all4student
Ultimate portal for students

Business plan

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INTRODUCTION

The student population in Switzerland counts more than 121’000 people speaking at least four major languages: English, German, French, and Italian. At the same time Switzerland enjoys high-grade communications infrastructure, with almost every household connected to the internet through a broadband connection\(^1\). Students represent the younger portion of the Swiss population, typically between ages 18-30, which is the part that is the most active in the internet. For example, 66% of Facebook users in Switzerland are 18-34 years old\(^2\).

However, unlike many other Western European countries, like Austria or Germany, Swiss students have only a handful of dedicated student sites offering practical day to day information to students. The student sites that are currently active in Switzerland, like etudiants.ch or students.ch, fail to appeal to the student population, as shown in our survey (c.f. annex). Information presented on these sites seem to be mismanaged, often outdated or irrelevant, thus making students continue relying on the traditional means of finding information through their personal networks, student associations, or university resources.

The web 2.0 revolution has completely shifted the way we look at the information on the web. From the traditional web-sites, like Britannica, where information is provided by the site owners and the content providers, we have shifted towards Wikipedia where users create and manage the content themselves. This idea was further developed into now popular community web-sites, similar to digg™ or Facebook, where the job of the creator is to develop the tools for the users to share and to manage the content, while the content itself is provided by the users. Unfortunately we do not see the results of this paradigm shift in the Swiss student oriented web-sites. Neither etudiants.ch nor students.ch, have successfully integrated community based approach into their services.

To fill this gap in the market we will build a platform which shall meet the most crucial information needs of the student. From here on this platform will be referred to as all4student. The concept of all4student is based on our own experiences as students of various sections of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne (EPFL). The portal has an ambition to become the principal site visited by students across all of the major campuses in the country. It aims at providing all relevant information and tips for students in a coherent manner, a unique portal that contains information which is normally scattered across several web sites. The core idea is to make a student oriented social networking site, where students upload and sort the information that they think is relevant. The site will have services that range from the calendar designed and adapted for students to support their academic success, accommodation finder, job search tool, night life planner, directory of past internship and exchange reports, previous years exams database sorted and structured to simplify browsing, private tutor hire and search tool, and relevant interesting deal finder. The site will be developed in three languages: English, German, and French, due to the multi-lingual nature of Switzerland.

The main challenge of the portal will be to attract students and to motivate them to contribute and communicate. We have designed a reward/bonus system to push the students to become active members of the community.

\(^1\)http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/fr/index/themen/16/04/key/approche_globale.indicator.30107.301.html

\(^2\)http://demographer.sociabliz.com/
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SERVICE DESCRIPTION

OVERVIEW

As discussed in the Introduction all4student is a social web service for students. Hence most of the content will be generated and uploaded by the students into one of the several parts of the web portal. We denote these parts as “services” and the comprehensive list of initial services is provided below in the List of Services. Due to limited resources we have, we decided to initially concentrate on the few most “crucial” services that attract users, like internship offers and study material. To determine which services are “crucial” we have conducted a survey at EPFL, the results of which are presented at the end of the report. It is important to note that we are not planning to stop the development of the portal and we present few further ideas in Further Developments. Finally we finish the discussion of the services by explaining our innovative Bonus System.

LIST OF SERVICES

INTERNSHIP / JOB OFFERS

This service will have a listing of current internship and job offers on the market. It will be possible for the user to see the offers by type, field, region or language they are interested in. The job types are separated into the following four groups:

- Graduate student job
- Internship
- Part time job
- Summer job

The list of fields will be the following:

- Architecture and Construction
- Consulting
- Engineering
- Finance & Accounting
- Food
- Health Care
- Human Resources
- IT & Telecommunications
- Legal
- Manufacturing
- Marketing & Communications
- Operations
- Research
- Sales

For the moment we will concentrate on the Swiss market and so the regions will be:

- German speaking Switzerland
- French speaking Switzerland
Italian speaking Switzerland

The language field will only show the job offers posted in the selected language. Possibilities will be:

- English
- German
- French

Companies will have the choice to limit their offers to certain institutes and faculties so that only registered students of selected institutes and faculties can see them.

### STUDY MATERIAL

Our survey indicates that a well organized directory of past exams is one of the most important parts of a good student portal. We decided to generalize the concept to include more items.

- Directory of past exams
- Class notes
- Cheat sheets
- Reports
- Student Tips

### FORUMS

The point of the forum is that students help each other. For example, if a student has doubts about the class he/she wants to take he/she can post a message on the forum and those students that have experience with that class can give him/her guidance. Note that we will design the forums site taking inspiration from modern web 2.0 discussion web-sites, rather than traditional forum sites, which are much less responsive to the user. We plan on dividing the forum into the following discussion boards:

- **Random Talk**: Here users can discuss anything which does not fit into the more specific boards.
- **University**: Students can use this board to discuss any university related issues. Each university will also have a sub board for its students.
  - **UNIL, UNIGE, EPFL, etc.**: The university sub boards will give access to further boards related to the different aspects of the university life.
    - **Admission**: Questions relating to admission procedures, experiences, etc. can be discussed here.
    - **Campus life**: This board can be used to discuss restaurants, shops, upcoming events, etc.
    - **Architecture, Civil engineering, etc.**: These are the sub boards for all the faculties
  - **Job / Internship**: Here students can share their experience and talk about things such as how to write a cover letter, get good recommendations, etc.
  - **Night life**: This board will host talks on the night life scene in the country, upcoming events, concerts, etc.
    - **Geneva, Lausanne, Bern, etc.**: Discussion on city specific events will be held here. There will also be 4 sub boards to treat specific areas:
      - Ins and Outs
      - Restaurants
      - Bars
      - Clubs
AUTOMATIC SCHEDULING

This is a calendar which can automatically add the time table of classes on to it given the name of the class. The calendar will be intelligent so that searches can be made by the name of professor or part of the class name (See Figure 1: Sample Search Box for the Automatic Scheduling). Also all core classes can be automatically added if the student is registered and updates his/her information.

NIGHT LIFE

This section will keep the students up to date on what’s happening and where to go. Night clubs, bars, restaurants, etc. can be rated by students and therefore students decide what’s “in” and what’s “hot”.

TUTORING

This section will help students find “tutor students” and vice versa. Information that a person registered as a “tutor student” can provide to students looking for one are:

- Basic profile (name, age, home town, etc.)
- Current and if applicable previous field of study
- Current year of study
- Experience in tutoring
- Personal availability

To complement the personal information we plan on adding a “tutor” rating system so that students can rate their tutors.

INSTANT TANDEM

An innovative service, Instant Tandem will allow users to look for online tandem partners and instantly contact them to have an online conversation using web-phone technology like Skype. Users can look for partners in function of the language they want to learn and those that they speak.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

We think that the services mentioned above are the most attractive for students. We do however plan on adding additional services if the demands are favorable and if the service is of value to the student community.
Additional services that we would like to add in the future upon further market study and user interest are:

- **"Good Deals"**: A place where students can share the best deals they have found.
- **Internship and exchange reports**: These reports concerning internships and exchange will be submitted by students and will be a source of reference for others. They will be organized and presented in a structured and easily browsable manner just like the past exams.
- **Dating**: Here we will have various dating related information such as recommendations, "do's and don'ts", etc.
- **Transport time tables**: This will give a listing of the timetables of all public transports including night buses.

These services will be studied and eventually launched after the start of the portal.

**BONUS SYSTEM**

The bonus system has been designed to incite members to take part in the website. By members we mean students who have created a free account on the portal.

We believe that actively participating members of the community should be more visible. To achieve this we will attribute points to users based on their participation. These points will be visible on their profile and next to their name wherever they make a contribution on the portal (forums, exam uploads, etc.). To further evaluate the quality of participation and therefore give higher rewards to meaningful participation, a "voting" system is put into place allowing other members to "vote" for the usefulness of the participation. Members "vote" on the material or information in question by clicking on a "thumbs up" image placed near the post, indicating that they "like" the content (See Figure 2: Example of how "like"/"don't like" button could look like).

![Like](image)

**Figure 2: Example of how "like"/"don't like" button could look like**

We are also planning on sharing our eventual profits with the members as they are directly responsible for the popularity of the portal. We plan on sharing 10% of our net profit at the earliest after one year or at the latest when the portal becomes profitable. The 10% will be distributed among members in function of the points that they have collected. Therefore, members with the highest number of points will get the biggest parts of the amount to be shared.

Below, is a table describing how the points will be distributed amongst members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>POINTS ATTRIBUTED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sign up: all users who sign up will start with initial points</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Posting a job offer  
10 + 1 X number of “like”

Posting study material: this includes exams, cheat sheets, etc.  
10 + 1 X number of “like”

Answering a question: this is for helping other members who are looking for information and have asked a question on the forums  
10 + 1 X number of “like”

Creating a public event:  
10 + 1 X number of “like”

Good tutoring:  
10 points after 5 “like”

Table 1 Bonus points attribution

Following is a small life scenario explaining the usage of the bonus system:

Lin signs up to all4student and instantly posts three past exams into the study material section of the portal. Lin will then have 40 points. He got 10 points for signing up and 30 points (10 for each post) for posting material. Two days later Lin sees that one of the exams that he posted has received five “like” and therefore Lin will now have 45 points; 40 from before and 5 (1 for each) because his participation was useful for others.

Furthermore, we have decided to add a star rating, color distribution and title holding system to accompany the point system. All of these will accompany the member’s profile and be visible whenever he/she participates. Below we provide a table listing the stars, colors and titles given in function of the points (See Table 2: Stars and title distribution in function of points). It is noteworthy to note that a member will lose 25% of his points per year if he stays inactive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>STARS</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>Noob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-39</td>
<td>★★</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-59</td>
<td>★★★</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-79</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-99</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-199</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200-399</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400-599</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600-799</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800-999</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Stars and title distribution in function of points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1000-1999</th>
<th>2000-3999</th>
<th>4000-5999</th>
<th>6000-7999</th>
<th>8000-9999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>10000-19999</th>
<th>20000-39999</th>
<th>40000-59999</th>
<th>60000-79999</th>
<th>80000-99999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Super Student</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>100000-199999</th>
<th>200000-399999</th>
<th>400000-599999</th>
<th>600000-799999</th>
<th>800000-999999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informed</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1000000-1999999</th>
<th>2000000-3999999</th>
<th>4000000-5999999</th>
<th>6000000-7999999</th>
<th>8000000-9999999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wise</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>10000000-19999999</th>
<th>200000000-39999999</th>
<th>400000000-59999999</th>
<th>600000000-79999999</th>
<th>800000000 and above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sage</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MANAGEMENT TEAM**

All4student is a young and dynamic privately held company. The members are all students from EPFL with a large interest in Computer Science, Engineering and Communication Technologies. Thanks to the good location near the EPFL and UNIL they have ideal access to the target group and can easily recruit skilled personnel for their future growth.

At the beginning we plan to organize the start-up in a flat hierarchical structure and all members are directly involved in the decision making processes. All decisions will be made by voting. Responsibilities for example such as marketing or fund raising will be distributed according to competencies and voting. Of course the person in question has to agree to the chosen responsibilities.
We are convinced that this will allow us to create an open and creative work environment where everyone can bring himself in the best way. All members of the management team have a stake in the company and therefore a high interest to lead this start-up to raving success.

TEAM MEMBERS

ACHRAF TANGUI

Achraf Tangui was born in Casablanca, Morocco. In 2008 he received his B.Sc. from EPFL and since September 2009 he is completing his master’s degree at EPFL in Computer Engineering. He joined all4student in September 2009 as a project manager and expert in web 2.0 technologies, later performing various functions within the company in the French speaking part of Switzerland.

HAMIDREZA KHADEM

Born in Tehran, hamid has experienced the life of Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Kuala lumpur, Geneva, and Lausanne.

Currently he is a student in the Swiss Federal Institue of Technology in Lausanne studying Electrical Engineering.

Hamid joined all4student in September 2009.

PEYMAN SAFARZADEH-SAMARGHANDIAN

Born in Tehran, Peyman has passed a big part of his life in Switzerland. He received his Bachelor in the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Lausanne in Electrical Engineering in 2008. Currently he is a Master student in the same Institute.

Peyman joined all4student in September 2009.
KAZIM REHMAN

Born in Lahore, Pakistan Kazim has passed most of his life moving from country to country. He has experienced the life of Islamabad, Tokyo, New York and Geneva.

Currently he is a student in the Swiss Federal University of Technology, Lausanne studying Electrical Engineering as a major and Management in Technology and Entrepreneurship as a minor.

ULUGBEK KAMICOV

Ulugbek Kamilov is currently M.Sc. student majoring in Communication Systems at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne (EPFL). His area of specialization is signal and information processing. Ulugbek has diverse international experience in engineering and software development, including his experience as a software engineer in Microsoft. Throughout his career Ulugbek has had a strong interest in entrepreneurship

FELIX A. HUGUENIN

Felix A. Huguenin was born in Winterthur, Switzerland. In 2009 he received his Bsc. at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology and since September 2009 he is completing his Master degree at the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne in Electrical Engineering. He joined all4student in September 2009, later performing various functions within the company in the French speaking part of Switzerland.

MARKETING

MARKET IDENTIFICATION

All of the members of all4student team are currently enrolled in various sections of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (EPFL) and the project has started out from our own frustrations with respect to the lack of easy information regarding student opportunities. We felt like much of the practical information aimed at us was scattered across numerous websites on the internet, offices on campus, and student oriented organizations, which makes it difficult to find. Hence the need to create a coherent set
of services which would be easily accessible and could provide students with means to succeed with their academic life. The most obvious solution then was to propose an internet portal designed for students, by students.

However, as for any business that aspires to be successful, there comes the need for revenue, and hence the issue of sponsorship. A student website is the perfect place for many companies to advertise their services and appeal to the upcoming work force. Thus, we can divide the consumers of all4student into two distinct groups: students and partners. From the students perspective all4Student will be a free online tool, where they can find in one place the information which is normally scattered all over the web. From the perspective of the partners we will provide a paid service through which they can reach out to the student population through targeted ads or communications.

It is clear that to be able to attract partners to support our activities financially we will need a solid base of active student users. The main consumers of our services are students residing in Switzerland. As a target group the latter is rather self explanatory. Generally, the age range is between 18-34, there is an almost equal division of sexes, and the student body is distributed evenly among larger cities of Switzerland. However they may be less homogenous when it comes to the type of study, the region where they study, and whether they are students in a public or private institution.

According to the statistics provided by the University of Lausanne there were a total of 121’000 students studying in one of the 12 public higher educational institutions in Switzerland (Figure 3: Number of Students registered in public universities in Switzerland). Considering the fact that the number is provided only for publicly funded universities, we expect the actual number of students to be even higher.

In order to get a better understanding of this target group, we conducted a survey among students in EPFL. The results of our survey turned out to be insightful. Students.ch the largest student oriented website within Swiss borders claims to have over 110’000 users, both from public and private institutions, but we have found that only 20% of survey respondents use student oriented websites regularly (See Annex). At the same time our findings indicate that approximately 80% of students would like to use such
This demand combined with the lack of suitable offer indicates that there exists a gap, which our website has the opportunity of filling. Furthermore, the graph of students in Swiss universities above clearly shows that our pool of potential consumers is steadily increasing.

To wrap up this section we would like to briefly discuss our partners. As discussed above as our user base grows, All4Students will become an attractive place for the marketing campaigns aimed at students. Compared to students, partners form a much more heterogeneous group, which includes all the organizations offering products and services for students or others that are interested in reaching out towards the student population. To use our services, partners will have to get in touch with us through our website. On the website, we will provide contact information for the partners and automatic forms for those interested in standard tasks like placing targeted advertisement banners (See Figure 4: Example of automatic advertisement form).

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3 Respondents of our survey were mainly EPFL students, thus results indicated represent the opinions of the French speaking area of Switzerland.
MARKET ANALYSIS

We used two methods to analyze the market situation: Porter’s 5 forces framework and the SWOT analysis. Whereas the 5 forces framework will focus on the industry the SWOT analysis will focus on the internal and external risks and opportunities.

PORTER’S 5 FORCES FRAMEWORK

Using this framework we break down the analysis into 5 different elements.

THREAT OF NEW ENTRANTS

There are many factors which make the threat of new entrants fairly high for this market.

Firstly, websites are not economies of scale nor do they require heavy capital investment. A website can initially be started for under CHF 200 a year⁴. However, for a commercially oriented website a company might want to have their own dedicated servers, high bandwidth connections and eventually an office. Though that brings the price up it is still very low compared to any traditional non e-market.

Secondly, even though there might be some proprietary product differences they are not highly differentiable from rival products. Just about all of the free services provided by any website can usually be easily copied by another website or an equally interesting alternative is proposed. For example there are tons of websites today that propose free space to upload photos, videos, documents, emails, etc.

Another factor which pushes the threat of new entrants up, are the almost non-existent switching costs for customers. The users can stop using a website without losing much. Most of the time there is no loss at all for the user.

BARGAINING POWER OF SUPPLIER

The bargaining power of the supplier, which in our case could eventually be the hosting service of our website, is very low. There are numerous hosts to choose from and the competition among them is fairly intensive. In Switzerland itself webhosting.info reports 420 hosts and this number goes to 23'823 for the US⁵. The other supplier for our product will be the students themselves as they are expected to contribute to the growth of our portal. Their bargaining power solely depends on how much we motivate them to participate so again it is quite low.

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⁴ Domain name registration costs around $10 and web hosting from $75-200 depending on the traffic. Estimates given by various webhosting and web design services. Ex: www.webpagefx.com

⁵ http://www.webhosting.info/webhosts/globalstats/
BARGAINING POWER OF BUYERS

Once again we can consider two types of buyers. Our main buyers will be the companies which would like to target students and advertise to them through us. Given the number of websites that exist on the internet their bargaining power is high.

The other "buyer" to whom we are "selling" our services for free are students. They too have a vast choice of websites to choose from, including a few that might seem similar to our portal. Obtaining a following is very important for a 2.0 website as they depend on the user’s participation and are immune to the network effect.

Fortunately for us, according to our survey the current offerings in the Swiss market do not satisfy the student’s needs.

THREAT OF SUBSTITUTES

As mentioned before there are numerous websites on the internet and this also applies to the number of new websites which keep growing. DomainTools\(^6\) gives an estimate of 116'421'420 total active domains out of which 144'629 are new domains registered just on the single day of 14-03-2010. This suggests that a website can be easily supplanted by a new comer if competitive advantage is not kept. Therefore, the threat of substitutes is very high.

INTENSITY OF RIVALRY

From the above study one would rightly suppose that the intensity of rivalry in this market is quite high. Indeed, that would be the case if all4student were to cover a more global area. However, considering the region where all4student focuses, which is Switzerland, there are only two well known competitors, students.ch and etudiants.ch.

In a survey\(^7\) in which we asked students if they used such websites only 5% of the respondents claimed to use it frequently and only 17% said they use such websites from time to time. At the same time 80% of the respondents said they would use a website if all of the services which we would like to integrate into our portal existed on a certain website. This leads us to think the intensity of rivalry is low to medium.


\(^7\) See survey questions, results and graphs in annex
SWOT ANALYSIS

Table 3: SWOT Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERNAL FACTORS</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weakness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Low cost start up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Informed about student’s needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Strategic location</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No trade mark/unknown domain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of practical experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Requires personal information sharing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXTERNAL FACTORS</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Differences in the offered services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Low level of rivalry and the possibility of rapid development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Easy to copy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exposed to network effect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DESCRIPTION OF INTERNAL FACTORS

STRENGTHS

The strengths of our project can be broken down into the following factors:

- **Starting with low costs**
  As mentioned earlier in the 5 forces analysis the cost for starting a website is low. Additionally, the founding members of the team will not be paid until the portal starts to make money. Therefore, the portal’s expenditures are very limited.

- **To be informed about student’s needs**
  Founders are all students and therefore well aware about market needs. We know what the currents student oriented websites lack and what is attractive for their comrades. The team has few members and the organization is dynamic and can easily adapt to current needs.

- **Strategic location**
  To stay in touch with student’s needs, the team will be located right at the heart of one of the Switzerland’s educational hub. With EPFL, UNIL, IMD, IDHEAP and HES, Lausanne has the big players in the vicinities.
WEAKNESSES

The weakness of our project can be broken down into the following factors:

- **No trade mark / unknown domain name**
  At the beginning our website will be an unknown entity, therefore we may struggle in getting market shares. Our project will probably need a serious marketing investment to position the brand vis-à-vis to the customers.

- **Lack of practical experience**
  Even though the team is highly motivated and is highly skilled in engineering. There is a lack of practical experience in the field of Entrepreneurship. This may lead to bad managerial choices, or misunderstanding of some of the market uncertainties.

- **Personal information sharing**
  Users (students) will probably hesitate to share personal data until the entity is known.

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL FACTORS

OPPORTUNITIES

The opportunities of our project could be the following factors:

- **Difference in the offered services**
  Compared to the current players in the market we are differentiated by making the students responsible for the content. We push the students to participate and award them accordingly, whereas the competition is spoon feeding the students and doesn’t let them interact actively.

- **Low level of rivalry and the possibility of quick development**
  In the Switzerland’s market, there are only two well known competitors, Students.ch, Etudiants.ch. Considering this oligopoly, the intensity of rivalry is quite low offering the possibility for a new entrant to take place in the market.

THREATS

The threats of our project could be the following factors:

- **Easy to copy**
  Unless we develop a dedicated and loyal user base quickly, competitors could copy our model and propose the same offers as ours. Given the fact that Students.ch has been around for a long time and has sister sites in other countries they have the resources to change quickly and already have registered users in many countries.

- **Network effect**
  There are very strong network effects operating in the market for such 2.0 websites. Because of this effect the value of the service will increase as more user use it (subscribe to it). As long as we don’t have a portfolio of users attracting others it’s going to be a weakness confronting to our competitors.
The main impact of a low number of users when starting this project will be the difficulty to find advertisers.

**Avoiding the threat:**
Porter’s theory of sustainable competitive advantage suggests two different ways to attract customers:
1) Lowering the price
2) Differentiating the product

This market is not a price competitive market because using a website like all4 student.ch is free. The only existing strategy to avoid the copying of the service is to patent the innovative technologies that we will introduce and to increase our presence in campuses by holding stands and offering prizes on different events. At the same time we will continue to introduce more innovative ways to participate and increase our service offerings. A few are already planned as mentioned in the “Further Developments” section.

**MARKETING STRATEGY**

Keeping in mind the two distinct users of our website as discussed in the section on market identification we would like to come up with a coherent strategy to place our service on the market. We will discuss separate strategies for both groups: students and partners.

**STUDENTS**

**PRODUCT**

Our major innovation with respect to other student sites will be the introduction of the traditional social networking tools, which make online applications like facebook or digg™ attractive to the masses. All of the sections of our website will be under the control of the students, who will upload the content, rate the relevance of it, or discuss it with each other. The all4student team will intervene in the process only when absolutely necessary.

For our portal to function properly we need our users to be active, hence we introduce the concept of user status very similar to the way ebay ranks its sellers. For each activity on the portal a student will receive points, which will cumulate and will be reflected with a little star next to his or her name. The most active users will have a shiny red star, while passive users will have less or no visible stars (See Table 2: Stars and title distribution in function of points). Moreover we will reward active users with higher visibility throughout website, meaning their messages will be disseminated with higher priority on the main sections of the site. This will give active students certain reputation, on which they can rely later on when they decide to tutor or to create an event.

As a student community portal all4student has to create the image of community and for achieving this we introduce another innovative concept of profit sharing. all4student will be sharing certain portion of

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the profit with its active users through offers on our website. This will be the way for us to thank our active users, who are actually the ones helping the portal generate the profit by creating the content. This is in line with our way of creating a community based on mutual profit and solidarity (i.e. notion a bit similar to the concept of social enterprise). In the beginning we propose to share 10% of the net profit.

We would like to underline two innovative services our portal will be offering: Automatic scheduling and Instant Tandem. For major universities in Switzerland we will develop a database of the courses they are offering. This will help us create an automated scheduler that will let students quickly create their calendar by logging in and selecting classes for the current semester. Instant Tandem on other hand will aim at bringing the popular Tandem to the internet world. From our own experiences with languages we found that one of the reasons why students do not participate in this useful program is the effort required to find a suitable partner. Hence, we will provide a section which will be matchmaking students willing to improve their language skills. Moreover we will give a possibility of making online tandem sessions through the use of the skypé™ network.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERVICE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internships and Jobs</td>
<td>Here students will be able to share available offers with each other. Moreover our partners will be able to post their offers through this section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Material</td>
<td>We will create a comprehensive and self-organized directory of the study materials, including directory of past exams, class notes, cheat sheets, reports, and other students’ tips. The trick for organization will be a voting system commonly found on most of the current social networking sites like digg™ or facebook, where a user shows if something is useful by clicking ‘Like’ or inverse by clicking ‘Dislike’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night Life and Events</td>
<td>Similarly this will be a self-organized directory of events. Students will be able to say if they are planning to attend an event, as well as invite their friends to go with them. Partners will be able to create events and invite students through this section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instant Tandem</td>
<td>We will offer a section dedicated to learning languages. On this page students will be able to find a partner with whom he or she can make regular Skype conversations to improve his or her language skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Discussion Boards (Forums)</td>
<td>Self-explaining section where students can post messages and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
seek advice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Automatic Scheduling</th>
<th>This was the original idea for our website. We wanted to create a tool called “Scheduleman” for students in major Swiss universities that would act as an automatic scheduler. The calendar will be able to automatically retrieve the schedule of classes, public holidays or events.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring</td>
<td>Here students can offer their services as tutors to other students. In the long term we are planning to develop this section to the form where we can actually match student and tutor, control the whole process, thus charge a little overhead.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PRICE**

As discussed previously in the report the site will be completely free for students. This means that any student with a valid university email address will be able to join our website for free and use the services offered. Potentially in the future, we are planning to develop sections like Tutoring and Internships where we will charge a certain overhead to the transactions made through our portal, much like ebay® does. The overhead will be added to the price posted by the student proposing his service. Before posting the student will have to accept our terms of use, which will explain the process to the student. However at least initially we are planning to launch our web portal keeping these services open and observe the potential of transforming them into online marketplaces.

**PLACE**

The way our customers, in this particular case students, will reach us is through the internet. Each student will have his unique user id to log in. Afterwards he or she can use the services offered.

**PROMOTION**

Awareness of students in Switzerland will be raised through promotional activities organized across the major campuses and cities. The main tool we will rely on will be student parties/events sponsored by our website.

Moreover we will organize an advertising campaign which will include ads placed on internet and potentially in the free newspaper “20 Minutes”. These campaigns will raise the awareness for our brand name among the students and the general public. Depending on the success of the campaign, there is a possibility to design a more extensive advertising campaign within student newspapers and journals.
PARTNERS

PRODUCT

For our partners we will be offering a possibility to get in touch with students through our portal. This can be done through online advertisements, job offers, and event creation. We summarize these services in the table below.

Table 5: Overview of Partner Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERVICE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Advertisement</td>
<td>Our partners will be able to place ads throughout dedicated zones on the portal. We are planning to innovate and propose an option of narrowly targeted advertisements, where partners specify exactly the characteristics of the student they want to reach (age, university, language, and etc) (See Figure 4: Example of automatic advertisement form).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internships and Jobs</td>
<td>Positions posted by our partners will receive special privileges. They will be designed to be more distinctive, as well as placed in more visible areas of the page. Dedicated page can be designed by the company on our portal for students to apply for the position. On top of that like with advertisements the partners will be able to target their offers to a narrow group of student users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night Life and Events</td>
<td>Similarly to job and internship offers, events created by partners will be more visible overall. Moreover partners will be able to design a dedicated page for the events to create certain aesthetic image of the enterprise.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PRICE

We will offer competitive pricing for the services. We present comprehensive pricing of our services in the Sources of Income section below.

PLACE

All the services for our portal will be accessible online, through online forms, very similar to the way facebook takes orders for advertisements. For very specific deals we will provide our contact details online, to let our potential customers get in touch.
PROMOTION

Currently we are not planning any partner oriented advertisement campaign in popular media or on the internet, as our main initial task is to attract students to have a solid user base. However, we expect our advertisement campaigns for students to make our brand known as well to our potential partners.

COLLABORATIONS AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Building sustainable collaboration network is important for all4student as it will help the company to improve the quality of its services, to potentially minimize the expenses, and to extend the customer base. We will create collaborations/strategic partnerships with companies, universities, student associations and leisure places (e.g. night clubs, travel agencies, sports centres).

COMPANIES

Our most important partners are clearly companies. Besides having them as advertisers on our websites, we would be interested in creating other types of collaborations with certain companies. It is clear that to make the collaborations worthy we will have to provide those companies with some value for their businesses.

Value sought by a company depends on its field of activity; however as a student oriented web site we suspect that it will be easier for us to collaborate with companies interested in our user base.

Some of the computer manufacturers already have deals with student platforms (e.g. poseidon.epfl.ch, students.ch), offering reduction on IT material to students. It would be valuable for our portal to obtain similar deals with companies like HP, DELL, or Lenovo. Currently most of these companies are already willing to offer reduction to students, in exchange for having their brands displayed on the place of the offer. As all4student is still a young web site, we do not have much bargaining power hence we will negotiate any possible initial offer.

Another possible collaboration would be with insurance companies or banks. As health insurance is mandatory in Switzerland and the country enjoys a large influx of foreign students, offering competitive insurance deals on our site can bring extra traffic to the portal. Moreover most Swiss banks provide special interesting private banking deals to students, which in turn can be advertised through our portal and increase our user base.

Finally, we will provide possibility to contact us through the portal for any company interested in building a collaboration based on mutual interest.

UNIVERSITIES

It is clear that we will need as strong collaborations as possible with universities in Switzerland. These collaborations can potentially bring huge amount of useful data like class timetables, events listings, internship offers, and past exam materials. Hence we would be interested in being present in campuses across Switzerland to be in constant contact with students, knowing the trends, and thus keep providing students with value for their studies. In our context being present simply means that we will have to organize activities and information sessions on a regular basis on all the major campuses. This presence
will help us slowly build a recognizable brand. As a student community oriented website we expect warm relationships with universities in Switzerland.

STUDENTS ASSOCIATIONS

Every major campus in Switzerland has a large number of student associations, managed and run by students. In case when collaboration with a university is not feasible, collaboration with a visible student association is a good alternative. Moreover having warm links with student association does only benefit to our brand recognition and image within larger student community. One approach we could take to build relationships is to do sponsoring of associations. Any student association needs money or materials to function, eventually we will be able to help associations with those matters in exchange of having all4student displayed and advertised by the association.

Moreover by collaborating with associations we obtain another benefit, that of multiculturalism. Many associations are in fact gatherings of different nationalities. We could use this for some of our services such as language tutoring.

NIGHT CLUBS/BARS/RESTAURANTS

As a student organization, mostly used by young people, we expect to have large advertising capabilities for bars and night clubs. For example, students could create events on our portal taking place in some prominent club in Lausanne. As we are offering ranking systems, we could extend it to include ranking of bars and clubs, such that our members could influence bars popularity/image. Moreover we could organize some specific events in some bars through our portal, which would play a role of advertisement for that bar. In exchange, we could bargain special offers for our members in that bar.

FINANCING

CAPITAL NEEDS

all4student as any startup needs funds. In the section we will discuss the capital needs of such a society. We will also discuss which of the debt capital or equity capital is more suitable for our case.

The **Start-up capital** or **working capital**, is defined as the funding that will help a company pay for equipment, rent, supplies, etc., for the first year or so of operation.\(^9\)

Let’s see how the capital need is divided in our case for the launch of the company:

IT INFRASTRUCTURE

As an internet portal it is obvious that a considerable part of the expense will be on the information technology and its management:

- **Dedicated server rental**: a quick comparison of the market offers sets the cost to: 200CHF * 12 = 2400 CHF/year
- **Brand and Interface design**: Creating the company’s logo and graphic style is definitely one of the most important tasks for our startup, as users will have to recognize the logo anywhere. Such a service would cost around 5'000 CHF\(^\text{10}\).
- **Software manufacturing**: Many of our services do rely on databases that are elsewhere, this requires that our portal has a back-end compatibility with other services (Is-academia, Unil, etc). The cost of manufacturing can be avoided since 2 of the team members are computer engineers and can develop the portal architecture.

**MARKETING**

IT is a basic investment, but without a perfect marketing campaign our product will fail to reach its target customers. Here is a non-exhaustive list of the means we plan to reach our potential customers and their respective cost:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertisement type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online advertisement</strong></td>
<td>Adwords, the famous keyword based advertisement in Google, has a range of prices that vary according to the keyword: For keywords like &quot;Bourse d'études, étudiants, appartements étudiants, jobs étudiants, bon plan étudiants&quot; average price per keyword is 0.10 CHF/Per click AdSense is another way of displaying banners in third party websites, for instance &quot;tillate.ch&quot;, and the price is calculated per thousand displays. This method had proven to be not as efficient as Adwords. Considering the number of clicks we expect a total of 10'000CHF a year (equivalent to 100'000) clicks, which is very conceivable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>20minutes</strong></td>
<td>As the reader may know “20minutes” is the dominant free newspaper. Advertising in it, is definitely an investment that is going to have an effect on the number of visitors to our website (Figure 5). The success of 20minutes plus the fact that it is has the monopole of the market leads to high product prices, the most suitable advertisement for all4student would be a print on the 1st page’s footer, which costs 2960 CHF/day. However such an investment is more likely to happen after the first year of activity. At most a couple of prints can be made the first year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Event advertisement</strong></td>
<td>A lot of events are taking place in the campus, and we can use those as a departing point for low cost advertising campaigns. Flyers’ printing is as cheap as 200 CHF per 5000(^\text{11}).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^\text{10}\) advised by Aziz Bousseta designer in CH, youfayourdesign.com

\(^\text{11}\) http://www.promo-flyer.com/Services/Demand%C3%A9chantillonsgratuit/tabid/92/Default.aspx
PAYROLLS
During the first years of activity the team members have agreed to share equally the rights of the company but no wages are going to be given.

RENT
The rent is not going to be an expense as the company doesn’t need a physical location. To begin we will work from our rooms or garages or anywhere where we have a fast internet connection.

OTHER EXPENSES
The only other foreseeable expense is the company insurance (520/year).

Adding up all the expenses cited in this section, we expect the total cost of all4student for the first year of activity to: CHF 16,800.

PRINCIPAL SOURCES OF FUNDS:
As discussed above the expenses for the first year are over 16'800 CHF, which is beyond what usual students can gather during their academic path.

Here is a set of solutions that can be presented as Equity capital:

- Parc Scientifique of EPFL : a site integrated to the EPFL campus that helps innovative high-tech startups to take off.\(^\text{12}\)
  - The PSE can provide the location for our company as well as the help needed to find investors:
- A non exhaustive list of venture capitalists (from Venturelab.ch):
  - CTI Invest
  - Business Angel Suisse
  - Fondation pour l’Innovation technologique - FIT
  - Fongit Seed Invest
  - BrainsToVentures (b-to-v)

\(^{12}\)http://psewww.epfl.ch/fr/
SOURCES OF INCOME OF ALL4STUDENT:

Finally, let’s discuss how much money all4student is planning to make:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Advertisements:** | Hosting banners in our portal can bring advertisement incomes, namely through Google's Ad-Sense mechanism: receiving a fee for each click or each impression on our portal.  
“A common banner ad package consists of 100,000 impressions and costs from $20 to $100 per thousand impressions. Rates from $25 to $70 cost per thousand (CPM) are average for popular sites”  
And we can as well copy the Students.ch model which is roughly the following:  
Fr. 70.- (CPM= cost per 1000 contacts / banners / ad impressions) |
| **Transactions fees:** | This will be a potential source of income. For every service where some money is involved all4student will get a transaction fee.  
Basically no money is transferred through the website, but for each transaction a fee is received from one and/or both of the contract parts.  
The fees will vary depending on the service type:  
- Tutoring: no fee will be received from the tutors directly, on the other hand, they will see their account type evolve making them beneficiary of the revenues, in addition the price of their services will be shown to the customers including a small additional fee.  
- Job offers: Checking the offers or uploading them is free of charge (bonus for the uploader). Once a deal is made we receive a onetime fee from the enterprise. |

Table 6: Description of the sources of income

LEGAL BASE OF THE COMPANY

all4Student will be registered in the “register de commerce” as a company with limited liability. The so-called “S.A.R.L” in the French jargon. As the minimum capital required for such an entity is 20'000 CHF, the 6 team members will bring in their savings or loans from family and/or friends, the amount per person is around 3’300 CHF which is relatively easy to gather.

13 http://www.workz.com/content/view_content.html?section_id=515&content_id=5619
14 http://www.students.ch/fr/publicite/onlinewerbung/
15 http://www.fiduciaire-suisse.com/creation-societe-suisse/SARL.htm
REFERENCES

We took the survey before starting our work on our business plan to have an idea of student’s needs and habits. For this purpose we designed the following 6 questions:

- To get a rough idea of how much time students spend on web 2.0 websites we asked them: How much time do you spend on a social website (facebook, orkut, linkedin, etc.)?

![Survey results](chart)

- We wanted to know how they look for internships/jobs so our second question was: How do you look for internships?

![Survey results](chart)

- To understand which will be the most crucial services we asked: If there is a social website oriented completely towards students which services would you like to see?
We then wanted to know how many students would actually use such a website, we therefore asked them:
If there is a social website that offers all of the services above would you use it?

We were also curious to know if the students would participate in such a website which is our basic idea behind all4student. Naturally the question was:
If there is a social website that offers all of the services mentioned above would you participate (upload exams, job offers, etc.) in it?
The last question we asked students was to measure the satisfaction of current solutions:

Do you use students.ch or other student oriented websites?

The actual survey can be found at [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/TPYGXJS](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/TPYGXJS)

The results can be seen by going to [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) and logging in with the following parameters:
Username: shsproject
Password: EPFL2010