



Introduction

3 Day Startup (“3DS”) is an academic program designed to teach entrepreneurial skills in an extreme hands-on environment. The 3DS program creates a living entrepreneurship laboratory on university campuses by bringing together students ranging from freshmen to freshly-minted PhDs, with diverse backgrounds, including computer science, business, engineering, law, design, communications and others. Participants gain experience in cross-disciplinary collaboration, brainstorming and ideation, and group productivity, including ad-hoc leadership and decision-making under severe time constraints. The resulting experience is just like that of working with a budding startup company. The 600 3DS alumni from eight events over the last three years have started 14 technology companies that have collectively raised over \$4 million in investment capital.

Event Goals

The weekend is designed with two specific goals in mind: kick-start new student-run companies and build entrepreneurial capabilities in students and their university communities.

Before the Weekend: Recruiting and Workshops

Before the weekend begins, the organizers of 3DS solicit applications from across the university, typically receiving 200 applications from 25+ different majors. After reviewing applications and conducting interviews, the top 45 students are invited to participate in the event. Two weeks before the event takes place, 3DS organizers host workshops on how to recognize opportunities in the marketplace, how opportunities differ from solutions, and how to execute on the customer-focused 3DS model of “sell, design, build.” 3 Day Startup alumni have succeeded precisely because they have applied a relentless focus on making products and services based on actual customer needs.

The Weekend Begins

On Friday, the participants arrive at the 3DS event site motivated to start new technology companies: students bring pre-built technology or simply an idea for a startup. These technologies and startups are usually at early stages; technical feasibility and business models are unproven. In the first few hours, participants discuss and evaluate their business ideas in smaller groups. During this analysis phase, mentors from around the community are brought in to provide their insights. Later that evening, participants vote on which ideas (usually 3-5) will become the focus of the weekend and participants decide which projects they want to work on.



Practicing Innovation

Fueled by free food and caffeine, the participants begin to convert their abstract notions of entrepreneurship into the actual practice of innovation late on Friday night. The participants begin to execute—business students model potential revenue sources and test marketing strategies, computer science students write code for prototypes, designers create branding and user interfaces, and everyone engages potential customers. The 3DS organizers coach students as they talk to over 200 prospective customers over the course of a weekend. Mentors roam about the event questioning assumptions and helping teams move their ideas forward. Saturday and Sunday are packed with action – these days are a microcosm of what it is like to run a startup, with the highs of successfully creating early prototypes and the lows of discovering a better positioned competitor that already dominates the market.

Sunday Pitches and Prototype Demos

The ideas that have survived thus far are revealed at the pitches and prototype demos on Sunday night. A panel of venture capitalists, angel investors, and accomplished entrepreneurs offers feedback. The

presentations include functioning prototypes, beta customer responses, and teams comprised of with highly skilled and motivated people. The feedback is constructive and extensive: panelists ask tough questions, identify strengths and weaknesses, and give candid advice for the road ahead.

Beyond the Weekend

The 3DS event ends Sunday night and the students leave their 3DS experience with the skills, plans, and beta products and services necessary to accelerate the growth of their businesses. The benefit to participants and their communities is ongoing. For those that choose to start companies, 3DS provides access to a world-class network of mentors that can provide advice in areas including venture capital, product design, and scaling new ventures. All participants take their knowledge and relationships back to their respective departments and colleges, thereby extending the entrepreneurial mindset to the rest of the university.



3 Day Startup Global by the Numbers

- 12 events in US, Germany, Spain, and The Netherlands
- 14 startups collectively raising \$4M investment
- 7 3DS-originated companies accepted to accelerator and incubator programs
- 600+ 3DS alumni from 40+ different majors
- 10 events scheduled for 2011

History

In January 2008, a group of students founded 3 Day Startup at The University of Texas at Austin, which is the home of the flagship 3DS event. Over the past three years, the program has spread from semester events at Texas to RWTH Aachen University, Germany; Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas; the University of Alaska-Anchorage; University of Maastricht, Netherlands; and to the city of Barcelona, Spain.