The 5 stages of Xobni’s growth & 5 pivots along the way

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The Big Idea

Google organized the world’s public data

But, personal data is different
+ There is no Google of personal information
+ 10x more personal data in the world than public info
+ Most personal data is trapped in email
= Foundation for Xobni
The Situation

- 22 & 25 years old
- Never had a “real job”
- $12k in the bank
The Result

- A lean startup was our only option
- We had a lot to learn about email
5 stages of Xobni

Stealth  Private Beta  Public Beta  GA & Biz model  Growth
1. Stealth

- Knew the vision, but not the product
- Lots of pivots in early years
- Pivot 1: Choosing Outlook
- Pivot 2: Analytics to sidebar
- Pivot 3: Raise $4M & hire 6 employees
Pivot 1: Outlook

- We wanted to build our own email client
- However, surveys & research showed Outlook was biggest among people with $
- Our own email client would take huge marketing budget to get people to try
- Lower user adoption risk on Outlook
Xobni Analytics

Analytics was our 6 week project to understand email better and establish thought leadership.

That took over 4 months to build.

And wasn’t a product people would use on a daily basis.

But gave us the understanding for our next pivot.
Email is about people
And no email clients cared about people
We decided to make email about people
Pivot 2: Moved from analytics to sidebar

How we came to this realization

- Selling Xobni Analytics to investors; best pitch was what we could tell them about people

- Dogfooding on our own email
Pivot 3: Raise VC to hire

- Building product for enterprise users was more work than we thought
- Couldn’t hire with $80k in bank
- Potential employees got away
- Raised $4M and hired 6 people
2. Private Beta

- Worked towards product/market fit
- Heavy focus on performance
- Most surveying, user studies, starbucks testing in company history
- Cut 1/2 of features
- Pivot 4: People profiles

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- Stealth
- Private Beta
- Public Beta
- GA & Biz model
- Growth
Pivot 4: Do one thing, and do it right: People profiles
3. Public Beta

- Business will be dual prong: direct to consumer & enterprise
- Raise $10M from Cisco & BlackBerry
- Pivot 5 - Search not relationships for 1st premium
Pivot 5: Search not relationships for 1st premium

- Xobni stands on two pillars: search & relationship management
- Planned on monetizing relationship features first
- However, one engineer convinced me to sell a search product first
  - something we needed to build anyway
  - low market risk
  - low execution risk for team
- The birth of Xobni Plus
4. GA & Biz model

- Came out of beta - enterprise adoption
- Needed business model to fund paid growth
- Rev line 1: Xobni Plus
- Rev line 2: Xobni Enterprise
- Rev line 3: Xobni BlackBerry
- Rev line 4: Xobni One

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5. Growth

- Taking Xobni experience to new mobile & email platforms
- Aggressively acquiring new Outlook users
- Sales team adding new enterprise accounts
- Building new products to monetize Outlook, mobile & web users

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