Volunteer Forum 2014

Austin Alumni Founders Series: A View from Within

Friday, June 6, 2014
Presented by: Bill Solominsky
Austin Founders Series background

- Speaker series featuring CMU alumni that have started companies in Austin
- Event is hosted at the company’s office – food and drinks provided
- The founder(s) typically presents
  - Experience at CMU and how it helped shape their company
  - What led them to Austin
  - Candid insight into company history and future
  - Office tour
- Founder and other employees are available to answer questions
Austin Chapter and Ecosystem

• Chapter background is technical and younger
  – Over 600 alumni, over half from CIT, SCS, or MCS; over 10% from Tepper
  – Over 70% from 1990-today

• SXSW Interactive (1995-today) attendance has grown from 5000 to 33,000 in the last 8 years
  – CMU events in 2013 and 2014

• Capital Factory started by CMU alumnus Josh Baer
  – Entrepreneurial hub of Austin
  – Google Tech Hub as of May 2014

• Austin culture
Austin leadership

- **Bill Solominsky – BS/MS ECE 2000 and 2001**
  - Moved to Austin in 2005
  - Worked for a few Austin start ups and recognized Austin’s vibrant entrepreneurial culture
  - Took over alumni group in 2012
  - Met CMU founders of successful, but not necessarily highly recognizable companies. I wanted to learn more about these companies and founders, and figured other CMU alumni would, too.

- **Zack Metzner – BS/MS, Computer Science/Business, 2000**
  - Moved to Austin in 2000 to work at Trilogy.
  - Spent most of the 2000’s at different software companies.
  - Most recently founded W6 Group which does technical recruiting for startups and smaller companies in Austin.
  - Enjoy networking with other CMU alumni in Austin. (One Alumni I met at a recent event now plays in my band!)
BlackLocus

- Rodrigo Carvalho and Lukas Bouvrie (Tepper MBA 2011)
- Austin's vibrant start-up scene has deep CMU alumni roots. Blacklocus was started in 2009 by CMU alumni Rodrigo Carvalho (TPR'11) and Lukas Bouvrie (TPR'11) while attending CMU's Tepper MBA program. Their goal was to provide business intelligence software for retailers in a simple and intuitive interface. The company moved to Austin in 2011, and a year later they were acquired by Home Depot operating as Home Depot Innovation Labs.
SquareRoot

- Chris Taylor (CS 1995)
- Austin's vibrant start-up scene has deep CMU alumni roots. Long before big data was a catchphrase, CMU alumnus Chris Taylor (CS'95) was bringing data to the forefront of business. Chris bootstrapped Square Root in 2006 with the goal of transforming the way companies utilize their data. Since then, Square Root has developed products and services to help more than 100 companies make data an actionable part of daily operations.
- The company shows no signs of slowing down. In 2013, Square Root ranked 41st in the software category on the Inc. 500 list of fastest growing companies, and in 2014 it was selected as one of the best companies for which to work by Texas Monthly.
Upcoming Founders Series

• SKYLIST, Inc
  – Josh Baer

• Thinktiv
  – Jonathan Berkowitz
  – Justin B. Petro
  – Paul Burke

• DataClay, LLC
  – Arie Stavchansky

• W6 Group
  – Zack Metzner

• Cork and Co
  – Kevin Kettler
Lessons Learned

• About 20 alumni at each event
• Hosted at company offices
• Meet and greet prior to presentation
  – Informal office tour
  – Food and drink
• Many company employees also attend
• Include founder’s story, especially as it relates to their experience at CMU, not just company history
• Recruiting for company
• Looking to bring in other peer alumni networks