



Creating a Company: Bedrock Outdoors™

Emma Dixon

University of Wyoming

Honors Critical Reflection

Is entrepreneurship a skill to be learned or something intuitive that you are born with? I still do not know after completing two business competitions at the University of Wyoming. My background in entrepreneurship began with my parents, as they created a highly successful construction company when I was little. Having this background helped me view creating a business as something more commonplace. I believe that anyone with an idea can start their own company. However, the success of that company can never be insured.

I initially entered the Ellbogen Competition because I felt that the outdoor recreation industry was exclusive. Through my classes in my Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management degree, I learned that there are many barriers of entry to outdoor recreation that people face. These barriers include cost, transportation, gear, education, and a lack of representation. It is vital to remove these barriers of entry because getting outside and recreating can benefit people immensely. Benefits range from improving physical and mental health to creating social relationships and a sense of place in an environment. After bringing on another student after the initial round, we made it to the final round. Our proposed business model of outdoor recreation education, rentals, and retail did not receive funding, so we entered the Fisher Innovation Launchpad competition.

In Fisher, Bedrock Outdoors evolved to become an education-focused company focused on those who may not have been fortunate enough to learn outdoor recreation skills growing up. Additionally, this model applied concepts from my Environmental Systems Science major since humans can harm the environment through ignorance, and education helps to minimize these negative impacts. This business model was markedly different because it focused primarily on reducing the barrier to entry of education and decreasing the negative environmental impacts that

can stem from an increase in outdoor recreation. After making it to the final round solo due to my business partner withdrawing to maintain a healthy work-life balance, Bedrock Outdoors received funding for market research. The judges wanted me to substantiate the need for what Bedrock Outdoors was proposing which I will continue to work towards.

Reflecting on the experience, I felt utterly overwhelmed and extremely ignorant throughout the entire process. In school, you are usually provided with clear guidelines, the right and wrong way of doing something, whether it is research, reading a scientific article, or writing a paper. In entrepreneurship, there are no right answers until potentially years to decades later when your business may flourish, fail, somewhat succeed, or pivot. While this could be viewed as a bad experience, I am grateful for it. It challenged my assumptions about life, making me realize that people do not have the perfect answer. They do what they can, and sometimes it is a success, and sometimes it is not.

These competitions were also the first time I realized that I will have the most knowledge on a subject sometimes, and I can always provide a unique perspective that is entirely my own. I do not remember who told me this, but before one of my business pitches, I was told that “you are the person who knows the most about your company and you are just going out there and teaching the judges about it.” This was very empowering, and I remind myself of the overarching message to this day. Competing in these competitions also taught me that you can never make the best decision for other people, only for yourself. Going in, I was making decisions based on what I believed would help people the most. However, I soon realized that for my mental health, I needed to make decisions that supported me so that I could provide support to others through a potential business.

Entrepreneurship can feel like getting thrown into a pool without knowing how to swim, but it is an experience that I would recommend to everyone with one caveat. That you find and surround yourself with knowledgeable mentors who will support you as you flounder around. I was blessed to have incredible mentors who provided support, suggestions, and empathy in both competitions. After graduating and finding employment at Visit Laramie, I will slowly continue working towards launching Bedrock Outdoors by staying in touch with my mentors at Impact 307 and gaining connections throughout the community. While it is possible to start a company on your own, it helps to have a community backing you, taking on your vision and making it their own.