

# Capon's Entrepreneurs Gallery

In recent years, like many of my colleagues I have observed a shift in interest among my students. Rather than focus exclusively on seeking employment from established organizations, increasing numbers are interested in starting their own businesses. Perhaps this is not so surprising, given the great success of relatively recent start-ups like Airbnb, Apple, Amazon, Facebook, Google, and Uber.

To that end, I have developed *Capon's Entrepreneurs Gallery*, a compendium of video case studies of entrepreneurial start-ups. The purpose of this gallery is to provide marketing instructors with material to construct class sessions focused on entrepreneurial start-ups.

In my market strategy class, I use these materials for students to prepare a bare-bones market plan—SWOT analysis, segmentation and targeting, market strategy, implementation. When students develop these plans, they learn, by doing, this important process. The two accompanying presentations are:

- ▶ Instructor slide deck to introduce market planning process
- ▶ Student templates to prepare a market plan

For a more complete process to develop a market plan, see *The Virgin Marketer: Create Your Market Plan*, <https://wessexlearning.com/collections/marketing/products/tvm4>.

The remainder of this document comprises information on several entrepreneurial start-ups. We present each start-up as follows:

- ▶ Start-up name (location)
- ▶ Key protagonist—typically founder and/or CEO
- ▶ One-paragraph description of the start-up
- ▶ Link to 20–30-minute video interview with the founder/CEO. To view, enter the provided four-character code at [www.axcessvids.com](http://www.axcessvids.com)
- ▶ Start-up website

# Entrepreneurial Start-ups

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## 1. Sharebite (New York City)

### Dilip Rao

**Sharebite** is a New York City–based e-commerce site where users can place restaurant orders for pick up or delivery. Sharebite also supports a social mission: to alleviate childhood hunger. For every order placed on the site, Sharebite donates a meal to a hungry child, or gifts 2 percent of the charge to a charity of the customer’s choice—at no additional cost to the customer. Co-founded by CEO Dilip Rao, who as a Wall Street executive spent many late nights eating dinner at his desk, Sharebite’s challenge is to build both a large restaurant base and a loyal customer base, in the face of tough competition.

**917v** <https://sharebite.com>

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## 2. LunaCap Ventures (New York City)

### Paul Capon

**LunaCap Ventures** is a venture-debt firm, serving as an alternative source of funds, especially for early-stage companies (female, minority, military veteran entrepreneurs) seeking working capital. In contrast to venture capital firms that demand significant equity stakes, LunaCap Ventures takes only a sliver of equity—typically 1 to 2 percent. LunaCap Ventures earns interest rates of 12 to 22 percent, typically for three years, when loans must be repaid or refinanced. Founded by Paul Capon, formerly a U.S. Air Force captain (responsible for 100+ missions in Afghanistan), LunaCap Venture’s challenge is to build a strong track record to attract investors, plus significant brand equity to secure good *deal flow*.

**599v** <http://www.lunacapventures.com/>

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## 3. Ovenly (New York City)

### Erin Patinkin

**Ovenly** is an award-winning bakery that manufactures cakes and cookies in its commercial kitchen, then delivers to small retail locations, households, and high-end coffee shops (independents and mini-chains). Ovenly’s few retail locations attract neighborhood consumers who often visit three to five times per week. With wholesale customers, Ovenly enjoys a 99 percent retention rate. Co-founder and CEO Erin Patinkin’s challenge is to retain high customer service levels as Ovenly grows, balance investment in its wholesale business with retail growth, and consider market expansion to other U.S. cities.

**845v** <http://www.oven.ly>

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#### 4. Shopper+ (Montreal, Canada)

##### **Jack Zhang, Tuo (James) Zhang**

**Shopper+** is an e-commerce site that provides China-sourced office supplies, cell phone accessories, photo gear, and similar products in a price-friendly and timely manner to Canadian customers. Shopper+ features product reviews to help customers make more informed buying decisions. The growth challenge for CEO Jack Zhang and senior executive James Zhang is to identify new products and product classes to add to the Shopper+ portfolio.

**384v** <https://www.shopperplus.com/>

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#### 5. Due West (Beijing, China)

##### **Andrew Sohn, Michael Novielli**

**Due West** is an educational firm that prepares and assists Chinese students seeking educational opportunities in the U.S. and other western countries—boarding schools and undergraduate colleges. Services include determining the best fit for each individual, assisting with the application process, and counseling about college socialization and life in the U.S. Due West has also been effective in demystifying the Chinese market for western educators. The challenge for co-founders Andrew Sohn and Michael Novielli is to navigate the fast-changing China environment, and to continually raise Due West's profile with western educational leaders.

**853v** <http://duewesteducation.com/>

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#### 6. Language Zen (Connecticut, USA)

##### **Micah Greenburg**

**Language Zen** is a web-based language-learning firm grounded in patent-pending machine-learning{{NC: "adaptive" instead of "machine-learning"?}} technology. Language Zen provides personalized learning experiences based on each individual learner's proficiency and areas of interest. Language Zen was initially focused on native English speakers learning Spanish and vice versa, and plans to roll out several new languages each year. The challenge for co-founder and CEO Micah Greenburg is to complete a market-ready language-learning experience, then execute a successful launch in the face of significant entrenched competition.

**495v** <https://www.languagezen.com/>

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## 7. Global Thermostat (New York City)

### Professor Graciela Chichilnisky

**Global Thermostat** owns a host of patents focused on capturing carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) molecules directly from the atmosphere. In the process, Global Thermostat addresses global warming, produces 99 percent pure CO<sub>2</sub>, and provides an inexpensive raw material for the water desalination, carbonated beverage, plastics, and carbon fiber (metal replacement) industries. Global Thermostat's pilot plant at Stanford Research Institute in California is already successfully removing CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere. The challenge for co-founder and CEO Graciela Chichilnisky (Columbia University professor, one of 38 Great American Immigrants [Carnegie Corporation], coauthor of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement) is to move from pilot-plant status to full-scale production and to commercialize the CO<sub>2</sub> extraction technology.

**152v** <https://globalthermostat.com/>

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## 8. Marketing Innovation College (MIC) (Beijing, China)

### Professor Yuhang Zheng

**Marketing Innovation College** is an online business school, supported by study centers in 20 cities in China and other cities with large Chinese populations. MIC offers lectures from professors at leading U.S. (with translation) and Chinese business schools. MIC tuition is a fraction of that of brick-and-mortar business schools; its goal is nothing less than democratization of business education. Dean Zheng's challenge is to expand MIC's customer base, and construct a business model to provide financial stability.

**733v**

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## 9. Glow Concept (New York City)

### Natalie McKay

**Glow Concept** is a cosmetics manufacturer that owns such brands as Laqa & Co. and Winky Lux. Glow Concepts sells products at 1000+ retail outlets (including Nordstrom, Forever 21, American Eagle) as well as online, direct to consumers. A key feature of Glow Concept's business model is its 45-day product development cycle, versus the two-year industry average. Founder and CEO Natalie McKay's challenge is to manage growth, while placing optimal effort on wholesale and retail business.

**856v** <https://www.glowconcept.com/>

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## 10. ComplyFirst (New Jersey, USA)

### Steve Howell

**ComplyFirst** is a third-party administrator that provides preemployment and federally mandated employee drug and medical testing, primarily to commercial truck drivers and security personnel. ComplyFirst's customers are transportation and security firms, served through a network of doctors and medical centers. The challenge for CEO Steve Howell is to secure new strategic accounts to increase revenues, while simultaneously providing good customer service, and gaining increased network efficiencies.

**482v** <http://www.complyfirst.com/>

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## 11. Pathspark (New York City)

### Anastasia Alt

**Pathspark** is a human capital management firm designed to support employee conversations along three overlapping tracks: employee and career counselor; employee and boss; messaging chatbot. The Pathspark platform tags conversation topics without compromising confidentiality, and points to topics considered relevant to an employee's career; the employee receives a consolidated report at regular intervals. Potential customers are corporations investing in career counseling for employees. The challenge for co-founder and CEO Anastasia Alt is to demonstrate the success of the Pathspark model, then roll out to target customers.

**101v** <https://pathspark.com/>

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## 12. Physical Pharmaceutica (New York, USA)

### Robert Bellantone

**Physical Pharmaceutica** offers specialized R&D consulting and laboratory services to the Food and Drug Administration and the pharmaceutical industry. Using a suite of patented technologies, Physical Pharmaceutica provides customized scientific solutions focusing on testing and measuring dosage-delivery of new or generic drugs. The challenge for founder, president, and chief scientific officer Robert Bellantone is to build a record of facilitating drug approval, expand brand awareness to secure new pharmaceutical accounts, and identify other applications for the firm's technology.

**246v** <https://www.physpharm.com>

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## 13. Paul Evans (New York City)

### Evan Fript

**Paul Evans** is a men's luxury footwear brand, sold mainly on the firm's website at wholesale prices. Paul Evans sources all products from a single supplier in Naples, Italy. (This factory also supplies Louis Vuitton.) The challenge for founder and CEO Evan Fript is to continue to grow Paul Evans, while effectively managing inventory and working capital.

**236v** <https://www.paulevansny.com/>