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This document is a work-in-progress and may change continuously. It’s also *an experiment*, so it might turn out to be utterly useless, or otherwise go horribly wrong.

**ShortURL:** <http://bit.ly/susnotes>

*Do share this with other people who are at Startup School 2013.*

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## Saturday, October 19, 2013 [Flint Center](https://www.google.com/maps/preview#!data=!1m4!1m3!1d3863!2d-122.0451047!3d37.3193348!4m29!2m11!1m10!1s0x0%3A0x15ae2b390ce521bf!3m8!1m3!1d203131!2d-121.8174129!3d37.2970155!3m2!1i1024!2i768!4f13.1!5m16!2m15!1m14!1s0x808fb4519e8c7de7%3A0x15ae2b390ce521bf!2sFlint+Center!3m8!1m3!1d203131!2d-121.8174129!3d37.2970155!3m2!1i1024!2i768!4f13.1!4m2!3d37.319498!4d-122.045097), De Anza College, 21250 Stevens Creek Blvd., Cupertino

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## <https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=6577927>

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[Jack Dorsey / Founder, Square twitter](#h.cgxkyf7jo8kr)

[Mark “The Zuck” Zuckerberg / Founder Facebook](#h.220nyopmfkn5)

[This is a question and answer session between Paul Graham and Mark.](#h.z8hquw81fv55)

[Nate Blecharczyk / Founder @nathanblec - Bio airbnb](#h.2va0pm4rz2qc)

[- Sam Altman](#h.smbw6fwlmom6)

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## 

## Phil Libin / Founder, Evernote, CoreStreet - [Bio](http://www.crunchbase.com/person/phil-libin)

* You shouldn't be friends with people who you wouldn't start a company with.
* Evernote is my 3rd startup. First was engine5. Was going to be 5 and 2 chickened out. We didn't know investors existed.
* Doing a startup as a consultant sucks, because you're not really building lasting value. The rewards are immediate but not lasting.
* Evernote came out of a merger. It was a very unconventional start. This was a big mistake. It doesn't pay to be innovative in your structure.
* We had 3 weeks of cash left. European VC. Panicked.
* Finally got money from a random guy in Sweden: $500k wired. -> Finally raised but not from SV investors.
* It got a lot harder once we were a real company. The most fun I ever had, the least stressed I ever was, was back when we were trying to raise money and I could have gone out of business any day.
* Only one job: raise money and have enough cash to make payroll. Totally ready to fail at that point, which is actually kind of liberating.
* After our B round, we had years of cash. The next morning after celebrating, it got hard. Now people are depending on us and there are expectations. Now we have to do something. im so lonely
* It gets better, but it doesn’t get easier. It does get more rewarding. It’s not fun day-to-day, but it is fun month-to-month. Gratifying to look over the past 30 days, but day in and day out, it’s difficult.
* 5 years ago, it would have been stupid advice to say: build something for yourself.
* Today, it’s stupid not to. im
* There are 1 billion people who want what you do. Even if you’re weird, there are still 10 million people who want what you do.
* If it’s something you want, it’s a big advantage because you know when it’s great.
* "Every investor in Evernote is a huge fan of the product"

# Dan Siroker / Founder, Optimizely - [Bio](http://www.crunchbase.com/person/dan-siroker)

* This is my 6th Startup School, but my first time presenting.
* Distribution strategy: put “Google “ in front of the name. Automatically 100k people trying the product.
* Learned the value of a feedback loop.
* Obama said he wanted to take what they do at Google, and bring it to government. He got me hooked on “bubble sort” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nnj7r1wCD4>)
* We had the most monitors per square inch of any part of the campaign.
* Believes biggest mistake entrepreneurs make is, that they follow algorithm instead of creating their own path to success.

# 

# Ron Conway / Partner, SV Angel - [Bio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ron_Conway) - [@RonConway](https://twitter.com/RonConway)

* Evan started an incubator called Obvious Corp. Odeo, in the podcasting space. Ev felt so bad that he gave his investors their money back.
* **“40% of our startups go out of business: we don't get a nickel back.“**
* We tried to sell Odeo and get it to a soft landing. He felt bad about it. At SV Angel, we invest in the people first. When they said Twitter, I said: I don't care what it does.
* He said: you should go talk to Jack Dorsey.
* **What does @RonConway think makes a successful entrepreneur?** 
  + **1) Rifle focus on Product & Product Quality; 2) Decisiveness**
  + **I look for decisiveness. Hire fast, fire fast.**
* It used to be that the algorithm was your most valuable IP (like Google). Now, it’s users, user design, and user interface IP.
* Never argue with the metrics. You (investor) may not understand why customer like it, but go with the metrics
* Most rewarding thing: watching entrepreneurs mature at the speed of light when they have to, and helping them do it.
* Fundraising Tips:
  + The biggest mistake founders make when fundraising is focusing on valuation vs. finding the investor that adds the most value
  + Get the 1st term sheet ASAP; acts as forcing function for other investors
  + Once you get any inkling of an agreement, send an e-mail that commits the investor to that agreement.

# Office hours with Paul Graham & Sam Altman

This is new this year. Each startup gets 9 minutes, timed. Have not met before.

## ???? / Code Combat - <http://codecombat.com>

* Learn how to code by playing a multiplayer game.
* Write code to kill a bad guy.
* I tried Codecademy but it wasn’t motivating enough for me.
* First company: “We keep using your product because it’s like a game.” Whoa, if we can do that inadvertently, then what if we made a game intentionally?
* There’s no Apache helicopters or anything like that. You’re a wizard, it’s fantasy
* Maxed out server at 15k people. Don’t know, people were getting 404s.
* Posted only to Reddit, that’s it.
* Are they people who know how to program, or is it people who want to learn?
* People who know how to program say: I want to help out, is this on GitHub?
* Do you guys know about the gaming business?
* There are probably certain best practices in the gaming business, which would be a good starting point. Whatever they do it, is probably the default to start with.
* Let’s find and talk with game designers.
* Mostly they just tell us when what we’re built sucks.
* We just finished the level editor.
* One guy is manning the servers right now (Scott), hopefully keeping them alive. We’ve been working together 6 years. Roommate in college.
* A lot of the reason people start startups is that they don’t want jobs.
* Someone who has worked a long time at a big company: bad sign. The best startup founders probably can’t stand that.
* Recruiters say all sorts of crazy stuff.
* **At the end of the office hours, Paul Graham told Code Combat that they were accepted into the next YC batch**
* Qualify people (recruiting) before introducing to a company.

## 

## Dance in a year ???

Made with 100

Private beta

Need more features, Social Sharing

Perhaps be more empirical, see how the platform evolves (i.e. baby walking for parents to capture those moments)

Piggyback on YouTube as a marketing channel, but videos hosted by us

100-day challenges

Gallery of 10-second clips.

Founded by Karen X Cheng - <http://www.karenx.com/>

**PG: gave advice to not over-optimize too early, let it grow into whatever it's going to grow into**

*Isn’t this more for the learners, than for people who are watching the clips?*

85 days beatboxing

Is the community encouraging people to stick with it? {yes. they described an example}

## Customs Brokerage - <http://flexport.com/> ???

Is it one of these things where dealing with the government is so awful that you need specialized, heavily-licensed people just to do this?

Yes. FBI background check too.

There could be 125 forms you have to fill out. There are existing customs brokers, but you’re an example of software eating the world.

How are you different?  
We don’t use a fax machine.

Online dashboard to organize documents, understand which documents are needed.

Teleporter for products, instead of people.

30 million shipments enter the US using a customs broker.

I’ve imported 1,000 containers and gotten them through customs. I know how to do this myself.

Why has no one done this before?

Customs broker convention: hasn’t changed in 40 years.

Highly regulated, hard to get license.

Until recently, it wasn’t possible to clear shipment except at your local port (Port of Oakland). Unless you had an office at every port.

We are a customs broker. We do the clearance.

It’s not like Uber. Yeah, I didn’t quite get that analogy, to be honest.

We have every importer in America in a database.

Wow, that’s very convenient.

How far along are you?

It’s a web app, you can sign up for it. Not taking new users right now.

The government shutdown furloughed our guy. We couldn’t clear our first shipment. Now he’s back so we put in our forms. Wanted to get on stage and say we cleared our first shipment, but not yet.

Gross margin 75% and doesn’t take a lot of time.

We’ll charge $100.

FDA - extra paperwork.

They will pay more in taxes to the government. To the broker, it’s still just one form.

Current ones: they charge more. Brokerage is just the way to enter a much larger logistics space. Now I know your supply chain. Freight, etc.

Others don’t look at this as a way to make money. It’s not their loss leader.

How much can you make?  
Logistics is a $2.3 trillion industry. I just like to say trillion.

If the number is too big, investors just don’t believe it.

$30M profit taking 1% of the customs broker business. $2-3k/year per customer.

$30M is 1%. Based on # of shipments cleared, etc. - not exact numbers.

Army of sales guys in my last company - wasn’t that fun.

Trying to do it better than last time so that it’s more fun.

# Lunch

# Chris Dixon / Partner, A16z; Founder, Hunch, SiteAdvisor - [Bio](http://cdixon.org/aboutme/)

* Recommends [Peter Thiel’s Blake Masters notes](http://blakemasters.com/peter-thiels-cs183-startup)
* “Know a secret”:

- Know the problem better than anyone else

- Know the tools better than anyone else

* Before Dropbox, there were 100 cloud storage companies, half of which were VC funded. But Dropbox knew the problem better than anyone else, focused on making the actual use of space easier, and disrupted the existing solutions who were merely trying to compete on economy (offer more space and/or charge less)
* Kickstarter: 10 years trying to raise money
* Perry Chen - Founder/CEO artistic (autistic?) community
* 2004 was the worst year on the web in terms of security problems: popup ads, internet explorer, phishing everywhere, it was a mess.
* There was McAfee SiteAdvisor.
* Why didn't Symantec do anything about it? They saw it as being technical problems: OS exploit, etc.
* However, most problems were social engineering problems. The technical features operated properly, but users were tricked into doing things. Their solution was to put out whitepapers, saying things like “Users should be smarter about downloading software.”
* We approached it from the consumer internet perspective. Let’s just create a better user experience, using whatever means necessary. **(same thing Dropbox did)**
* Like Skype. Biggest concern: Most people didn’t have microphones yet. Microphone adoption is the key issue. Would they be willing to drive to Best Buy and get one?
* Low quality. Low bandwidth. Narrowband. Will broadband ever get adopted?
* Head of McKinsey: Nobody will ever adopt broadband. *(lol)*
  + **Fun Quote: Vinod Khosla:** “Don't ever listen to anyone from McKinsey" ([link](https://twitter.com/JCinSV/status/358057901841068033))

## Successful Startups Usually Start From:

**Unbundling functions done by others.**

Example: Newspapers - collection of functions (brand, curation, classifieds, distribution)

- Disrupted by platforms like Flipboard

**Hobbies**

Homebrew… Blogs… Web… Open Source...

Bitcoin, 3d printing, drones, big data

Things that are dismissed as toys. When tech is at the low point, it looks like a toy to a lot of people.

*“If you’re into something, chances are there are 100 million people who are into it to. Unless you’re really weird, in which case there’s maybe 10,000 people into that.” ~ paraphrased*

**Challenging Social Norms**

People were weirded out at first by platforms like Airbnb and eBay, now they’re billion-dollar companies, because there were willing to challenge social norms

**To develop startup ideas:**

1. Best ideas come from direct experience
2. The abstract - like analyst reports, trends, analogies
3. The abstract, by definition comes from conventional wisdom

In short: startup secrets are "drawn from direct experience", are "dismissed as hobby" and "challenge social norms". (via: [@rlacombe](https://twitter.com/rlacombe/statuses/391680283545976832))

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# Diane Greene / Founder, VMWare - [Bio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diane_Greene)

***“****Startups are one lucky break after another****”***

### Diane Greene on doing a startup - “*I’m just another slob trying to do a startup*”

* VMWare: her second startup. She’s currently working on her 3rd startup.
* Created virtualization industry starting 1998. Fakes out operating system to think it’s running on hardware (see: [VMWare wiki](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/VMware))
* YoY Growth of 54%. 6k people in offices around the world, steadily growing
* Big vision: facilitate constraints by freeing up innovation.
* Start a giant vision by making a small goal that you can work towards - what small things could we do?

**On VMWare**

* Didn’t want to rely on specific hardware (Microsoft, etc)
* First milestone: platform/hardware agnostic
* Take it to market as Linux tool
* People wanted to work in Linux but were required to use Microsoft Tools (run fixed Windows software under Linux)
* Three Linux companies came to us and tried to buy us
* Michael Dell thought all Linux companies had zero chance of succeeding, but he supported them because he wanted to see Linux survive.
  + **Fun Fact:** Check out the market caps today of DELL vs. [VMW](https://www.google.com/finance?q=NYSE%3AVMW&ei=bzNjUtCMAY_okwO4Aw)...
* Launched with free beta/30-day demo, $299 for commercial use
* Spreading the word of the company by attending a startup demo day.
* Managed to get on Slashdot, and decided to spend $0 on marketing, focused on PR
* Picked up by [Wall Street Journal](http://www.vmware.com/company/news/articles/wsj_1.html)
* Due to all this “hits” they ran out of bandwidth, a random student at Cornell took it upon himself to mirror the site (was regarded as very friendly)
  + **TIP:** this Cornell student got himself an internship out of this
* When you sit between Microsoft and Intel, you want to protect your IP (intellectual property).
* Weren’t terribly concerned with patents/IP but acquired said patents
* Microsoft bought a competitor/similar product - we weren’t going to sue them because we knew we would beat them.
* In the end she doesn’t think her patents helped her company at all
* If you can think of a good reason for someone to help you (besides the fact that they’re rich, et cetera) they will usually help you
* Got a meeting with [Larry Sonsini‎](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Larry_Sonsini), he ended up joining the board as an advisor
* Found a way to help hardware vendors make money.
* Tried talking to analysts, flew overnight to Forrester office, ended up talking to an auto industry analyst. [sign that the mainstream industry was behind the times and VMWare was in on something early]
* Lawyers found out Linux software was in the product, didn’t want all their stuff to end up open-sourced due to GPL
* Resellers were able to sell the software without running into that issue

***“*** *Bring something to market that people absolutely love* ***”***

Balaji Srinivasan / Founder, Counsyl; Lecturer, Stanford - [Bio](http://jinome.stanford.edu/)

Topic: Silicon Valley’s Ultimate Exit: Is the USA the microsoft of nations? ([session sheet, via: @aley](https://twitter.com/aley/statuses/391685237228306433))

Larry and Sergey wanted change: what they had to do was exit

**Voice:** change system from within

**Exit:** creating a new system

Voice vs exit in open source: respectively patch vs fork

US is shaped by both voice and exit - so is Silicon Valley

**Fun Fact:** Noncompetes are not enforceable in CA

exit amplifies voice

voice gains more attention when people leave in droves

exit is a meta concept about alternatives - the choice to peacefully “opt out”

reduce the importance of decisions made in DC (without lobbying, etc)

Silicon Valley vs The Paper Belt

Silicon Valley is reinventing every industry and seriously threatening gov’t power

US gov’t can’t ban things it wants to ban anymore

Paperjam

We need to actively repudiate that “SV is the cause of the economy fault”

***“*** *Technology is about reducing prices* ***”***

Gov’t raises them

respond via voice, reduces price

What would a society run by Silicon Valley look like?

Larry page wants to set aside a part of the world for experimentation. [#](http://www.theverge.com/2013/5/15/4334356/larry-page-wants-to-set-aside-a-part-of-the-world-for-experimentation)

Build an opt-in society run by technology/innovation, totally separate from the US

Not saying take away US laws - just making an exit

You don’t actually have to buy your own island - Participating in online communities (going on Reddit/HN,etc) is an “exit” in a sense

- Taking control of your own medicine through quantified self

- Reject traditional currency (Use Bitcoin

Telepresence robots.

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# Chase Adam / Founder, Watsi - [Bio](http://blog.watsi.org/post/21043545556/meet-chase) - [@ChaseAdam17](http://twitter.com/chaseadam17)

*“Sometimes you give people something that helps them the first time, but ends up hurting them on day 365”*

Those women are selling rice at 1/100th the price they should normally get. **Whenever there’s a humanitarian disaster, charities send free or heavily-subsidized rice to Haiti. That put all of the local farmers out of business.**

Every Tuesday night, we worked on Watsi.

I said, “Fuck nonprofits.” The last thing I wanted to do was start a large nonprofit. I thought it was cool, fun, and we wanted to build the nonprofit that we ourselves would want to donate to. Being small meant we were beholden to no one. We could take risks and do things that no nonprofit would do.

**Watsi’s Core Values:**

* Radically Transparent: we would be the most transparent nonprofit in the world. We’ll take screenshots of each bank transfer and post them online.
* 100% of your donation funds medical care. We’ll never take a cut, no matter what.
* Minimal Fundraising. Operational fundraising kills nonprofits because it’s such a distraction. Nonprofits get focused on annual galas!
* Circular Structure: No hierarchy. No founder/co-founder. Watsi is in a perpetual state of being founded. Each new person changes Watsi and takes it in a new direction, so we’re constantly getting founded.
* Golden Rule. Treat our patients the way we’d want to be treated.
* Launched: August 23, 2012 at 9 AM. Immediately sent email to our network, thinking “Okay, it’ll go crazy now.” 15 minutes later, nobody.
* My mom donated. Grace’s mom donated. Jesse’s mom donated. Friends and family. 2 hours later, that was it.
* Decided it should be posted to Hacker News. If it got upvotes, I’d tell the team. If not, I’d just delete it and pretend it never happened. By lunchtime the post was #1 which resulted in 16k unique visitors. Spend the entire day participating in the comment section.
* Funded every medical treatment in our pipeline almost instantly. Hundreds of emails, Facebook posts, tweets, emails. I told my boss (in finance) that I need the day off..
* [NBC wrote it up](http://www.nbcnews.com/technology/watsi-kickstarter-third-world-medical-care-966283)

**Google** ***ALERT***: **TechCrunch**wrote about Watsi. I had no idea they would, or that they even knew what Watsi was.

*I asked my girlfriend, “Do you think all the startups that TechCrunch writes about are secretly as crappy as we are?”*

“You can’t even donate anymore because we’re completely out of patients.”

We thought we had 6 months of patients, and they were funded in a few hours. In our wildest dreams we didn’t think this would happen.

I quit my job and knew I had to do it full-time.

We had to fundraise because we had no money. Our first attempt was a total disaster. Nobody tells you “No”.

Entire email from Paul Graham: “Are you in the Bay Area? If so, I’d like to meet”.  *\*canned laughter\**

Watsi got three major points out of YC

1. focus (only focus on one metric (like Airbnb) - weekly donations)
2. network (advisors, entrepreneurs)
3. stamp of approval (nobody will take a bet on a non-profit, YC did and showed to the world it was/is worth it)

***“*** *Find something to work on that you care more about than yourself.* ***”***

Why Watsi can impossibly fail:

One more human life has to be fund. If the rest of my life has to be spent finding this patient, my life will be a success. (**#TODO** REWRITE)

*(tears due to Watsi its mission OR because we are ahead of schedule)*

# Break

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# Jack Dorsey / Founder, Square twitter

HERE WE GO, BRACE YOURSELVES

Instead of doing a presentation, Jack Dorsey will provide us with excerpts from books he recommends and has found valuable lessons in.

**Dorsey’s book recommendations:**

1. [The Art Spirit, Robert Henri](http://www.amazon.com/The-Art-Spirit-Robert-Henri/dp/0465002633)
   1. Artists work in any medium.
   2. The work and the craft are just as important as the end product.
   3. Entrepreneurs are, for a long time, alone--there are costs to being an entrepreneur. In doing something meaningful, you’ll have to pay for part of the work, but you’ll also enjoy it for a long time after.
   4. We are not here to do what has already been done.
   5. Be a master of your own tools. Constant practice
   6. What really matters is the work that implements the ideas
   7. Don’t worry about the rejections.
   8. We work so hard to try to get some sort of positive feedback. When we look at others it seems so fast. But it takes years and years and some patience.
   9. Essays will be shorter in words, and longer in meaning.
   10. We must paint only what is important to us. We must not respond to outside demands, they know not what we have to give.
   11. You are building what you want to see in the world. And you are betting others will want to see that in the world too. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose.
2. [The Score Takes Care Of Itself - Bill Walsh](http://buff.ly/1a2nmKx%20) 
   1. Start first with an idea, a philosophy, a purpose, a mission, and you find people to help you. Book provides a series of lists of what to do and what not to do
   2. Recommend to people who want to be a leader or lead a team
   3. Teach connection and extensions.
   4. If you react to the outside, you are building someone else’s roadmap
   5. Twelve Habits of Being a Leader
      1. Be yourself
      2. Be committed to excellence
      3. Be positive (this is the hardest part)
      4. Be prepared
      5. Be detail-oriented (build an organization that cares about itself and raises the bar)
      6. Be organized
      7. Be accountable
      8. Be both near-sighted and far-sighted
      9. Be fair
      10. Be firm
      11. Be flexible
      12. Believe in yourself
      13. Be a leader. Lead by example.
   6. What Not to Do (missing 3 points)
      1. [missing]
      2. [missing]
      3. [missing]
      4. Spend excessive amounts of time socializing with superiors/subordinates
      5. Become best buddies with certain employees
      6. Kissing assTenured staff members
      7. Trust others to carry out your fundamental duties
      8. Find ways to get out from responsibilities of your position
      9. Promote an organization that is “fun”, “light-heartedness”, “tension-free”. You need balance
   7. General Patton
      1. Praise is more impactful than criticism
      2. Tell people what’s expected of them
      3. Discipline is based on pride in the position
      4. Officers must assert themselves by example and by voice
      5. General officers must be seen in the frontline during action
      6. Tendency for the chain of command to overload junior officers by excessive requirements
   8. “Success Disease” - what happens when you start winning?
      1. Formally celebrate victory and make everyone feel a part of it
      2. Allow pats on the back for a limited time
      3. Be apprehensive about applause
      4. Develop a plan to get your team working again
      5. Address specific situations and focus on things that were less-than-spectacular
      6. Develop a plan for your staffs to produce success in the first place
      7. Use the time after success to make hard decisions
      8. Never fall prey to the belief that getting to the top makes everything easier
3. Music: “Angoisse” - Alain Goraguer (Serge Gainsbourg) ([listen on Youtube](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DMOfO-ylQ_w))

He has notes for every single thing he is doing and for every person in his company to keep things organized. A very handy memory device. Make do / dont’s lists. Note all the things you never want to do again

too many items, too many lists. and the music is kind of awkward. what is dorsey doing? (it’s hard to be BEFORE Zucky)

**Dorsey’s Daily List** *(this is an example given of the memory device)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Do** | **Don’t** |
| Stay present | Drink hard liquor or beer (on weekdays) |
| Drink only lemon water and red wine | Avoid eye contact |
| Stand up straight | Be late |
| Say hello to everyone | Set expectations for someone and not able to meet it |
| Stand up straight |  |
| Meditate on this list |  |
| Video journal every single day |  |
| 7 hours of sleep |  |
| 6 sets pushups/squats/planks. Run 3 miles |  |

# Mark “The Zuck” Zuckerberg / Founder Facebook

### This is a question and answer session between Paul Graham and Mark.

PG**: What did you test to see if Facebook “worked”?**

MZ**:** I don’t know what the first piece of code was. I built stuff for myself. When I got to college, I wanted to build things to connect with the people around me. I built the first version of Facebook during the “reading period”

PG**: When you first launched Facebook, what did FB have that competitors didn’t?**

MZ**:** It was the focus on real identity and the connections between people. That information isn’t just indexed out there, you have to build tools that give people the power to share that themselves, and those tools didn’t exist. Interaction was mostly anonymous; it was scary to put your real identity online. None of the competitors had a concept of “connections” (relations between people). Friending is important because you could put someone on your profile and be “connected”, this was revolutionary.

\_\_

“Don’t only use Facebook connect. Twitter is fine too, but use two.”

“The only thing I got out of Facemash was my wife”

**PG: Hypothetical question: if you hadn’t started Facebook; there would probably be something like Facebook now. Would it have been something which started out as a network for college students or would have MySpace grown further to that position?**

**MZ:**

**PG: How many schools did you have before you realize this was it? You still thought some big company could overtake Facebook?**

**MZ:** I spend a bunch of time analyzing how we were able to do it - all reason suggests that we weren’t able to do it. All reports suggest that we didn’t have the resources (servers, time employees). We ended up becoming the biggest because we cared more than anyone else. It felt in our gut. Skeptics: they couldn’t become a business. Companies wouldn’t invest because there wasn’t a model. Someone else can do it. The big emphasis is [internet.org](http://internet.org/) (???)

***“****Our mission isn’t to get 1/7 people in the world - our goal is to connect everyone* ***”***

**PG: Is there anything that you feel makes you uniquely qualified to be the person to found/run Facebook?**

**MZ:** I actually think determination is probably the biggest piece. So many things go wrong, and people ask about mistakes. Don’t even bother trying to avoid mistakes, just learn from mistakes. So many things could and would have killed us, but you just bounce back and you learn. Nothing is impossible. - *PG summarizes: So the biggest mistake is the meta mistake hmm (\*canned laughter\*)*

MZ: I knew nothing when I got started (19 years old).

PG: **How did you learn?**

MZ: I only knew so little at the time. Peter Thiel demanded everyone be on vesting schedules … I didn’t even know what a ***vesting schedule ???***was. “Oh shit, now what do we do?” That mistake probably cost me billions of dollars, but you learn!

PG: You start out as a 19 year old, you have this website, and you have to learn how to be a manager, to create this organization. How did you learn how to manage people?

MZ: *Key point: make mistakes, trial and error.*

No one is good at hiring people, out of the box. I’m absolutely not [a management expert]. I have developed a few heuristics over time that the organization could understand.

**Would you work for the person you’re hiring?**

**Hire people that you learn from.**

“I used to be really terrified of public speaking” Overcame this by throwing himself into public speech without preparing anything.

PG: Do you like managing people?

MZ’s irrelevant answer: Most smart people like learning. If you can set up a team dynamic where you’re constantly learning from the people around you, it tends to work.

(have you ever seen such an unorganized question - answer session

it is like question: completely irrelevant answer) {yes, every political debate ever}

MZ on the best way to make hire/no hire decision: Answer the question, "Would you work for this person?"

MZ: I never had a goal of starting a startup. My goal was to get it to be a “good company” as quickly as possible and get out of “risky startup phase” (buzzwords).

PG: Were you influenced by Peter Thiel, Sean Parker, et al?

MZ: I paid a lot of attention to Microsoft (MZ: 3.1 and 95 were unbelievable things // PG: in a sense they really were *(\*canned laughter\*)* )

PG: Was making Facebook a “platform” a goal all along?

MZ: Turning Facebook into that platform came later, but I always felt that there would/should be a social platform. **Core thing**: Sharing is really core to human psychology.

(ps. I am having more fun collaborating than I will probably ever have reading all of this stuff again 2am in my local timezone) !!!

PG: Can you remember a particular strategic insight from early on?

MZ: Peter Thiel was really focused on network effects. I agree with the model that as the company grows, things could go in a million directions and you need to pick the one or two that actually matter. When I started surrounding myself with people, I had to learn to focus on what matters and tune out the noise.

PG: When you say connecting people, you don’t necessarily mean a lot more signups (?)

MZ: We built a lot of tools to help people do what they already wanted to do. Our job was to remove as much friction as possible. Our strategy was to branch out, from Harvard, to other schools that would have dense social connections to the existing network and grow the network in a meaningful way.

2005 college facebook (clone)

strategy: they wanted to start in places we weren’t (coasts diversity, race)

dustin took it very personal

**Lockdown concept**

Locking everyone in the office when competitor gets ahead until you regain the lead

Russia: clone of facebook, hard to compete with (not been able to beat), hosts illegal file downloads (warez)

***“****We try not to break the law****”***

Maybe those lockdowns were unnecessary

PG: ignore competitors?

Some companies clone companies that have been developed in other places and bring them to europe to get a headstart on the network effect in Europe.

**PG:** It seems like the most successful founders are a little bit obsessed. What is it that you care too much about?

**MZ:** Connecting everyone. *\*enthousiastic\** No, seriously! This aesthetic sense of the world I have is that communities of people can channel their energy to do great things. And when there was all this uncertainty, we always pushed on because we just cared more. And you could say it was a “startup thing”, but we’re still doing it. Now we’re here and we connect more than a billion people, but we’re pouring tons of money and resources into connecting people who don’t even have internet access! Because we think it’s the right thing to do.

**PG: So it’s a *movement*, and Facebook the company is sort of a subset of it.**

Female: “Mark, you’re like a fine wine, you get better every year.” Ooh la la.

# Nate Blecharczyk / Founder [@nathanblec](https://twitter.com/nathanblec) - [Bio](http://www.crunchbase.com/person/nathan-blecharcyk) *airbnb*

Everyone expects to pull a “hockey-stick”.

Hopefully, year 2 comes alone, still hockey stick… y3, y4, and if you're really lucky, y5 and you still have that hockey stick.

4 years to service first 4 million guests. In the last nine months? another five million.

73x growth

Any given night, 150k people staying due to Airbnb

***“****The startup journey is like*

*going to the Olympics****”***

* You’re gonna fail more times than you’ll succeed, you need to persevere.
* Every experience should be additive, you should always be learning.
* Joined a startup: learned everything *not* to do
* You can change your idea, pivot, but you can’t change your partners without starting over. Give this a lot of thought.
* Goal: three clicks to book it (*great UX principle*)
* There is a lot of stress when you are starting a company and no one is getting paid
* You got to be realistic about what you can accomplish
* **Trough of Sorrows:** where you work really hard, and nothing you do matters
* (was it their pitch or did they observe it? didn’t get that) One of the investors they pitched walked out mid smoothie (bet s/he regrets that)
* Before you quit, you have to give it a 100%
* Goes in for YC, interview goes off the rails. convince PG of their character
  + You need people who never give up
* [Ramen Profitability](http://www.paulgraham.com/ramenprofitable.html) estimated at $1000 a week (make just enough to pay the founders' living expenses)

*“You can change your idea, pivot, but you can’t change your partners without starting over.”*

* PG: “I thought you guys were cockroaches”
* PG: “Surest route to success is to be the cockroaches of the corporate world.”
* "It's better, initially, to make a small number of users really love you than a large number kind of like you.” - Paul Buchheit (creator of Gmail)
* Do things that don’t scale (like meet every user, all 40 of them *\*canned laughter\**) change their profile pages and pricing, take professional photos; improve the overall quality of the place listings
* “Perseverance is what matters the most”
* If you can pace yourself so you don’t quit too early, you can do amazing things.

***“****Investors don’t want M’s, they want B’s baby****”***

### *- Sam Altman*

If anyone wants to hear the story of Airbnb as told by Joe Gebbia (another cofounder): [he tells it well](http://zurb.com/soapbox/events/38/Joe-Gebbia--ZURBsoapbox)

At Age 14: Got paid $1000 for a programming gig - increased confidence

[PG’s lifecycle of a startup](http://www.futurelab.net/sites/default/files/upload/startup-curve.png)

*“You need that confidence… You’re going to fail more times than you’ll succeed.”*

Attendance

## Name - Keywords - Phone / iMessage - URL (max 1 line total, per person)

1. Dan Gailey - <http://techendo.co/> - Ruby/PHP/Obj-C/etc - [dan@techendo.co](mailto:dan@techendo.co)
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24. *Raed Marji - Predictive Analytics, Recomendation Engines - CTO JoGeeks.com - @hla3mi*
25. *Jonathan Chizick -* Business Dev & Marketing - <http://jonathanchizick.com> - [@JCinSV](https://twitter.com/JCinSV)
26. Tine Ravnikar - Partyhiker Team

*[Add yourself to this list by adding a new line above, please no advertising]*

Meta

Add your comments, questions, and criticisms of this document right here.

First and foremost I think I speak for all us when I say that I am impressed with how this many people are able to frictionlessly collaborate without outside communication. *+1*

**Q**: Watching the Livestream but didn’t get the chance to attend… wondering if I should/could put myself on the list above?

**A**: Yes, Definitely!

**Q**: Watching the livestream here in Accra, Ghana and am not really having a smooth watching experience due to my slow broadband, I hope there will be links to the #startupschool videos later?

**A**: They have videos for the 2012 sessions so I assume there will be recorded videos for this year, too. See: https://www.youtube.com/user/StartupSchool12

**Q**: Why are you guys so awesome?

**A**: Years of training, participation, and reflection.

**Q.** Is the point of this document to provide a transcript of the entire event, or distill the talking points of speakers into actionable information?  
**A.** My mission is to connect people together by enabling them to collaborate in real-time. My first attempt is [Whiteboard](http://georiot.co/2cHR), an app I first released in 2009 and today has about 300k MAU. But that was merely the first step. I have a hypothesis: Improving Notes and text-based collaboration will enable people to communicate more broadly, deeply, and accomplish more. This doc is thus an experiment to test this hypothesis. If this sounds interesting to you, let’s chat. -**Elliot** (creator of this doc)

There are so many of these kind of apps but no one does the job. Keep doing what you do to become the one that rules them all. :p

**Q.** Anyone in here working on any startups right now? And if so, are you hiring?

**A.**

Well, I am off to bed. It was a fun ride and I will see whether this document keeps getting updates. Thanks everybody for having a pleasant night and maybe we will ever meet again. Bye, bye! :-)

PS. Elliot, if you ever read this you are at the frontpage of HN and peaked at around 50

Google Docs is a pretty remarkable tool.

Amen.

Some stuff works flawless (like the collaboration) but other things like simply putting in images in documents is a hell of a job.

Haha yeah that was pretty rough.

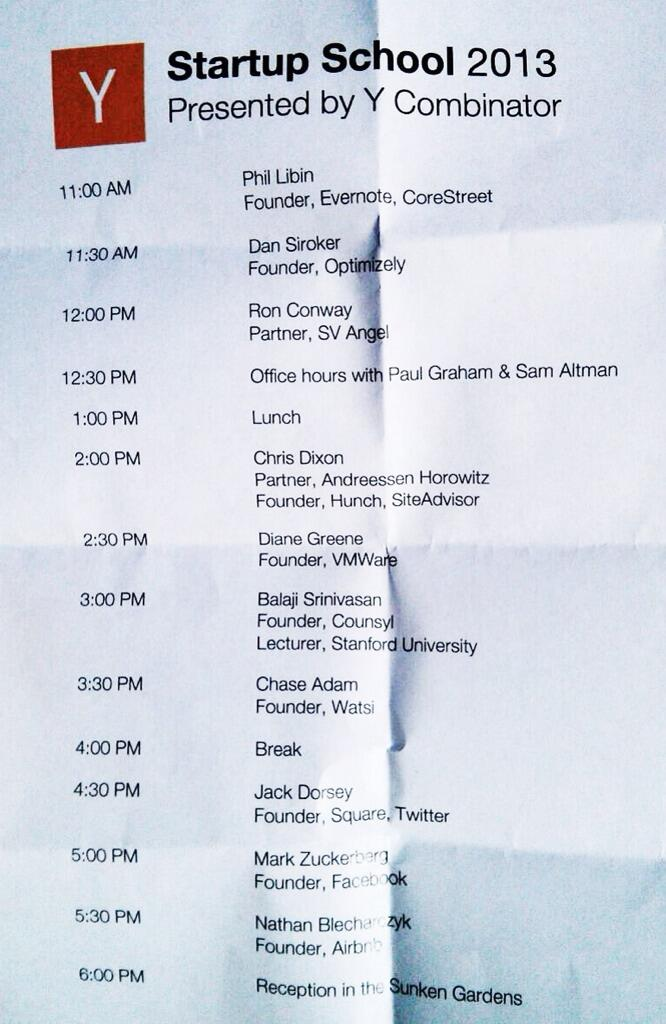
How about Google Keep? It is still not available in my country. Looks like a great UI for on the go use.

-> It is very limited in functionality compared to Google Docs. You only get simple formatting, to do lists, images and such. You are restricted to what you can do and am uncertain whether it has Docs-esque collaborating functionality. I think it is intended as a light-weight note app for mobile.

Definitely the most fun I’ve had at a remote event (this is the only remote event I’ve attended but still).

~ Co-signed2.

**Agenda:**



Shameless Easter Egg: #500Strong <http://youtu.be/cKVScfsmQ-o>

<http://youtu.be/cKVScfsmQ-o?t=2m26s>