

This is BYOBiz: And this is Jeffrey Bartley who's figured it out.
By Emily Cummings

Still in its infancy, the BYOBiz program is already turning out some really extraordinary ventures. Bob Bloch, Director of BYOBiz, has been working on the program since the second year of its development and is ecstatic about where it is today in its fourth year.

So what is BYOBiz, really? Well, what it seems to be, more than anything else, is an invaluable resource for students. It is especially useful for those who have some great ideas but aren't really sure what to do with it yet. Bloch explains it like this, "A lot of students will have a moment when they think of this really great idea. But then they don't know what to do with it. What BYOBiz does is be there when that lightning strikes."

Bloch promotes the idea that without that resource for students, there is less of a chance of them going through with it. And what a unique resource at that. According to Bloch, Champlain College is the only house of higher education in the nation with a program like this. "One of our [BYOBiz] missions is to spread entrepreneurship around campus," says Bloch. "Everyone has the potential to be an entrepreneur."

One example of a student who knows what Bloch means is Jeffrey Bartley, a recent Champlain graduate from the Santa Barbara, California, area. Bartley received his Bachelor's Degree in Business Management this past May and is now working on his Masters.

Two years ago, while stocking shelves at Price Chopper, Bartley started working on his now business, FanRanter.com, for Professor Charlie Nagelschmidt's entrepreneur's class. "Essentially, it's ESPN meets Facebook. You will have the ability to access all your sporting news that is relevant to you as an individual sports fan. You'll have access to Twitter feeds, official news articles, and the ability to rant on a wide array of topics," says Bartley.

The original idea for the entrepreneur's class was a bit different from the one Bartley works on today. Bartley and his best friend John are avid sports fans. Combined, they have over 40 fantasy sports teams in the NFL, NBA and MLB. Bartley estimates they spend anywhere from \$4,000-5,000 a year on attending sporting events, watching them on TV/internet and fantasy sports.

"We came up with the idea of a website called JJRants.com. John and I would debate back and forth, make lots of money in advertisements, become huge sports celebrities and hang out with Derek Jeter. When reality set in, we realized that there is a real potential to harness sports extremist energy on a website that was devout to the fan. We found a couple of sites that tried to do that, but weren't executing properly, and failed to meet our needs," says Bartley of the beginning stages.

The class was ending, but Bartley's idea was growing. Professor Nagelschmidt recommended that Bartley enroll in the BYOBiz program. The idea really started to take shape after that.

Bartley and his business partner and friend John realized that companies like ESPN and YAHOO!, companies "we use religiously," Bartley says, weren't giving them a fulfilling experience as a sports fan.

"We go to their sites and we're forced to watch/read their information. We thought, there is a lot of relevant information on these sites, but it doesn't give us a competitive advantage with fantasy sports," says Bartley.

Once enrolled in the BYOBiz program, Bartley started moving forward with the idea. "The best thing BYOBiz can help you with is networking. Bob Bloch helps point you in the right direction as to who you should talk to for marketing issues, legal guidance, and financing options. The program is currently not designed to hold your hand while you start your company. You work at your own pace, while receiving advice from Bloch, and your professors," Bartley says.

Bloch says of Bartley, "He is going to be successful at whatever he does. He's very bright and focused."

Bartley explains that starting a business is a full-time job. "I hired myself for my Senior Internship Class. Instead of taking an internship with another company, I was able to work on FanRanter.com. It was very convenient and cut down on stress. Let's be honest, starting a venture is a full-time job, maybe even two full-time jobs. There is always something that needs to be done," Bartley says.

The BYOBiz program is going strong, according to Bloch. "The students this year have been the best. Everyone in the group is so motivated," says Bloch.

Bloch really stresses that anyone who is determined and strongly believes in their idea can succeed. BYOBiz helps students set up goals or a plan in small steps, such as targeting things to accomplish for the semester, and then making it a reality.

To join BYOBiz is simple. There is no set application process. But there is also no credit given and everything is self-motivated. "Students who are in BYOBiz are working toward something they believe in," Bloch says.

You don't have to be a Business Major to make use of BYOBiz. If you have an idea, have a desire to make it a reality, and make time to meet with Bloch, you too can be in BYOBiz.

Just ask Bartley, who wants to thank Professor Nagelschmidt for motivating him to join the program. "I probably wouldn't have made this venture if it wasn't for his [Nagelschmidt's] class. Business plans are a pain in the butt-- but I knocked out that stone in his class," says Bartley.

Bartley also wanted to say, "My Yankees are going all the way this year." No comment from the writer.

Bartley, a huge sports fan is turning his passion into his own viable business. What can BYOBiz do for you?