

Paid Internship at a Startup Blog

Minim Inc. in Manchester, NH

Week One

5/28/17

As my first week at Minim ends, I have started to reflect on the many exciting things happening at here and at Hitchcock Management. Right away, I have felt very welcomed into the tight-knit group of administrators, developers, advisors, interns and designers that make up the organization. I look forward to building a relationship with each member that comes from a diverse and impressive background in the New Hampshire startup community and beyond.

As an incoming sophomore at UNH, I still plenty of time to decide on the details like my academic focus and long term career goals. Because of this, my current objectives center around experiencing constant growth, both professionally and personally, in whatever ways possible. This internship has already proved to be an outlet to do just that. After only one meeting prior to beginning my position, it was evident that Minim employees are less concerned with my technical skills and more concerned with my interests and developing tasks for me that would best cater to them. I have already been given the opportunity to complete real and important assignments that will have a lasting impact on the company.

One of the many benefits of working at a startup company is the constant shifts in roles and responsibilities every day. They give you the tremendous opportunities to develop a well rounded skillset to help add value to any organization. Week one consisted of various tasks that exposed me to the true complexity of bringing an idea from dreams to reality. I've been able to research the current bottlenecks in the industry, contact major players and competitors, and define what value Minim will bring to the table.

I learned that in order to grow quickly and efficiently, you need to constantly analyze your progress and set long and short term goals. Every day there are standup meetings taking place throughout the building, each discussing a different topic and plan. These meetings have been a great way to learn about the dynamics of the industry, understand the current hurdles that need to be overcome, and get a glimpse of what will come next. They allowed Cody and I to get consistent feedback on our progress; what we are doing well, and what needs improvement.



Tasting Millworks Coffee cold brew blend in the office.

Alpha Loft's Startup Shindig was a perfect way to top off an awesome first week of working in Manchester. The whole team was able to explore Dyn's headquarters and network with various entrepreneurs and businesspeople. We got to watch several startup demos, each with a promising vision to disrupt their given industry. Hearing about the contributions that the UNH community has made to the startup ecosystem further assured me that my decision to get involved in the ECenter will continue to benefit me for years to come. It was also really neat to see the same people I work with in the office on stage presenting entrepreneurs with their Millworks Fund prizes.

Week Two

6/4/17

As week one came to an end, Cody and I received new objectives and feedback that prepared us for another exciting week at Minim. My time is split up between a variety of unique tasks that I switch between throughout the day and throughout the week. This has been a great opportunity to dip my feet in many different aspects of the startup. My main focus since beginning my internship has been on researching the financial records of our competitors. Minim is an agent built into internet routers that helps households monitor every device connected to their network and protect against attacks. It is being sold to internet service providers because the majority of consumers lease their routers through their ISP. By analyzing the SEC filings and other financial records of ISPs, our company is able to understand the money being wasted on poor device management and see the money being invested in similar technologies.

Another focus has been to find conferences around the country to network and demo our product. The nearest conference is at the end of June and I have spent the last week preparing all of the booth essentials that will need to be ordered. This included furniture, signage, goodies, CRM scanners, collateral, and utilities. A detailed game plan is essential to making the most out of a conference.

On the marketing side of startups, Cody and I have been able to learn how to customize web templates to optimize site traffic. After purchasing a Hubspot account, we have started to develop landing pages, contact pages, and additional information on our product for customers to view. We have also begun to experiment with customer relationship management software to help organize our leads. Aside from my main objectives, every day has been filled with interesting mini tasks that keep the day interesting. Next week I'll be attending a conference in Boston with Jeremy to learn about the bottlenecks involved in financing cannabis dispensaries. I'm also helping with the restoration of a Factory Five Mk4 sports car. Each time I come in, I'm presented with the opportunity to learn a new thing about a different industry or facet of a business and I couldn't be more happy!

Week Three

6/11/17

Week three brought on even more new and exciting challenges to conquer. First thing on the agenda: moving upstairs. Hitchcock Management is in a newly purchased building residing at 848 Elm Street in Manchester, NH. Over the past month, loads of renovations have been done to the offices. In my first week, everyone spent several hours moving our belongings from the third floor to the second floor while the space was being remodeled. This week, the project was done and we once again lugged everything back to where we started. The space had several walls knocked down, new carpeting, and a fresh coat of paint to top it off.

Once we were settled back in, I began to dive back into my main focus of planning the company trip to the Smart Cities convention in Austin, Texas. I've been tasked with planning every portion of the excursion and it has proven to be a learning experience. I've had to coordinate the installation of carpets, proper furniture orders, exhibit staff forms, hotel reservations, and more. The goal of the trip is for Minim to hopefully meet some professionals in the embedded systems industry and make some valuable connections that we can use further down the road.

Aside from my event planning assignment, Cody and I were given a new opportunity to learn more about marketing. In the early days of our internship, we were encouraged to take Hubspot's free Inbound Marketing Certification class online. It covered all of the essential B2C marketing tactics; from building a buyer persona to proper SEO techniques. The only problem was that Minim is not a B2C company. We are selling to other businesses. This means that the techniques, rules, and jargon can be vastly different.

Our mission was to begin a research project to slowly piece together the buyer persona of who we will be selling to. In many occasions, a company can have several buyer personas. It is important to understand the difference between each of them and develop different tactics to close a sale for different types of

buyers. It requires an immense amount of research to define a B2B buyer persona, and even more research to identify their key drivers and how to capitalize on them.

Being a freshman business student and only studying B2C marketing techniques, I have to admit I was a little naive. All of my training was pointing me in one direction: surveying customers. I had read all about contacting as many people in the target demographic as possible to get an idea for what your ideal customer should be. A great way to do this is by formulating key questions and calling your customer base.

I dove right into the assignment and began calling numbers from all around the country from the database I had collected. I asked questions, wrote down replies, and categorized everything about my phone calls. When it was time for our team stand up, I was eager to share my findings. Little did I know that what I did was not proper practice at all. Reaching out to customers that have not been touched by your company's sales channel is a long and delicate process. I rushed to get the results I wanted, and my team was disappointed. It was upsetting to think I was doing the right thing, only to find out that I was jeopardizing valuable sales leads. With that said, I'm glad it happened because it was an important lesson to learn about patience and due diligence.

Once I was through with my marketing blunder, I was able to end the week on a great note. The whole team was taken to Ben & Jerry's to enjoy some ice cream on a hot Manchester day. We had a relaxed afternoon full of reflection and laughter that made put me at ease. Just like that, week three was finished and it was time to enjoy the weekend.

Week Four

6/16/17

Week four had some pretty exciting events and activities. As an entrepreneur, Jeremy is always looking at the risk and reward of pursuing a variety of different ventures. His interests span across many different subjects, and his opinions tend to shift as he learns more about them. He has gotten the interns involved in these subjects in some fun and interesting ways. Often he will tell us all to look at a small company and analyze its financials, structure, and services and ask us how we would bring it from “x” customers to “y” customers if we were CEO. It's always a fun exercise and as definitely sharpened my research and problem solving capabilities.

The newest challenge consisted of two different industries; higher education and backend cannabis business. For higher education, I was eager to learn more about ways that it could be improved. I felt that it would be a great exercise help prepare me for future work in this field if I am accepted into University Innovation Fellows Program. Backend cannabis confused me a bit more at first, but the more research I did, the more visible the problem became. As legalization efforts rise across the U.S, many states in which it is legal still struggle to run successful businesses. As it is still federally illegal to operate a business like a dispensary, banks will often refuse to fund them for fear of the legal risks involved. This means that many of these businesses operate in all cash; their inventory, payroll, taxes etc.

I'm always open to learning about new popular areas of investment, so when I was invited to accompany several other team members at a private equity conference put on by a law firm about the cannabis middle market, I was very excited. It would be an opportunity to hear professionals in law, policy, and retail all share what is going well and what needs work in the industry. The conference was in Boston, so I expected we would drive down or take a bus. Little did I know that I would be spoiled and get to try a form a transportation that I've never used before; a helicopter. We flew down at 6:45 am from Manchester and made it to Logan by around 7:20 am. It was a treat that I'll never forget.

The conference was full of valuable insights. I heard policymakers share their progress, entrepreneurs pitch their products and services, and critics ask intriguing questions. There were dozens of topics at the event that had never even crossed my mind. Entrepreneurs battled the stigma of cannabis, pushback from local and federal government, and the lack of education about the industry. Although I left the conference with more questions than answers, I was still happy to attend. I hope to attend similar conferences for other industries in the future.

At the office, Cody and I continued to dive into our research about our competitors and potential partners. As the first event to for Minim to showcase the product and network with potential clients approaches, it has been my job to make sure everyone knows where they are going, what they are doing, and who they should be speaking to. I've had to cross reference loads of lists that Cody and I have put together over the last month. It was finally becoming clear why each piece was so important. I'm excited to see how our team will make out and what connections will be made at the event!



Week Five

6/23/17

As I finished by fifth week at Minim, I was astonished to realize that I am officially halfway done this internship. It seems like just yesterday I was meeting my coworkers and learning the ropes around the office. Now the team is busy working on a handful of different projects, each of which I have been lucky to share both big and little roles.

Much of last week was focused on preparing the team to officially launch Minim out of stealth-mode and into a recognized startup. This has required and immense amount of effort from Cody and I as we finish developing the website and learn how to properly use our CRM system. If someone asked me six months ago if I thought I could get an attractive website running and implement a CRM system for a team of ten people, I would never have believed them. With the guidance of our team and our conferences with our CRM provider, we made it happen.

On Monday morning, the company officially went live. Our website became available to the public and we began to see visitor traffic steadily increase. It was definitely an exciting day at the office. Now that our marketing efforts were officially under way, it was time to learn to take our leads and channel them through the sales pipeline into customers.

This week I also learned a valuable lesson about the constant adjusting of objectives and strategies that goes into building a new company. Within my first week at Minim, I had been developing an in-depth game plan for a conference that several team members were planning to attend. I ordered all of the furniture, utilities, promotional items, hotel rooms, and many other things to prepare my team for the trip. Unfortunately, plans changed and the conference was no longer an event that lined up with our current goals and objectives. With just a few days notice, I had to cancel all of our orders and collect refunds for as many purchases as I could. Although I put a lot of work into the coordination of the trip,

it was encouraging to see that our management has a very clear vision of what is most important to the company as it officially launches.

Week Six

6/30/17

Week six was short and sweet. With the Independence Day weekend right around the corner, I was spoiled enough to be starting my vacation earlier than most. I left for a camping trip on Thursday and got to enjoy a long six days before heading back to the office.

Even though it was just a three day week, there was plenty of excitement packed into a short time. We were featured in the news for the first time on BostInno and Xconomy, both publishing stories about “Dyn founder’s new IoT startup that plans to tackle IoT security.” It was really cool to know that I played a part in the coverage as our website visits spiked that very day.

As prospects began to fill out forms to hear more about our company, Cody and I helped the rest of the team members integrate our CRM into their email and begin to reach out to potential customers. There was no shortage of meetings set up before the beginning of the long weekend.

Week Seven

7/9/17

Week seven at Minim rolled by at a steady pace. Everyone was glad to be back from a nice vacation and get back on our grind for a quick three days. As the CRM's implementation neared completion, the team began to settle into their roles of reaching out to potential prospects. This meant that Cody and I were constantly on call to answer questions and resolve issues, since we have been the most heavily involved in the CRM. On top of that, we spent the majority of our time gathering as much intelligence as we could for the dozens of companies attending the National Cable Television Cooperative Conference. The conference, set for the end of July, will be swimming with potential leads for Minim to continue to implement their pilot program on or get advice on our product. We have spent days picking through databases to find the perfect prospects to reach out to, both during and after the conference. On top of this, several of the engineers will be attending a tech conference to learn more about the technology that our product works within.

Progress is continuing to be made on the product. Several advances in the UI marked huge milestones for the company this week and everyone was very excited to see what comes next. As the internship comes closer to the end, the team has reflected on Cody and I's roles and began some discussions of the possibility of extending our positions. Whether that happens or not, I'll still be very grateful for the responsibilities I've been given and skills I've acquired thus far. Katie and I met one on one to discuss what I liked and disliked about my position and offered me guidance on many career related questions. It will be tough to leave a job that has been so unique compared to my previous positions. My hope is that my time here will serve as an important stepping stone into more positions that will push me to develop professionally and mentally as I continue my college career.

Week Eight

7/16/17

Week eight at Minim got off to a bit of a strange start. We were informed that as of today, our COO, Katie, will no longer be with the company. This came as a huge surprise to me, as I had not heard any news of this happening beforehand. I do not know the specifics of the staff changeup, nor is it any of my business. However, it is something that will definitely have an impact on my day to day work within the company because she was who I reported to directly for new tasks. From this point on, Jeremy is expected to get more involved in daily operations in the office. Whatever the reason for the exodus, I am confident that both parties felt it was for the best for Minim. I've come to learn that in startups, roles and responsibilities constantly adapt to the current needs of the company, which can sometimes change the demand for a certain position. It is a natural part of any workplace and I wish her the best in her future endeavors.

Cody and I began work on another new project in the office. Since the announcement of his new startup, Jeremy has gotten lots of interest from his friends and coworkers. He has received a handful of IoT device donations; surveillance cameras, automation devices, fancy routers, and motion detectors. The engineers' current focus at Minim has not been in IoT security, but in perfecting the application to view and understand the devices on a network. As this project progresses, there will soon be a need to emphasize the security aspect of our product. Because of this, we have created an IoT test lab in the back room of the office. The purpose of the lab is to connect a multitude of IoT devices to an isolated network and experiment with them on different routers and configurations to learn more about how they work. First, we built a metal shelf and fastened ethernet and power cables to it. Then we set up several LAN ports and a router to easily switch connections between many devices. We had a lot of fun setting up some of the devices, like the Nest security camera, which took plenty of screenshots of Cody and I laughing as we untangle cables and troubleshoot problems. We also had fun using the mobile applications for these devices to automate tasks. By the end of the day, we had lamps turning on and off from sensing motion across the room.

Week Nine

7/23/17

Finishing up my second to last week at Minim was a strange sensation. It felt like only yesterday that I was meeting with Jeremy's Executive Assistant, Brianne, at the ECenter to learn more about the start of the internship. With that said, I can say with confidence that I am happy with the outcome of this internship so far. I have some made great connections within the company that I look forward to nurturing throughout my career. I've learned things about home networks and hardware vendors that I never even knew existed. I've learned how an entrepreneur divides his or her work week to maximize effectiveness. Most importantly, I've learned how to stay curious and constantly search for new questions to answer ideas to ponder.

Aside from my previous projects, this week I focused on a few new objectives. Minim is at a stage where the it is ready to reach out to consumers and receive some validation and feedback on the service we provide. The company's product is being constantly tested and improved every day, but in order to become perfect, additional pilot programs need to be set up. Aside from the handful of deals being worked on currently, it is up to me to explore different avenues for obtaining new pilots. To do this, I've been focusing on different ways to find and approach companies. My two latest ways have been through rural electric cooperative companies and targeting ISPs with a specific set of hardware. I've spent several days compiling data and explaining why these avenues could be viable.

This week also showed the advantages of working above a startup incubator. I was able to meet a founder of a blockchain-based streaming company next door and set up a meeting next week. He had previous came to pitch his company to the Rines Fund last Fall. I'm extremely excited to pick his brain and hear about his company's progress since that meeting.

Week Ten

7/30/17

With week ten over, Cody and I are still having a hard time understanding how the time went by so quick! Our last five days of the paid internship program were bittersweet. Time went by slow as several of the engineers were in and out of the office on various tasks. My main mission of the week was to draft and send outreach to several prospective clients on behalf of the CEO. I was delegated Jeremy's email and carefully crafted messages and responses to individuals. It was a bit daunting making sure that there were no grammatical or spelling errors, but it was great practice to get an idea of how to reach out to sales prospects via email. We began our outreach primarily with attendees of the conference that Jeremy had spoken at during the previous week. So far there has been one response, but I'm hopeful that there will be more.

On the engineering side of things, the Minim app finally got approved to be listed on the app store. This was a really great accomplishment for the team. It's much more difficult to get apps on iOS than it is on Google Play, and they had been working on the application for weeks. It's another great step in the right direction towards securing more pilots to test out product.

This week we also got our second piece of news coverage. This time, it was from the Union Leader. They spoke about Jeremy's history and about the content on our website. With more press directing prospects to our site, it's important that we are filling it with more content and tracking every lead we get. A near future project will be to add additional team members and make the site easier to navigate.

This week the team also got the chance to hang out outside of the office together. We all attended the Manchester Chamber of Commerce "Picnic at Victory Park Event." Friends, family, co-workers, and food trucks were all there. We had a great time mingling, and I even got yelled at by the Manchester mayor Ted Gatsas for jaywalking!

These last two and a half months have been a lot of fun. Spending time with new faces and old in an awesome atmosphere has been far beyond my expectations. I can't believe that I was fortunate enough to land this internship and make the connections that I did this summer. Even though my official internship is over, I'm very confident that I will remain in contact with the Minim team to watch how fast they grow and prosper. I'm also excited to share my experience with classmates and staff at school in the fall.