, and analysis.



Advisors

Management Advisor	Larry Montgomery <i>Former CEO of Kohls Department Stores</i>
Investment Advisor	Josh Lee <i>Former Investment Manager</i>
Restaurant Industry Advisor	Jim Riley <i>Multiple Restaurant Owner</i>
Marketing Advisor	Edward Ackerley <i>Account Executive at Ackerley Advertising</i>
Management Team Advisor	Emre Toker <i>Early Venture Mentor, member of Desert Angels investment group</i>

Vision and Mission Statement

VISION STATEMENT

The Liist is the spark that re-ignites the flame for the 75% of couples who say their relationship lacks passion.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Liist helps couples fall in love again.

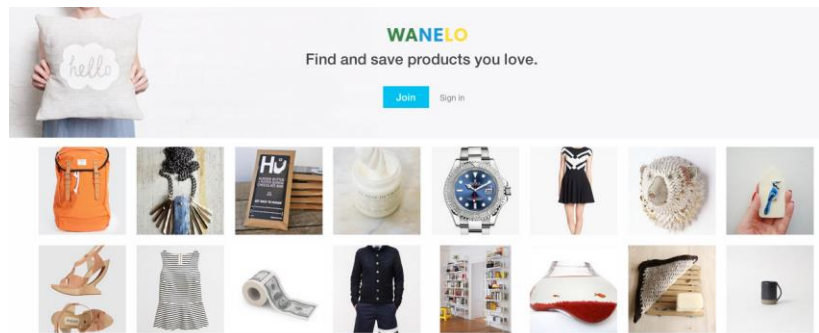


Business Model: Based on a Benchmark

The Liist utilizes a successful, proven business model best exemplified by a \$15M annual revenue company, Wanelo. By innovating their business model into a niche and active community of couples, The Liist addresses an untapped market with proven strategies.

WHAT DOES WANELO DO?

Wanelo ("wah-nee-lo," from Want, Need, Love) was founded in 2010 and is an "online community for all the world's shopping," according to crunchbase.com. The online social platform brings together stores' products, and people who want to purchase those products. All posts are made by users, and its community is the largest that is focused 100% on products. It's revenues come from affiliate e-commerce.



WHAT HAS WANELO DONE SINCE ITS FOUNDING?

- \$15 million in investments since founding
- Revenue per employee (24 individuals) = \$625,000
- Revenues: Y1 = \$2 million, Y2 = \$15 million
- 8 million registered users, spend 50 minutes per day on website.
- 6 million products from over 200,000 stores


WHY IS WANELO OUR BENCHMARK COMPANY?

- Couples build their own relationship timeline similar to Wanelo's product conglomeration.
- Both revenues come from personalized affiliate marketing and affiliate e-commerce.
- Wanelo & The Liist are purchase-driven platforms; consumers visit to purchase, not to browse.

Although Wanelo required \$15 million in investment, The Liist serves a niche market and would only require a fraction of this investment. In addition, Wanelo's exponential growth can be scaled down to The Liist's size for company comparison (i.e. a more modest hockey stick growth).

Problem and Target Market



	Couples	Date-Destination Businesses
Who are they?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target market of 24 million innovative couples in the U.S. aged 18-44 who have lost the spark in their relationship. Served available market = Innovators and half early adopters = 2.4 million <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovative couples using Internet help sites. Annual revenue generation potential = \$672 million. Target market of couples will always exist. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target market of a broad assortment of date-destination businesses Large focus on local and independent restaurants. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially 50 Tucson restaurants. These businesses seek new and repeat customers
Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75% of established couples find that within ten years they've lost their original spark. Dating websites only match individuals, and fail to provide continual support. No active community of couples or central hub of date ideas. Current solutions (marriage counseling, surveying friends, search engines) are time lengthy and costly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeat customers drive 1/3 of service industry's profits. Increasing repeat customers 5% = profit increase of avg. 75% Current marketing services provide broad, non-targeted messages.
Solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online social community; content centers on date recommendations. Platform encourages couples to post & engage Features include shared date ideas & stories, contests, and personal relationship timeline. <p>  More dates = reduced likelihood of divorce (up to 10% less likely). </p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New marketing platform, which targets a niche of high-paying regular customers. Reward system incentivizes couples to return as repeat customers. Affiliate marketing scheme allows for lead generation and minimal cost to businesses.

Industry Overview

The Liist competes in a unique niche within the Internet Publishing and Broadcasting Services industry (519130b), a \$23.5 billion market that is growing 9.4% annually.

The Internet Publishing and Broadcasting Services industry revolves around providing content to a general audience. Currently, there are no businesses within this industry that feature a combination of the following:

- 1.) Provide incentives and gamification to keep users engaged,
- 2.) Cater their offerings to the niche market of "Couples,"
- 3.) Allow established couples to connect, engage, and share on one unique community platform.

How does The Liist make money?

The Liist generates approximately \$30 in revenue per couple per year from our services. This is derived from two revenue streams:

1. Date Night In products (affiliate e-commerce)
2. Date Night Out advertising package (affiliate marketing)

The Liist showcases date night ideas for inside the house. For example, we will provide our users a variety of products such as a pizza making kit, creating the optimal date night idea "Night In Italy." By selling other company's products through our website, we can generate revenues of 5-10% per product or product package. For example, said pizza making kit will cost around \$50 and we will generate \$5-\$10 in revenue.

The Liist also provides a hub for date night out ideas, centered on local businesses like restaurants. These business have beautiful pages on our website, which describe a common date night at these locations, with links to the location's website to make a reservation or commitment to purchase a service. Based on initial commitments from our 7 restaurant partners, and a industry standard set by *OpenTable*, The Liist will charge approximately \$.50 each click from our page to their website.

Competition

Since The Liist has a two-sided market, Couples and Businesses, each market receives different benefits from The Liist. This means there are two separate sets of competitors:



COUPLES

Other main competing companies within the Internet Publishing and Broadcasting Service industry that seek the same budgeted money (seeking online products for relationship benefits) of our users are:

WANELO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Social online community for browsing and buying new products from user posted products. o Generates revenue through affiliate marketing.
PINTEREST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Visual directory & planning tool which allows users to find, share, and post ideas on their homepage. o Generates revenue through affiliate marketing and sponsored posts.
POLYVORE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Community powered social commerce site revolving around collages of products and topics. o Generates revenue through affiliate marketing

The Liist separates itself from its main competitors on the consumers' side by focusing only on the niche of couples and "date ideas", instead of generic products/collages, which need to be filtered. However, The Liist utilizes the unique advantage of having consumers visit its social community for the purpose of purchase, like its competitors. Affiliate marketing empowers both The Liist and its competitors' revenue engines.

BUSINESSES

On the business side, The Liist is compared against companies that refer customers to restaurants and date destinations, such as:

HOWABOUTWE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Intuitive online dating site incentivizing singles to date through experiences. o Generate revenue through sales of discounted date experiences.
OPENTABLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Online restaurant reservation service. o Generate revenue per reservation.
YELP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Online review site helping consumers find great local businesses. o Generate revenue through ad sales and upgraded profiles.



The Liist separates itself against competitors by targeting couples specifically and engaging them with an organic social community. Our community of couples feature strongly differentiates our business, yet stays true to the successful features of our competitors.

Competitive Advantage and Differentiation

The online community is the primary differentiator, as there currently are no such communities catered specifically to established couples. To motivate couples to visit the community regularly, there will be a reward system in place. Couples will receive points for each interaction on the website--for posting pictures, sharing a status, participating in contests, and going on dates at our partner restaurants. The points they earn can be put towards relationship-related rewards, such as certificates for coffee dates, wine nights, or couples massages. The success of Pinterest's online community (70 million users since 2010) proves that there is a market for sharing goals and ideas. The Liist is capitalizing on the opportunity proven by Pinterest, only it is focusing on a segmented target market (established couples).

Long term competitive advantage: community enables retention. Couples want to stay on the site because they have friends on the site, they have invested time (recording their relationship milestones), and they have accumulated points that can be redeemed for rewards.

There are a plethora of dating websites that aim to set single people up with each other. There are not, however, websites that focus on couples after they have been in a relationship; the fact that The Liist focuses on exactly this already sets us apart from current dating-related offerings. Some additional features that add value to our service over competitors:

1. Reward system to incentivize repeat use
2. Timeline feature on the website
3. Contests
4. User-generated relationship advice



Proof of Concept

FINDING DATE IDEAS IS A REAL PROBLEM. In 2011, approximately 25 million individuals used online dating sites to discover love. The Liist seeks to leverage these individuals' zeal for online love services and merge them over to The Liist. A recent uptick in searches for "date ideas" online (15K to 33K, a 120% increase in the past 5 months) illustrates 2 things: 1.) The search for date ideas is a growing problem, and 2) The Liist can be the central hub to answer these queries.

SUPPORT FROM LOCAL BUSINESSES. On the business end, at least 6 local, independent Tucson date destinations have verbally committed to The Liist once we launch.



BUSINESSES WANT NEW MARKETING OUTLETS. The Small Business Administration (SBA) recommends that if a restaurant is to be successful, it must invest at least 7-8% of revenues towards marketing efforts. Groupon's success in getting 500,000 businesses to sign up proves that small businesses are looking for new ways to bring in consumers to their establishment.

FACEBOOK CAMPAIGN SUCCESS. The Liist has run two Facebook campaigns to judge initial interest in our service. Both campaigns have proven The Liist has the potential to be widely successful. Small rewards were given to couples/individuals whose posted photo was shared and liked the most by their friends.

Campaign One: Valentine's Date Night Photo Contest (Couples)

- Reach: 22,000
- Engagement (Clicks): 37,000

Campaign Two: Puppy Love Photo Contest (Individuals)

- Reach: 5,500
- Engagement (Clicks): 9,000

Barriers to Entry



COMMUNITY

Couples will be engaging, sharing, and developing relationship-related content on our new social community. During our launch phase our team will generate 90% of the content, gradually transferring task of creating content to the users. In order to motivate couples to post creative content, we must create an atmosphere of sharing while providing incentives (such as points and contests) to motivate them to share. Once our community continues to engage on our site they will have an invested relationship with The Liist, that even if another community for established couples emerges, joining it would not seem valuable. We can induce the cost for couples leaving by implementing a point system to rewards users as well as encouraging the creation of a timeline of their relationship.

NICHE MARKET

The partnered date destinations have shown a desire for new marketing tactics. The Liist is targeting a specific niche of customers that will provide encourage partnerships with local businesses. There are current websites that provide date ideas and affiliate marketing for businesses, but no website has provided both while tapping into a specific niche such as established couples.

Making The Liist Sticky

In order to achieve our goals, it is important that The Liist is an addictive—"sticky"—website that couples want to return to over and over. We will make it addictive on both sides of the market.

DATE-DESTINATION BUSINESSES

Every date destination has unique marketing and operational problems we need to address. The way we provide a viable and effective solution to their problems such as lack of successful marketing tactics or exposure to a new customer demographic, will determine how long our relationships with them lasts. The independent, sit-down restaurants we are targeting need to be seen as an optimal date location (based off of menu, service, ambiance) by our target audience and pass through a filter to ensure they are a desired location. By using Google Analytics we can track what topics our users are most interested in and alter the pages that are receiving the least amount of traffic.

COUPLES

Our users that are in established relationships are going to our site to find new dating alternatives, relatable content, and incentives to use The Liist. The website is populated



with addictive content that couples can relate to. We will acquire relevant articles through Google Alerts, which will filter content based on keywords that we select. We will also seek blog posts from relationship counselors. A large portion of our website will be based on user-generated content, which makes couples an important resource. They will be building a timeline of pictures and statuses about their relationship and dates they go on as they occur sequentially. By instilling a habit in our users to continuously post we will utilize the addictive nature and monetize through affiliate marketing.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Our strengths engage our users and maintain not only couples relationships but also our relationship with our users.

STRENGTHS	VALUE
Online Community for Couples	Websites have been developed for matching singles, but there is no platform that focuses on the niche of established couples
New Marketing Channel	Our new marketing channel will provide featured date destinations with a new demographic of customers.
Provide New, Repeat Customers	By incentivizing our users to visit our featured businesses, we will bring them new and repeat customers
Reward System	The reward system will build stickiness on our platform while making it addictive for our users.

Our awareness of our weaknesses keeps us current and innovative. We continually self-evaluate to ensure we maintain our competitive advantage.

WEAKNESSES	MITIGATION STRATEGY
Populating the website with users and businesses	Focus on building a critical mass that are engaged and the businesses
Users do not engage on website, fail to attract date destinations (CAC underestimated)	Develop new social media and community efforts to incentivize a following for constant engagement. Use Google analytics to find most



	sticky features on site
Better capitalized company merges in our market and attracts couples	Reposition focus on payment process to monetize community
Expanding to other cities provide unforeseen acquisition costs	Hire sales reps to create relationships with business and potential users in that area

Timeline and Previous Accomplishments

PREVIOUS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

7 date destination partners
 In 6 weeks: 360 Likes on Facebook, total reach of 40,000
 Market research with 120 couples
 Couples Community Platform Launched

FACEBOOK CONTEST SUCCESSES



Date Night Photo Contest
 35 participants
 2,000 Likes
 Reach: 22,000
 Engagement (Clicks): 37,000



#PuppyLove Contest
 48 participants
 500 Likes
 Reach: 5,500
 Engagement (Clicks): 9,000

How Can We Be Better?

MONTH 1-3 GOALS

May 1st
 Populate website with 10
 dates ideas & 10 date
 destinations

May 20th
 Populate website with 30
 dates ideas & 30 date
 destinations

June 1st
 Register 250 users

MONTH 4-6 GOALS

July - August
 Monitor website, generate
 weekly content, engage
 users with contests

July 15th
 Funding for full
 development of website

August
 Affiliate Marketing
 provider acquired

LONG TERM GOALS

October 1st
 Implement point system to
 reward users

November 1st
 Perfect product in Tucson
 by converting 60% of users
 into paying customers

January 2015
 Launch premium open
 platform model for couples
 for expansion



Growth Strategies

As an affiliate marketing revenue based company, The Liist is only slightly restricted by immediate national growth. Although the date night out service is constrained to geographic growth, our date night in products can be nationally purchased immediately. As The Liist grows, this feature will serve as a beta sales strategy: couples produce content across the nation. The social community allows for couples to be incentivized to provide organic content. In addition to this, The Liist will focus on building its date night out business heavily in Arizona for its first year, and then the West Coast by end of year two. Due to its ability to sell our other services (i.e. date night in products) remotely, there are not high barriers to growth.

Once the Liist has a large community (at least 50,000 active members), the company plans to start advertising specific products posted on couples' timelines. This strategy will bring in additional revenue streams outside the initial date selling strategy.

Sales Objectives & Strategies

COST OF CUSTOMER ACQUISITION:

The cost to acquire a user {as opposed to a business} is estimated at \$18 during year one and progressively increases each year, ultimately to \$22 in year 5, due to scaling costs. On the business side, CAC is minimal, as our couples will provide date-destinations, which can be transferred from ideas to clients by the same sales team that acquires our couples. So, CAC for users includes business acquisition costs as well. Through Search Engine Optimization (SEO) our website will begin to build a presence on the web and soon become the go-to website for anything relationship related. We will create and compile content on our website related to relationships.

SALES STRATEGY:

Our members create and curate the content on our website, however due to partnerships with date-destinations, we must have a sales team to sell our services. As The Liist grows, couples will start posting their favorite locations to go on a date. Using Google Analytics and tagging, our sales team will analyze the successful posts and call these date destinations, seeking to initiate an affiliate marketing deal. Essentially our couples are a lead generation team, with our sales team making the final call as account executives.



In terms of our Date Night In ideas created by our couples, our content management team will read the popular posts, and link products online which can make the dates possible. These products, if bought, can provide revenue of 5-10% of product cost.

R&D Objectives & Strategies

Hire full time software engineer to build website	<p><u>Strategies:</u> Use seed funding (100k-convertible loan) & small equity to bring on developer full time.</p> <p><u>Tactics:</u> Find someone with experience building similar website (old engineers from competition).</p>
Figure out what makes the site sticky	<p><u>Strategies:</u> Monitor metrics closely to see what content users are engaging with the most.</p> <p><u>Tactics:</u> Use Excel to plot # of page visits vs. what content is posted.</p>

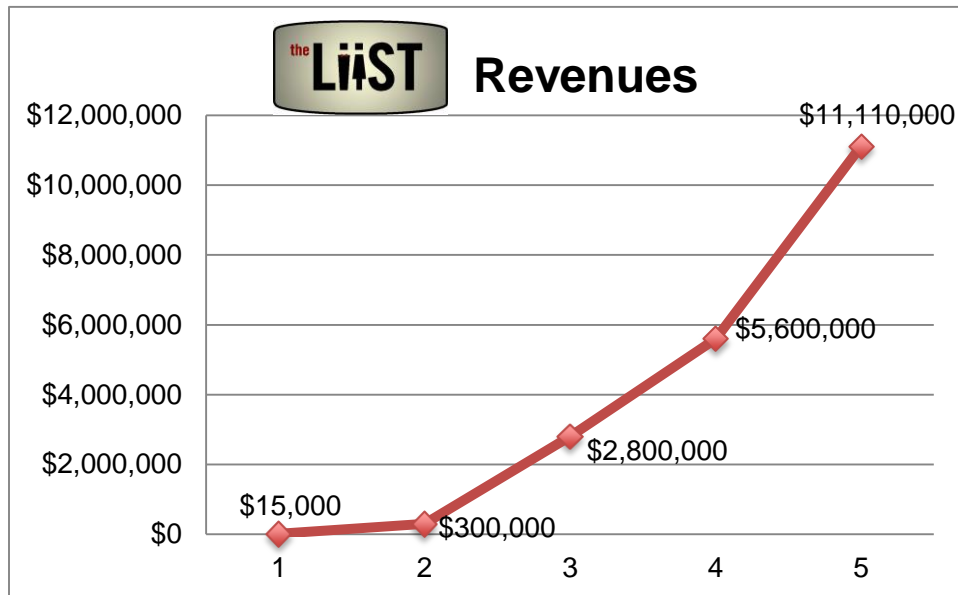
Intellectual Property & Legal Strategies:

1. Patent some of the key methods and processes associated with the utilization of the site by customers.
2. Trademark our logo and company name "The Liist".



Revenue Projections

The graph below shows yearly projected revenues during the first five years of business. The biggest revenue growth is between year two and year three, increasing roughly 800%. (See next page)



The Liist revenues will come from affiliate marketing and affiliate e-commerce. By year four, Wanelo's revenues jumped from \$2.8 million to \$15 million with 10 million registered users. The Liist projects \$5.6 million in revenues by year four with 3.7 million registered users. Given that Wanelo is a website for any shopper, ultimately a general market, our projections are proportionally smaller because we are focusing on niche market.

Financials Overview

The five-year financials overview is as follows:

Year	1	2	3	4	5
Revenues	\$15,000	\$300,000	\$2,800,000	\$5,600,000	\$11,110,000
COGS	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Gross Margin	\$15,000	\$300,000	\$2,700,000	\$5,600,000	\$11,110,000
Expenses:					
R & D	\$30,000	\$100,000	\$250,000	\$650,000	\$1,100,000
Sales & Marketing	\$25,000	\$300,000	\$1,700,000	\$2,400,000	\$5,400,000
General & Admin	\$20,000	\$50,000	\$200,000	\$460,000	\$700,000
Total Expenses	\$75,000	\$450,000	\$2,150,000	\$3,510,000	\$7,200,000
Earnings Before Interest & Taxes	-\$60,000	-\$150,000	\$550,000	\$2,090,000	\$3,910,000
Taxes	\$0	\$0	-\$140,000	-\$800,000	-\$1,500,000
Net Earnings	-\$60,000	-\$150,000	\$410,000	\$1,290,000	\$2,410,000

The Liist's expenses are broken down into four different categories: research and development, sales and marketing, general and administration and other. During the first year of operation, 39% of expenses are in research and development because it is important to figure out what makes The Liist sticky.

Our first year expenses are relatively low because the four founders will be doing the majority of the work in exchange for sweat equity. The research and development expense of \$20,000 will be going to our developer as part of their compensation for building the website. The rest of their compensation will come from owning a percentage of the company, 15-20%, vested on a milestone basis. This will incentivize the developer to do an even better job because they have a percentage in the company. We will break even during year three during our progression in building our user base. By year 5, we project \$2.3 million in profits.



Organization

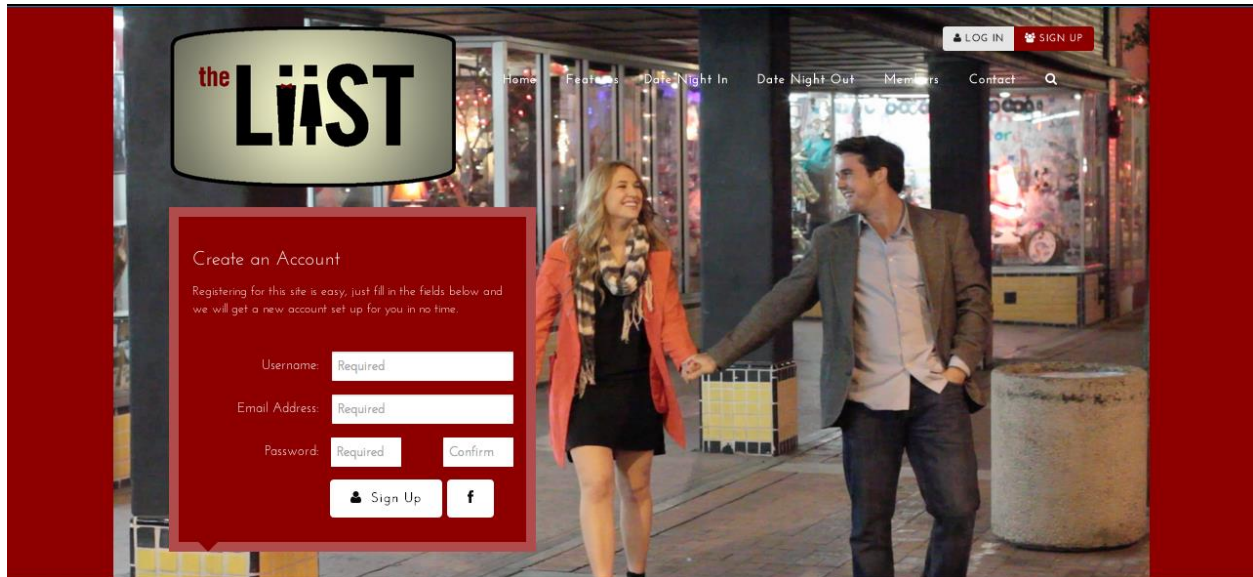
Our long-term plan for The Liist is to get acquired by a corporation such as Open Table, Yelp, How About We, or Pinterest. Below is a list of companies similar to The Liist who have recently been acquired.





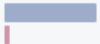





ACQUISITIONS MADE BY COMPANIES SIMILAR TO THE LIIST				
	Purchase year	Age of business when purchased (years)	Purchase Amount	Purchase Amount Per User
BUSINESS SIDE				
OK Cupid	2011	8	\$50M	\$14
People Media	2011	8	\$80M	\$314
SeatMe	2011	3	\$12.7M	No data
COUPLES SIDE				
Livestar	2013	2	No data	No data
Hackermeter	2013	.5	No data	No data
VisualGraph	2014	1	No data	No data

Of the 6 acquired companies listed above, the one that The Liist is the most similar to is People Media. People Media is an online dating site that caters to niche markets. Because People Media has this segmented target market, Match.com was willing to spend \$314 per user when they acquired it. Similarly, The Liist also focuses on a niche market (i.e., couples), so this sets itself up with the potential to receive up to \$300 per user when acquired.



Appendix



03/25/2014 9:50 pm	 Photo Credit: AHA Productions			4.7K		9.8K 580	
02/25/2014 1:04 pm	 These couples know how to keep the spark alive! Check out some of the dates they've been on and			21.8K		38K 2K	





It's time to fall in Love. *Again.*

Welcome to *The Liist*, the community for couples that reignites the spark in *your* relationship.



[Sign Up Today!](#)

Great date iideas from *our* couples

Here you have some success stories from our ideas. Join today & become part of our community of couples finding love, together.



Wondering how we help you discover love?

[♥ Find Out Here](#)



LEADERSHIP SELF ASSESSMENT

Logan Stoneman

Marketing and Entrepreneurship Major

McGuire Entrepreneurship Team: Sugar City: The Liist

1. *Take the core self-evaluations scale (CSES) on p. 50 of the assigned textbook. Score your answers and compute your total score. Do you think your score accurately captures your personality? Why?*

The core self-evaluations scale (CSES) was an interesting test as my final score was a 4.3. The results were fairly on point, although some of the questions could be interpreted in many ways, causing a skew in the results. However, the 4.3 fit quite accurately with my persona. Because higher scores are associated with more effective performance, low stress, and great satisfaction – I can pinpoint myself organically around the same number. If focused, and passionate about the work I am doing, I am extremely effective and efficient with my team and self. Some people call it “the zone”, a highly centralized focus on nothing but the task at hand. If need be, I am able to crank out work which I am proud of and that also answers the questions at hand. In addition, if the work is something meaningful, I derive great satisfaction from not only completion, but also the process. Stress levels are usually low; occasionally peaking around emotional worries rather than academic or professional worries. What also must contribute to the number landing at 4.3 is the fact that I am often energetic, outgoing, and optimistic. This leads to a higher self-awareness and peak in numbers in terms of confidence in self. Overall I do see value in the CSES, however a mind cannot be categorized based on twelve questions. I do agree that it is a nice first filing system that can silo large groups of individuals, but it takes an in-depth analysis to truly understand the complexities of an individual, and more importantly a leader. My personality is bi-polar at times, and because of this, the results of this test could have been completely different depending on the environment,

emotions, and attitudes of myself when I was taking the test. If extrapolated over the course of different scenarios, situations, and environments the test could narrow down on a general idea of my personality.

2. *Take the tolerance for ambiguity scale on p. 52 of the assigned textbook. Score your answers and computer your total score. Do you think your score accurately captures your tolerance for ambiguity? Why?*

The tolerance for ambiguity scale did not accurately capture my tolerance. In the book it states that a high score above the average of 40-44 meant the individual was not comfortable with ambiguity. I am extremely comfortable with ambiguity, but I scored a 52 on the test. I believe the only way an individual can grow and expand his knowledge on life is to put him in uncomfortable situations. I strive for ambiguity, but the questions that were asked could have been interpreted in different ways, leading to answers with no explanation. Take for example: "People who fit their lives to a schedule probably miss most of the joy of living". This question has nothing to do with ambiguity. I schedule everything in my life, from meetings to tasks, it is all laid out. I do this because I become more efficient with my time and can open breaks of time for ambiguous activities. I am scheduled in professional life to be ambiguous in my personal life. This balance leads to spurts of creativity in both sectors, and high effectiveness in professional life. This question, like others in the Tolerance of Ambiguity scale, does not account for external factors like my situation. If conversing with a professional, my tolerance for ambiguity would most likely result in a lower number than the average individual. I would not say I am ambiguous in everything I do, only hazy in that which provides personal satisfaction. Because of this, I believe I have an internal locus of control in my professional life, and

an external locus of control in my personal life. I enjoy this strict distinction as although it creates a bipolar effect in attitude, it allows for a wide range of breadth for my ideas to come from. In essence: creativity within bounds.

3. *Study the ten frequently cited skills of effective leaders as identified on p. 89 of the assigned textbook. For each skill rate yourself as: (a) outstanding, (b) good, (c) adequate, (d) weak.*

The ten frequently cited skills of effective leaders and how they relate to myself are as follows:

1. Communication, including listening and making formal presentations
 - a. Good
 - i. I believe I am outstanding at making formal presentations, but only adequate at listening. Averaging these traits, I am good at communication. I am extremely comfortable in front of large crowds, communicating context to any individual. However, on a 1:1 basis, I often have trouble listening to specific requests. If I focus, I can truly narrow down on each conversation and can perform well in a controlled setting. But, more often than not my mind jumps quickly through triggers in dialect. My mind moves fast, and so when people try to communicate with me I often get launched into my subconscious. In formal presentations, I am extremely focused on the task at hand and can clearly communicate what is necessary. This is why I believe I am good at communication.
2. Time and stress management

a. Outstanding

- i. Like stated earlier in the paper, I control my everyday through cloud calendars that dictate each event and task at hand. If I have an assignment to do, I schedule a time to complete the task. All my calendars are synched across multiple devices, which alert me when each task is due. Time management is a skill, which I excel at. In terms of stress management, there are some areas on the emotional end that I often get stressed out about. Professionally and academically I am not often stressed by the work I must do, due to my organizational skills. The only times I am stressed is when members on various teams do not follow through with assignments and do not communicate effectively on their inadequacies. I have found ways to fix this: recruit only the best team members. In my entrepreneurship team, I was saddled with a team member whose traits led to a lack in communication about the success of assignment completion. This led to large issues with our team chemistry and effectiveness. However, instead of becoming stressed and lashing out, I worked with my team to finish the assignment and then proceed to discuss how we must work to be more effective in the future. These examples are why I believe I am outstanding at time and stress management.

3. Decisiveness: managing and making timely decisions

a. Outstanding

- i. My decision-making skills are extremely fine-tuned. I never waiver between decisions. I see the world as a system, and my decisions are rarely emotion based. By analyzing all known stakeholders and aspects, I make decisions based on future predictions on high success. For example, my team was trying to decide between an idea that we were emotionally attached to and an idea that had market potential. By understanding that love could be developed around an idea with market potential, I convinced my team to pursue the idea with the highest revenue forecast. Since then, we have developed an emotional connection, but early decisiveness was critical for our future success.

4. Organizational/technical competence: Recognizing and solving problems

a. Outstanding

- i. Once again, because I see the world and business as a system, I try to lead others through each problem with a Swiss army knife of solutions. I lay out all potential decisions, analyze them based off of projected success, and then quickly decide. When problems arise, they need to be addressed uniformly and swiftly. And because my mind partitions itself between creativity and analytics. I solve problems with creative solutions, and attack them with business maneuvers.

5. Motivating and influencing others

a. Adequate

- i. If there is one thing that I definitely need to work to develop, it is my ability to motivate and influence others. People are emotional beings, unlike my computer-like mind. Just because I see the world as building blocks, does not mean I can influence others to see the same way. I must learn how to derive emotional decisions and influence out of the systematic results. I have failed often because I try to make others see things the way I do. I must see it through their eyes, and mold my answers to their mind. Once I land on their level, I have found I can easily motivate people.

6. Managing people: Delegation/fairness/patience/respect/tolerance

a. Good

- i. Because I manage my personal life so effectively, I easily transition my clear-cut model to others in terms of delegation. However, I am not outstanding at patience and tolerance of others mistakes. I delegate to alleviate my workload, not to eventually fix others mistakes if their work is not up to my expectations. To adjust this as a leader, I must understand my expectations before I delegate. By explaining my work ethic and desires for the final product, I can more effectively manage others.

7. Settings goals/articulating a vision

a. Good

- i. Being innately creative allows for quick development of a vision for an organization or team. I paint pictures in others minds, and

set goals for the team to accomplish based on metrics and phase gates. Where I see room for improvement lies in the ability to continually pursue that vision, keeping my team honest and on track. Often I am quite ambitious and need to realistically plan so others can achieve success.

8. Self-awareness

a. Outstanding

- i. If there is one trait that I feel I excel at the most, it is my self-awareness. Throughout my life I have been challenged to overcome personal and professional obstacles. Early in my life incredible mentors taught me that I must understand myself before I can connect with others and accomplish anything. Now, this self-awareness has led to high functioning of business skills, and allowed me to focus on the important parts of life.

9. Team-building/Team spirit

a. Good

- i. Although I have made mistakes in team building, the core of team building does not come from recruitment. The core is derived from how you develop the team you are given. If we look at these skills from that perspective, I believe I am fairly outstanding. However, in terms of simple recruitment, I am developing my ability to read people and their inner cogs. Keeping morale up is always important to myself, but I need to tap into teammates emotional

pulls to increase my aptitude.

10. Managing conflict

a. Adequate

- i. I manage conflict from a business standpoint quite well. However it is the interpersonal conflict that I am investing more time into, due to lack of certain skills. In the past I use to shy away from conflict, and focus on my own actions outside of influencing others. However, as my time in the business college has taught me, I must mitigate conflicts with confidence and understanding. There is large room for improvement in this sector.

4. *Talk to at least two members of your entrepreneurial team venture and ask them to frankly and honestly tell you what they see as your biggest leadership weaknesses and strengths. Ask this same question of one of your parents, siblings or nearby relative that knows you well.*

See appendix for the conversations and replies from two members from my entrepreneurship team, and one reply from my sister (18 months older, law student at Cornell). Overall it seems as though I excel at being a creative leader who can organize and manage a team effectively. My faults revolve around the fact that I am constantly analyzing everything and projecting its success. This leads to being quite critical, and a devil's advocate. At times, with small doses, this is an effective strategy. However I do not produce viable solutions in the criticism's place. Frustration can mount quickly with team members and I do not move to mitigate the situation quickly. This issue is something that I have already identified and now confirmed by those closest to me. I look forward to this summer for having the opportunity to find my balance between critical

and constructive.

5. *Identify things you can do over the next 24 months to improve your leadership skills. What do you see as barriers over the next 24 months on you not becoming a more effective leader? How do you explicitly plan to overcome and/or minimize the effect of those barriers?*

Over the next 24 months I will face a number of challenges that will test my leadership skills. If I can overcome them, and learn from them I will develop the parts of my leadership skills that are lacking. I am currently the Marketing Director for a startup called NoteBowl. In the next 24 months I will be faced with the task of expanding our brand through a variety of media outlets and developing our sales team and tactics. Because much of my leadership inadequacies revolve around human interaction, confliction, and recruitment I must develop these skill quickly to succeed over these 24 months. Last summer I read many business books on self-awareness and vision development. They helped me improve a variety of my skills and became assets to my overall development. I will do the same this summer, with a variety of business and team management books. By learning from the best leaders in today's fast paced society I will be able to recruit an incredible team. The largest barrier will be the number of opportunities/challenges I will face. If I avoid confrontation and take the easy route, I will not develop. Humans are often programmed to find the easiest channel to flow through. It is those who create their own channel who develop the strongest current. I seek to create this channel through high responsibility, risk, and ambiguity. These traits will help my mind co-create with my skills to become a more effective leader over the next two years.

Self-Reflective Essay: Leadership Ambitions and Drive
Logan Stoneman

Throughout my life I have lived by the motto: Reject Mediocrity. I can only live true to this motto if I continually pursue growth opportunities and lead others to do the same. By accepting positions that challenge me I can become the true leader that I strive to be. Since I was a young boy I have always taken on every leadership position. From president of my elementary school to high school student-body vice president to school senator in college, I believe I was born to lead. I've led teams from over fifty to managing less than five interns; both are exhilarating and exhausting. But in each position I find a new found love for being a part of something bigger than myself that can truly enact change. My ambitions now lead me towards leadership positions in industries where my scope of change is not limited by a school environment.

Throughout college I have filled my resume with a variety of leadership positions. My freshman year I served as president of the Freshman Class Council. This position gave me the opportunity to oversee 50 students working to improve the lives of freshman through a variety of services. Because of this, I grew quickly having to manage a variety of personalities all desiring different things. In student government I served as a senator overseeing a variety of boards allocating money. This position taught me how to work with individuals of all ages all seeking one goal: an investment. I worked as co-recruitment chair in my fraternity. Being a leader was one thing, but recruiting leaders was a completely different process. Having to read people and understand their motives I gained a new insight on what qualities developed into becoming an effective leader. Lastly, this past year I have

been Marketing Director for the McGuire Entrepreneurship program startup that I am a part of: The Liist. Working with A-type personalities, trying to develop from scratch an idea into reality, has challenged me to expand my communication skills and construct a passion for idea generation and development.

Coming out of college I knew I wanted to empower individuals. In the fall of my senior year I interviewed with and accepted a job offer from General Mills. The position was a Business Management Associate, essentially category management and sales for their Wal-Mart division. I was content with the position, and humbled by the offer. I was given the opportunity to be a lead “follower” to many established leaders, in a company with a proven track record. All in all, my family was proud and I seemed ready to ease through the rest of my senior year. Then it all changed.

Over winter break, I began working for a startup called NoteBowl as marketing director. The position was initially given as a consultant position to help out the company, who had just received a \$300,000 investment. Right off the bat, I was given responsibilities that challenged and empowered me. Being in charge of the complete branding, marketing vision, blog, social media, and go-to market strategy I had work coming out of my ears. I hired an intern, taught her the basics, and over the course of 6 months I have developed an entire company’s marketing landscape.

However, I sat in my room in March and realized the work NoteBowl afforded me was what I needed to be doing. I was leading complete efforts, building a team and a company. My work extended beyond the shelves of Wal-Mart, and actually empowered students through our educational technology platform. The

position has given me an insight to what type of position I want in the future. My ambition revolves around having the ability to be in charge of my own work. And so, mid-March I dropped the offer sheet from General Mills to pursue the full-time position with NoteBowl as their Marketing Director. Yes, it was a risky move, but I know now that if I want to succeed monetarily and professionally I must work hard, lead effectively.

I am driven to perform effectively when I am challenged, have deadlines, and my work impacts others. I lead effectively when I am in environments such as these. Passionate about producing golden results that are tangible, the Marketing Director position gives me all that I can ask for. With a team with experience from Apple, Google, Square, and Facebook, I am privileged to have the opportunity that fits me so well. Through leadership on all levels, NoteBowl can grow my proficiency as a follower and leader.

In terms of my long-term ambitions, I seek to truly empower individuals through technology in the industries of education, travel, and health. I have already begun my path towards empowering students, but down the road I want to lead companies and teams in improving the health of society, and allowing those who don't have capabilities to travel, to do so. I believe I can accomplish all of this with my leadership skills that I will develop over the years. By never being content with my current repertoire, and being relentless in growth, these ideas can be a reality.

Self-awareness is the key to success, and throughout the exercises this paper has put me through, I have found a deeper understanding of my skills as a leader. As stated, I must improve in connecting with others, and stay true to my ability to be an

organized and effective visionary. If one seeks to be a leader, simply for the fame and following, attainment is impossible. Through refined focus, open ears, and patience becoming a leader will hopefully become a reality. More so, it is not about those that inspire you to become a leader, it is the followers who entrust their faith and belief in you that allow you to understand that you have become one. As I fill the gaps in my leadership resume, I will begin to understand and connect with these followers. Networking with future and current leaders I have the ambition and drive to truly emerge as a highly successful entrepreneur.

Appendix

Comments made from friends and family about leadership skills:

Taylor Bilby, Sister

Strengths:

1. Good communicator, especially in a professional sense. You're good at connecting with people on a level that makes them want to participate in whatever you're doing or whatever goal you have.
2. You're a hard worker. You've put your all into everything from FCC to Senate to Notebowl and it really shows... and not in a way that you seem like you're doing something because you *have* to. When you're working on something, it's evident that you're passionate about it.

Weaknesses:

This one was hard to think of... Weaknesses are easier to spot in a leader that is leading you, and I haven't been in a position where you've been leading me. If you want an answer for this, I'd say to ask someone who has been in an organization you've led. With that said, one weakness might be that, at least from my point of view, sometimes it seems like once you've made a judgment about someone or something, you're pretty fixed in that opinion. It's something that can definitely be a good thing as well so I'm not so sure it's really a weakness, maybe something to just be aware of? Idk, I really don't think you have many patent weaknesses so this was really hard to think of.

Colby Matzke, General Manager of my Entrepreneurship team

Strengths:

Logan's strongest attribute as a leader is his marketing and creative initiative. He fully understands his target market and knows what tactics and strategies to implement in order to reach the highest potential of the desired audience. I experienced Logan's skills first hand in our entrepreneurship venture. When we need to market our company, Logan knows how to impact different demographics by implementing several productive advertising techniques. These skills have benefitted our company by reaching a larger audience while efficiently using the little capital we had.

Weaknesses:

As far as a weakness, Logan tends to step back when the team is trying to come up with solutions to a problem. This might come off as being nonproductive to the team by not sharing any input, but Logan wants to see what ideas the team can come up with without his suggestions. He tends to provide a solution after the team has bounced ideas off one another. He is often seen as the "devil's advocate" and wants to poke holes at ideas. Some may see this as negative and offensive, but in doing so ideas and solutions can be analyzed further so they do not fail in the future. I have found that Logan being the "devil's advocate" on our ideas has led our team to notice weaknesses beforehand and allowed our team to reduce the opportunity for failure in the future.

