



Curtin University

A Curtin Ignition Case Study

Brightpath
Sandy Heldsinger

This initiative is based on the successful Ignite program managed and delivered by the University of Cambridge Judge Business School's Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning (CfEL)



Centre for
Entrepreneurial Learning

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teacher judgments have long been the topic of debate, and the only real solution to date has been externally imposed and often unpopular standardised tests.

There is a new solution to this problem. Brightpath, based on ten years of research performed at The University of Western Australia (UWA), provides a methodology to assess students and evaluate teaching programs across multiple scholastic institutions. It is implemented using an assessment tool which teachers can access via a web browser – teachers simply compare their students’ work with a set of calibrated exemplars and score them accordingly. The scores are recorded and the results collated into a report that provides the basis for developing ongoing teaching programs and targeting the needs of individual students.

As any schoolteacher knows, marking student work can be subjective, therefore it is difficult to use such data to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching. Methods of standardising

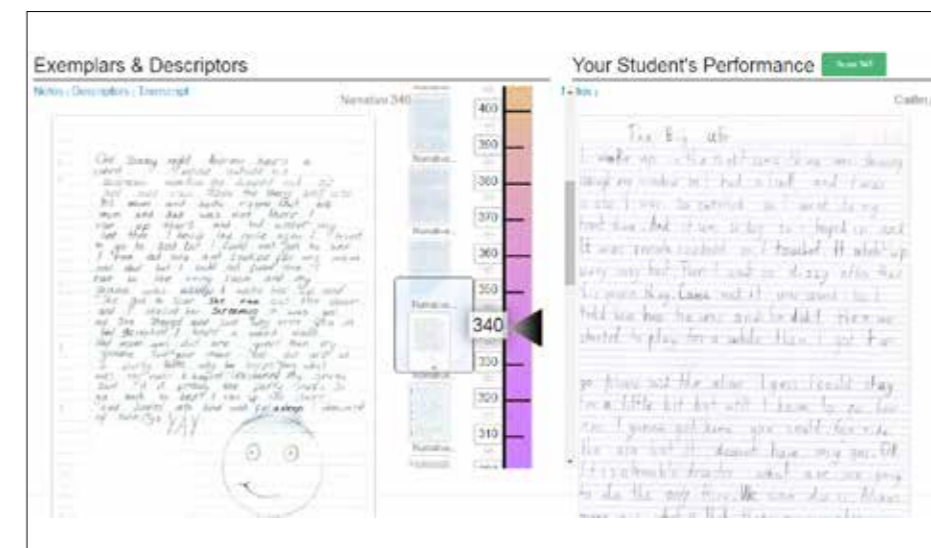
“Ignition had such an impact on me – despite it being over two years since I attended the program, I can still remember a little bit of each and every one of the sessions.”

Dr Sandy Heldsinger had a small consulting business and was still a researcher with UWA when she attended Ignition in 2013, and is now working full time on the Brightpath business.

Ignition proved to be a catalyst. Gaining a scholarship from the WA Department of Local Government and Communities, Sandy completed the program and immediately went to speak to her fellow researchers to talk to them about commercialisation of the methodology and development of the software to make it a commercial application. Her suggestions were met favourably, but her team was concerned about how to decide upon the best business model, and how money might be made to sustain the business. Undeterred, with the help of her Ignition mentor, they obtained a licence agreement from UWA, enabling them to commercialise Brightpath.

Remembering Ignition, Sandy says, “Ignition had such an impact on me – despite it being over two years since I attended the program, I can still remember a little bit of each and every one of the sessions. Coming from a background in research, business was new to me and I was introduced to

something new almost every day: lean startup, cash flow and organisations that have money available, like Commercialisation Australia, as it was then. The single most important session for me was The Pitch. I was introducing a technology that could potentially disrupt the way we assess students in schools and I needed to ensure the panel understood what we were doing. I found that having to explain our work to someone in a short amount of time made me focus clearly on conceptualising and articulating our commercial offering.”



AT A GLANCE

Business name:
Pairwise Pty Ltd T/as
Brightpath Assessments

Web address:
www.brightpath.com.au

Number of employees: 3

Founder: Dr Sandra Heldsinger

Date incorporated: July 2013

Ignition year: 2013

Almost immediately after Ignition, Sandy approached the WA Primary Principals Association (WAPPA) to seek their support in realising the vision of providing a tool that fundamentally changes how teachers assess. WAPPA's support was instantaneous and Brightpath is the result of much goodwill and help from the profession

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and self-funding by the founding partners. A business model decision was made to licence a basic package to schools, providing them with the opportunity to upgrade with selected advanced features as needed.

Brightpath was released in September 2014 to 130 Western Australian primary schools. The initial sale has led to a learning process for both the schools and for the Brightpath team. The initial focus on software development has now shifted to helping school leaders manage change and implement the innovation.

The WA School Curriculum and Standards Authority has purchased a five year license to make Brightpath available to all WA schools from 2016 onwards and Brightpath plans to expand into the Eastern States. They are already talking to authorities in the eastern states and will start marketing to individual schools in early 2016. Initially, the target is primary schools but Brightpath applies across the education spectrum, from early childhood to tertiary.

Once adopted by Australian schools, Brightpath will produce reportable comparative data across all schools countrywide. Looking further into the future, Sandy knows that Brightpath

can be applied in its current form across all English-speaking schools worldwide. Additionally, once translated into other languages, there is potential for a much larger market.

Sandy understands the scope of the opportunity, but clearly says, "I was advised by my Ignition mentor, to stay aware of the 'blue sky potential' but to be realistic. There is massive potential and I have to hold myself back from thinking 'big picture' as there are so many things that need to be done, and I know we need to take a staged approach, but it's there and it's very exciting!"

To anyone considering Ignition, Sandy says, "Seize the opportunity. The program is highly focused; the concentrated nature makes it all the more worthwhile, you have to focus all week on your business or concept, it really pushed my thinking and there is something to take away from each and every session. Do it!"



For more information:

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