

TDF Project Review

George Griffiths, June 6th 2020

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1.1. Sending students to conferences

1.1.1. Working with Gold Scholars

Arranged an agreement with Liz Simmons (Gold Scholarship Programme Director) to prioritize 20% of volunteer places for Gold Scholars at the University of Bath.

1.1.2. List of events we supplied volunteers to from Bath (Oct19-Jan20)

180 students in total

Event	Website	Number of Students
Big Data London	https://bigdataldn.com/	10
Connected World	https://connectedworldsummit.net/	15
Data Driven Business	https://marketinganalyticssummit.co.uk/	10
Dev Sec Con	https://www.devseccon.com/	20
Digital City Expo	https://digitalcityfestival.com/	20
Digital Construction Week	https://www.digitalconstructionweek.com/	10
Banking Transformation Summit	https://connectedworldsummit.net/	15
Mobile UX London	https://mobileuxlondon.com/	3
Open Data Science Europe	https://odsc.com/london/	50
Tech Day London	https://techdayhq.com/london	14
Women in Publishing	https://www.worldforumdisrupt.com/women-in-publishing-london-19/	3

These events allowed us to explore the following business models:

1.2. Exploring the staff commission business model

This business model involves charging the organisers of the conferences a commission for providing staff to the events.

1.2.1. Problem encountered:

Staffing is a critical service that event organisers depend on, therefore if we're charging for this service it's imperative that deliver it to a good standard in a competitive market, however because students are volunteers and aren't remunerated for their work, they aren't required to attend

We provided 'Big Data London' with 10 staff for a industry-discounted price of £40 per student, due to be paid after the event. Only 7 students turned up, we received less revenue as a result, and the event organiser wasn't satisfied with the service, understandably, because the event was understaffed due to volunteers not turning up.

Despite making some revenue, it was clear that the client wasn't happy with the quality of the service. If we were to use this model at scale, then it could create massive problems for us.

One idea to mitigate this risk would be to create a contract that students are obligated to sign before attending an event. In the contract, the student agrees that they must attend the event. However, the student has nothing to lose in the case that they do not honour the agreement, which presents a challenge from an assurance point of view.

1.2.2. Problem encountered:

Events generate revenue from providing data about delegates to industry sponsors who use the data to follow up as sales leads. Organisers collect this data by scanning the badges of delegates who enter auditoriums sponsored by the recipient sponsors, our students haven't been reliable in collecting this data as they have no formal training of what to expect on the day.

We've experienced two cases, one at each event, where a sponsor has complained to the organiser about the lack of delegate data that they believe should have been in more abundance for particular talks that they were sponsoring, one of the sponsors is classed as a 'Blue Chip' company in their market. The talks that the sponsors referred to, were being monitored by Expo Education volunteers. This led the event organiser having to query Expo Education to what extent the volunteers could have been involved in data going missing.

I discovered that the volunteers due to monitor these talks had frequently left their posts before and during the event, which I relayed to the organisers.

If the event organisers had paid a for a temporary staffing agency for staff that didn't turn up, they would be in a position to sue the staffing agency for not delivering the service that would have previously been promised via a legally bound contract.

Due to the fact that the event organisers had not paid for the staffing service provided by Expo Education, they have no seller to present a case for poor service to, as no contractual agreement was signed between the organiser and Expo Education – this essentially means that the event organisers legally only had themselves to blame for not delivering their data capturing service to their sponsors.

The event organisers working with Expo Education realized this, and it put them off working with us again in the future.

1.2.3. Problem encountered:

despite the savings, cost is small enough for events to justify paying for premium, trained staff.

The majority of event organisers that we presented the idea to introduce a small service charge to, were skeptical about the feasibility of it. Conferences are naturally very expensive to attend, with tickets often costing hundreds or even thousands of pounds.

Many organisers understandably want to ensure that their delegates get a five-star experience for paying such a price. Organisers say that the event volunteers model is attractive as it provides extra help for free, however if they were to pay money they would expect there to be a level of training delivered to the volunteers to ensure they understand the responsibilities of a professional member of staff at the event.

Given this however, most organisers expressed that if they were to pay for staff, they would much rather pay more for professionals who have experience doing the job.

1.2.4. Problem encountered: It conflicts with employment law compliance

By charging the event organisers for the work that students are doing, we face some challenges from an employment law point of view.

The service that we are legally providing is human resource and it is not legally possible for a company to provide human resources in the form of temporary works to facilitate or broker the connection between the worker and the employer without remunerating the worker on an hourly basis.

If we were to send students to a conference to give their time in exchange for a ticket and charging the event organiser a fee per student for example, we would effectively be making money out of individuals carrying out the service who are legally required to receive remuneration for the work that they do.

1.3. Exploring the university data collection and insights model

This idea came from working with the CLT and getting insights in to the mechanisms behind how the university's student experience strategy links to data collection on students.

The Office for Students (OfS) is a regulatory body of the UK government's Department for Education. The Office for Students play a large part in the strategy of UK universities as they have strong regulatory powers over universities that they use to mediate how much revenue universities spend on developing aspects of their community that are in line with the UK's economic and ethical expectations.

Every year, UK universities are required by OfS to spend a certain amount of their revenue on improving the access and participation (A&P) for less represented groups of young people, as well as required to create Access and Participation Plans (APP) every 1-3 years. APP reports detail how the university intends to allocate this compulsory percentage of revenue to improving A&P.

The annual APP budget for universities is expected to be split between 'Access' and 'Outcomes' for students. The money spent on matters concerning Outcomes for students is expected to improve student employability, attainment and satisfaction.

Each year universities are required to spend money on improving the employability, attainment and satisfaction of their students – I believe that this represents an opportunity for EdTech companies to create products that can be offered to universities that provide a measurable impact on improving these metrics.

I believe Expo Education has the potential to be molded into a company that provides such a service through the following products:

- Quantitative insights in to how various aspects of the student experience is improved by attending conferences.
- An option to choose which student demographics should receive priority access to attend conferences.

The overall value that I believe Expo Education has the potential to deliver would help universities to see an improvement in the key metrics that paint a picture of how good the university is. Since these metrics are used universally across the UK and often overseas, universities subscribed to Expo Education would gain a competitive advantage over other universities from a Student Outcomes standpoint.

1.3.1. Which questions do we ask?

In order to get student's feedback on their volunteering experience, we need a system of asking students the right questions. This was an interesting exercise that I often allocate time to throughout my weeks, as the types of questions that we get students to respond to reveal interesting insights for staff that analyse student experience data at the university.

An important factor that I've had to take in to account is the total number of questions to ask students, as there is a risk of creating too many and boring the student users.

I'm currently testing 6-9 questions, taking a 'Likert' measurement before the conference volunteering experience as well as during/after the experience. Once we have the two measurements, we can test to see if there is a significant change in experience due to the conference volunteering experience.

I've leaned towards trying to pick questions that have a high chance of showing a positive increase in student experience as a result of volunteering at the conference, such as:

"I have access to people in industry who can share their professional knowledge with me".

1 – strongly agree

2 – agree

3 – Not relevant

4 – Disagree

5 – Strongly disagree

If we have 200 students completing 10 questions, this would reveal some very interesting data to the universities.

1.3.2. Learning about the TEF and APP, and the data behind them specifically for the University of Bath

Being in the office, I've had insights in to how the university is approaching the Teaching Excellency Framework and the Access and Participation Plans.

1.3.3. Prioritization: collecting data that can be used to reinforce APP and TEF for the university

The university of Bath is one of the least diverse universities in the United Kingdom. In order to improve the outcomes for students in less represented backgrounds.

As a young person, university is an incredibly exciting place to be, and a big reason why is become they're so diverse! However, a perennial problem that all UK universities seem to be facing is having a attainment gap between particular student demographics.

The entire student body at the University of Bath is made up students from countries all over the world, and is a melting pot of ethnicities.

There is evidence to suggest that despite all students participating in the same courses, there are particular demographics that attain significantly less in grades, as well as earn a significantly lower salary after graduation – this is called the student attainment gap.

One of the primary reasons for the introduction of APPs for UK universities by OfS was to reduce attainment gaps across the board. Within their APP reports, UK universities must show links between how the money they intend to spend on improving student outcomes will positive impact the attainment gap for individual demographics of students.

Expo Education could be a tool that universities could use to address this problem. By having the ability to select which student demographics have priority to attend conferences, universities can direct professional development opportunities to the demographics.

This would be incredibly valuable for a university.

1.3.4. Problem encountered: the ethical challenge of accessing personal data in order to prioritize students

In my [December blog on the SETsquared website](#), I explain my plan to use the University of Bath student number that all students are issued with to access student's personal data in order to create an encrypted, anonymous ticket allocation system using personal data, in order to prioritize volunteering access for users of our app.

The idea is to create a tool that allows a university to internally and discretely specify to Expo Education which demographics they would like to prioritize access to professional development experience.

This does however in light of the recently passing of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Act, pose challenges from both ethical and legal points of view.

Ethically: categorically saying that certain students are given an advantage over others on the basis of personal characteristics is a very uneven surface to traverse, as one can imagine.

Legally: Businesses are now legally obligated to follow strict laws on possession, utilization and democratization of data linked to individuals. This makes obtaining and manipulating student personal data in order to generate profit very difficult from various technical and legal angles.

1.3.4.1. Meeting with Dr Andrew Heath, Director of Centre for Learning and Teaching, University of Bath

Met with Dr Heath to explore what mechanism is involved in presenting a business case to the university for EdTech related services that have the potential to provide value to the university in line with its Education Strategy.

We explicitly discussed the viability of Expo Education's strategy to prioritise access for underrepresented student groups in order to contribute to the university's APP projections.

Dr Heath expressed concern with the ethical implications of the university deciding which groups of underrepresented students should be prioritised.

Dr Heath also expressed concern with the legal repercussions on the University should the institution be involved in disruption of the UK conference temporary staffing market.

1.3.5. Problem encountered:

total number of conferences that fit our scope

A potential limitation of pursuing the university revenue stream is the total number of relevant conferences in the UK.

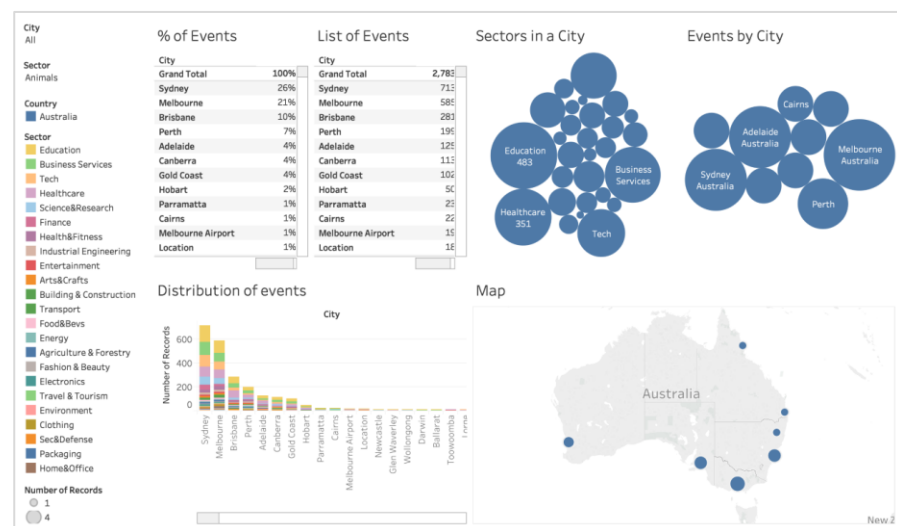
I would class a conference as relevant if it has more than 250 attendees, contains topics related to university courses, involves a minimum of 1 of the following: exhibition floor, roundtable discussions, seminars and presentations.

I created a programme that uses meeting event databases on the internet to create a list of meeting events happening in all major cities within the top 40 countries by population. The final result was 66,000 events happening worldwide, with around 3,250 in the UK. Of those 3,250, I only found around 250 taking place during academic semesters at Bath, outside of exam periods that were in the scope of events that we would look to send students to.

250 events split between 5 universities would be 50 events per year each.

A low-ball average of 10 students at each event, would mean 500 students would benefit from the events each year.

We've been asking questions about how these numbers would affect the scalability of this business-model.



An example of a data visualization dashboard of events happening in one of the 40 countries we looked at: Australia.

1.4. Exploring charging student's business model

Another idea is to charge students a small fee for using the platform.

I have not explored this option with as much vigor in comparison to the event-organiser and university derived revenue streams.

1.5. Alternative business models tested: Creating service for industry corporate social responsibility

Additionally, one idea for revenue is to create a commission-based service for corporations to meet their corporate social responsibility targets by sponsoring students to attend conferences.

I had one conversation with the UK Lead for Diversity & Inclusion at IBM via email about this one.

1.6. Creating a product

Upon starting my innovation award, I decided from the outset that building a minimum viable product (MVP) should be a priority.

1.6.1. Finding an app development company who have the model we need

There are various routes one can take to create an MVP. I chose to contract an agency to build the MVP for me. A large reason for doing so is that I have limited to no technical development experience of any kind, I also believed that I could get it built quicker.

Before setting out on searching for someone to build the app for me, I thought it would be useful to first get some ideas down for what features I would need in the app. Knowing what I needed helped me to make a decision faster.

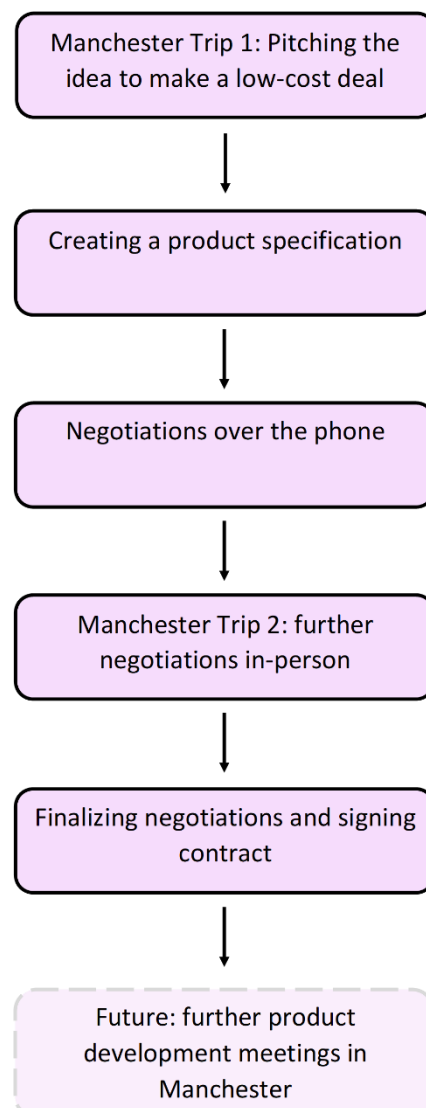
In my online search, I came across a development agency called Padoq. This company has built a white-label mobile and desktop application that can be used to manage communities of users in a social environment.

Buyers wishing to use the white-label can begin using it immediately with their own branded design. There is also an option for the buyer to participate in a design process with Padoq to work out a price for additional features that they need.

I reached out to Padoq and arranged a low-cost deal – details in my [December-February blogs](#).

1.6.2. Leading an app development deal between Expo Education and Padoq.

Further details on my thought processes throughout the deal can be found [here, in my blogs from December onwards](#).




1.6.3. Completing the transaction

I paid Padoq £5000.00 + £1000 VAT for the app.

Apple
Mac
iPad
iPhone
Watch
TV
Music

App Store Preview

This app is available only on the App Store for iPhone and iPad.



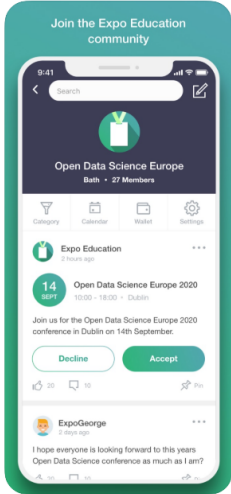
Expo Education (4+)

World Class Conferences
Expo Education

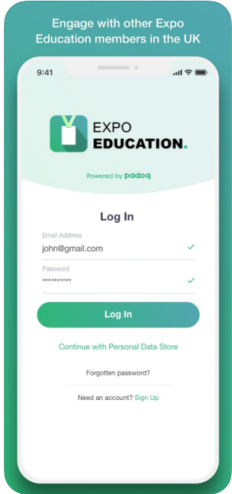
Free

Screenshots iPhone iPad


Join the Expo Education community



Engage with other Expo Education members in the UK



Attend Expo Education events



Expo Education helps students attend world-class conferences for free through volunteering.

3 WAYS CONFERENCES WILL CHANGE YOUR EDUCATION

Networking - Network with top professionals and find mentors to enhance your university experience [more](#)

2.0. Targets aiming to be fulfilled at the precipice of the coronavirus outbreak and subsequent forced hibernation of the events industry

2.1. Continue developing the product adding in a gamification twist

Explore opportunities to incorporate gamification in to the data collection to incentivize students to respond.

2.2. Place students at the following events and trial the product and to generate data to present to the university in a business case

Using the MVP developed, encourage students to sign up through the app and mediate their experience via their mobile devices at a selection of 4 events for 92 students:

Event	Website	Number of Students
Code Mobile	http://www.codemobile.co.uk/	10
Deep Learning in Finance	https://www.re-work.co/events/deep-learning-in-finance-summit-london-2019	2
Future Health 2020	https://www.futurehealth.global/	40
IoT Tech Expo Global 2020	https://www.iottechexpo.com/global/	40

As of 06/06/2020, I'm continuing to explore business models that will allow an idea like Expo Education to continue.