To do and not to do

NHMRC Commercialization Workshop
Alan Finkel
November 2014
My relevant background...
• PhD Monash University
  • Electrical Engineering / Neuroscience

• 1983 left ANU (JCSMR) for San Francisco
  • Started Axon Instruments Inc

• 8 months later shipped 1st product

• Profitable in the first year
Twenty years later in 2003
- Profitable 20 of 21 years
Faster, cheaper, better
Create beautiful interactive lessons.
Any device, anytime, anywhere.

Try Stile Today
To do
#1 secret for success?

- Marketing
- Technology
- Fund raising
- People!
- Partnerships
- Quality
- Competition
- Collaborations
Relentless commitment to quality

“Quality is remembered long after price is forgotten”

Eric Charles

Quality by design!
#2 secret for success...

Focus, focus, focus on product development

- Identify
- Analyse
- Design
- Test
- Deliver
Launch on a product, not a technology promise

- Investors do not have infinite patience

Great products sell themselves

Follow the market “pull”

- Listen to champion customers
- Give them what they need, not what they ask for
- Products should be intuitive to use

Simple arithmetic does not work

- Doubling the number of half-finished features does not add up to one finished product
#3 secret for success...

To build a world-class organization you need world-class people
Other secrets for success...

Persistent focus on growth

Continuously look for the next product
   “Ambiguity is a friend to be welcomed” (John McGagh)
   If it is straightforward, somebody else has already done it

Launch fast and iterate quickly
   Take small steps not giant leaps
   Generates revenue faster
3. Find $x$. 

Think laterally
3. Find x.

Think laterally

Here it is
Keep all agreements simple

Partnerships are essential, but must be straightforward

Make quick decisions on legal contracts – accept risk

Simple corporate structure
Plan sales from the bottom up

Never say:
“Our plan assumes 2% of $100 billion market in five years”

It is much harder in reality
Find money, spend it wisely

Three things you know for sure in life...

1) You can never win a dispute with the telephone company
2) You can never get the attention of a waiter when you need it
3) There is never enough money
Sure, we need more research in alchemy, necromancy and sorcery, but where is the money going to come from?
Location, location, location
Innovative US worker

Innovative Australian worker
## City liveability index*

2013, rank out of 140 cities, 100=ideal

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Not to do
• Don’t start with marketing
• Don’t make promises you can’t keep
• Don’t hype the technology
• Don’t worry about saving tax
  • Concentrate on making a profit in the first place
• Don’t over analyse
• Don’t base partnerships on friendships
And then there is YOU

Give creative freedom to developers

Give them challenges, not specifications
And then there is YOU

- You need a five year vision
  - You need a strategy to achieve the vision
  - You need to execute on the strategy
- Communicate honestly, openly and frequently
- Seek advice, again and again and again
- Be generous to employees and collaborators
- Make quick decisions
And then there is YOU

- Manage the professionals who work for you

Lawyers

Accountants
And then there is YOU

Positive attitude

"He's right! When you look at it that way, it's not so bad!"
And then there is YOU

Be versatile

In theory there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice there is.