Recap: First Lepage Virtual Pitch

November 3, 2020

On October 16th, the Albert Lepage Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation hosted the first virtual pitch competition of the school year. The competition consisted of five student start-ups and a panel of three Freeman-alum judges: Tim Fulton, Tsetsa Dankova, and Erin McMenemon. Each company pitched their ideas to the judges' panel with a grand prize of $500 at stake. In case you missed it, here's the breakdown and highlights of the competition.



First up: Clementine, an online event planning platform for “normal parties” as founders Abbi Larkin, Catherine McNeel, and Gillian Maier put it. Clementine attempts to make planning any type of party, from dinners to graduations, a seamless and easy process. The process is entirely tech-based. The goal is to take away the user’s need to sit on the phone all day or go from restaurant to restaurant picking out the perfect place. Furthermore, it is completely customizable to your budget. Users can decide to use Clementine for just one service, such as catering, or the whole process.

Next up: Daddy Merch Apparel by Kwasi Agyeman. Daddy Merch Apparel focuses on creating sustainable campus apparel that students and alumni alike want and will wear. Agyeman noticed that most campus bookstore’s overproduce their inventory with outdated clothes and therefore produce so much waste. Daddy Merch Apparel uses cruelty-free, standard 100 OEKO-TEX Materials with 100% recyclable packaging. “We are the Tesla of college apparel,” says Agyeman, whose company is an officially licensed partner with the Tulane bookstore. The Daddy Merch team hopes to move into the larger schools such as Alabama and LSU. The shirts will come straight to your door, and students can pick up one of their own here.

Then came Rize, an innovative company that connects students with businesses to facilitate meaningful connections through short term projects. Founders Sofia Viscuso and Matthew Friedman’s goal is to create space for more diverse students to gain access to internships, as unpaid work tends to favor the more privileged. Rize also helps smaller to medium-sized businesses who do not have an established internship program connect to students and gives them a voice. Through Rize, businesses choose from a pool of qualified applicants, saving the business time and resources, which can then be allocated to other needs within the company.

The “Go-To Plug for Late-Night Grub” Sexycakes was up next. Sexycakes is a speedy delivery service for on-campus students. The menu offers a wide range of food options from pancakes to milkshakes to wings with clever names such as “The Full Send.” Founders Alex Leiman and Jonah Borstein described Sexycake’s appeal to students, as you can expect your meal at your door in 30 minutes or less with no delivery fees ever. The company is currently running a “Golden Ticket Promo” where students can win various prizes such as a night at the Ace Hotel.

Last but not least was Spirit Fruit: a natural, low calorie, zero carbs, and zero sugar ready to drink vodka cocktail. Philip Brossy described the spirit as “the most natural

and best-tasting vodka drink on the self.” Spirit Fruit launched in 2020 and is currently sold out in all markets. Their primary focus right now is to keep up with the demand for their delicious product.

After the five companies presented, the three judges and Lepage Center executive director Rob Lalka went to a breakout room to discuss the competition winner. After about 15 minutes of deliberations, the four came back to announce the winner. Lalka first spoke to all the teams and stated, “you all are upping your game,” as each company impressed the judges.

The big winner was Rize, who hopes to use their $500 to further expand their company and connections. In talking to Friedman and Viscuso, the two were very excited: “The pizza pitch was such a great opportunity for us! We have been working so hard the past 6 months, and from our official website launch in August, so it was really nice to take a step back and appreciate the progress we have made. We were super transparent during our pitch about the reality of our business, both the wins and losses. Receiving such great feedback from the judges and other competitors helped to validate our mission and the growth we hope to achieve!”

The next Pizza Pitch competition is on November 13th, and teams can find out more and register here.

— Neera Kennedy (BSM ’23)