



Brand Hackathon by SMU IIE Paves the Way for Co-creation between Startups and Designers

SINGAPORE, 13 April 2021 (Tuesday) – The Business Innovations Generator (BIG) Incubation Programme offered by the Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IIE) at the Singapore Management University (SMU) organised its first **Brand Hackathon** of 2021 at The Greenhouse, located at the SMU Connexion. (Please refer to Annex A for more information about the seven startups that participated in Brand Hackathon.)

Held on 9 and 10 April 2021, the Brand Hackathon brought together business-to-consumer (B2C) startups and designers from the branding and creative industry in Singapore to co-create compelling brand stories, re-assess the startups' marketing message and even packaging. Guided by **Christina Lim**, Curriculum Director of Brand Hackathon 2021, who is also the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) in Residence at SMU IIE, the Brand Hackathon is one of the many coaching platforms that BIG incubation programme offers.

Organised exclusively for incubatees at SMU IIE, this Brand Hackathon's core objective was to help B2C early-stage startups understand the importance of branding and messaging through a hands-on and work-through approach, focusing on mentoring and consultation throughout the event.

The two-day event started off with a sharing session by **Charlie Blower**, Managing Partner and Co-Founder of Blak Labs, where he shared various case studies on building brand expressions and designs.

The startups that participated in the Brand Hackathon were selected based on their product-market fit and readiness, and were subsequently paired with an experienced designer. Together, they jointly identified their respective challenges – whether it was the company's logo, product packaging or identifying a unique brand story. At the end of the event, the participants presented their findings to marketing veterans which include **Jorg Dietzel**, Adjunct Faculty at SMU, and **Sharon Koh**, Director at Asia PR Werkz.

"Good branding and a strong brand story helps to make a good and lasting first impression. This is critical for start-ups working to win their first customers. For this Brand Hackathon, we have designed it to focus on B2C businesses, many of which have physical products which have to break the clutter in a saturated market place," said **Christina Lim**, Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) in Residence.

"The event is designed to be a discovery and creative journey. We hope that the startups will use the opportunity to work with the designers and co-create their unique branding assets. We have carefully paired the designers with the startups based on their experience and relevant profile, and this is a unique collaboration which we believe will allow the startups to learn and make their brands more memorable, meaningful and stand out from their competition," she added.

"It has been a true delight to be a part of this edition of Brand Hackathon. Structured as a work-through rather than a workshop, the work we co-created with our assigned designer, Kaihui, will serve as a solid branding platform for all our works from here on. We're walking away with a stronger brand and actual branding collaterals we will use to bring our ideas to market. As an incubatee, I have benefited so much from SMU's incubation programme," shared **Bryan Koh**, who is an SMU student entrepreneur and Founder of lifestyle watch brand Sekoni Original.

"I joined the event to share my experience and insights with budding entrepreneurs. It's been an extremely rewarding experience, knowing that the participants are at the infancy of their brand, and our work together will directly impact them," shared **Andrew Lim**, Co-founder and Creative Director of a branding and web design studio 360&5.

Aside from the Brand Hackathon, BIG also organises a series of BIG Masterclasses, which equip the founders with knowledge on topics such as founder's ethics, sales strategy, digital marketing, fundraising, understanding term sheets to help them in their entrepreneurial journey. (More information about the list of support provided to the startups in Annex B)

With a strong founder-centric focus, the BIG incubation programme is highly curated and is designed to provide the startup founders with the support they need to focus on their product development and to reach their development milestones.

The equity-free incubation programme is industry-agnostic and welcomes startups from a wide range of industries; and the Brand Hackathon is one of the flagship programmes that IIE organises for its incubatees.

Started in 2009, BIG programme is an intensive four-month founder centric programme that offers early-stage startups and student founders the opportunity to validate their business plans, gain access to industry experts as advisors and grant opportunities.

Applications will be assessed based on the viability of their business models, validated market needs and potential, as well as the attributes of the founding team. With a rigorous screening process, founders are assessed based on their coachability, integrity, grit and community-orientation.

The incubator will run its next call for applications for pre-seed and seed stage startups in June 2021, and applicants can be SMU affiliated or non-SMU affiliated.

Startups interested to join the incubator in the next cohort can fill up the interest form at: <https://iie.smu.edu.sg/apply-for-incubation>. They will be notified when applications open for the next cohort, and can read up about the application journey from the same link above.

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About SMU BIG: Singapore Management University (SMU) Business Innovations Generator (BIG) is a world-class university incubator that offers an equity-free programme. It is dedicated to help student founders and early-stage startups validate and refine their product and startup through a coaching-heavy and founder-centric incubation curriculum. Working out of BIG's downtown coworking space, founders have access to corporates and industry titans who could be their first clients, mentors or investors. For more information: <https://iie.smu.edu.sg/incubator>

About SMU IIE: The Singapore Management University (SMU) Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IIE) is a practice-oriented institute that nurtures changemakers and founders who aspire to make the world a better place. To achieve this mission, IIE focuses on developing and providing experiential learning programmes that stand on our three pillars: Culture, Capability and Community. The institute also champions a cohesive innovation and entrepreneurship community anchored at its innovation hub – The Greenhouse and through activities such as its marquee event – the Lee Kuan Yew Global Business Plan Competition (LKYGBPC). For more information: <https://iie.smu.edu.sg>

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Annex A

Startup Name	Description	Website
BoundByWine	BoundbyWine is a wine ecommerce with an interactive algorithm that helps wine lovers identify their perfect wine for every occasion, based on their past wine diary inputs.	https://boundbywine.com
Craft Tea Fox	Craft Tea Fox is an Internet-based lifestyle brand focused on making enjoying Matcha convenient and easy.	https://craftteafox.co
Crunch Cutlery	Crunch Cutlery is the first startup to address plastic waste and poor urban nutrition with a single product. Our solution is to supercharge a functional "biscuit" with superfoods such as flax, chia and whole wheat for a boost of Omega 3, Vitamin B3, Lignans and Fibre with every bite. We want to encourage people to use our product as functional cutleries and eat it after use so that nothing goes to waste!	https://www.crunchcutlery.com
dateideas	dateideas is a mobile app SaaS-enabled marketplace which allows couples to book a variety of curated couple packages from merchants, while integrating SaaS features which improve the quality of their dates and relationships in the long-run.	https://www.dateideas.io/
KASEE Batik Activewear	KASEE produces activewear which is done in batik process. Our focus is to preserve Indonesian culture by redefining the tradition for the modern lifestyle. Through this, KASEE aims to provide visibility for batik artisans and bring the tradition closer to the heart of urban dwellers.	www.kasee.id
ORBIT	Pet dogs are the family we choose for ourselves. ØRBIT offers game-changing holistic, sleek, smart collars that automates monitoring health and location for early diagnosis and easy tracking. It is designed to empower pet owners to proactively care for their dogs and to enable them to give their dogs the best lives.	https://www.orbit.company
Sekoni Original	Sekoni Original is a watch company that provides an intriguing take on traditional watches. With an iconic moonphase timepiece and an upcoming athleisure-inspired series, Sekoni aspires to tell compelling stories for wearers through artful timepieces.	https://sekonioriginal.com

Annex B

Support provided at BIG include:

- Financial support, such as application for grants (i.e. SG Startup Founder's Grant) and co-funding opportunities;
- A strong knowledge and support network, including strategic mentoring by a pool of world-class industry experts who are successful entrepreneurs, VCs, angels, corporate and government agencies;
- Regular mentoring by IIE's Entrepreneur-in-Residence to guide them on moving the company forward;
- Community events, ranging from Office Hours where startups can consult and get advice from invited experts, Founders' Updates, and other sharing sessions;
- Masterclasses which will equip the founders with knowledge on topics such as sales strategy, digital marketing, fundraising, and legal advisory;
- Access to The Greenhouse in SMU, a newly opened 700sqm workspace in the heart of downtown Singapore (currently closed till further notice due to COVID-19);
- Additional perks such as credits from corporate partners to offset the bills when the startups engage the services of these corporates, which include Amazon Web Services, Stripe, and more.