



Open MBA Practicum Project – Launch Planning for Squirrlefeeders.com, A Small Is Good Business Web

Keywords: Business model innovation, entrepreneurial rural economic development, decentralized supply chain management, appropriate/intermediate technology, web-based executable business models (Mirror Worlds), viral marketing, story-driven game-oriented e-commerce, Shamrock organizations, nanocorps

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General Organization Description

Sohodojo is an independent, non-profit applied research and development laboratory [1] supporting entrepreneurial free agents and their dejobbed small businesses — the building blocks of *Small is Good Business Webs*. Our domains of entrepreneurial social action are rural and distressed urban communities.

We serve our constituent communities through the development of business models and associated software technologies consistent with Small is Good Business Web organizing principles. Our most elementary constituency is the *nanocorp* or “unary (smallest, indivisible) business,” ranging from the solo entrepreneurial free agent to the working family. [2]

Our ultimate goal is to research, develop and support the Small Is Good Business Web model [3] as a full employment sustainable life-style. However, by providing opportunities for sustainable supplementary income, this innovative entrepreneurial business model – especially when applied in a collaborative family context – has the potential to contribute immediately as a stabilizing factor in rural communities where underemployment and job availability cycles adversely affect family financial stability.

Sohodojo’s R&D is focused on development of a free Open Source software platform for the creation of role-actor executable business models, and for creation of a story-driven, game-oriented e-commerce engine consistent with, and taking unique advantage of, Small is Good Business Web dynamics. [4] We support successful adoption of technologies developed by our lab through a complementary education program centered on unique content freely available at the Sohodojo web site.

In short, Sohodojo functions as a nexus of research, development, and education exploring the *other side of Capitalism* [5] as a means of extending the flight of Spaceship Earth. [6]

Squirrlefeeders.com [7] will be the first Small Is Good Business Web, serving as a sandbox for the design, business model prototyping and demonstration of this model for sustainable enterprise. Structurally based on Charles Handy’s three-leafed Shamrock organization model [8], the core leaf company will be the “dot-com play.” The B2B service partners leaf, and contingency workforce leaf of the Squirrlefeeders.com business web’s Shamrock organization will be composed of nanocorp-based free agents and dejobbed small businesses. B-web members will participate either as simple transaction-based associates, or participate as commonwealth owners [9] by having earned some form and degree of equity-based participation in the business web [10].

The b-web’s context-providing core leaf company – the creation of which is the focus of this practicum – will be responsible for envisioning and implementing the business web’s e-commerce-based *executable business model* enabling the b-web’s *decentralized supply chain* [11] as well as managing branding and

marketing strategies, partner relationship management and web-member relationship management (based on a practicum-recommended member ownership model).

General Project Description

Practicum participants will work closely with Sohodojo Founders and Research Directors, Jim Salmons and Timlynn Babitsky [12, 13], to envision and then prepare the prerequisite business development materials to launch Squirrelfeeders.com as the prototypical Small Is Good Business Web.

As a pilot demonstration project within the state of North Carolina, this entrepreneurial social action and research program will focus on developing solo and family-based sustainable enterprises within rural communities coping with our State's transition from a tobacco-dominant economy. The emphasis in this Practicum project is on developing a fundable business plan based on the Small Is Good Business Web model for ownership and operation of a sustainable, craft-oriented, value-chain and Internet-enabled geographically dispersed business enterprise.

Timing

The proposed Practicum uses a web-based project management service. This infrastructure gives you and us a great deal of flexibility in executing collaborations. Ideally, teams will begin working in the Spring of 2002 with completion before the start of Fall 2002 classes.

Interaction with Sohodojo's Research Directors throughout this project will be Internet driven and occur on a weekly and as-needed basis. The Practicum team will determine project updates and milestones during the initial project planning and kick-off discussions initiated in the project's eProject project portal.

Detailed scheduling of the presentation of final deliverables will also be determined through the kick-off project-planning discussions, taking into consideration student exam and vacation schedules. It is generally expected, however, that the final package of deliverables will be presented to Sohodojo by the end of September 2002.

Project Scope

This is an *entrepreneurial start-up* scale and scope project. Practicum participants will be expected to familiarize themselves with the referenced work cited in this Practicum proposal and to interact on a regular basis with social/business entrepreneurs Jim Salmons and Timlynn Babitsky as they work on this Practicum project. Participants will have the opportunity to interact with Sohodojo's Advisory Board members [16] as needed and with other subject matter experts within Sohodojo's network of research and business associates.

Based on the Small Is Good Business Web models envisioned at Sohodojo, students will assess various co-op and alternative ownership and operational models (e.g., the Scott Bader Company, Springfield Remanufacturing, among others), then develop a fundable business plan for the Squirrelfeeders.com core company based on their recommended Small Is Good Business Web ownership/operational model. They will provide, at least in outline form, recommendations for the B-Web Node Business Toolkit.

Deliverables

Practicum deliverables are anticipated to include, but not be limited to:

- ◆ A fundable business plan for the 'dot-com core leaf' Squirrelfeeders.com company so it may serve as the context provider for the Squirrelfeeders.com Business Web.
- ◆ A 'B-Web Node Business Toolkit' outline recommending the scope and content of how-to guides, starting-point business plans and template documents for business incorporation to be used by soloists and dejobbed small businesses joining the Squirrelfeeders.com Business Web enterprise.

Implementation

This practicum, *Business Web Planning and Process/Material Development – Squirrelfeeders.com Pilot*, is the first of a three-phase program, *Launching a Small Is Good Business Web – Squirrelfeeders.com Pilot*, undertaken as an applied research and entrepreneurial social action by Sohodojo.

The deliverables of this practicum are the essential prerequisite materials and process definitions to enable the second and third phases of this project. Phase two of the program, *Squirrelfeeders.com Business Web Pilot - Participant and Stakeholder Development*, is the subject of a grant proposal currently under funding consideration by the Golden LEAF Foundation, the administrator of North Carolina's share of the tobacco settlement [14, 15]

With the successful completion of the proposed practicum and funded implementation of the second phase of this program, it is anticipated that Sohodojo and core practicum participants will have forged an alliance under which we will collaboratively seek funding for the culminating third project within this program, *Launching and Sustaining a Small Is Good Business Web – Squirrelfeeders.com Pilot*.

Practicum participants will be candidates for "sweat equity" positions within the Squirrelfeeders.com Business Web. Whether in the dejobbed core company or as a commonwealth member in the business web, the exact nature and extent of such equity participation will be the subject of consideration by, and will be among the deliverable recommendations of, the practicum participants.

References Listed in the Text

[1] Sohodojo:

<http://sohodojo.com/index.html>

[2] What is a nanocorp?

http://sohodojo.com/newsletters/rnr_newsletter_01.html#topic2

[3] The Small Is Good Business Web Model:

http://sohodojo.com/nanocorp-primer/shamrocks-n-nanocorps_01.html

[4] A story-driven, game-oriented e-commerce engine:

http://sohodojo.com/nanocorp-primer/small-is-good-b-web-stories_09.html#vy

[5] *The other side of Capitalism*:

http://sohodojo.com/nanocorp-primer/nanocorp-primer-01_21.html

[6] R. Buckminster Fuller. "Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth":

<http://sohodojo.com/ribs/omse.html>

[7] Squirrelfeeders.com:

http://squirrelfeeders.com/nanocorp_welcome.html

[8] Charles Handy. "The Age of Unreason" and "The Age of Paradox":

<http://sohodojo.com/ribs/age-of-unreason.html>

[9] See The Scott Bader Commonwealth, among others:

<http://info.greenwood.com/books/1567204/1567204147.html>

[10] Tapscott, Ticoll, and Lowy, "Digital Capital: Harnessing the Power of Business Webs":

<http://sohodojo.com/ribs/digitalcap.html>

See also, David Carr's excellent (it mentions Sohodojo's b-web initiative;-) article, 'Business Webs - The new breed of web-integration services', for an on-line b-web introduction:

<http://www.internetworld.com/magazine.php?inc=041501/04.15.01feature1.html>

Prospective participant inquiries welcome - <mailto:mba-practicum@sohodojo.com>

This document: <http://sohodojo.com/projects/open-mba-practicum.pdf>

[11] Executable business models and decentralized, small-scale value chain:
http://sohodojo.com/nanocorp-primer/role-actor-scenario-patterns_01.html

See also David Carr's *Forging 21st Century Value Chains - Weaving the partnership Web*:
http://www.internetworld.com/magazine.php?inc=071501/07.15.01feature1_p1.html

[12] James F. Salmons, Founder and Researcher Director, Sohodojo:
<http://jfsconsulting.com/home/jimbio.html>

[13] Timlynn T. Babitsky, Founder and Research Director, Sohodojo:
<http://jfsconsulting.com/home/timlynnbio.html>

[14] Sohodojo's Golden LEAF one-page Proposal Summary here:
<http://sohodojo.com/projects/glf-summary.pdf>

[15] Sohodojo's Golden LEAF full proposal here:
<http://sohodojo.com/projects/glf-proposal.pdf>

[16] Sohodojo Advisory Board:
<http://sohodojo.com/advisory-board.html>

Research Sponsor

eProject Inc. of Seattle, Washington (<http://www.eproject.com>) is a **Sohodojo Research Sponsor** of the Open MBA Practicum Project. eProject is contributing seats to its web-hosted Enterprise project management service for members of the Practicum team. The web-based project office will be an essential ingredient in supporting the distributed and decentralized teams expected to work on the Practicum project.

Prospective Participant Inquiries – Individuals and Teams

Students, faculty and researchers who would like to participate in the Open MBA Practicum Project are welcome to contact Sohodojo. Start with a brief introductory note explaining your interest:

<mailto:mba-practicum@sohodojo.com>

Thanks to our eProject sponsorship, the Open Practicum Project will have a full-featured web-based project portal to facilitate team collaboration. So we are interested in inquiries from individuals as well as from school-affiliated teams. We're hoping to generate a friendly competition among a small number of school-fielded teams with an 'outlier' team consisting of interested individuals regardless of local affiliation.

Two "at large" team member spots are available! You don't have to be an MBA student or business school faculty member to qualify for an "at large" team position. Creative reasons for wanting an "at large" seat are welcome.