



Lessons Learned Birthing and Building Web Start-Ups

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One Nerd, Two Startups



- Launched 1998
- Acquired by Yahoo 2000 (as eGroups)



- Launched 2003
- Acquired by Ask Jeeves 2005

Garage Philosophy

- Solve a Pain Point
- Have Passion for the Idea
- Be Cheap!!
- Release Early/Release Often (3 Month Rule)
 - Doesn't Have to be Perfect
- Involve Your Users

Garage Philosophy

- Moonlighting limits risk
- Friends/Family funds
- Free services = less pressure
- Hire a lawyer
- Outsource to eLance/Rent A Coder

Garage Marketing Philosophy

- Wonders of viral growth
- Users are all that matters
- PR is cheapest marketing you can do
- Don't worry about biz dev
- Pay attention to and leverage blogs

Design Philosophy

- Amy Jo Kim's presentation at Etech - Putting the Fun in Functional:

<http://shufflebrain.com/etech06>

On Raising Money

- How Much?
- Raising Money Takes Time
- Friends and Family
- Angel
- VC
- Debt Financing

On Being A Sellout

- eGroups vs Bloglines
- Don't sell – be bought
- Investment Bankers
 - What they are
 - Finding/Interviewing them
 - Negotiating with them

Software Choices

- Linux/Apache
- C/C++/bash/python
- DJB (<http://cr.yp.to>)
 - qmail
 - DJBDNS
 - Daemontools
- ClearSilver (<http://www.clearsilver.net>)
- Berkeley DB (<http://www.sleepycat.com>)
- Memcached
- Avoid NFS
- Avoid table-level locking in MySQL

Hardware Choices

- Dedicated servers vs. Buying/Hosting
- Design for cheap hardware
- eBay!
- APC PDUs for remote power cycling
- HP ProCurve
- Avoid Seagate Ultra-SCSI drives
- Good phone for SSH

Architecture Choices

- Copying files vs. Client/Server
 - Bloglines News RSS Feed
- Calculate on the fly vs. Cache
 - Subscriber counts
- Memory vs. Disk
 - Notifications

Storage Choices

- Relational DB vs. Flat Files
- RAID vs. Redundant
 - ONElist/eGroups with hardware RAID
 - Bloglines without hardware RAID
- Linux Software RAID 1

SysAdmin Choices

- DNS round robin for web servers
- Hot back-ups for off-line processing
- Worry about cooling in the co-lo
- Avoid using swap

Avoid Making Stupid Bets...

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Questions?