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Business Plan

The African Sports Network

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Declaration of Authorship

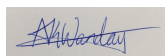
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List of Tables

Table 1	Competitive landscape
Table 2	Porter's five forces
Table 3	Results of participant survey
Table 4	Athletes and professionals pricing model
Table 5	Talent identification and industry pricing model
Table 6	Key assumptions and forecasts
Table 7	Projected sales
Table 8	Projected startup expenses
Table 9	Income statement

List of Figures

- Figure 1 Service overview
- Figure 2 Product roadmap
- Figure 3 Marketing roadmap

Table of Contents

Declaration of Authorship	2
Acknowledgements	3
List of Tables	4
List of Figures	5
Table of Contents	6
Executive Summary	7
1. Business Overview	9
2. Market Research and Analysis	14
3. Business Proposal	25
4. Financial Analysis	38
5. Conclusion	42
References	44
Appendices	46

Executive Summary

Sourcing African talent in various sports has been a common interest across the world for years. African athletes continuously excel in various top sports and leagues, which only make agents and other stakeholders more curious about how to tap into the African market and source players. Currently, international agents and scouts tend to neglect a large portion of the African market as they do not know where to find credible African talent without traveling to the continent. Similarly, sports organizations in Africa do not hire qualified sports professionals as they struggle to find people with the right qualifications. Furthermore, African athletes and industry professionals lack access to resources and opportunities to secure their future in the sports industry and they are endlessly looking for new ways to access opportunities globally.

This thesis provides a business plan on how to fill this gap, proving the need for a leading database for African sport which facilitates networking, transfers, new opportunities, jobs, skill building and mentorship. a groundbreaking online sports community which allows African athletes to be their own content creators, grow their sports network and gain visibility by creating professional sports profiles, while helping scouts, agents and organizations around the world source African sports talent.

The platform's mission is to be Africa's leading sports database bridging the gap between talent and opportunity, and its vision is to increase engagement and awareness in the African sports industry in order to contribute towards reduced inequalities, and increasing decent work and economic growth through sports.

It is targeted at athletes from any sport, any genders and any sports levels as inclusion is one of the organization's core values. For athletes, the platform is about visibility through sharing, connecting and learning. Sports professionals looking for opportunities including sports management graduates and sports industry enthusiasts, are invited to connect, and find their next opportunity in the sports industry. Talent Identification groups such as agents, scouts, clubs, sports academies will be able to identify African talent, regardless of their physical location. Industry members such as corporates, entrepreneurs, federations, government organizations, universities will have access to a talent pool of qualified sports professionals. The platform seeks to boost the industry's collaboration for future industry growth.

The pricing strategy will consist of free plans as well as a subscription model which will be it's main revenue stream.

The theory of change is a future where African sporting talent have visible digital profiles globally and increased access to opportunities. Due to the ease of access to sports industry knowledge and resources, we foresee an increased number of sports professionals who can work together to enhance the image and mindset of sports

business in Africa. These are a few ways that the African Sports Network will contribute towards boosting sports development in Africa.

This business plan further analyzes the industry, market and competition and proposes a leading service by explaining its functionalities, legal, marketing and operational plans as well as providing a financial analysis.

1. Business Overview

Problem

It is no secret that African athletes are key drivers of sports globally. There is however a gap in the market regarding talent identification as the continent is large and opportunities to gain visibility are limited. With all the digital transformation that has taken place in various industries over the past few years, it is shocking to note that talent identification processes have not advanced, and as the concept begins to be grasped in certain parts of the world, Africa is left behind.

Andrew Numero is a Malawian footballer who grew up in Kenya. At 20 years old, he has already played for the Malawian national team and is now playing for Gor Mahia, one of Kenya's top football clubs. Andrew has reached the highest level of the sport in his home country and in Kenya, and now dreams of playing for a top club in Europe. He however struggles with being seen beyond Kenya therefore attracting the interest of foreign clubs.

On the other side of the globe, Andreas Govas is an Australian ex-footballer who is now a football scout based in the United Kingdom. Andreas recruits players from many regions except Africa because he does not know where to find credible talent without traveling to Africa.

Ella Ileri is a 21 year old sports management student at Loughborough University. Ella will graduate from university in 2022 and is nervous about returning to work on the African continent because she is currently struggling to connect with the right people in the sports industry in order to establish her next steps.

Ronald Okoth is a former Kenyan footballer who played in Kenya's top league. After retiring from football, Ronald ventured into entrepreneurship and started his own football academy on a grassroot level. Ronald is in the process of growing his organization and even though he uses LinkedIn and other social platforms regularly, he struggles to connect with the right people to grow his team on an employee side as well as an investment side. During an interview with Ronald, he summarized this problem by saying that "Our sports industry lacks a database for our local sports organization. I never know who the right person to contact is or how to reach them."

Andrew, Ella and Ronald are only a few examples of members of the African sports community struggling with local and international breakthroughs and Andreas is only one example of thousands of scouts who dismiss the African continent in their talent identification. They primarily represent one sport, yet there are many more sports both popular and minority with athletes and sports professionals at all levels struggling to access their next step.

Solution

The African Sports Network seeks to be a leading database for African sports which facilitates networking, transfers, new opportunities, jobs, skill building and mentorship. With the presence of the platform, African sport can begin to be understood and celebrated much more on the continent, leading to empowerment of more athletes to create profiles and showcase their talent. With the growth of this platform, agents, coaches, scouts and academies worldwide will gain access to view African talent without having to travel miles to recruit the talent. Athletes will have the opportunity to be their own content creators and have a platform where they are all equal and can showcase their personal brand as they like. This platform will be in the form of a mobile application, as well as a linked website.

Overview of the business

The African Sports Network is a registered Private Limited company incorporated on the 12th of February 2018. Over the last few years, it has been operating as a social enterprise, reinvesting the majority of the profit generated back into the business to run social projects. The projects include sports workshops which focus on creating opportunities for young leaders to identify and address social challenges in the sports industry and begin to see opportunities for job creation for youth through sports enterprise. The company's initial business capital was raised through grants and fundraising. Sports marketing and consultancy services have been the organization's main source of income, alongside the fees participants pay to attend workshops. The business diversification into the technology sector to solve the talent identification gap in African is the company's long term sustainability plan.

This mobile application's main feature is a professional portfolio which allows users to create professional sports profiles in order to gain visibility from scouts, agents, academies and teams as well as grow their sports network.

In addition, this application offers a variety of additional features:

- Content sharing

Users can share videos, pictures, short text, blogs and links.

- Job portal

Community members can post vacant opportunities allowing users to apply for suitable positions.

- Private messaging

Users can interact with one another on a personal level and grow their network.

- Search filters

Users can search for types of athletes (elite, professional, amateur or recreational), specific locations and much more in order to narrow down to their needs.

- Educational tool

Learning platform offering various courses for athletes, coaches and industry members to sharpen their skills.

- Endorsements and reviews

Users are able to endorse other users or coaches, agents, scouts or organizations and leave reviews based on their experience.

- Live sessions

Users will be able to go live on their accounts and interact with the community in real time.

- News

Keep up with the latest updates related to sports in Africa.

- Mentorship

As a premium service, we will offer users a chance to get professional advice from established members of the sports industry who would like to inspire the next generation.

Value Proposition

The African Sports Network is a groundbreaking online sports community which allows African athletes to be their own content creators and gain visibility worldwide while helping scouts, agents and organizations around the world source African sports talent. Recruiters can post an opening or contact athletes directly. This platform allows them to access a diverse selection of African athletes, students and sports professionals in an efficient and quick manner. All in one place and 100% online. As LinkedIn is a social network for the business community, The African Sports Network is a social network and database for African Sport. This is where talent meets opportunity.

Motivation and importance of the business and its impact on the society

Growing up, African youth who are interested in sports are constantly reminded that sports is a hobby rather than a career path that they can pursue. They end up sidelining their talent and looking for an academic path to suit them, and neglecting what they truly love. The flaw in this is the fact that when they pursue something that they are not truly passionate about, they become just another number in that industry. We see potential for African youth to transform the sports industry because their passion would make them more than just a number.

Unlike in Europe or the United States for example where it is possible to be a student athlete and pursue studies while working on becoming a professional athlete, the opportunities for such a balance in Africa are limited as the society has not opened up to the notion of sports being a valuable career path worth investing time to. At the same time, the majority of successful African athletes have had poor representation leading to mismanagement of funds and poor retirement plans.

Uniqueness of the idea

We believe that the exclusivity of creating a platform that is exclusively for African talent makes it unique as African athlete's have proven to excel in sports and top leagues all around the world. Given that Africa has the highest youth population in the world, there is an opportunity to transform the lives of young people through sport and give them the chance to represent themselves and be seen all across the world. The platform is most importantly open to all athletes, regardless of their age, gender, ability level or which sport they play, in order to foster inclusivity at all levels. This platform is an opportunity for minority sports and athletes to gain visibility and tell their own stories, while at the same time connecting with other athletes like them across the continent and opportunities worldwide.

Mission and Vision

Our mission is to be Africa's leading sports database bridging the gap between talent and opportunity, with a vision of increasing engagement and awareness in the African sports industry in order to contribute towards reduced inequalities, and increasing decent work and economic growth through sports.

Core Values

1. Inclusion

It is important that our community is a safe space for all talent, regardless of their sport, ability, gender or age.

2. Collaboration

We believe in the power of building purposeful relationships and coming together to achieve common goals.

3. Persistence

In pursuit of long term success, we are keen on knocking down barriers and pushing on by believing that it is possible.

2. Market Research and Analysis

Macro-environmental analysis

Political Factors

- Collaboration

With pan-African trade as a common topic for development, this application is a strong development through sport for enabling sports collaboration among athletes, professionals and organizations across borders.

Economic Factors

- Growing technology industry

Increased internet access and mobility has increased technology literacy and understanding of users in African countries. As a result, the technology industry is growing and this is an opportunity for the platform to gain increasing numbers of users.

Societal Factors

- Widespread usage of smartphones

According to Facebook (2016), each month across Sub-Saharan Africa, more than 95 million people access Facebook, with 97% on mobile. Given this advancement in society, it is clear that consumers will not have challenges accessing the mobile application.

- Sports Culture

Given that the African continent does not cultivate sports enthusiasts, the industry consists of millions of young people who are keen on finding more information about how to excel in the sports industry.

Technological Factors

- Highly competitive social media market

Currently, new mobile applications are being developed continuously, all of which are competing for users attention in different ways. Given that our target audience is the youth which includes teenagers, it means that we will be competing with well established platforms such as TikTok on our community engagement side.

- 5G Technology

Given the rapid development of technology, our platform will be challenged to keep up with these innovations and ensure our platform's performance keeps up with the market, with no delays in media such as videos.

Environmental Factors

- Sustainability

With an increasing emphasis on sustainability, as a new venture, the African Sports Network has the opportunity to set up its systems and structures in an environmentally conscious manner.

Legal Factors

- Digital tax

Given the increase in e-commerce activities, African countries are beginning to introduce digital taxes. In Kenya, where the African Sports Network is registered, according to Deloitte (2020), any income accumulating through a digital marketplace has a 1.5% tax rate as of 2021. They define a digital marketplace as a platform which facilitates the direct interaction between service seekers and service providers through electronic means. As this platform will operate across borders, there is a need to evaluate policies in different markets and adapt accordingly.

Industry analysis

Sourcing African talent in various sports has been a common interest across the world for years. African athletes continuously excel in various top sports and leagues, which only make agents and other stakeholders more curious about how to tap into the African market and source players. In this section, we will review literature on Africa's sports market and the issues surrounding it. We will also review current talent identification practices and go further to understand technology's role in the sports industry, in order to draw a connection between talent identification and technology.

Athletic labor markets, especially in professional football, have become increasingly internationalized since the mid-1990s with a larger number of foreign players from a wider range of countries plying their trade in Europe's top leagues. (Maguire & Pearton, 2000). According to Darby, Akindes and Kirwin (2007), The fragile political African economy and the economic strength of the European club game resulted in a rise towards the supply side of this migratory equation. As the years progress, professional football clubs are recruiting more and more players from Africa. (Poli, 2006). This is due to the unequal distribution of wealth globally and sporting corporate power which has resulted in sporting talent from less paying clubs moving to higher paying clubs, and even nations. (Simiyu, 2010). Darby, Akindes and Kirwin

(2007) highlight that African athletes have no encouragement to remain in their home countries as there is little to no chances of a good salary, not much infrastructure or even professionalism in the industry. When these players look abroad, the earnings are nearly unimaginable based on African standards, as European clubs offer salaries that massively exceed the average incomes of players when they graduate from African academies to European clubs.

When we look at other sports such as athletics, it is known that no major world marathon would be sportingly interesting without East African runners and these runners typically do not have bank accounts outside of their country, therefore it is their agent who receives their earnings, deduces any advance that has been granted to them, and punctures his own remuneration before paying the balance to the runners. (Gaudin, Teka & Mwangi, 2016). These agents do not spend their lives in Africa: they live and work in Europe and the USA and only travel to Ethiopia or Kenya on some key dates to attend national competitions that are decisive for the identification of future 'talents'. (Gaudin, Teka & Mwangi, 2016).

Gone are the days when the world of sport was simply a common leisure or activity. The sports industry is now an entire ecosystem made up of multiple stakeholders with engagement on various levels. It continues to evolve and expand and there is a rise in innovation and cutting-edge technologies being integrated from various industries and these advancements are changing the entire experience and evolving the industry in ways no one imagined, which presents a massive opportunity for businesses and investors. (Deloitte, 2017, p. 8). In the Sport section of our television or internet news, the East African runner who enjoys a few seconds of media coverage is only the top tip of a big iceberg; in his shadow looms a whole demographic pyramid of aspiring champions. (Gaudin, Teka & Mwangi, 2016). A high number of excellent sports men and women are misidentified or underutilized as a result of the insufficiency of the existing current identification processes. (Kipchumba & Jepkorir, 2015). No matter how the structure of the industry evolves, the basic manner of doing business- one key point person recruiting a single athlete- does not appear to be evolving and the recruitment of the athlete still occurs the old-fashioned way: person-to-person, one-on-one recruitment of clients. (Shropshire & Davis, 2008).

According to Deloitte (2017), the Global sports industry is a \$700 billion business and over \$5 billion was invested globally in sports tech between 2014 and 2016. Nielsen Sports (2018) highlights that tech giants will increasingly challenge traditional sports media. As technology advances, sports businesses will have to adapt and transform their processes in order to leverage on new opportunities. (Global Sports Innovation Center, 2019, p. 9). Digital transformation is well-worth considering based on the plethora of opportunities that exist for sport organizations. There are four categories of these opportunities which are; engage sponsors, drive the fan experience, generate new revenue and broaden content reach. (Deloitte, 2018, p. 3). Deloitte (2019) highlights that the build up of macro trends has enhanced the growth of the concept of athletes as their own content creators. In today's world, sports fans no longer rely on reporters to keep up with the latest news of their favorite players as athletes are now taking advantage of Instagram, Twitter and even websites to be their own content

creators. (Deloitte, 2019, p. 4). As mobile media continues to grow, attention spans are shortening and the two factors result in an increased number of things that are competing for consumer attention. Consequently, while seeking new ways to keep up the engagement, influencers and athletes have become key tools to reach large audiences on social and digital media platforms. Thanks to this trend, athlete power and their commercial value is increasing. (Nielsen Sports, 2018, p. 5). Even though the role of an athlete as an individual content creator began as a small complement to traditional media, it is now proving to be a trend, especially for those raised in the digital age and it could be much more impactful, meaningful and important in the years to come. (Deloitte, 2019, p. 4). Over-the-top (OTT) digital video providers, user generated content, mobile apps and social networks have exploded in the media industry in a manner that continues to create new revenue streams and new business models. (Deloitte, 2017, p. 6). The sports industry is undergoing massive disruption and the digital technology ecosystem is opening unforeseen opportunities for growth, therefore in order to fully capitalize on these opportunities, sports organizations will likely need a digital overhaul. (Deloitte, 2018, p. 3).

Market/Consumer analysis

According to the United Nations (2019), Africa is home to over 1 billion people with a median age of 19.7 years and 43.4% of this population is urban. Each month, across Sub-Saharan Africa, more than 95 million people access Facebook, with 97% on mobile. (Facebook, 2016)

A report by the World Bank Group (2018) highlights that potential lies in the uniqueness of Africa's demographics. Given that other parts of the world have higher aging populations, what stands out about Africa is its young and growing population. In the next 25 years, it is expected that the population of cities will double due to rapid urbanization, which raises hopes for economic diversification, productivity and innovation. It states that technology is a particularly bright area for Africa and there are opportunities for economies to overstep traditional development steps and catch up with advanced economies much faster due to innovative technology adaptations. Africa continues to be a world leader in innovative financial services, specifically based on mobile telephony which is transforming the world of banking and financial services. This report goes further to emphasize that Africa's middle and high-income groups are foreseen to rise by 100 million by 2030, totaling them to over 160 million people across the region. They foresee that there will be a shift in consumer spending, as these expanding consumer groups will now spend much more on information and communication technologies, education, transportation, pharmaceuticals, clothing and footwear and other products and services, and less on the basic facilities like food and beverages.

Nairobi, Kenya is the organization's chosen headquarter location because it is where the company is incorporated and it is also the team's most well known market. Kenya is an attractive market as it offers increasing investment opportunities across key

priority sectors such as horticulture, infrastructure development, information and communication technology (ICT), tourism, power generation, manufacturing and natural resource extraction. The country has a rising domestic and regional consumer market and a strong private sector which offers diverse and immense growth prospects. (Deloitte, 2016). According to the Switzerland Global Enterprise (2018), Kenya's booming tech scene is the birthplace of the most innovative startups on the continent, thus known as the Silicon Savannah. The catalyst for Kenya's technological explosion has been Africa's general lack of formal infrastructure. The article highlights that Kenya's internet speed is a common talking point, as it is one of the fastest in the world with credits to its undersea fiber optic cable which makes it truly connected and offers an appealing space for technologists, investors, entrepreneurs, and even well-known firms such as IBM, Microsoft, Intel and Facebook have taken advantage and settled in this birthplace of innovation. Kenya is one of the fastest growing economies in Sub-Saharan Africa with an urban population that is English-speaking, well-educated and young. It has a population of slightly under 50 million people and has bold plans to be an upper middle-income country by the year 2030.

Furthermore, Ventures Africa (2015), the success of Kenya's mobile banking platform (M-Pesa) which is praised to have taken financial inclusion in the country to the next level, and has even been adopted in parts of Europe and Asia. This makes Kenya an undeniable trendsetter in technology advancement and adoption within the African continent and beyond. Nairobi, Kenya's capital city is now the only African smart city which made the list of top 20 smart cities globally. This is further emphasized by the AfrAsia Bank (2017) in their Africa Wealth Report, which shows that Kenyans are among the wealthiest people on the continent and due to its powerful trade connections with neighboring countries and its growing diversity of industries, it is an easy selection for foreign companies looking for a way to tap into the region. The report shows that ICT has been identified as the key to growth in Kenya as it already leads in transportation, communication and financial services. Furthermore, Kenya is a solid candidate for early 5G implementation as it has a strong focus on building a technology-based economy.

Competitive position

The competitive landscape consists of multiple ventures offering a variety of services. The African Sports Network plans to leverage on the power of building a strong community, fostering inclusion in sport as the primary objective, and thereafter have a focus on promoting connecting and networking for industry collaboration, and ultimately, achieving the final goal of having athletes create strong professional profiles in order to be a leading talent identification platform. In this section, we categorize the African Sports Network's companions into three main categories: 1) Photo and video sharing platforms, 2) Talent Identification platforms, and 3) Networking platforms.

	PHOTO SHARING PLATFORMS			TALENT IDENTIFICATION PLATFORMS			NETWORKING PLATFORMS	
	ASN	Instagram	TikTok	Transfermrkt	Blocsport One	Wyscout	LinkedIn	Atleto
Professional portfolio	✓			✓	✓		✓	
Athletes as their own content creators	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Identify top talent	✓			✓	✓	✓		
Recruit talent	✓						✓	✓
Photo and video sharing	✓	✓	✓				✓	
Private messaging	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
Search filters	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Education or skill building	✓						✓	✓
Endorsements and reviews	✓						✓	
Host live sessions	✓	✓	✓					
Exclusively for sports	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓
Variety of sports	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
Any sports level	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
Player statistics				✓	✓	✓		
Presence in the African market	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Table 1. competitive landscape

Competitive advantage

	Low	Moderate	High
Threat of new entrants			✓
Threat of substitute products and services		✓	
Bargaining power of customers	✓		
Bargaining power of suppliers	✓		
Rivalry among existing firms		✓	

Table 2. Porter's five forces

- Threat of new entrants

Given the increasing use of social networks, the threat of new entrants is increasing daily. Now that the sports industry globally is gaining more and more attention, sports innovation is rising and big companies are innovating new products rapidly and may soon tap into this market. In order to hold a strong position in the market, it is important that this application not only fosters a community, but also offers very specific value and diversifies its offerings and innovates progressively to keep up with social networking trends.

- Threat of substitute products and services

The market already consists of various substitutes, including photo and video sharing platforms, networking platforms or talent identification platforms, however not an integration of the three and certainly not focused on the African market. The African's Sports Network will need to leverage on the power of sport and highlight to the market that this platform is essential alongside others which serve various functions.

- Bargaining power of customers

The customers of this platform will mainly be African athletes or sports professionals who want to market themselves in the sports industry and connect with various opportunities in a simple, online and efficient manner. If the network achieves its objective of being a leading sports database, the bargaining power of customers will be quite low as the platform offers a generous free plan and low costs for access to extra services.

- Bargaining power of suppliers

The supplier for this platform can be scouts, agents, organizations, academies and other talent seekers. With an extensive database of African sports talent, and the increasing trend of online service providers, scouting and digital innovation, suppliers will have a low bargaining power. The African Sports Network has the advantage of giving them access to a vast talent pool without them needing to travel across borders.

- Rivalry among existing firms

In the local market, there is a huge opportunity for the African Sports Network to dominate and be the first thought when it comes to sports in Africa. In the international landscape however, there are numerous organizations innovating ways to connect people and solve needs, which emphasizes the importance for this platform to keep up with the full local and international landscape and continuously diversify its offerings.

Potential Partners

- International Sports Academies

International sports academies focused on nurturing talent continuously seek sports talent from across the globe. One such academy, Kaptiva Sports Academy which is a football academy based in Barcelona raised a concern in regards to access to the African market. They claim that there is a lot of talent which they do not know how to access and are seeking partnerships with local organizations or platforms who can help them bridge this gap. At the same time, such academies are opportunities to monetize the platform as they are keen on publishing advertisements in order to reach more users and gain more participants in their programs.

- Sports Data Platforms

Sports analysis tools such as Afrecon who provide statistical and performance analysis of some African football players have the opportunity to partner with us and upload their footage from top sports leagues to our platform with 100% credit in order to gain further brand visibility

Business case: Demand for proposed business

Having worked in the African sports industry over the last 3 years with a specific focus on African youth, the clear understanding of the gap that exists is felt in almost

every interaction with athletes when asked how they can be helped. Besides having a strong focus on teaching athletes how to be their own content creators on existing platforms in order to gain visibility, the key point for the African Sports Network in realizing the importance of athletes needing portfolios and links to their full profiles in one place was when the African Sports Network published an Instagram post on October 31st 2018, highlighting a profile of a Kenyan footballer named Willard Otieno. This feature listed his biggest achievement, his biggest challenge and his dreams for the future. Nick Kimanthi, a Kenyan sports entrepreneur who was based in Barcelona, Spain at the time and has connections to various football scouts and agents saw the feature and left a comment saying “Does he have videos or a player profile, I could help him get trials in Europe.” When we shared this comment with Willard, he said that unfortunately he did not have any videos or even a player profile, and just like that, what could have been a life-changing opportunity for Willard, slipped away. This was the turning point for our enterprise in narrowing down on a specific challenge and trying to find a solution to it.

We focused on Willard’s story and came up with a new type of a workshop from our previous offerings. On the 7th of September 2019, the African Sports Network hosted a Football Clinic as a prototype of a new concept to get closer to solving this problem. For this test, we decided to focus on one sport, football as it is the most popular sport in Africa . The workshop focused on the following aspects:

- Player profiles

Gather data from the athletes and creating a 1 page snapshots of their sports profile, as shown in figure 1.1.

- Video creation

We recorded short videos of the athletes doing a few skills and edited them and delivered them to the athletes for their own use on their social platforms.

- Workshops

We brought 4 guest speakers, all playing various roles in sport to share their experiences and inform athletes on some key areas below:

- Naythan Din-Kariuki, an analyst at Oxford United Football club spoke to them about roles within the football industry and international recruitment.
- Khayran Noor, the founder of Sports Legal spoke to them about legal roles within the football industry and dealing with contracts.
- Ronald Okoth, a former professional Kenyan football and the founder of Road to Goals Organization spoke to them about social media branding and marketing.
- Mildred Cheche, the founder of Changes Soccer Academy spoke to them about Women in the football industry.

After the workshop, the players filled in feedback forms and 95% of the players mentioned having understood the importance of professionalism and social media to build their brands. See below:

Participant Name	Insight
Samuel Mwangi Woresha	“I was inspired to have confidence in myself and use social media platforms to market myself. I see the need to be my own brand and be my biggest fan.”
Ricardo Momanyi	“I learnt that networking is key and it is important to develop a profile to showcase yourself”
Brighton Achoki	“I learnt the importance of putting myself out there and using social media to market myself.”
Edward Kasili Misiko	“I understood the importance of networking in the football industry.”
Faiz Marete	“I saw the importance of using social media platforms to market myself by posting my videos.”
Ella Gathoni Ireri	“I understood how important social media is and the role that it plays.”
Imran Abdi	“ I learned how to brand myself as a player.”
Mohammed Musa Bodle	“I got insights as to what makes a player unique and I see the key importance of brand exposure.”
Andrew Kekai	“I learnt that I should contact more people in the sports industry because you never know where it will lead to.”
Kyewalabye Male	“I learnt that social media is a key tool you can use to market yourself.”
Zeddy Dan	“I learnt that professionalism is very important, even in sport.”
Trevor Ngugi	“I have learnt a lot of useful ways to market myself on social media.”
Jonathan Obewa	“I learnt the importance of building your image (brand)”
Nathan Muya Gathara	“I learnt the importance of having a good social network.”
Ezra Wangila	“I learnt how to market myself using social media to football agents.”
Joseph Donahue	“I learnt how agents play an important role in football players.”
Denis Omondi	“I learnt how to market myself as a footballer.”
Oscar Odhiambo	“I made a list of things I need to work on, especially my social media platforms.”
Daniel Musau	“I learnt that I should expose my football career more.”

Table 3. results of participant survey

The general realization after the event for the players was that they could do much more using social media to gain brand visibility, but even more importantly, they see the importance of building strong brands and networking within the sports industry.

As for the next steps after that workshop, we were unable to continue hosting these workshops and expand to different sports given the Covid-19 pandemic. Amidst all the new changes in the world due to the pandemic and all the technology disruptions, we realized that we can have a much stronger impact and reach beyond borders if we leverage on the power of technology to connect people. One thing we struggled with when hosting physical workshops was creating lifetime value and connections, ensuring that the athletes do not only meet and network in that space and do not keep in touch to work together to better the industry. With on-going conversations with African athletes and sport professionals about the continued challenges in the sports industry, we were inspired to go beyond simply hosting events and ultimately create a platform that allows athletes be their own content creators, gain visibility and build lifelong networks in the sports industry while maximizing their career opportunities. During an interview with Ronald Okoth, a former professional Kenyan footballer who now runs his own grassroots soccer organization, he very importantly stated that “our sports industry lacks a database for our local sports organization. I never know who the right person to contact is or how to reach them.” With the innovation of this platform, we will go beyond creating a strong and exciting network, and also build credibility through a database which can be used globally to gain insights about African sport.

3. Business Proposal

Product/service

The service that we will provide is a groundbreaking online sports community which allows African athletes to be their own content creators and gain visibility worldwide while helping scouts, agents and organizations around the world source African sports talent.



Figure 1. service overview

Customer Segments

There will be four major customer segments, which can be broken down to two categories: Athlete related and industry related.

- The athlete related side will have a matching segment of talent identification which will be local and international agents, or anyone seeking African talent.
 - The athletes aspect is open to athletes from any sport, any gender and any sports levels. For the athletes, the platform is about visibility through sharing, connecting and learning.
 - Talent Identification groups such as agents, scouts, clubs, sports academies will be able to identify African talent, regardless of their physical location.
- The industry related side will be composed of sports industry professionals or students seeking opportunities, as well as sports companies, clubs and federations who are looking for talent.

- Sports professionals looking for opportunities including sports management graduates and sports industry enthusiasts, are invited to connect, and find their next opportunity in the sports industry.
- Industry members such as corporates, entrepreneurs, federations, government organizations, universities will have access to a talent pool of qualified sports professionals.

We envision ourselves as industry collaborators seeking to connect and uplift the industry.

Consumer Journey

1. Create your profile/portfolio

Add your best photos, videos, details, and additional links to showcase yourself and get recruited.

2. Apply for opportunities

Browse up to date opportunities and apply to unlimited openings in the sports industry.

3. Connect with community members and find your next opportunity

Talk, exchange contacts and communicate directly with other users, agents, scouts or companies of interest.

Product Roadmap

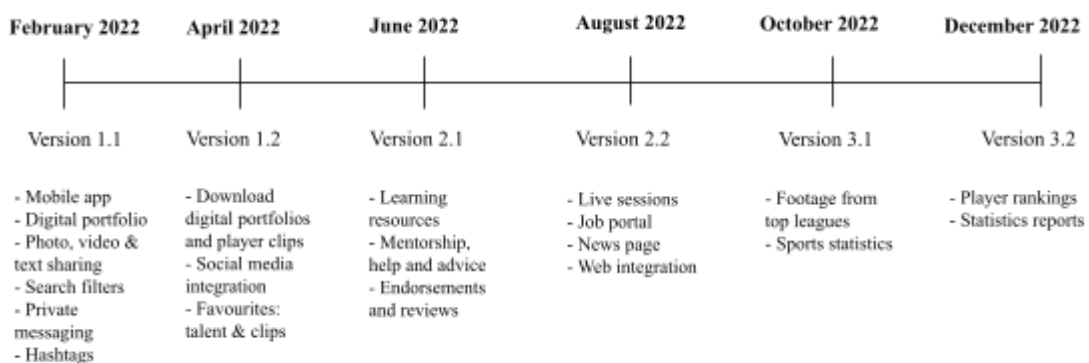


Figure 2. product roadmap

Athletes and Professionals

FREE Join the community	PREMIUM STARTER Explore your potential	PREMIUM UNLIMITED Maximize your chances
Free No billing	€5/ month Monthly / Annual billing	€15/month Monthly / Annual billing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital portfolio • Unlimited content sharing • Access to job portal with two job applications per month • Previews of learning resources • Private messaging • Endorsements and reviews • Access to the news page • Search filters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional digital portfolio • Unlimited content sharing • Access to job portal with five job applications per month • Unlimited access to general learning resources • Private messaging • Advanced endorsements and reviews • Go live four times a month • Access to the news page • Search filters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional digital portfolio • Unlimited content sharing • Access to job portal with unlimited job applications per month • Unlimited access to certified learning resources • Private messaging • Advanced endorsements and reviews • Go live at any time • Access to the news page • Mentorship • Advanced search filters

Table 4. athletes and professionals pricing model

- Digital portfolio

Create your professional sports profile and list which sport you play, your age, height, experience and much more relevant information to get scouted. As a premium offering, go through our verification process and be able to upload your sports statistics such as your club or league, number of matches played and your ranking (all which will be verified with official statistics then added to your profile.)

- Content sharing

Share an unlimited amount of videos, pictures, short text, blogs and links.

- Job portal

View suitable opportunities for you and depending on your plan, apply to two, five or an unlimited number of jobs every month and sharpen your skills.

- Learning resources

Depending on your plan, see which courses are available or access unlimited learning resources at any time with an opportunity to gain certification with the premium unlimited plan.

- Private messaging

Interact with other users on a personal level and grow your network.

- Endorsements and reviews

Endorse and review other users and community members and receive endorsements and reviews. Depending on your plan, organize your endorsements and reviews as you like.

- News page

Keep up with the latest updates related to sports in Africa.

- Host live sessions

Depending on your plan, host live workouts or conversations four times a month or whenever you want and interact with the community in real time.

- Search filters

Depending on your plan, filter your search to view results in different categories such as athlete level, age, gender, locations and much more in order to narrow down to their needs.

- Mentorship

As a premium service, we will offer users a chance to get professional advice from established members of the sports industry who would like to inspire the next generation, as well as offer other services such as personalized portfolio feedback, and access to free professional templates in order to help users' profiles stand out.

Given that over the past 3 years, sports industry members have been willing to pay between €5 to €15 to attend our workshops and training, we believe that it is a reasonable starting pricing point for further benefits.

Talent Identification and Industry

FREE Get started and find your next talent!	PREMIUM STARTER The smarter solution for sourcing talent	PREMIUM UNLIMITED Talent will find you! Ultimate tool for your talent identification needs
Free No billing	€50/month Monthly / Annual billing	€150/ month Monthly / Annual billing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Digital portfolio ● Private messaging ● Content sharing ● Portfolio and profile viewing ● Search filters ● Recruit talent online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Digital portfolio ● Private messaging ● Content sharing ● Advanced Portfolio and profile viewing ● Advanced search filters ● Host one live workshop or information sessions about your organization monthly ● Recruit talent online ● Post job openings ● Reviews and ratings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Digital portfolio ● View thousands of portfolios ● Content sharing ● Advanced portfolio and profile viewing ● Statistics and rankings ● Advanced search filters and favorite lists ● Private messaging ● Host unlimited live workshops or information sessions about your organization ● Recruit talent online ● Unlimited and prioritised postings of job openings ● Unlimited access to learning resources for your organization ● Receive unlimited ratings and reviews ● Features on news platform (advertisement)

Table 5. talent identification and industry pricing model

- Digital portfolio

Create your professional profile and list your role and other relevant information to build credibility.

- Content sharing

Share an unlimited amount of videos, pictures, short text, blogs and links to enhance your brands achievements

- Portfolio and profile viewing

View talents profiles, general information and experiences and depending on your plan, view content from professional competitions.

- Statistics and rankings

As a premium offering, view athletes verified sports statistics such as their club, league, number of matches played and overall rankings.

- Job portal

View suitable opportunities for you and depending on your plan, apply to two, five or an unlimited number of jobs every month and sharpen your skills.

- Learning resources

Depending on your plan, see which courses are available or access unlimited learning resources at any time with an opportunity to gain certification with the premium unlimited plan.

- Private messaging

Interact with other users on a personal level and grow your network.

- Reviews and ratings

Receive reviews and ratings from the community to gain credibility and depending on your plan, organize your reviews and ratings as you like.

- Features on new page

As a way of advertising your brand, you will be able to submit content about your organization to fit into the news page.

- Live sessions

Depending on your plan, host one or an unlimited number of live workshops or information sessions.

- Search filters

Depending on your plan, filter your search to view results in different categories such as athlete level, age, gender, locations and much more in order to narrow down to your needs.

Our pricing models for the talent identification and industry segment are based on average industry pricing. Our pricing falls on the lower side of other talent

identification, with a goal of increasing these rates as we refine our value offering. We allow this segment to have a free plan targeted towards users and organizations who are keen on gaining brand visibility and networking, but not necessarily recruiting talent.

On both the athlete and professionals and the talent identification and industry side, the freemium model is a strategy aimed at attracting as many customers as possible, with the hope that a number of them will later translate into paying customers for the premium services. The premium customers will enable the enterprise to generate revenue. The advantages of a freemium model are that it allows engagement and interaction to gain familiarity with the product without spending any money, it is a simple way to get a large user base and build brand awareness and it meets high demand without excluding lower income users. The subscription model is beneficial because the step by step upgrades with different prices offer solutions to users depending on their financial capacity.

Management

The African Sports Network is currently composed of 5 youthful, ambitious, creative and passionate individuals.

1. Amy Wanday

Founder and Chief Executive Officer

As a former athlete, Amy carries the vision of the enterprise. She has leadership and entrepreneurship skills and is deeply immersed in the global sports business environment. She has been listed as one of the most influential sports personalities in Kenya and has won various sports leadership awards.

2. Dickson Muriuki

General Manager

Dickson's strong people management skills have him responsible for keeping the team together and managing internal and external stakeholder relations. His legal background keeps us ethical as he always ensures to look at all angles before we go into a new venture.

3. Cyprian Kimutai

Media and Communications Manager

Cyprian's journalism background and strong connections in the Kenyan journalism industry keep us relevant and grow our connections and visibility.

He also manages to keep all our social media platforms up to date and create online engagement.

4. Emmanuel Obam

Operations and Logistics

Emmanuel is a law graduate who supports the team with operations and logistics when we are setting up workshops in Kenya.

5. Tatyana Kiruthi

Sales and Marketing

Tatyana is a business student who supports the team with sales & marketing, and specifically customer relationships during our workshops in Kenya.

Even though this team has managed to deliver exceptional results over the last three years, the organization understands the need to recruit new teammates in order to succeed in the expansion and business diversification. We specifically see a need to recruit individuals with a computer science background as well as general business development among other areas. The team will also focus on solidifying existing relationships in the industry in order to create a strong board of directors. Some of the existing relationships in consideration are:

1. Amadou Fall

President of the Basketball Africa League (BAL)

Amadou Gallo Fall defined the vision and led the historic launch of the Basketball Africa League in May 2021. Before this, he played a role as the Vice President & Managing Director of NBA Africa, working to grow the game of basketball across the continent.

2. Fernando Soler

Sports Industry Consultant

Fernando is the former head of global tennis at IMG and is now a consultant in the field of sports, media and entertainment working with clients including IMG, Kosmos and Sela Sports. He specializes in client management, event management and sponsorship sales.

3. Charlotte Gustavsson

CEO | Non Executive Director | Public Speaker | Mentor

Charlotte has over 10 years experience as a CEO, with experienced leadership skills and a track record of building company culture, business development

creating new business and revenue streams. Charlotte is also a mentor at The African Women Entrepreneurship Cooperative (AWEC) she mentors brilliant young female entrepreneurs across the continent.

4. Lucy Mills

Regional Project at the FC Barcelona Foundation

Lucy joined the Barça Foundation in 2018 following 14 years working in the football for development sector. Lucy's most notable achievements during this time were working on the 2010 FIFA Men's World Cup official legacy project in 16 African countries and managing the UK branch of Grassroot Soccer. Lucy's is particularly committed to unlocking the transformative potential of the game for girls and young women.

5. Cynthia Mumbo

Founder and CEO of Sports Connect Africa

Cynthia leads a sports consultancy organization which specializes in connecting and empowering sports stakeholders in Africa and has a strong focus on youth development through Basketball. She is an alumni of Leaders in Sport under 40, Class of 2018.

These are a few of the core people who have shown a deep sense of understanding and support towards the African Sports Network and we are optimistic that they would continue to be valuable in this time of diversification. Moreover, the African Sports Network is currently undertaking the Collaborative Learning Initiative (CLI) run by Issroff Family Foundation. The Issroff Foundation is focused on uplifting the lives of children and youth in Southern & Eastern Africa, New York, and Israel. In this program, the African Sports Network is immersed in a peer learning journey, coaching, and mentorship processes designed to help improve project management, board and staff management, resources mobilization skills and other aspects of community driven social change.

Legal plan

- Limited liability company

As this business diversification requires a large financial investment and is a big step forward for the company, with any such advancement comes the aspect of risk. As a limited liability company, the owners are not personally responsible for business debts and liabilities which will protect personal assets in case of any challenges along the way.

- Jurisdiction

In order to successfully launch this application and be a leader across the African continent, we will need to go through an extensive process of ensuring that our operations comply with local laws and regulations before marketing and distributing the application in different markets.

- Non-disclosure agreement

In order to protect our ideas, we will sign a non-disclosure agreement with our mobile development company and our partners.

- Intellectual property rights

As we define the contents of the mobile application much better, we will look into trademarking and patent protection for various elements that we hope to build brand equity from.

- Privacy policy

As we will be collecting personal information, having a privacy policy and being transparent with users about which data is being collected and what it is used for is essential.

- Other factors

In addition, we will need to sign legal agreements with the App Store and Google Play Market and agree to their terms and conditions.

Operational plan

Due to the African Sports Networks teams lack of technology background, we will work with a software development company to build our application. This team will specialize on the design and will have experience in the sector in order to alert us about the feasibility of our plans and double check our timeline in order to make sure it is possible. This way, we will have our internal team focusing on business development, marketing and sales while working closely with this external team who will develop a leading platform.

Marketing plan

The marketing plan for the African Sports Network has 3 main objectives:

- Brand visibility

In order to launch successfully, it is important for the company to begin gaining traction in the months leading up to the launch. We will leverage the power of social media in order to do this, using diverse platforms to reach different sports audiences. The first months of content will be used to position the brand, consisting of content about the platform and communicating the values of the brand to foster inclusion and create a community from day one. This will be in parallel with a web page which will serve as a landing page for interested people who want more information about the platform and are curious to know when it will launch.

The landing page and social media channels are also very important in establishing credibility when reaching out to potential partners, brand ambassadors and influencers ahead of the launch as it gives them a sense of understanding of the platform and what to expect.

- Downloads and engagement

After the launch, it will be very important to have users on the platform. Our marketing focus will shift from creating awareness to a more concrete call to action which is to download the app. This message will be spread through our social channels, and amplified with strategic brand ambassadors with a wider reach across platforms. There will also be an emphasis on media partnerships on a small scale through bloggers and a high scale through the press in order to strengthen our SEO positioning.

A physical event or traditional press conference on the day of the launch will boost attention towards the platform and make the launch bigger than simply an online campaign. The parallel focus alongside downloads is engagement. We will be recruiting brand ambassadors beforehand in order to ensure that when the platform goes live, there is enough interaction on the platform in order to keep users engaged.

- Revenue generation

After creating a thriving community, it is important for the African Sports Network to create further value in order to generate revenue. From June onwards, the focus will be on refining the value offerings, ensuring that we maximize on the value of connecting users and building a database strong enough to give users the urge to pay to gain further visibility, and recruiters the urge to pay to narrow down on the strongest talent.

December 2021	February 2022	June 2022 onwards
Pre - releases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landing page "coming soon" • Social networks 	Media Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press toolkit • PR & blogger outreach • Brand ambassadors onboarding 	Launch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press conference • Launch event • Paid social media advertisements • App store optimization
Brand visibility	Downloads and Engagement	Revenue Generation
Growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of subscription model 		

Figure 3. marketing roadmap

In order to achieve these goals, we will use a variety of distribution channels:

1. Search engine optimization

This will help us enhance our customer experience and lead to higher conversion rates.

2. Traditional marketing and word of mouth

Over the last 3 years, the African Sports Network has managed to gain free visibility on television, radio and blogs through reaching out to key journalists and media outlets who are looking for powerful stories. Through our strong social media platforms, we are regularly approached by the media and we aim to continue attracting the media and providing them with clear toolkits with ready material about us which they can publish from the day of the launch.

3. Social media

Social media is a strong marketing channel which allows the African Sports Network to gain credibility and increase brand visibility before, during and after the launch of the application. It also enables the team to identify strategic brand ambassadors to help drive the message and is a simple way to set goals and clear targets such as specific age groups, locations, behavior, market segments and much more. It also allows us to channel traffic towards the app stores to increase the number of downloads. The following channels will be leveraged to inform, engage and acquire customers:

- Web page

This will serve as a landing page for all relevant information, communicating our value proposition, with a key message telling users that the application will be available for download in February 2022.

- Instagram

Instagram will serve as the main social network and information will be delivered and displayed strategically in a way that tells a story about the organization. We will also leverage tools such as instagram stories to spark conversations and use paid advertisements later on to target certain audiences and channel traffic towards application downloads.

- Facebook

As Facebook has millions of users across the continent, this platform will enable us to have a high reach to users and similarly to instagram target specific demographics.

- LinkedIn

LinkedIn currently has a large audience of talent identifiers and seekers who would be interested in joining our platform which is exclusively for the sports community.

- Twitter

We will use twitter as a platform to share news and spark conversations around African sport, with an aim of building credibility.

- YouTube

We will use YouTube to share information and tell powerful stories. We have an existing database of athletes with powerful stories which we can begin to document and share why the platform is an exceptional opportunity for them.

- TikTok

TikTok will be used to position the brand as a youthful organization and grow our community by celebrating African sport in unique and exciting ways.

- Pinterest

We will use pinterest to share ideas, facts and information, closely related to African sport and our values.

4. Financial Analysis

Key assumptions and forecasts

Low scenario	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Annual total active app users	20.000	70.000	250.000	400.000	700.000
Annual athlete and professional freemium users	18.280	66.600	244.900	393.200	691.500
Annual athlete and professional premium starter subscribers	900	1.800	2.700	3.600	4.500
Annual athlete and professional premium unlimited subscribers	250	500	750	1.000	1.250
Annual talent identification and industry freemium users	500	1.000	1.500	2.000	2.500
Annual talent identification and industry premium starter subscribers	50	60	90	120	150
Annual talent identification and industry premium unlimited subscribers	20	40	60	80	100

Table 6. key assumptions and forecasts

Projected sales

Low scenario		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Athlete and professionals	Premium starter (5€ per month)	54.000 €	108.000 €	162.000 €	216.000 €	270.000 €
	Premium unlimited(15€ per month)	45.000 €	90.000 €	135.000 €	180.000 €	225.000 €
Talent identification and industry	Premium starter (50€ per month)	18.000 €	36.000 €	54.000 €	72.000 €	90.000 €
	Premium unlimited (150€ per month)	36.000 €	72.000 €	108.000 €	144.000 €	180.00 €

Table 7. projected sales

Projected start-up expenses

Item	Cost estimate
Application Development	8.000 €
Marketing and Sales	920 €
Salaries	62.400 €
Facilities	1.620 €
External Services	36.425€
Other (payment charges, etc.)	3.060 €
TOTAL INITIAL FUNDING	40.405 €

Table 8: projected startup expenses

Capital requirements and investment/financing

In order to raise our seed capital, we will be seeking funding from various parties with different target amounts based on their connection to our organisation. We will reach out to organizations, individuals and foundations in order to reach our target. The

African Sports Network plans to use the period between July 2021 to December 2021 to raise the seed capital.

Projected financial statements

Income statement

		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
REVENUE	Athlete and professionals: Premium starter	54.000 €	108.000 €	162.000 €	216.000 €	270.000 €
	Athlete and professionals: Premium unlimited	45.000 €	90.000 €	135.000 €	180.000 €	225.000 €
	Talent identification and industry: Premium starter	18.000 €	36.000 €	54.000 €	72.000 €	90.000 €
	Talent identification and industry: Premium unlimited	36.000 €	72.000 €	108.000 €	144.000 €	180.00 €
TOTAL REVENUE		153.000 €	306.000 €	459.000 €	612.000 €	765.000 €
OPEX	Application development	8.000 €	20.000 €	22.400 €	28.000 €	33.600 €
	Marketing and sales	920 €	2.024 €	2.476 €	3.312 €	3.864 €
	Salaries	62.400 €	137.280 €	174.720 €	224.640 €	262.080 €
	Facilities	1.620 €	3.564 €	4.536 €	5.832 €	6.804 €
	External services	36.425 €	80.135 €	101.990 €	131.130 €	152.985 €
	Other costs	3.060 €	6.732 €	8.568 €	11.016 €	12.852 €
TOTAL OPEX		109.365 €	249.735 €	314.690 €	403.930 €	472.185 €
EBIT		43.635 €	56.265 €	144.310 €	208.070 €	292.815 €

Table 9: income statement

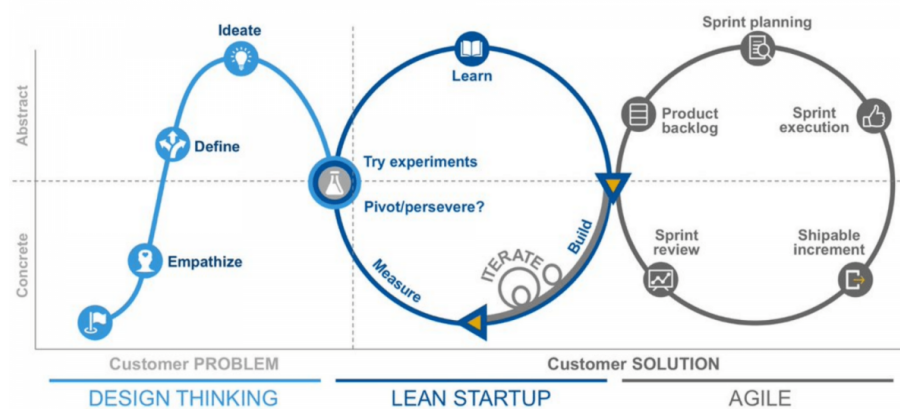
Break Even analysis and performance metrics

Given that the scenario shown above is the lowest possible scenario we envision, we believe that we can find some sustainability in this model, in the sense that we will be at a profit from the first year of operations. In terms of performance metrics, the conversion rate of users from the free plan to the subscription model will be an important factor to analyze if our value offering is strong enough. Besides that, community engagement is an important factor for all users in order to know that our community is valuable. It will be important for us to analyze the download rates versus the active users.

5. Conclusion

Implementation plan

In order to enhance the viability of this business plan, we identified three methodologies that we believe can be used together strategically in order to build a strong service in the most customer friendly manner, while adapting at the same time. A combination of the design thinking methodology, lean startup concept and agile methodology as shown in the figure below can help us work step by step in order to create a strong service which the market will respond positively to.



(Sam Vaghefi, 2019)

Implementation challenges

As we work on implementing this business plan, it is very likely that we will face many uncertainties and the need to adapt rapidly will arise. One of the important conclusions that we have drawn is that a business development and data management partner is crucial to work with the internal team under external services until the team can afford to employ a business development strategist. Such roles are important in order to work with the team to strengthen the financial analysis, leading to an overall stronger business plan.

Strategies/recommendations

As a result of this research and writing this business plan, we have identified two major opportunities with potential to be tapped into further in the future:

1. Partnerships

There is a strong opportunity to enhance partnerships on the talent identification and industry side, with high schools, sports academies, sports agencies, sports clubs, sports federations and much more. We believe that a

full time role and even possibly a B2B sales department specializing in such partnerships can go a long way in increasing the organizations revenue.

2. Advertisement

Beyond advertisement by organizations who are already in our community, there is a possibility of third parties to see an interest in advertising on our platform.

In conclusion, this research validated the following assumptions that athletes value building their brands, a community to advance networking and gaining visibility. Furthermore, this business plan highlights that there is a strong opportunity for talent identification processes to take place online based on the technological advancements over the years. The African Sport Network feels confident to begin the process of creating a groundbreaking online sports community which allows African athletes to be their own content creators and gain visibility worldwide while helping scouts, agents and organizations around the world source African sports talent.

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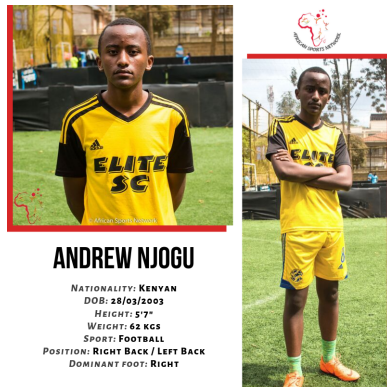
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Appendices

Link to African Sports Network website: www.africansportsnetwork.com



ANDREW NJOGU
NATIONALITY: KENYAN
DOB: 28/03/2003
HEIGHT: 5'7"
WEIGHT: 62 KGS
SPORT: FOOTBALL
POSITION: RIGHT BACK / LEFT BACK
DOMINANT FOOT: RIGHT

Figure 1. African Sports Network player profile