

Unit 3 Case Study

Filling Market Needs

Have you ever used Canva to create a presentation, a flyer, or a graphic design? If you have, you should be thanking Melanie Perkins. During her time in school, Perkins was a private tutor for graphic design students. It was this experience that made her realize the difficulty students had with advanced design programs, such as Adobe Photoshop. Seeing students struggle with the most basic features of advanced programs, she realized there was a business opportunity in streamlining the design process so it could be easily understood by everyone, not just professional graphic designers. Perkins left college at the age of 19 to start her business.

Canva was not the first business Perkins started. She actually launched Fusion Books with Cliff Obrecht, an Australian entrepreneur. Fusion Books housed a library of design templates that students could use to build their school yearbooks. Perkins had experience with yearbooks and thought it would be a good test market for the idea that would eventually become Canva. Within five years, Fusion Books became the largest yearbook company in Australia and had expanded into both France and New Zealand.

Perkins and Obrecht realized early on that they needed to grow the business, but they also realized they needed funding. They met with over 100 potential backers before Perkins met with Bill Tai. During this meeting, Tai messaged Google Maps cofounder Lars Rasmussen and told him that if Rasmussen could build a team of experts in tech, Tai would invest. Unfortunately, none of the prospective leaders worked out, but Rasmussen was able to connect Perkins to Cameron Adams, a former Google employee. Adams was hesitant, but he eventually decided to join the team.

By August 2013, they launched the newly renamed business Canva. They had 50,000 users in the first month, and by 2014, 600,000 users had created 3.5 million designs. The number of users and the countries that utilize Canva just keeps increasing.

According to Perkins, Canva's mission is "...to empower the world to design and we really mean the whole world...Canva is a free source of design, which allows anyone, anywhere to download for free." Perkins is considered a *social entrepreneur*. These are people who are in business to help, provide, or make a contribution to society. The next time you use Canva at no expense, think of the ease of using the program as a benefit.

1. Why do you think Melanie Perkins and Cliff Obrecht had a difficult time initially finding backers?

Answer:

2. In what way(s) is Melanie Perkins a social entrepreneur?

Answer:

3. How do you think Fusion Books helped Perkins and Obrecht build a better Canva?

Answer:

4. Why do you think Canva was so popular at its launch and remains as popular as it is?

Answer:

5. Think about your experience in school. What struggles have you or your peers faced that could actually be an opportunity for a business?

Answer: