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About CompanyCrafters

CompanyCrafters is a management consulting firm that specializes in creating and growing high tech businesses. We work with entrepreneurial teams as well as corporations, venture capital firms and research institutions to plan, launch and grow market-leading new ventures.

Based in Ann Arbor, Michigan and led by veteran entrepreneurs and technology industry executives Jim Price and Mike Klein, CompanyCrafters has developed a range of high-value tools and proprietary approaches all focused on crafting and growing new business ventures more rapidly and efficiently, and with significantly improved chances of success. The firm deploys these tools and methodologies through its high-impact consulting services to benefit several types of clients:

- Established corporations
- Entrepreneurs and startup teams
- Venture capital firms
- University technology transfer groups
- New-business accelerators

CompanyCrafters provides a range of advisory, hands-on management and educational services focused on planning, launching and scaling new enterprises and corporate and university spin-outs.

Planning & Launching New Businesses

Well-run corporations tend to spawn a number of innovations and new-business ideas in the normal course of business. But here's the dilemma: so many of these innovative ideas are outside the realm of the company's mainstream business and therefore need to draw on resources outside of the enterprise to shape the business plan and launch the venture.



That's where CompanyCrafters comes in.

As experienced tech entrepreneurs in our own right, we've been through the drill multiple times. At CompanyCrafters, we've built a practice around helping others to successfully plan, launch and scale robust new ventures. We bring a unique entrepreneurial perspective on new business development that is structured, repeatable, and geared toward maximizing value and minimizing the new-venture risk.

Businesses Planning

CompanyCrafters coaches and provides hands-on assistance to the management team in researching and developing new business plans. Our structured planning process entails applying a suite of analytical tools to fully understand the market, the industry dynamics and the business opportunities. From this analysis, we identify the most powerful combinations among alternative business models, market segment focuses and go-to-market strategy. We start with an outward-focused market perspective, test the various alternative strategies, and analyze the financial viability and return of the most promising approaches.

Through the business planning process, CompanyCrafters works with the management team to produce a validated business plan, a practical marketing plan, and a detailed financial model – crucial tools for launching the new business

Some of the specific tools we bring to bear in the business planning process include:

- Development of a comprehensive industry map
- Value chain and margin structure analysis
- Market segmentation
- Competitive mapping
- Examination of business model alternatives
- Compelling value and strategic fit analysis
- Strategic pricing
- Financial modeling and forecasting
- Risk analysis and delineation of critical success factors



Launching New Businesses

Some clients call on CompanyCrafters to take a hands-on role in leading the team through the new-business-launch process, testing and proving out the strategy and refining the business plan based on market and customer feedback. We can assist in building out and coaching the management team through the launch process including development of a comprehensive “flight checklist,” an execution framework, 30/60/90 day execution plans and deliverables to keep the launch on track.

We work with the management team to assure customer and market feedback are integrated back into a living, breathing business plan and ongoing risk mitigation strategies to keep the team focused on the right milestones toward success.

Our role in our clients' new-venture launches can range from executive leadership to active advisory and coaching assistance to board participation.

Leading Businesses Through High Growth

Once the business plan is proven, and predictable, repeatable sales can be delivered in a particular sub-segment of the market, the business may be in a position to be rapidly scaled up.

CompanyCrafters works with clients as they scale the business through this high growth phase. We serve as active hands-on advisors and board members, coaching management through the tumultuous changes always associated with rapid growth.

Crafting Go-to-Market Strategies

Poorly-devised go-to-market strategies cause more new-business initiatives to fail than any other factor. CompanyCrafters has a successful track record of helping a range of companies evaluate their business models and craft effective go-to-market strategies.

The process starts with a thorough analysis of the business's value proposition, industry dynamics and competitive positioning. Working with a proven set of analytical tools and methodologies, we help companies examine their business model, product strategy, and sales and marketing plan in light of the current industry dynamics and market obstacles.

Based on this rigorous evaluation, CompanyCrafters is often able to provide new strategic insight into the challenges and obstacles inhibiting the business's growth. We then go about addressing these obstacles head-on and work with our client to build an effective go-to-market strategy.

The next step is to execute on the go-to-market strategy through effective team execution. We often work with our clients to build a clear accountability and communication framework into the team's execution plan. With effective team execution, market feedback (including not just successes but failures) can be rapidly incorporated back into the strategy to quickly narrow in on the optimal business model.

Finally, we help our clients assess their business risk along four axes: market risk, product risk, management risk, and finance risk. Through a dynamic risk assessment process we call the Venture Quotient™ (VQ™), the most threatening risks can be surfaced and addressed quickly.

Throughout the process, CompanyCrafters works closely with its clients. We don't gather data and go away to deliver a report. Rather, as experienced entrepreneurs, we take a hands-on, coaching approach to make sure our clients are involved in the process and own the results of the work we do together.

Structuring Corporate & University Spinouts



At CompanyCrafters, we've achieved notable success working with both corporations and research institutions to evaluate new innovations and business opportunities, formulate rigorous business plans and ultimately launch new businesses. In some cases, these ventures are spun out as independent entities, while in other cases they are launched as new business initiatives within the parent organization.

In developing new spinouts, we exercise our extensive professional network to bring the right resources – legal, financial, executive talent, etc. – into the mix as needed. Our focus is on partnering with the parent organization – the innovating corporation or institution – to leverage their innovations and create a robust new business with a high confidence of success.

Interim Executive Assignments

Remember the old expression, "It's not what you know, it's who you know"? Well, if you know CompanyCrafters, you've got access to top-notch venturing professionals who can jump in and help ensure a highly successful, low-risk launch of your new business. If we can't do the job ourselves – due to time constraints, prior commitments, or need for a specific skill set, – we'll tap our extensive network of experienced executives and tech-venture pros to help you fill out your "A team."

CompanyCrafters Education & Seminars

At CompanyCrafters, we believe that many of the "mysteries" of starting a new business from scratch aren't mysteries at all, but there are many common but entirely unnecessary mistakes. Many of these mistakes can be company-killers if they're not headed off early in the process. Most new ventures take risks they don't need to.

We believe that low-risk, high-probability-of-success venturing can be taught and coached.

How do we come by this belief? At CompanyCrafters, our partners have founded and run successful tech ventures ourselves and produced impressive financial returns for our investors. We've accumulated our own "valuable scar tissue" and watched numerous other startup teams repeat the same mistakes over and over.

CompanyCrafters conveys these lessons to other business leaders through executive education, seminars, and one-on-one coaching. One measure of how effectively we convey these lessons is where we teach. One of the world's top-ranked business schools, the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business, calls on CompanyCrafters to serve as faculty in entrepreneurship and corporate spin-out venturing in both their MBA and Executive Education programs.

Representative Customer Engagements:

The following two pages provide a sampling of representative CompanyCrafters client engagements:



Eaton Corporation

CompanyCrafters worked with this Fortune 50 company's management team to analyze the market potential, value proposition, and industry map and value chain. CompanyCrafters developed the business and go-to-market plans focused on identifying, screening and launching a new, technology-based business venture for Eaton.



Mercedes Benz Technology

This leading automotive design, manufacturing and test technology and services organization called on CompanyCrafters to develop the market analysis, business plan, financial analysis, and go-to-market plan to launch a new software product that leveraged MBtech's years of experience in the automated test market.



Dow Chemical Company

CompanyCrafters has provided extensive advice to this Fortune 50 industrial company focused on identifying, screening and ultimately launching a range of new, technology-based business ventures and growth initiatives that leverage Dow's intellectual property and domain knowledge.



Soar Technology, Inc.

An acknowledged leader in the development of expert system software, SoarTech has sought CompanyCrafters' help with a broad-based effort to position the company for continued rapid

growth – realigning the board and corporate governance, recapitalization, strategy development and implementation, negotiation of strategic alliances, and executive recruiting.



Altarum Institute

A leading non-profit research and innovation institute, Altarum frequently seeks consulting advice from CompanyCrafters regarding technology mergers and acquisitions as well as growth strategies and the optimal approach to entering new businesses and new markets.



University of Michigan

Tapping the nation's largest public-university research budget, the University of Michigan's Technology Transfer group is active in efforts to commercialize the results of UM research, and turns to CompanyCrafters to evaluate the commercial potential of various inventions and intellectual property, and to provide advice on the creation of new spin-out businesses.



Hometown Communications Network, Inc.

The executive management of this publisher of over 80 newspapers engaged CompanyCrafters to provide strategy and new-business-development guidance in the area of technology business ventures and growth strategies.



Ann Arbor IT Zone

CompanyCrafters has assisted this innovative new-business accelerator in developing and conducting a range of entrepreneurial education and executive mentoring programs, and has conducted a series of educational seminars and panel discussion programs on a range of entrepreneurship and venture finance topics.



Wise Solutions Inc.

This leading provider of utilities for the IT developer and administrator markets retained CompanyCrafters to provide advice regarding innovative strategy and positioning the company for rapid growth.



GDI Infotech

CompanyCrafters lead this IT Services Provider through a restructuring process, returning focus to its core business and developing differentiated solutions. CompanyCrafters helped the company establish an execution framework and metrics that brought daily focus to results and profitability.

Biographical Briefs:

Mike Klein

**Managing Partner
CompanyCrafters LLC**



Mike Klein is a highly accomplished, passionate and energetic executive with a unique blend of vision, motivation and execution skills. In 2005, he joined CompanyCrafters to develop a new focus area helping mature organizations think and operate more entrepreneurially. By leveraging a venture mindset developed through years of starting and leading successful technology businesses, Mike advises established businesses that are looking to “get entrepreneurial” in their approach to evaluating and exploiting new business opportunities.

Mike has over twenty years of business leadership, technology, and startup experience. He founded **Steeplechase Software, Inc.** in 1993 and lead the company as CEO and Chairman to quickly become the undisputed market leader in PC-based factory automation, joining the list of *Inc. 500 Fastest Growing Companies*. While at Steeplechase’s helm, Mike raised over \$10 million in private investment capital, built a base of dozens of Fortune 500 customers. After successfully selling the company in 2000 to Schneider Automation, Mike was asked to lead the turnaround of **Interlink Networks, Inc.** a network security firm, by the company’s board of Directors. As CEO of Interlink, he quickly stemmed the losses, hired a new management team, raised additional financing, and successfully repositioned the company expanding its Fortune 500 customer base. In 2005, Mike lead the management buy-out of the company from the investors and remains the CEO and majority owner of the company.

Mike spent a decade in sales, strategic marketing, product development and management roles at Motorola and Rockwell Automation. An engineer by training and an innovator at heart, Mike has also been awarded over a half dozen patents. Mike is an accomplished speaker who captivates his audiences with his passion and receives consistent acclaim for his speaking engagements. He has made hundreds of presentations on topics ranging from entrepreneurship to sales, marketing, business planning and technology. Mike holds a BS in Computer Engineering from Rochester Institute of Technology and a MS in Electrical Engineering from Arizona State University.

James D. Price

**Founding Partner
CompanyCrafters LLC**



Jim Price is a serial entrepreneur and business educator with over two decades of broad-ranging business management and technology startup experience. In 2000, following a string of entrepreneurial adventures that included a successful company sale, an IPO, and multiple angel investments, he founded CompanyCrafters with the vision of applying his “useful scar tissue” to help others launch and grow successful businesses.

As an entrepreneur, Jim has served as a principle founder and either CEO or Chairman of the following tech startups: **Transom Technologies Inc.** (a simulation software company founded in 1996, sold to Engineering Animation, now UGS, in 1998); **MAXfunds.com Inc.** (www.maxfunds.com, an online financial services venture founded in 1999); and **Cielo MedSolutions LLC** (www.cielomedsolutions.com, a healthcare IT firm founded in 2005). From 1988 to 1996, as VP of marketing with Mechanical Dynamics, Inc., Jim was a member of the management team that guided the engineering software vendor from \$3 million to \$25 million in annual revenue and through a successful IPO in 1996. Prior to that, he worked for several years in the Boston/128 area serving in senior business development and marketing management positions for Fortune 500 technology companies. At the outset of his career, Jim spent five years in management consulting.

Jim currently serves on the boards of Cielo MedSolutions, Soar Technology (www.soartech.com), and the Zell-Lurie Institute for Entrepreneurial Studies at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business (www.zli.bus.umich.edu). He also teaches entrepreneurial studies as an adjunct lecturer at UM's Ross School. He is a frequent public speaker and has authored numerous papers and articles on various entrepreneurship and business management topics. Jim holds a BA degree in government, environmental sciences and jazz from Oberlin College, and an MBA degree from Stanford University.