



M.B.A. Start-ups

Recent business school graduates are heading out of universities not just with fancy diplomas, but ideas to remake the world.

By MAGHAN MCDOWELL

● **Top business schools** have become more than just places to hit the books and nab a door-opening line on that LinkedIn profile; they've become a breeding ground for future founders of the next big thing. ¶ The next idea to push the envelope (or attract top venture funding) might well be hidden away in the notebooks – or laptops – of the latest graduates. ¶ And it could be anything: an algorithm for finding something as intimate as lingerie, tech to customize something as personal as a wedding dress, data mining to make online shopping better for everyone involved. ¶ They're all in the works. ¶ "It's definitely a normal thing at Stanford to join a start-up as a cofounder early or start their own thing," said Slyce cofounder Bryant Barr, whose company helps facilitate the relationship between influencers and the brands who depend on them for marketing through social media. "Instead of an internship between the first two years, I started my own company."

Although some at Stanford frown on starting a company in favor of focusing on academics, Barr found the atmosphere ideal for incubating an idea.

Even without any intention of making his own firm, he said, "I think the academic experience influences you to do that – a lot of classes are on how to come up with an idea, nurture it and move it along."

At Harvard Business School, "a student is going to do what they want to do," said Jodi Gernon, director of the school's Arthur Rock Center for Entrepreneurship.

"We encourage students to get experience at a start-up so that they can learn to apply it elsewhere. But while they are here, if they have

ideas, we can teach them how to approach their ideas and build them into a company," Gernon continued.

At Harvard, Gernon said the focus is on teaching students how to look for problems and to question how things are currently done, not only within technology but in everything. Current students, for example, are looking at redesigning the bra and the belt.

Here is a look at ideas from some of the latest crop of students from Harvard Business School, the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and Stanford Graduate School of Business, who follow in the footsteps of alum such as Facebook's Sheryl Sandberg, Nike's Phil Knight and Tesla's Elon Musk.



MAGPIE

DISCOVERMAGPIE.COM

"Discovery," "data" and "path-to-purchase" are all areas of intense interest and continuing mystery in e-commerce. But technology company Magpie is looking to provide clarity by giving retailers analytics on how consumers interact with their products outside of their site. The firm also provides tools for online publishers, including fashion bloggers and magazine web sites, to optimize content and maximize revenue by allowing consumers to buy products on any web site without leaving the page.

Funding: Closing a seed round in March

Founded: April 2016

Founders: Gerrit Orem, Andrea Fantacone and Damjan Korac, Harvard Class of 2017



Gerrit Orem



Andrea Fantacone



Damjan Korac

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Jodi Gernon, Arthur Rock Center for Entrepreneurship



TROVE
THETROVEAPP.COM

Trove app was founded by a husband-wife team with roots in both Wall Street and fashion blogging: Mary Orton, who runs professional dress blog Memorandum, and Stanford business school grad Rich Scudellari. The shopping app aggregates outfit posts from top bloggers and lets users save or shop images, while keeping affiliate links intact. That means the blogger and the merchant relationship doesn't change, but the discovery process for the followers is streamlined and simplified.

Funding: Not disclosed

Founded: November 2014

Founders: Mary Orton, Memorandum founder; Rich Scudellari, Stanford Graduate School of Business (M.B.A.) Class of 2016



Mary Orton



Rich Scudellari



NUDEST
MYNUDEST.COM

To the founders of e-commerce platform Nudest, "nude" can mean one of more than 50 shades ranging from mahogany to ivory. The company uses a proprietary algorithm to match customers' complexions to lingerie, hosiery and shapewear from brands such as Naja. Its "Nudemeter" combines photo analytics with textile color and fabric data to make recommendations, with plans to introduce additional fashion categories in the coming months.

Funding: Self-funded

Founded: January 2016

Founders: Atima Lui and Nancy Madrid, Harvard Business School Class of 2016



Atima Lui (left)

Nancy Madrid



SLYCE
SLYCE.IO

In the Wild West of social media and sponsorships, Slyce is a platform that helps brands and influencers manage and track posts to social media. The brands use a desktop web site to manage content and timing, and deliver it to the talent on the Slyce app. Thus, a company like Under Armour can deliver tailored and timely social media content to Slyce cofounder and NBA player Stephen Curry.

Funding: Angel round of \$1.6M

Founded: July 2015

Founders: Bryant Barr, Stanford Graduate School of Business (M.B.A.) Class of 2016; Golden State Warriors basketball player Stephen Curry; Jim Cal, Stanford School of Engineering (M.S.) Class of 2015



Bryant Barr



Stephen Curry



Jim Cal

"It's definitely a normal thing at Stanford to join a start-up as a cofounder early or start their own thing."

Bryant Barr, Slyce



ANOMALIE
DRESSANOMALIE.COM

With a background in mechanical engineering, Leslie Voorhees managed product development and factory operations for brands such as Nike and Apple, while husband Calley Means worked in corporate strategy, marketing and operations. While shopping for her own nuptials, she formed relationships with wedding dress suppliers and formed Anomalie, which sells custom wedding dresses for about \$1,000 and lets customers have a major say in the design process.

Funding: Seed round

Founded: Mid-2016

Founders: Calley Means and Leslie Voorhees, Harvard Business School Class of 2015



Calley Means



Leslie Voorhees



KOIO COLLECTIVE
KOIOCOLLECTIVE.COM

At a time when high-tech tools are seen as the solution to, well, everything, Johannes Quodt and Chris Wichert just wanted a "personal dream shoe" – a luxury leather sneaker. They linked up at business school and formed Kolo Collective, starting with a men's high top made in Italy, sold online directly to customers and starting at about \$300. They've since expanded into women's and have attracted funding from those including Winklevoss Capital and Andy Dunn of Bonobos and Brian Spaly of Trunk Club.

Funding: \$1.3 million seed round

Founded: February 2015

Founders: Johannes Quodt and Chris Wichert, Wharton Class of 2015



Johannes Quodt



Chris Wichert



NUDEST

MYNUDEST.COM

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