Nathanael Peterson

_I Saved a Mouse Last Night_

Capstone Project

7/29/15
Audit Report

It all started with an bad childhood experience of having to kill a mouse on a snowing winter night with a shovel. The unfortunate event eventually turned in a cute poem/story in 2011 to fulfill a writing assignment for a English class I was taking at Weber State University. I expanded the poem on the advice of another writer who thought it was too short. I expanded it to the point where it was double in length and made it more of a marketable story by adding a dog, in the fall 2014.

Once I finished the story I knew great illustrations were needed to help describe the story and engage the reader. I knew I could not do them myself, so I contacted a local artist I went to high school with through Facebook to create the images in Fall 2014. This took around 3 to 5 months of working with the artist, communicating what I wanted the images to look and feel like. It cost around $500 for 15 imagines.

At the same time, I researched publishing options, publishing houses, and printers for over five months. Thoroughly examining each possible avenue to the book could be published. Which included print on demand to local printers to foreign printers. The goal was to get the price per book to be under $4 including shipping cost, and everything else in between. However, most places I found had similar prices of $10 to $22 per book for the same size and options, such as hardback, paperback, cloth cover, or glossy cover. I narrowed it down to the two reasonable options I have, which lowered the price down to $4 to $6 dollars per book Createspace and Friesens.

I researched what the best option was for first time authors who were entering the writing world. I found that almost all authors want to be published through a publishing house, even
though they will have to complete close to the same amount of work if they had self published it but with a fraction of the profit. This is due to most publishing houses wanting the author to already have a strong following before they publish them. This is the reason why I believe most authors go through self publishing firms like Lulu, Createspace, etc. However, these have less appeal and a limited number of options such as printing material, sizes and where you can sell the book. I found another option by printing the book in bulk through a Canadian company. This seemed like the best option, for most of the duration of the BIS class’s, because of the ability to print in hardback. This format makes the most revenue, readers love it, and bookstores prefer it. But for a first time author with an unproven story, I have had trouble convincing myself and the entrepreneurship program that this was and is the best option to start with up front. Down the road it clearly is, because as the book becomes more successful I can order larger amounts, which lower the cost, and make more revenue.

The next step I took was researching how to get high quality scans of the painted illustrations. This was key to having the book look its best and the ability to make clean edits. The cost was surprisingly small amount of $7, due to finding a great price at a Weber State University print shop.

I then learned some basics Photoshop skills from watching Youtube tutorials and memory of art classes, so I could edit the images to make them clean from the lines and imperfections from the scanner. I also altered five images in Photoshop to create more unique pictures by adding, cropping, and blending images. I did this to make the story and illustrations look even better than before, which was a success.
Lastly, I formatted the book Indesign to be PDF format and entered the words to the pages to make it complete for the printing stage through Createspace.

Literature Review

Entrepreneurship

I have used the skills I have learned in the Entrepreneurship minor extensively throughout my capstone project. It has been intertwined throughout this project more than any other minor, because my project was formed during the latter end of the minor. Most of the progress I have made towards finishing the project, which is a children's picture book, has been due to this minor. It forced me to see the light when I did not want to. It enabled me to see the holes in my plans and what I was justifying because I wanted to do something, even though everyone around me was saying I was merely guessing. It has taught me to know the dangers and rewards of trusting your gut and going against what the numbers and everyone around you says and when to listen to the advice of others. I have learned that even though failures can be extremely painful, it is still better to have taken a chance and failed than not to have taken a chance.

In one of my first entrepreneur classes, I learned one of the keys to being a successful entrepreneur, is to test your product. I absolutely hate this part of the process however, yet it can be incredibly important aspect of being successful. Entrepreneurs typically guess that customers are going to like their product until it is actually tested. In the article *Why the Lean Start-Up Changes Everything*, it suggests you test your product with real customers as you build it. When I first started the Entrepreneurship Program, I wanted to have $50,000-500,000 to test an idea.
learned this is not smart or reasonable. Now, I understand I can do a lot more with $5,000 or even $500 for that matter than I ever could have imagined. Because with market testing, I can find out if the product is good or not. I did that with one of my first ideas I had. It was a sword toy. I got some concepts made from a big firm in North Salt Lake City, Metropolis Design. The Company designed parts for the popular shake bottle that mixes your workout drink in the cup. They also did a project for one of the major James Bond Films creating a briefcase with secret compartments. I on the other had was asking for a large amount of work done for $300, not close to the several thousands of dollars the company typically charged to make its normal amount of concept drawings. This experience was one of my favorites from the minor due to the fact that Metropolis Design worked with me, gave me good insight, and because I was able to negotiate the price of the quote to fit within my small budget. In return I received concept designs which I tested by showing them to middle school kids. The test was a huge success. The kids loved the toy and wanted to know what they needed to do to help make it. There was one problem with the toy. I learned to make toys you have to have $25,000-500,000 to make the molds, and you must have a mold to take to manufacturers. This was a big problem, such a big problem that I had to put the toy on hold. Though this is incredibly painful to put a great project on hold, I learned it can be necessary for the project to survive.

One trait of an entrepreneur, according to the author of *Why Startups Fail*, David Feinleib, is that “entrepreneurs love to prove that they are right.” I would take this a step further and say they believe they are right almost all the time and that they know their customers even though they have never actually talked to them before, just because their “gut” says so. This is what, I believe, they try to prove is right. I know lots of people who have this entrepreneur gut,
and I know for a fact I have it too. This is a blessing and a hindrance. It is a blessing because I am right a good amount of the time, but it is a hindrance because those times that I am wrong might end up costing me hundreds to thousands of dollars, all because I did not do my due diligence. I have heard stories from the person who started and funded the Entrepreneur program and the Center for Sales Excellence at Weber State University, Allan Hall, on how he has a room full of different products he knew would be a success that were not. If Mr. Hall gets it wrong, there is a very good chance I will too, which I want to avoid. I am still at war with this mindset though.

I also learned not to be afraid of making mistakes. Sure they cost you weeks of your life and hundreds or thousands of dollars, but you can still learn from them and maybe it got you closer to a product that customers will like. I have read and heard about not being afraid of failure in countless business books and professors, but you never get over the fear until you have experienced it first hand. One of my biggest lessons I learned was from a failure in the Entrepreneurship program, when I was allowed to launch a Kickstarter campaign by myself instead of joining a team to work on a group project. This was one of the most important things I did at Weber State University because I put everything I had into the project and had to watch it crash and burn with nothing I could do about it. It was horrifically painful, and I carried that pain around for several months. However, during that time I learned a lot about myself and about failing. That put me into what I call a higher level as a student and as an entrepreneur. According to an article in the Harvard Business School, Working Knowledge, “the fact that your enterprise has failed can actually be a badge of honor.” And can actually help you move forward with success in your career. Most big business boards have people that have been through a company
failure. They do not want a person with a “clean slate”, they want someone who has done something. I agree with this point of view. I believe the more you are willing to try, with the real possibility that you will fail, the more likely you will succeed. I feel that I understand more about failing and succeeding than most others students who are graduating. Thomas J. Watson’s says it well, “If you want to increase your success rate, double your failure rate.” At first, this seems easy and doable, but having experienced the pain of failing and knowing what it takes to truly fail, this quote becomes a tough one to accomplish.

I learned that choosing your business partners is one of the most important things you do as an entrepreneur. Picking the correct partners can make or break the business. In class we had the chance to hear first hand accounts of how successful entrepreneurs picked the right partner, which is why the business did not just survive, it thrived. I saw first hand how the others in the class picked partners because they thought they had or needed to, and I saw these partnerships fall apart. The person they thought was a good fit, dropped out of school the next semester or out of the program. So all their partner had put into the idea was basically gone. I also saw how it helped some teams do more than they could have achieved alone. Now, rightfully so, I am extremely picky about who I allow to be my partner, which is why I only have brought in one person to help me on this capstone project other than the people I paid for their services.

I also learned a valuable life lesson, that almost no one will believe in you or your project unless you sell them on it. Also, no one is supposed to believe in it either, it is up to you to believe in yourself and projects. This was one of the most painful lessons I learned. I was hoping that the department was going to jump on board with all my ideas and love everything I was saying as much as I did. This, I found, was just a fantasy. In the real world, you have to make
people believe in you and your ideas by proving that they work and will succeed. The problem with this is, it seems the only way this can be done is through actually doing it, which makes succeeding tougher but in the end it is even more rewarding.

I learned that even if you do what the possible investors, advisors, or any books say to do to succeed, there is still a big possibility it will fail. This information brings me to one of my favorite things I have learned thus far. There is a great chance you are going to fail, so you might as well fail doing it your way. There is no point in following someone else's guess of how it might work when your guess could be right too.

One of the last things I learned from the Entrepreneurship minor, which I wrote in my own words. Just do it. Give it all you have, go as fast as possible. You are going to make lots of mistakes so make them as fast as you can. Do not be afraid of failing or taking chances. Andrew Stanton the director of several great hits from Pixar, like *Finding Nemo* and *Wall-E*, knows what it takes to create something and turn in it into a success, and he says to, “fail fast, fail often.” Even though I am still getting over my fear of failure, I cannot agree with him more. In today’s world, failing is worst than bad: it is horrible. I believe that failing is one of the most important parts of succeeding in life and having a life worth living. Which is why I plan on failing fast, failing often, and failing big. It scares me to even write that, but I do believe that is the key to a successful and happy life. I am willing to bet on some big ideas and years of life testing it. To see if it works, we will have to look at the quote from the zen master, “We’ll see.”

Professional Sales
Professional Sales has taught me to read between the lines. I learned to look at and consider why a person is really buying a product, or why they are doing what they are doing because each person is motivated for different reasons. A large factor is personality types discussed by Robert Rohm and E. Christ Carey in *Who do you think you are anyway?* They discuss the four main personalities in the DISC profile. Knowing these main four will help you relate better to your customers commutation style and buying preferences. If you know that you are selling to a C personality, you know to give them only the facts and keep the small talk to a minimum. This is key information to know because if you do not know it, you might be driving away sales because you are not aware of their personal buying process. Knowing their personality type can also help you understand why they are buying. Are they buying a product for a specific task, purchasing it because of how it will make them feel, or how it will make them look to others. Knowing this information is key to selling the consumer the correct product that will make them happy with the purchase as well as the ability to follow-up for possible future sales.

Professional Sales has also taught me how to negotiate better, some classic scams and dirty tricks to watch out for. Like the example given by Chester Karrass, the author of *In Business As In Life - You Don’t Get What You Deserve, You Get What You Negotiate*. He showed that you must review every word of the fine print in the contract, so any slight changes do not trap the seller or buyer by altering the deal. The author gave a superb example of how the other side changed the word gross to net. This would have meant the person would have received almost nothing for his hard work. It is necessary to check and double check the actual contract. Because what is agreed on during the conversation of the negotiation does not mean it will be the
writing of the contract. I also liked how at the end of every day of a long negotiation, to put in writing what was agree to and have both parties read and sign it, so they can look back on it. This way it is less likely to have one party backing out of what they said they would do.

I learned in the same book by Mr. Karrass, that finding win-win deals is one of the most important parts of any negotiation. If one party is not happy or if someone gets the short end of the deal, that party will find a way to cut corners and make their deal better at the other person's expense. One might think that it was a good thing they got the lower price, but in the long run, it was because the other side had to cut back on quality so much that the product is now inferior, so they could make some profit on the deal. It actually would have been much better to pay a little more for each item and get the higher quality that was expected and needed, than it was to save the money up front.

Finding a win-win deal also does not mean one party has to pay more or less than the other. It means that you search for creative ways to make a better deal for both parties. Like delivery options. It might be a lot of work for the seller, but it is easy for the buyer because they already have an empty truck driving in that area. Working out who does what might save the seller tens of hours, which saves the company money. So the seller’s are happier and are more willing to lower the cost some because of the savings. These kinds of deals are key to having long term relationships with sellers or buyers. Without these deals, the other side is always looking for ways to make their money back or looking to get even with the other party.

Also in the same book by Mr. Karrass I learned that you must find the unspoken needs of customers to make a deal happen. What people really want from the deal is like an iceberg, 90 percent of it is unseen. The job of the negotiator is to find and satisfy those unspoken needs,
without giving too much away. This is where large transactions are made that make the other side truly satisfied.

Then there is the words you can not use, from Don Aspromonte’s book, Green Light Selling for the 21st Century. Words like why, try, and but. These kinds of words counteract what you are trying to say and do by building rapport. For instance, the word “why” makes people defensive. The word “but” cancels everything before it. Knowing these simple yet powerful tools is another tool in the toolbox of successful selling.

Art

My art minor has taught me a lot about being myself and being creative. Allowing myself to be creative is much more difficult than I ever could have imagined. When you start to be creative every person who is not, tries to stop you. This was a big challenge for me, for years and still is to this day. Trying to find out who I am while being told not to experiment, is difficult to say the least. But in the art program, I was given some much needed space to be creative.

I learned that finding your voice is one of the most important parts of school. In taking art classes I was able to learn a lot about myself and finding how to use my creative side. I learned that I can stand for eight hours at a time in a darkroom developing photographs not only for the class but also for enjoyment of creating the work. I learned it is okay to be yourself even if the teachers and students completely disagree with your opinion. I learned no matter what, you better enjoy what you are working on, and what the end product is going to be, because there is a great chance you will be the only person who will actually enjoy it.

I also learned, it is alright and even good to standout from the crowd. I did this almost naturally, but I still had to learn it was not rebellious or wrong to do so. I found that I have
unique styles for drawing, photographing, and even painting. My first class I was a nervous reck about standing out. All I wanted to do, was make my art work perfect, so I went very slow. I went so slow that I did not get my work done. This made critiques that much more scary, and they scared the living daylights out of me when I had finished work. I found that I was scared of critiques, because of my fear of being told my art was not up to par. But as time went on, I slowly found that I was able to grow as a creative person and show the art class who I really was. Even if they disagreed with my work. This sounds easy enough but it still took me four years at Weber State to achieve it.

In my last art class I took over the summer of 2015, was one of the first classes I felt very comfortable completing the assignments the way I wanted to. I was not only willing but able to look ahead at the blank canvas before me, and decide what I wanted it to look like at the end. When I first started at Weber State, I hated being pushed by the teacher to try new things or being told to draw this particular way. In that last class, I had no trouble creating whatever they told me to create. I also was able to stick to one project the entire semester. This sounds easy but as a creative person it can become very boring quickly. I decided before hand not to let it get to me, because I knew when I left Weber State, that I was and am going to have to stick with projects until they are finished. Thus I was able to prove to myself, that I am well able to do so.

I also learned, that your artwork will never ever be perfect. You can try all you want. Take days of time to tweak every little detail, and you’ll still find five more things to fix. Realizing working towards perfection was a bottomless pit, I learned when to walk away from the project. Because I found from experience you can put another 10 hours into perfecting a piece but most likely you are going to make a bigger mistake that someone is actually going to
notice. The worst part is, as the artist, you will always see the imperfections no matter how much time you put into fixing them.

I say all of this, because I had to learn that it is alright to have my project standout and have people not fully believe it in. I asked an art teacher what he thought of my capstone project and he laughed. If I had not learned how to standout, stand alone from the creative crowd, and make something I liked, I would have quit on this project a long time ago. I had to have the courage to say this is how it is going to look and then stick with the project. Because no one else sees it like I do, nor do they understand the story like I do. But the key from all of this is making sure kids like it. The first time I tested it, with an individual reading. I had only one image with me and I showed it to the child while we read the story together. The kid could not get enough. She kept asking what was going to happen next? Is the mouse going to die? This was exactly the response I wanted.

Bringing it all together, I have also learned I was not like everyone else in the business, professional sales, or art building. In the business building, they typically wanted to work for a big business, and the people in the entrepreneurship program wanted to run and own their own company that was started from the ground up. I realized I was more like entrepreneurs but not entirely like them. I lean more towards the creative side of the art building. One entrepreneur teacher thought I was so creative, that she suggested I work for a toy company, because of how many creative ideas I had. But I said why would I want to make someone else a lot of money? (I am all for licensing ideas though). But one big problem was, I did not fit in in the art building either. I wanted to make a lot of money off my work and make my work commercial. This did not bode well with the art professors or most students. I found myself in a cross roads. Creative
but not fully an artist. Business man but my main focus is not all about the money. Which is why the BIS program worked so well for me. It allowed me to make my stand in between these programs, creating a more balanced learning experience.

By having three different minors instead of one major, I have been able to have an unique experience that has prepared me for the future. One reason is why I think this way is, I do not believe I could have learned half as much, if I had stayed with just one major. The different lessons I have experienced, have helped me to understand not only the business, art, and sales worlds, but I have attained something much more valuable. I have gained an understanding of who I truly am. This I hold as priceless. It is so valuable to me that I know I can change businesses or even careers and still be able to thrive, because I know who I am. This might sound silly, but it is not to me. Allan Hall, changes businesses every seven years. Because he likes to change things up. He does not pick a business because he knows a lot about it. Instead, he picks one because he wants to learn about it or wants a new challenge and he believes he can make it succeed. He has the confidence in himself to learn or to get the people around him that know what he needs to know. Mr. Hall is not concerned with entering a new market because he knows that he can make the right deals and has the right mindset to make the business succeed. This is what I hope to recreate. Just like studying one major sounds horrific to me, it sounds even worse to stay in one field of business for a life time. I plan to take what I have learned from my diverse minors in Entrepreneurship, Professional Sales, and Art and combine them into a very diverse lifetime of learning and working.

My experiences through studying different minors has taught me to look at learning differently. I want to know a lot about various things instead of only knowing a good amount
about one thing. I believe this is the key to relating to people from different walks of life, careers, and to find common ground at the negotiation table. It also helps with being creative and writing more stories, because the more you know, the more you can create that will relate to others. I know that combining the knowledge I have gained from my unique major, along with the skills I have learned will help me in my future endeavors, long after I leave Weber State University.

Analysis


2. *What did not work?* Changing the background color of 7 images to make them have more of a night time feel. Did not get the required the $4,000 to $5,000 of funding needed to place a bulk order of the book in hardback format.

3. *What would you do differently?* Even though I started way before my first BIS 3800 class, I would have liked to have started even earlier. I would have liked to have learned more about Photoshop and InDesign, this would have taken a lot of the pain, fear, and frustration out of editing. I would have like to have found more funding for the bulk order of the book. I would have liked to test the product more.

4. *What skills and knowledge helped you?* Learning some basic Photoshop skills from several three different art classes. Knowledge about starting up a lean start up.
Negotiations skills to lower the price of the bulk printer orders. Art skills of knowing when to stop and what looks good and what does not. Knowledge of selling products on Amazon.com. Being able to understand the fundamental ideas of knowing what price you have to sell something at to make it worth your time.

5. *Who benefited from your work and how?* Children in the United States at first and maybe around the world one day, will benefit from my work. They will get a favorite children's picture book that teaches them it is good to save even a small life if you have the chance to do so.

6. How will you share your work in the future. I will share it by selling it through Amazon.com and possibley local book stores. I will also give away large amounts of copies to libraries, elementary schools, and giveaways on social media.

Appendices

35 hours writing, editing, and increasing the length of the story.

30 hours editing the illustrations in photoshop.

18 hours of setting up the illustrations in indesign and walgreens (for the prototypes).

300 hours researching printing options, how to break into the market, marketing techniques.

250 hours towards trying to acquire outside funding through Kickstarter and entrepreneurship program.
Works Cited


