

Entrepreneurial ID «venture leaders» 2009



Name: Arnaud Bertrand

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Project/ Company name: HouseTrip

Short description: *HouseTrip is a social marketplace where its users can rent out their places for short-term, directly or through auctions.*

Web site: Coming soon

Industry: *Web 2.0, Travel & Leisure*

About Arnaud

A French citizen living in Switzerland for 5 years, I studied hospitality with a major in entrepreneurship at the Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne as well as International Corporate Governance at Harvard University. The two significant working experiences I have had in my short life (I am 24) were as a junior consultant for PKF Consulting and I also joined an expedition in Nicaragua with the British charity Raleigh International.

Coming from an entrepreneurs' family, I have always felt the need to create my own venture, ever since elementary school when I brought together a team to build a hut in the trees (which is still standing, by the way)!

The HouseTrip idea was originated by two events: I first struggled to find a nice vacation rental in Scotland and then I struggled to rent out my own place in Switzerland during the summer. After speaking around and getting confirmation that the problem was not only mine, I simply thought about what in my eyes is the perfect solution for short-term rentals. Like back in elementary, I brought together a team (we are now 11 working on the project) and since January 2009 we have all been working with great enthusiasm on the project.

Apart from HouseTrip, my passions in life are reading (mainly about politics, technology and business), some sports (tennis, jogging, swimming), travelling (I have visited more than 30 countries) and great food!

About HouseTrip

You have a place to rent out? A house, a flat, a room, even a coach? Put it up on HouseTrip, describe it in as much depth as you want, update its availability and the way you want to rent it out (auction or not) and there you go! HouseTrip is also social: reviews, friends, wall, etc. HouseTrip is all about great places, great people and great prices!

In an industry dominated by classified ads websites, we go the other way and propose a direct booking model with auctions: we think that property owners need tools to better describe their properties, to optimize their prices and to rent them out directly. No more calls from tenants asking if the property is available! On the tenants' side, we give them a great search function and many more factors on which they can base themselves to find the right properties suiting their needs. They can also get great deals thanks to the auctions!

Thanks to an aggressive customer acquisition strategy we will be able to start with 5'000 geographically spread properties on the website. An innovative marketing strategy will allow us a strong growth in the amount of users and properties from there on. With our commission-based revenue model – we get rewarded only if our users rent their places out – our projections indicate that revenues will reach CHF 5M by the end of our second year of operation, with a net income of roughly half or CHF2.5M. We should be able to start operating and launch the website by the end of the summer.

In the past month, we have already convinced 6 investors to fund HouseTrip including such profiles as Uli Pillau, VP EMEA for Ideas, the largest revenue optimization company in the world.

We are still looking for CHF200'000 in investment and would be interested in partnerships or affiliations in the view of spreading the buzz for HouseTrip, developing ourselves in the US market and/or adding some nice features to the website.