



Student Interview Coach™

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Overview of the Problem

Interviewing skills are important throughout one's life. In high school, a student is evaluated on their interviewing ability in a Careers or Workplace Planning course, and it may also be a determinant of their success in landing a Co-op or Apprenticeship placement. When students leave school, the success of an interview will often determine whether they are offered a full or part-time job. Students in Ontario are assessed on their interviewing skills in both the required grade 10 Careers course, and the optional grade 11 or 12 Co-operative Education course (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000, 2006).

In a classroom, the opportunity to practice before being formally assessed is known as formative assessment or assessment for learning. Bloom (1969) believed that assessment should provide “feedback and correctives at each stage in the teaching-learning process” (as cited in Bennett, 2011, p. 6).

One of the benefits of formative assessment is the ability to “identify learning needs and adjust teaching appropriately” (OECD, 2005, p. 13), but it can be difficult to provide every student in a large class with the timely feedback they require. In addition, some teachers have little experience with interviewing and may not be comfortable with or proficient at providing feedback on the interview process to students. To bridge this gap, some teachers reach out to the community and invite guests into their classrooms to provide feedback, but there are several problems with this approach. It can be difficult to secure volunteers and if volunteers are available, the timing may not suit the teacher's schedule and may require lessons to be adjusted. The school may also be located in a rural area with limited access to well-qualified volunteers.



Finally, there are many virtual high schools and elearning courses that would not have access to live volunteers due to the manner in which the courses are delivered.

The Solution

The Student Interview Coach™ is an online service that provides timely and constructive feedback to students on their interviewing skills. To use the service, students create a video of themselves completing a mock-interview using their cell phone, camera or school video equipment. The student then logs into the Student Interview Coach™ website and uploads his/her video. Within 24 hours, the student will receive voice feedback from one of the experts at the Student Interview Coach™. Voice comments are clear and easy to understand, and simulate the process of having someone beside you delivering feedback. The student can use the comments to identify areas upon which to improve and the classroom teacher can use the voice comments to identify common issues and/or areas requiring further clarification with the class as a whole.

Competition

An Internet search revealed several companies that offer job interview coaching services. The main difference between these businesses and the Student Interview Coach™ is that other companies offer their services to prospective job seekers, not students. The potential competition also offers services that include résumé writing, ebooks, and preparation for specific job interviews.

In addition, two educational institutions, the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and St. Olaf College, offer some interview services but only to their own students. The UCLA service provides online resources to prepare students for an interview, but no coaching or



feedback is offered. St. Olaf College in Minnesota offers an online practice interview service for its own students, but feedback is provided by making an appointment with a counsellor. The Internet search did not identify any businesses that specifically target the student market or that provide online interview feedback exclusively, giving the Student Interview Coach™ a significant competitive advantage.

A summary of competitors is outlined in the table below.

Name of Company or Educational Institution	Target Market	Service(s) Provided	Cost
The Job Interview Coach	Job seekers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General and job-specific interview coaching • ebook 	\$99 (one hour of coaching and an ebook)
Feroce Coaching	Job seekers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General interview coaching via telephone • Résumé, cover letter and LinkedIn profile review 	Not disclosed
Surcorp Résumé Solutions	Job seekers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General interview coaching via telephone • Résumé and cover letter review 	\$125 (one hour of coaching)
Carole Martin – The Interview Coach	Job seekers and FBI candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General interview coaching face-to-face or via Skype • Résumé and cover letter review • Many products available for purchase 	Not disclosed
UCLA Online Interview Workshop	UCLA students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online resources that address interview preparation, interview formats and types of questions 	Free to UCLA students
My Interview Simulator Online Edition	Job seekers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic and behavioural interview questions with suggested responses • No role-playing opportunities 	Free
St. Olaf College Centre for Experiential Learning	St. Olaf College students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online practice interview service • Feedback is available by booking an appointment with a counsellor 	Free to students at St. Olaf College

Table 1 – Summary of Internet Search of Potential Competitors



Market Potential

The largest potential market for the Student Interview Coach™ is Canadian secondary school students. Enrolment information is summarized in the table below.

Province or Territory	Career Studies		Co-op or Apprenticeship Course	Number of students	Adjusted Number of students (2)	Number of high schools
	Course Offered	Required to Graduate				
British Columbia	✓	✓	✓	280,000	280,000	350
Alberta	✓	✓	✓	157,770	157,770	276 (estimate)
Saskatchewan	✓	✓ (1)	✓	42,898	42,898	283
Manitoba	✓	✗	✓	61,081 (2008)	61,081	316
Ontario	✓	✓	✓	707,000	707,000	911
Quebec	✓	✓	✓	398,815 (2010)	398,815	446
New Brunswick	✓	✓	✓	35,624	35,624	39
Nova Scotia	✓	✗	✓	138,661 (K – 12)	42,665	>100
Newfoundland and Labrador	✓	✓	✓	16,840	16,840	126
Prince Edward Island	✓	✗	✓	20,148 (K – 12)	6,200	14
Yukon	✓	✓	✓	5,000 (K – 12)	1,540	6
Northwest Territories	✓	✓	✓	2,700 (2001)	2,700	18
Nunavut	✗	✗	✓	9,065 (K – 12)	2,788	24

Table 2 – Summary of Careers and Co-op Courses and Enrolment in Canadian Secondary Schools

(1) For alternative education program only

(2) For provinces with data from K – 12, the actual figure was divided by 13 and multiplied by 4 to determine a secondary school estimate



Another potential market is universities with co-operative education programs. For example, the University of Waterloo has the largest co-op program in the world with approximately 16,000 students participating in the program (University of Waterloo, n.d.). Offering students a tool to obtain feedback before a co-op interview or an interview for a full-time job would help them be more successful.

Revenue Projection

The data in Table 2 indicates that the potential Canadian market for this service is approximately 1.76 million students. Rogers (1995) noted that the rate of adoption of technology by a community resembles a bell curve or normal distribution, and identified five categories of adopters, namely innovators (2.5% of the population), early adopters (13.5%), early majority (34%), late majority (34%) and laggards (16%) (as cited in Butler & Sellbom, 2002). Three of Rogers' categories have been used to prepare the revenue projections for the Student Interview Coach™. The innovators represent the “low” estimate, early adopters represent the “medium” estimate, and the early majority represents the “high” estimate for the revenue projections contained in Tables 3 and 4.

It is anticipated that it will take approximately 10 minutes for an expert to watch a student interview and provide voice feedback on the Student Interview Coach™ site. This translates into six student interviews per hour. Minimum wage for those 18 years and over in Ontario is currently \$10.25 per hour (Ontario Ministry of Labour, 2012). Therefore, it is recommended that pricing for Student Interview Coach™ be set between \$3.00 and \$3.50 per student to cover wage costs and reflect the fact that the coaching is individual in nature. Benchmarking to determine



pricing was completed using Turnitin, a service that evaluates students' written work for plagiarism. Turnitin currently charges approximately \$2.00 per student (Karre, 2011).

Market Estimate	Percentage Applied (1)	Number of Students (2)	Projected Revenue (\$3.00 per Student)
Low	2.5%	43,898	\$131,694
Medium	13.5%	237,050	\$711,150
High	34.0%	597,013	\$1,791,039

Table 3 – Revenue Projection at \$3.00 per Student

- (1) Per Rogers (1995)
- (2) Number of Students (adjusted) Enrolment data from Table 2 x Percentage applied

Market Estimate	Percentage Applied (1)	Number of Students (2)	Projected Revenue (\$3.50 per Student)
Low	2.5%	43,898	\$153,643
Medium	13.5%	237,050	\$829,675
High	34.0%	597,013	\$2,089,545

Table 4 – Revenue Projection at \$3.50 per Student

- (1) Per Rogers (1995)
- (2) Number of Students (adjusted) Enrolment data from Table 2 x Percentage applied

The Ask

A number of steps must be completed before the Student Interview Coach™ is launched. The venture requires programming to develop a secure website with login capability and technology to embed voice comments in a student's profile that would be accessible by student and teacher. Legal costs would include registration of a logo and trademark of the company name, as well as development of a purchase agreement, terms of service and privacy agreements. Decisions would need to be made about whether to purchase a server to house the information submitted to the site or to contract with a third-party to provide services through cloud computing. Recruiting costs will be incurred as more interview experts are hired based on the volume of customers. Last but not least, the venture would need to be marketed to potential customers. It is



envisioned that between \$50,000 and \$75,000 would be needed to launch the venture and the service could be operational in approximately six months.

Marketing Plan

The market for the Student Interview Coach™ is secondary schools and universities with co-op programs, and the service will be of interest to institutional purchasers such as school boards and university administrators.

Since the company's president and CEO is a secondary school teacher and an alumnus of the University of Waterloo, her school board and the university will be approached first. Presentations and live demonstrations of the service will be made at provincial meetings of organizations such as OCEA (Ontario Co-operative Educators' Association) and OSCA (Ontario School Counsellors' Association). In addition, advertising will be placed in relevant trade publications such as Professionally Speaking, which is received by all teachers and administrators in Ontario and OSCA Today, a publication for all Ontario guidance counsellors. Advertising would also be placed on provincial co-operative education and guidance counsellor websites.

Since elearning opportunities continue to expand throughout the country, the service would be presented initially to decision-makers at eLearning Ontario, the government body responsible for developing elearning courses in the province of Ontario.

Meet the CEO

The President and CEO of the Student Interview Coach™, Deborah Schell, is a Chartered Accountant with 16 years of corporate experience and an Ontario Certified Teacher in her sixth year of teaching. She also has experience teaching co-operative education to grade 11 and 12



students and has witnessed first-hand the importance of providing feedback, and the difficulties in providing that feedback on a timely basis to a large class. In her corporate role, Deborah had hiring responsibilities and completed many interviews of potential candidates.

Deborah is not afraid to take risks as evidenced by her decision to resign from her corporate job to obtain her teaching degree. She is persistent, determined and is known for seeing projects through to completion. She is interested in how technology can be incorporated into the classroom and is on target to complete her Master of Educational Technology degree in the spring of 2013.

Conclusion

This is an excellent opportunity to invest in a venture that has tremendous potential for generating revenue in a market with no direct competition. The opportunity to provide timely and constructive feedback to students at a low cost, regardless of location, will be attractive to school board and university purchasers. As the Latin proverb says, *Exercitatio optimus est magister* or practice is the best teacher (University of Oklahoma, 2011).

Self-Evaluation

Strengths

There are many strengths of this venture but perhaps the most significant is that there is currently no direct competition offering the same service. In addition, the service has a large potential market of approximately 1.76 million secondary students in Canada alone.



The service would also appeal to students taking courses via elearning, homeschooled students as well as those attending completely online schools such as the Virtual High School in Ontario. The service would provide students with feedback that they may not otherwise receive.

Lastly, since no investment in technology or infrastructure is required on the part of the school boards or universities, there are no costs related to obsolescence, replacement or maintenance.

Weaknesses

In a time of decreasing government funding, school boards may not have money to spend on this service and may decide to maintain the current process of attempting to bring volunteers into the classroom instead.

Some schools or students may not possess the equipment to make videos and/or may not have computer access to upload them and listen to the expert feedback. In addition, remote communities may not have high-speed Internet access which could make the process of uploading videos more difficult.



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