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Teaching note

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HOW TO BUILD SUSTAINABLE START-UPS FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR PLANET

TEACHING NOTE

SYNOPSIS

Václav Gregor is a partner at Soulmates Ventures, a Czech accelerator for sustainable innovations and a venture capital investment fund. SV handpicks and supports emerging companies, assisting them in securing capital from private investors while providing guidance to ensure their success. Investors who contribute to funds managed by SV get above-average returns on their investments, attributable to SV's high success rates at exit valuations, a testament to their distinctive approach to startup acceleration.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The case study is tailored for university students engaged in business management, entrepreneurship, marketing, finance, sustainable business practices, or technological innovation studies. It holds particular value for coursework in strategic management, investment, sustainability, new venture development, and business modelling. The intended audience encompasses:

Entrepreneurship and business students: They will analyse Soulmates Ventures' value proposition and business model, evaluating its feasibility, merits, and potential drawbacks.

Students of sustainability and business development: They will appraise the needs and goals of all stakeholders involved, identify any alignment issues, and propose modifications to the business model that could enhance the venture's success.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The insights and expertise acquired broaden the understanding of startup business models, innovations, and investments. This case fosters

numerous learning goals, centred on comprehending key aspects such as:

1. Recognizing the significance of addressing the needs of all stakeholders.
2. Appreciating the value of standing out in this industry and in business as a whole.
3. Learning the key principles that govern the startup world.
4. Identifying which business sectors are most likely to yield high returns on investment and also contribute positively to our planet's future.
5. Investigating the various challenges and prospects that come with expanding Soulmates Ventures' operations.

APPLICATION IN THE CLASSROOM

- Interactive Activities: Engage students in discussions, role-playing, or case simulations to deepen their understanding of startup business practices and entrepreneurship.
- Guest Speaker: Invite guest speakers from the startup scene to share their experiences and insights, connecting real-world perspectives with the case study.
- Field Trips or Industry Visits: Arrange visits to innovative and sustainable startup companies or financial investors to provide students with a practical understanding of the challenges and opportunities in the industry.

TEACHING STRATEGY/PROCESS INCLUDING SPECIFIC TIMING

If students are given the canvas, they can finish the case study in 45 minutes. Without it, they may need 90 minutes or two class sessions to thoroughly analyse the case.

Step 1: Introduction (10 mins): Briefly outline the case background and introduce the main concepts of the business canvas.

Step 2: Interactive Discussion (20 mins): Initiate a conversation with students using the provided questions to delve into the case's various elements. Divide students into groups and assign them two tasks: one group to construct a business model canvas for SV, and the other to refine the already provided canvas.

Step 3: Group Presentations (15 mins, up to 3 mins per group): Each group presents their canvas, promoting a group learning environment.

Step 4: Analysis (20 mins): Encourage students to examine the attached pitch deck critically. Prompt them to assess its realism and scope, and suggest improvements. Ask them to propose how it could be made more persuasive for potential investors and startups. Consider if there should be separate pitch decks for startups versus investors.

Step 5: Conclusion and Takeaways (10 mins): Sum up the main insights, lessons, and themes from the case study.

FOLLOW UP ASSIGNMENTS (OPTIONAL)

For further study, task students with research projects or essays on topics like the key steps in building a successful company, the progression of startups, various financial investment strategies, or the factors that drive success.

Assessment: Evaluate students on their engagement in discussions, the quality of their group presentations, and any supplemental work completed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• Can they find enough innovative projects that fulfil the mission (sustainability in selected fields) and have profit potential?

• How to correctly evaluate the personality of the founder/s? He must have passion for the cause, experience, he must seek advice and also his personality must "chemically" match with the personalities in SV. Is that right?

• How to set KPIs (key performance indicators) of a start-up in order to get the promised investments for further development? How long should KPIs be set for? What specific KPIs? How to take into account the quality hidden in numbers? Set them at all?

Developed by:
Zdeněk Hašek

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