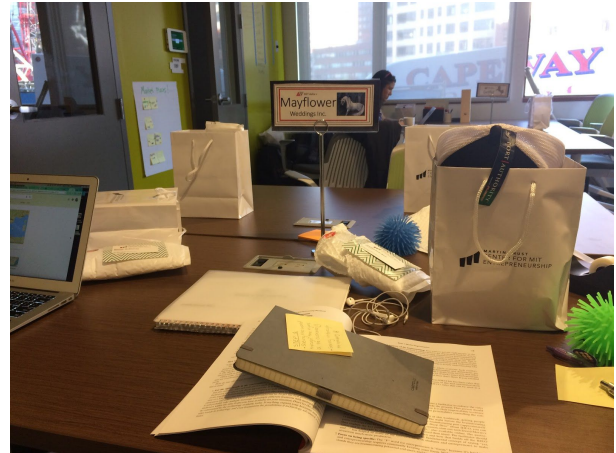


A Summer story: UNH meets MIT

1. Disciplined Entrepreneurship

Week 6/ 12 - 6/16

I know it has only been five days since I started my internship, but I already feel like I have learned a lot about entrepreneurship and wedding planning. My week first started with becoming familiar with MIT's Martin Trust Center. This space is truly magical, and the people working here seem to be very devoted. This year MIT's Delta V accelerator program has recruited more than 20 teams, lead by MIT students (mostly grad students), who will work full time all Summer to launch their business ventures. I knew my team and I would be sharing



space with other teams but I never pictured it being such a significant factor. - Believe or not , we all fit in the office. - At the end of the program, each team will be able to pitch their startups to investors, and press during Delta V's Demo Day event which is bound to happen in September. Mayflowers has already made a lot of progress to get to that point. Some of our team goals this week included:

- Launch a niche advertising campaign to test the reach of our online marketing strategy.
- Find a vehicle to enable transportation to prospect venue farms and properties.
- Design a shirt for our brand (one of our neighbor teams helped us finalize the design concept for the shirts. This is one of the advantages of sharing space with the cohort).
- Grow our venue pipeline list.

My individual goals this week were to:

1. Interview 5 couples who married recently, or are currently planning their wedding.
2. Become familiar with the wedding venues in our website, so that I can better inform prospective couples about our offerings.
3. Research more venues to add to our venue lists.

All of this goals were really ambitious but we managed to check most things off our list. On my part, having the opportunity to talk to couples has been an eye-opening experience. Each interviewee had a unique story. From a 400+ guests wedding being planned 2 months prior due to a "change of plans", to a couple losing their ceremony officiant weeks prior their wedding day and having to find another one.. They were all really heartwarming stories. The interviews also provided me with

valuable insight about how to better help couples plan their weddings in the future. The interviews were part of PMR that would help us better understand the needs and behavior of future customers.

Apart from this set of goals, I was assigned an "unofficial" assignment that consisted of reading the book *Disciplined Entrepreneurship* written by the director of the Trust Center, Bill Outlet. To be honest, it still feels kind of surreal that I get to see him every day. Meeting Bill and listening to his advice during the Delta V Kickoff event has been one of the highlights of my week. During his talk, he asked us to focus on three things this Summer "Customer, Product, and Venture". According to him, these three things would secure a successful growth for our startups. Fortunately for my team, we have been able to touch base upon all three already. I can't wait to see what we get to accomplish next week!

2. Priorities

Week 6/ 19 - 6/23

"If you manage to cross off all the things in your list and [feel proud of yourself] for it, you're not reaching high enough." - that's what our Delta V advisor, Trish told teams during the weekly marketplace goal setting meeting on Monday. Moments before that, I was feeling very confident that Mayflower was setting the bar high with our goals, but as soon as I heard the advisors say this, I realized that it was going to be a busy week for our team. The way the program works, during the first part of the Summer teams put emphasis on the "customer". Most teams are conducting marketing research to identify their beachhead market and come up with the type of persona their product/service is targeting. Mayflower has already been able to do that, so our goal during the first couple of weeks is to put the final touches to our product prototype, venues. So far there's barely 20 venues in our website, and we're trying to increase that number by almost 100%. In order to achieve this, we have been reaching out to landowners, land trusts, and farms to add to our portfolio as venue owners. Together Eileen, the operations and product representative for Mayflowers, and I have contacted about 200 new venues this week. We hoped to close at least 5 contracts within this sample, but after the goal setting meeting, I believe that each of us set up that number higher in our minds. Even though, our main focus right now is to increase our product and enhance our user platform so that it draws more couples. We want to make sure that our service matches the demands of the market. In fact, this week my tasks included contacting 5 wedding venues and interview their working professionals to learn about the state of the wedding industry (wedding theme trends, demand for venues, policies, etc.), and some of the challenges they face hosting weddings. In addition to this, I generated a competitor matrix of Mayflower's top 10 competitors. Completing these tasks gave me the chance to take a look at our company from the outside, and analyze whether our service was actually meeting industry standards while enhancing the wedding planning experience. On the other hand, apart from our surface goals, this week the team got to engage in significant discussions about the operations system we will be using. One of the topics we were discussing was what slogan would be most appropriate, so that customers don't get confused about the type of service we're offering. Similarly, we talked about what type of *conversion pixel* we should choose to indicate that our advertising is being successful, and customers are actually visiting the website because they are interested. Eileen and I thought that

we should enable users the option to add venues to their “favorite list” because it shows that they would actually use our product. Also, since they would have to sign up for an account in order to do so, we would gain access to new customer emails, which are very important for marketing and sales. However, one dilemma we had, is that we were not sure if this feature was a priority compared to the other things we already had to add to the site. The team had an additional discussion about how we should prioritize our tasks in order to achieve our goals for the Summer. I appreciated being included in this discussions because they remind me of the importance of prioritizing, and stay aligned with the company’s objectives.

3. Sales or Marketing, which comes first?

Week 6/26- 6/30

This week has been a busy week for me! As I mentioned last week, Eileen and I started researching new prospect venues. Even though, it was not easy task together we managed to add 200 new leads to our Venue Leads Spreadsheet. Well that was last week, this week we had to reach out to those venues and pitch them about Mayflower Venues. Not only that, but we also had to generate new leads too. This time we managed to add 100 new ones. Now, when reaching out to prospect venues we use two methods, phone and email. First, I send emails and then I would call them if they responded asking me to so or if they did not respond at all. – Some of the owners we would email did not check their email often so we wanted to make sure they could hear about us. – I think that sending emails was much easier than doing a sales call. Especially because I do not like to talk on the phone on a regular basis already. When sending emails, I the main challenge is creating an appealing subject title because Mayflower already had an email sample or pitching the company to venues. I was also given the freedom to change it around as it was most fitted. There were also scripts for cold calling but it I considered it more challenging because people could always ask unexpected questions. Also, the fear of getting rejected will always hunt me. Despite my fear , I have managed to email all leads with an email and cold call 10. The more calls I did, the more comfortable I became with doing sales over the phone.

Apart from doing sales, this week I also learned about a few tools that help Mayflower run effectively. Wesley is Mayflower’s software developer gave me an overview of the technology that helps the company run. I learn about analytics, CRM and, communication software. But the most shocking discovery for me was Amazon’s web hosting platform. I was not aware that Amazon hosted those type of services. According to Wesley, what makes the service so beneficial is that it allows companies to add content to their website by storing everything in the cloud. This prevent the loss of information. It also is very affordable which makes it suitable for a lot of startups. Even if I may not end up using all of the newly learned software, I appreciate having the knowledge. Who knows, maybe in the future, I’ll be part of another startup and these tools will be needed.

4. Corporate Strategy

7/3- 7/7

This week was very interesting. It was different because I was only in the office for 3 days out of 5. Given the 4th of July holiday. Even though I appreciated the extra free time, being away from my desk definitely affected my deliverables. As an ongoing project, I have to find new venues every week but I was not able to reach my goal of 80. But fortunately, I can always move unfinished projects to the following week. On the other hand, this week I was able to make progress on my sales technique and I called more than 20 venues. A lot of the people the landowners I talked to showed high interest on joining Mayflower Venues and we even reached the point of talking about scheduling a visit. It was very rewarding to see all my effort pay off. I dedicated a lot of time to sales this week but I still managed to work on marketing projects. I had 3 marketing projects, a Social Media Follows list, a Mayflower flyer for venues, and developing tests post for Mayflower Venues' Instagram. Some of the questions that rose when completing the tasks were: what kind of image and social media style is most fit for Mayflower's brand? what facts should I highlight in the flyer to attract prospective venues?, where will the flyers be placed?. Even though I was not certain about all the answers to these questions, I still completed all the tasks and received positive feedback from the rest of the team. They also answered the questions I had before. It turns out, there are many directions I could take when completing this type of projects. My teammates really want me to have the freedom to access each project as I deemed necessary and they are always open to hear new ideas from me. At the end I created two different sets of flyers but I plan to come up with different ones. Also, next week I will be creating 5 additional tests Instagram posts and I look forward to using the feedback I received to improve my derivatives.

At the end of this week, the team had a corporate strategy meeting. During this time we were able to plan the future steps of the company. I consider this very important given the uncertainty that can come in a startup company. It was insightful to learn about what is going on with MV besides my projects, it definitely helps see the bigger picture. During the meeting, a strategy map was shown and the team made adjustments as we debated the future of the company.

5. "Winter is coming"

7/10- 7/14

We're now at that moment when the work is becoming more difficult and uncertainty is arising. Nevertheless, this is also the time when we have to work the hardest and challenge ourselves so we can make progress for the company. Our main dilemma is the fact that Mayflower hasn't booked a venue yet. Something that does not only worry us but our Delta V advisors. In fact, they are pushing for us to try to book another event besides a wedding before the Summer ends. Their reason, we have yet to prove that our product is actually relevant and will generate profit. They also say that our platform and tools for having couples book weddings are well design however the fact that we haven't been able to execute our business model even once is worrisome and could lead to a big

failure for the company in the future. To be honest, I haven't even thought about the risks of the company until now. I believe the advisors were bringing a good point and I can't blame them for pushing our team so that we start paying for attention to this risks. However, I also understand my teammates is reasons for not having booked a wedding yet. Our hypothesis until now has been that our low supply does not drive as much demand for our product. We have been running online ads in order to drive prospective customers to our site. The analytics show that people do interact with our site and show interests, however, we are far from our desired demand volume. Also given our hypothesis, we think that the solution to the problem is to increase our supply a.k.a signing more landowners as venue partners in our platform. My main responsibility in the company is to create this new venue leads. I have been able to do so successfully, however, the funnel from the time we find prospective venues to when we get them signed is not a short one. First, we have to cold email and cold call the leads and pitch them about our company. Even though they may show interest, it usually takes a few emails and calls in between until they agree to move to our second step, scheduling a site visit with us. When we go into the site visits we are able answer their questions face-to-face. During this time we also take pictures of the site and take drone footage to create their venue profiles online which is what couples see when they visit our site looking for a venue. Despite the challenge that this may pose, this was the first week we were able to schedule our first site visits. We booked 10! According to my team members Sam, and Eileen who were the ones taking part on the visits, a lot of the venues expressed interests on partnering with us and we also were able to get really good footage. It was encouraging to hear that despite the fact that we haven't book any weddings yet. The other side of the business, the venue side was making progress. Now, we just need to onboard the venue profiles into the site and wait to hear to hear back from the sites we visited. Hopefully we get to convert at least 5 of the 10!

6. Drone down! Drown down!

7/17- 7/21

Truth be told, we continue to be in the phase where the work is becoming more difficult, and uncertainty is still arising. But that's the beauty of startups, or any business for that matter. Since the site visits started, it has only been me and Wesley, our web development technician at the office. Being a Business Analytics option candidate, having Wesley teach me random facts about how our site is able to operate definitely makes my internship an even more insightful experience. Wesley is constantly making changes to our site and it truly amazes me how fast he is able to include new features to the site. We are constantly making changes based on what we believe will make customer's experience more enjoyable in the site. One of my my favorite features so far has been adding a "favorites" page so that users can group their favorite venues in one page and maybe come back to it in the future. Me and Eileen were really rooting to have this feature added. The thing is that there are many functions that we want to add to the site, however, given the company's situation we always have to be mindful about what features we add first. We do this according to what we as a team believe should be prioritized. Even though I'm not a founder of the company, Eileen, Sam, and Wesley always try to include me in this conversations and allow me to give my opinion which is really reaffirming of the fact that my actions contribute to the company even though sometimes I don't realize it.

Having only two people at the office has both advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, it means that we're taking steps towards our goal of boarding 60 new venues to the site. On the other hand, it means that it's harder to keep communication amongst all of us. I believe that it's important that all the parties know what's going on in all different aspects of the company so that we can address our individual and common goals. Often times, we need help from each other in order to carry out our individual responsibilities. However, it has been very hard to do so this week. We included that as our low for this week during our "Best and Worst" debrief with the rest of the cohort this week. Another "worst" we had this week is that one of our not-so-cheap drones fell while Sam was trying to film a venue. Apparently, a bee attacked him and he lost control of the drone's command. We use two drones because the batteries of the machine don't last very long so if we had a day full of site visits we won't have to face running out of battery. Fortunately, we share coworking space with a lot of talented people so hopefully, one of our fellow engineers is able to help us repair it. Because buying a new one would not be cheap. On a positive note, at least we still have a drone, and we are still scheduling site visits. Can't wait to find out next week's derivatives!

7. "Life is better on the farm"

7/24- 7/28

After this week I may be switch my major for photography so I can become a professional wedding venue picture taker. Yes, it finally happened, I visited not only one but two prospect farms! And I'm so glad it happened! We had been talking about including me into one of our site visits since the beginning of the Summer. I was actually supposed to join Eileen and Sam in one of their site visits in New Hampshire earlier this month but I had to reschedule various times (startup life!). Actually the reason why I haven't been able to join before is because Eileen, Mayflower's operations and venue expert was kind of going through "training". She had just joined the team at the end of the Spring Semester so our first Summer site visits were also her firsts site visits ever. In addition, we were trying to avoid putting pressure on the site owners by having just two people go into the site visits instead of three. Also,, somebody had to make sure that the company was not falling behind in the rest of its business operations. And that was Wesley and me. Now, when I was finally able to join Eileen on one of her site visits, I was responsible of taking pictures of the two sites. We usually take at least 200, just to make sure we get all we need. It was interesting because it was kind of cloudy and gloomy that day but by the end of our second farm visit the sun came up and the site looked gorgeous. (It was also at this moment that our camera lense became blurry out of nowhere but we were able to solve it after wondering for a good 10 mins... it just needed a reboot!). You could tell it was natural food that was being harvested because of the smell of vegetables. I also took pictures of some cows, donkeys and goats on the previous farm and a fully furnished barn. The barn was ready for somebody to move in. Apart from enjoying the beautiful sights of nature, I was also able to meet the people that make it possible for these farms to operate the way they do. Some of them had a lot of questions, but that could be considered a positive thing because they were showing interest. For my part, it was awesome to meet the people behind all the spaces I have been researching online, and who I have been reaching out to over emails and calls. It definitely makes a difference to experience first hand one of the most pivotal parts of the company.

Lastly, another important event that happened this week was that Mayflower Venues had its second board meeting. As part of the Delta V accelerator, teams have to present different aspects of their company to a group of board members composed by industry experts and entrepreneurs as a way to show the progress the company is making. On this meeting, we had to present our product in depth and explain our business model. Depending on the score that we got from the board we would receive a certain amount of funding. On this meeting teams were also aiming to recover the funding they did not receive from the first board meeting so the pressure was high. I'm happy to say that we were able to receive a high score again. This was also my first time attending this type of meeting and I must say that it was really informative. I look forward to using the presentation strategies I have learned from seeing Wesley, Sam, and Eileen present.

8. Change of plans

7/31- 8/4

As I mentioned in previous post, Mayflower hasn't book a wedding yet and being that's the main point of our business that's worrisome. At first our hypothesis was that it was due to our low supply. At the moment there are only around 20 venues on the site, so our main goal for the Summer was to increase our venue partners. However, as time went we realized that signing venues is a long and demanding process so maybe we should look for other ways to attract couples to our platform as we try to shorten this step. We enabled new features and changed some designs on the site. Per example, now couples can book tours directly and they can also take a "test" about their likes so that we can send them venue recommendations through email if they are indecisive. Furthermore, this week we officially "activated" our social media pages in Facebook and Pinterest. Pinterest its know for being the lead source of inspiration for couples looking to get married, so it was our first target. As the marketing and sales intern, I was put in charge of Pinterest. This week most of my work consisted on building our profile and creating the perfect boards and pins. Now, I'm a vivid fan of social media but fun fact, I have never really pursued Pinterest so I wasn't familiar on how to use it. However, I was really excited to build Mayflower's social media presence so I took into the task of "cracking the Pinterest code". For the all week I dedicated sometime every day to research tips and tricks on how business use Pinterest to their advantage. In summary, once your profile has been build and you're comfortable with repins the next step is to create YOUR own pins. I already have a couple of ideas for these but I probably won't get hands on them until next week.

In addition to doing research about Pinterest, I also started another 2-week research project but about Mayflower's product and how it stands on the market compared to competitors. I was really excited about finishing my internship doing all this marketing research because I am able to practice what I am studying. One of my favorite parts of this week was being able to sit with Sam, who used to work as a marketing expert in Google, and have a Marketing Research 101. During the brief lesson we went over some of the marketing research tactics and tools available currently. Since I'm a marketing student I was already familiar with most of them but I was thrill to learn more about Big Data. Big Data is the one that I would use the most for my research assignment. I do

think that we should learn more about big data in the classroom since it's the latest and most used tool in PMR right now. I'm looking forward to present all that I find next week to the rest of the team.

9. It's the seasonality

8/7- 8/11

This week I had not only one but two research assignments to complete. The first one even though unexpected, was really easy to research and also very insightful. It was related to the challenge we were facing receiving inquiries from couples. We were trying to find the reason why people were using our website but never booked a venue or did not ask questions on the chat box. We could only make many assumptions so we decided to ask experts. The team asked me to do some product research and call 10 venues to ask about the times when they received more inquiries about their venues, when they scheduled the most tours, and when they hosted the most weddings. Mayflower had already done research about seasonality before but as startups there can always be something you're missing. After calling professional venues, the average response I got was that since couples tend to get engaged during the holidays (November - March) that's when the wedding venues tend to receive most requests, even though most weddings happen during the Summer. The team found this insight really valuable because until now we generally expected there to be a higher demand for venues during the Summer since it's when most weddings happen. However, the results from the research proved our assumptions were not completely correct. At the same time this finding made us feel less uneasy about the low traffic we were receiving because it meant that we were not wrong when we decided to focus on increasing our number of venues. Actually, we were kind of preparing for the seasonality pick up in the fall. Mayflower actually built a "fake" website last fall to test if there was demand for a business like ours. In fact, back then we received tons of traffic and people were asking questions. Therefore, the results from the research are certainly valid.

The second research assignment I had this week was the one I mentioned on the previous post. Mayflower wanted to find out whether our product aligns with what customers are looking for. We were especially concerned about whether we were using the right language for our product features. For example, the prominent names for venue styles (private home vs. estate, lake vs. waterfront, etc...). And also whether there were features or aspects of a wedding venue business model that we were missing. For this research I used a lot of customer review forums to see what customers of businesses such as Airbnb or Peerspace were saying. Even though these businesses are not centered on weddings, some of their spaces are available for this type of events and after all, Mayflower's service consists of connecting engaged couples with open space venues. After completing my

research I presented my findings to the rest of the team. I also presented my Pinterest research results. The team gave me very positive feedback and said that they learn a lot from the research which we would be applying to our business operations soon. I was very happy with the feedback that I received. It is rewarding to hear that the work I'm doing is actually helping the business make progress. Now, it looks that I'll continue doing research on my last week. It'll be specifically about marketing techniques wedding venue businesses are using on their venue profiles. In theory, it will be about product placement but on the sites. I'm pumped to see what I find!

10. Last week at Delta V, MIT :(

Week 8/14- 8/18

I can't believe my time in Delta V is coming to an end! Being part of the Mayflower team for the Summer is truly been an amazing experience. Even more amazing than I would of imagine. I can still remember how stressed I was last Spring semester when I was looking for internships and wasn't sure if I would end up getting one. I pretty much did everything there was to do. I went to the UNH career fair, attended many interview prep workshops, scheduled many real ones, resume review sessions, asked for recommendations, sending job applications, etc... It was not easy, but all the hard work definitely paid off! It's not only working with Mayflowers but also being part of the all Delta V 2017 cohort. Going through start up trouble at the same time as other teams definitely made a difference. I was not only able to meet other people,, such as interns like me but also learn about other business sectors otherwise I would know nothing about. Because while Mayflower was discussing our new marketing strategy or ways to make venue owners access the contract more easily through the site, teams such as Just Roots were in a video conference meeting with their artists discussing how their art would get "shipped virtually" from India. Or Alba was sending out surveys to their babysitters to receive feedback about their experience using app. Or W8X was making a prototype of their new workout machine. It was really and truly such a humbling experience and also very rewarding. This amount of exposure allowed me to get out of my Mayflower bubble every now and then and learn from other teams.

As a cohort we would help each other, since each of us was an expert in different sectors. I loved to witness the cohort helping one another. I myself, was able to help other teams a couple of times. I made friends with a team from Mexico and since Spanish was the first language for both parties, we bonded over that.

In the cohort we all celebrated our individual wins and also lamented our losses. But at the end, everything was a lesson. Seeing other teams accomplish their goals or working around their problems was a constant reminder that anything is possible if you work hard for it.

For my last week at Mayflower, I presented research about the strategies space rental companies use to place their products online in their site. In addition, I generated new venue leads and wrote a blog post for Mayflower's newly installed blog! Hopefully, it gets published!

As an intern I had a set meeting time every Friday, to present my weekly derivatives to the rest of the team and then receive feedback. This would also be a time to reflect on my upcoming projects and debate whether they align with the upcoming weekly goals of the company or not. But sadly, being that this was my last week, there wasn't any planning left to do. However, I was given the chance to reflect on my experience interning for Mayflower and offer my own recommendations on future steps the company should take based on the research I have been doing and my experience. I believe that Mayflower is the right path to success. We haven't been able to book a wedding yet, but that was also due to seasonality. With the engagement coming upon us and the public presentation at Delta V's Demo Day, I'm certain Mayflower Venues will book their first wedding soon!