



Making the Right Pitch Makes All the Difference

By Melissa Thornton

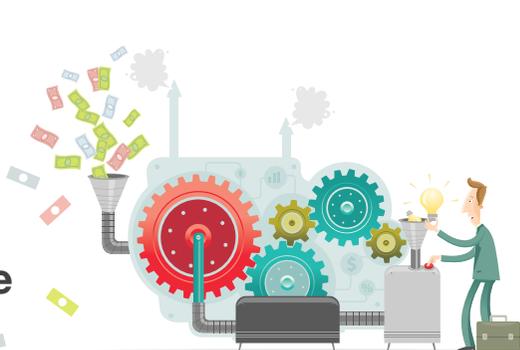
Most businesses that make headlines start with a great idea: a recipe for a unique cola that remains a secret to this day; a machine that would allow you to make multiple copies of a single document at the press of a button; a phone that people could use to make calls, play music and answer their latest emails; or a website that would allow you to socialize with college students across the globe. After that great idea came funding. From angel investors, venture capitalists to an IPO, great ideas take money to execute. Pursuing higher education is a great idea but, to do so, you will need to secure funding for yourself. You can apply for financial aid using FASFA and the CalGrant programs, but you'll also want to take advantage of any and all available scholarships. Although student loans usually are offered with lower interest rates than traditional loans, money applied toward your college expenses that you don't have to pay back is a much better option.

Research and Development

Just as a company puts time into promotion once a product or idea has been created, you should create a brag packet for yourself before you apply for a scholarship. Every student should create a brag packet the summer before their senior year in high school. It should include your transcripts, academic honors you've received, information on your extracurricular activities and any other awards or special recognition you've earned. You should have several copies of these items for any teachers, counselors or administrators from whom you are requesting letters of recommendation. You should also keep a copy for yourself so you can easily fill out college and scholarship applications. The brag packet will also be helpful as you write your personal statement.

Your Elevator Pitch

While some investors might have specific questions, the basic facts about what makes a product great remain the same. Similarly, some scholarships will require that you write a response to a specific essay question, and many scholarships ask for something akin to a personal statement. Since your personal statement probably includes information about your decision to go to college, the achievements about which you are most proud, your goals for the future or all three, you'll likely be able to adapt your personal statement to answer essay questions

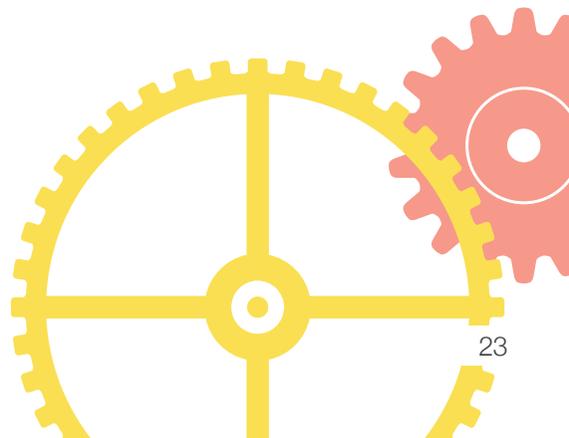


that are asked. You'll also want to determine who will be willing to edit your essays during the writing process, whether it's a parent, teacher or friend. Just like with any application you want to make sure your content is thoroughly reviewed and in top condition before hitting the "submit" button.

Seeking Your Investors

After you have compiled your brag packet and written your personal statement, it's time to start your scholarship search—just as a new company would pursue grants and investors. There are plenty of free websites available to help you find scholarships for which you'll qualify. However, you'll also want to check if any organizations to which you belong, or that support students in your major, offer scholarships. Some scholarships are available only for tuition while others can be used for books, living expenses and dues for professional fraternities; take advantage of flexible scholarships when possible. Don't forget to keep applying for scholarships throughout your college career (many students stop filling out applications once they start college). You will likely qualify for different scholarships each year so you'll need to update your search profiles on any scholarship search websites you create as a high school senior. Make sure to utilize this scholarship resource guide and your career center to start your search.

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Scholarship Resource Guide

Scholarship Searches:

The following websites are designed to help you search for either general scholarship opportunities or scholarships that fit a profile you design for yourself:

- CollegeBoard.com
- CollegeAnswer.com
- College-scholarships.com
- Educationcorner.com
- Fastweb.com
- Free-4u.com
- Findtuition.com
- Scholarships.com
- Scholarships360.org

Accounting & Finance Majors:

The following organizations offer scholarships specifically for students studying finance and accounting:

- CalCPA offers more than \$300,000 each year to undergraduate and graduate students pursuing careers in accounting. www.calcpa.org/scholarships
- Start Here Go Places is the AICPA's website designed especially for high school and community college students. Check out the plethora of accounting career resources, application tips and scholarships. www.startheregoplaces.com/scholarships
- This Way to CPA is the AICPA's website designed for undergraduate and graduate accounting students. It offers scholarships each year and include information on scholarships available from many accounting and finance organizations in its scholarship search. www.thiswaytoCPA.com/scholarships
- Beta Alpha Psi, an honor organization for financial information students and professionals, offers scholarships to top performing accounting students each year. www.bap.org
- The National Society of Accountants offers scholarships for students interested in careers in accounting. www.nsacct.org
- The Government Finance Officers Association assists students in pursuit of careers in government finance and management. www.gfoa.org
- The Association of Certified Fraud Examiners offers scholarships for students enrolled in accounting, business, finance and criminal justice who wish to pursue anti-fraud careers. www.acfe.com/scholarship

Minorities:

The following organizations offer scholarships specifically for minority students studying finance and accounting:

- The National Association of Black Accountants awards close to \$500,000 annually. www.nabainc.org
- The Association of Latino Professionals in Finance and Accounting and Hispanic Scholarship Fund offer scholarships ranging from \$2,000-\$10,000. www.alpfa.org
- The Asian & Pacific Islander American Scholarship fund provides college scholarship for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. www.apiasf.org

Women:

The following organizations offer scholarships specifically for female students studying finance and accounting:

- The Accounting & Financial Women's Alliance foundation offers both undergraduate and master's scholarships to students pursuing degrees in accounting or finance. www.afwa.org
- The Educational Foundation for Women in Accounting offers scholarships to students committed to the goal of pursuing a degree in accounting in preparation for a career as an accounting or finance professional. www.efwa.org