

CASE STUDY:

OXBOW SOCIAL MEDIA MONITORING

Avoiding Pitfalls & Maximizing Value With Lean Startup



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BACKGROUND

Chip and Dan Krueger, two brothers from Rocky River, Ohio, came to LeanDog with an idea they believed they could monetize. They wanted to develop a mobile application that would enable a user's friends to prevent them from posting questionable content while intoxicated.

DIVING DEEPER

LeanDog kicked off the project with a comprehensive discovery session known as a Deep Dive. The purpose of this session was to dig into every facet of the project and bring clarity to areas such as customer segments, the business model, user stories, the value proposition, and other areas of ambiguity.

During the Deep Dive, a concern was raised that the chosen customer segment (friends of habitually inebriated social media users) was unlikely to purchase or use the app. Rather than simply build the product and hope for the best, LeanDog consultants advised the owners to pivot their focus to a customer segment that was more likely to see enough value in the product to pay for it.

After some research and consultation with the LeanDog team, it was revealed that there was a customer segment who *did* see value in the ability to monitor and curate another individual's social media content: *parents*.

The team found that the prevalence of social media usage amongst children has made cyberbullying and online predators a source of major concern for parents. Additionally, the instantaneous nature of posts combined with the relative permanence of information published online raises further concerns around the consequences of broadcasting inappropriate content. That being said, it is clear that social media isn't going away. This left parents with two unappealing options: either ban their children from using social media entirely, or simply hope that they used it responsibly.

When presented with this information, the Krueger's decided to shift the focus of the service from adult baby-sitting to social media training wheels for kids. Their mobile app, called Oxbow, would allow parents to monitor and curate their kids' social media activity so they could teach them to be responsible and safe users.

THE SOLUTION

Over the next 12 months, LeanDog made the Kruegers' idea a reality. Using Lean Startup principles and practices, a cross-functional team of designers and developers built the app in iterations - designing, measuring and learning as they went. Starting with nothing more than index cards and post-it notes, the team tested, refined, and retested the design - solidifying the concept before ever touching a keyboard. This saved Oxbow a substantial amount money by avoiding multiple rewrites of expensive code.

The end result was mobile application that not only allowed parents to monitor their children's social media accounts in real-time, it also allowed them to approve or deny content prior to it being posted. The app also included a feature that allowed parents to flag inappropriate feed content for future conversations with their kids. Now, rather than fighting a losing battle to shelter their children from social media, parents could leverage networks like Instagram and Twitter to spark positive discussions about responsible behavior.

ABOVE & BEYOND

In order to give Oxbow the best possible chance for success, LeanDog not only provided technical support to the project, but business and marketing support as well. The team routinely consulted on strategic decisions and helped the owners prioritize feature development based on a balance of user and business value.

They also helped the owners refine both the business model and elevator pitch, requiring the brothers to deliver the pitch at the start of every meeting until it became second nature. After the product launched, the team also helped create marketing material to promote the app and even took time out on a Saturday to staff a booth at a local marketing event.

LOOKING FORWARD

By taking the time to validate and refine the original concept, Oxbow avoided wasting thousands of dollars on a product with no market. Additionally, LeanDog's collaborative, transparent approach to software development allowed Chip and Dan to gain greater visibility into their product. This enabled them to make smarter,

value-based decisions, and avoid pitfalls that could have otherwise cost them their business.

