

Embroidered Apparel Brand

UM Pre-College Entrepreneurship Bootcamp

Day 8 = Pitch Day. All work completes by end of Day 7.

Vertical 4: Embroidered Apparel Brand

Sponsor: Martin Bermudez

Mission: Martin runs a profitable embroidered-hat Shopify store. Your team will launch a new niche brand from scratch: pick the niche with data, build the brand identity, set up the Shopify store, create content that drives traffic, and try for a first sale – all by end of Day 7.

Your KPIs

- 3 niche concepts evaluated with data
- 1 brand selected and fully designed (name, logo, colors, fonts)
- 20 customer interviews completed
- Shopify store live with at least 2 products
- Content calendar built and first posts live
- Unit economics calculated in Google Sheets
- **Stretch:** Generate the first actual sale

Your Toolbox

Tool	Use
Google Trends	Compare niche search demand
Pinterest Trends	Visual niche demand validation
Google Forms	Customer interviews
Canva	Brand identity, product mockups, social content
Printful Mockup Generator	Photorealistic product photos (free, no account)
Shopify	Build the actual store (3-day free trial)
Claude / ChatGPT	Write product copy, brand story, SEO text
Later	Instagram / TikTok content calendar

Day 1: Foundations

Read the Glossary. Focus on ICP, Unit Economics, and CAC – you are building a real e-commerce brand and every decision has a cost. Prepare your 2-minute personal pitch.

Day 2: Pitches, Team Reveal, Setup

After pitches: create Slack channel #team-apparel, set up Notion, watch the founder video, assign roles, read Days 3–4 before leaving.

Days 3–4: Discovery Sprint

Day 3 – Morning

Evaluate 3 niches with Google Trends (60 min). The sponsor does embroidered and manufactured products. Think: custom pet accessories, personalized baby/toddler gifts, vintage-style collegiate apparel, niche sports fan gear. Pick 3. Compare on trends.google.com using + Compare, United States, past 12 months. Also check each on Pinterest Trends (trends.pinterest.com). Build a “Niche Evaluation Table” in Notion: Niche, Google Trend Direction, Pinterest Visual Demand, Team Excitement (1–5), Our Vote.

Customer survey in Google Forms (30 min). Seven questions: custom product purchase history, what they bought and where, why custom over generic, biggest frustration buying custom products online, what matters most in a custom embroidered product, WTP for your leading niche product, where they discover new brands.

Day 3 – Afternoon

Launch outreach for 20 interviews. Post in communities relevant to your niches: r/Embroidery, r/Etsy, dog owner groups (pet niche), new parent communities (baby niche), collegiate fan groups (apparel niche).

Make your niche decision before 3 PM. Look at the data. Discuss for 10 minutes. Vote. Commit. Write in Notion: “We chose [Niche] because: (1) [data reason], (2) [data reason], (3) [team enthusiasm].” This unlocks everything else.

Day 3 checkpoint: 3 niches evaluated with screenshots. Survey live. Outreach sent to 25+. Niche chosen and documented in Notion.

Day 4 – Morning

Analyze interview data (minimum 15 responses). Find what your niche’s customers value most. Pull direct quotes. Write a target customer profile in Notion: Name, Age, Occasion they buy custom products, Where they shop now, What would make them buy from a new brand.

Brand your company in Canva. Open Canva and click Brand Kit. Steps in order: (1) Brand name – 1–2 words, memorable, fits the niche. (2) Logo – search “minimalist logo” in Canva templates, customize. (3) Colors – pet: warm/playful; baby: soft pastels; collegiate: bold/classic. (4) Fonts – 1 headline + 1 body using Canva’s pairing suggestions. Lock all in the Brand Kit so everything stays consistent.

Product mockups on Printful. Go to printful.com/mockup-generator, no account needed. Select your product type, upload your logo, pick a background, download. Create at least 3 mockups. These go on the Shopify store and in the pitch deck.

Day 4 checkpoint: 20 interviews done and analyzed. Target customer profile written. Brand Kit complete in Canva. 3 Printful mockups downloaded.

Days 5–6: Execution Sprint

Day 5 – Morning

Build your Shopify store. Go to shopify.com, start free trial, choose the Dawn theme (free, minimal, professional). Build: Home page (headline + one mockup image + 3 benefit bullets), 1–2 Product pages, About page, Contact page. The store mockup is the deliverable. A real sale is a bonus.

Write all copy with Claude or ChatGPT. For product descriptions: “Write a product description for a [product] from a brand called [Brand Name] targeting [customer profile]. Tone: [warm/playful/sophisticated]. Include 3 benefit bullets. Under 80 words.” For the About page: “Write a 100-word brand story for [Brand Name], a custom embroidered [category] brand for [niche]. Started by high school students at UM. End with 1 mission line.” Copy outputs into Shopify.

Day 5 – Afternoon

7-day content calendar in Later. Connect Instagram or TikTok. Plan 7 posts: Day 5 brand reveal, Day 6 product mockup, Day 6 behind-the-scenes of how fast you built this, Day 7 engagement post (tag someone who would love this), Day 7 second product shot, Day 8 morning store launch, Day 8 after pitch full story. Create each post in Canva using your Brand Kit. Schedule in Later.

Day 5 checkpoint: Shopify store live. 2+ products with AI-written descriptions. 7 posts created in Canva and scheduled in Later.

Day 6 – Morning

Polish the store. Complete any missing pages. Add Printful mockups to each product page. Get the public Shopify URL and post in Slack.

Unit economics in Sheets. New tab: Production cost per unit (ask sponsor), Selling price (based on survey WTP data), Gross margin (selling minus production), Target monthly units to break even, Revenue at target. Even rough estimates with stated assumptions are more convincing than no numbers.

Day 6 – Afternoon

Stretch – 5 micro-influencer DMs. Search Instagram/TikTok for creators in your niche. DM 5 offering a free product for an honest post. Track responses. One yes = real traction.

Day 6 checkpoint: Shopify store fully complete. All 7 posts live or scheduled. Unit economics in Sheets. KPI board updated.

Day 7: Pitch Preparation

Slide	Title	Content
1	Cover	Team + Brand Name + Logo
2	The Opportunity	Niche market size + trends data
3	Our Research	20 interviews, top 3 insights, customer profile
4	The Brand	Logo, colors, brand story (most visual slide)
5	The Products	Printful mockup photos

6	The Store	Live Shopify URL + screenshot
7	Content Strategy	Later calendar screenshot
8	Unit Economics	Production cost to selling price to margin
9	30-Day Launch Plan	What happens after pitch day
10	The Ask	Investment needed, first steps, expected results

Open the real Shopify store URL live during the pitch. Don't just show a screenshot.

Day 8: Pitch Day

Be ready to answer: "Could you actually sell this?" – "Yes. The store is live at [URL]. We have units ready through the sponsor's manufacturing. We need [budget or decision] to run the first ad."

Program Syllabus

What This Program Is

Seven working days, 9 AM to 3 PM daily. Day 8 is pitch day. You are placed into a live business vertical with a real sponsor on Day 2. You execute inside that vertical and deliver real, sponsor-ready work by the end of Day 7.

The Execution Formula: Validation + Marketing + Management. “Product” is not in the formula. Build nothing before you validate demand.

Schedule

Day	Focus
Day 1	Startup vocabulary, BMC, VPC, customer discovery, the three costs (time, opportunity, money). Watch DoorDash YC pitch and Snapchat explainer. Homework: prepare your 2-minute personal pitch.
Day 2	Individual pitches (hard 2-minute cutoff). Team reveal. Vertical reveal. Tool setup: Slack channel, Notion workspace (KPI Board, Interview Log, Task List, Pitch Deck Outline), founder video, role assignments.
Days 3–4	Customer discovery sprint. Interviews, research, first KPI check.
Days 5–6	Execution sprint. Build, test, iterate.
Day 7	Pitch prep. Dry runs. All deliverables finalized.
Day 8	Final investor-style panel pitches. Feedback. Debrief.

Assessment

Component	Weight
Individual 2-minute pitch (Day 2)	20%
Team execution vs. KPI board (Days 3–7)	40%
Final investor pitch (Day 8)	30%
Engagement, professionalism, tool use	10%

Three Rules That Apply Every Day

1. **Evidence over opinion.** “I think customers want X” is worth zero. “12 out of 20 people said X” wins.
2. **Done beats perfect.** A live landing page with a typo beats a flawless one that doesn’t exist yet.
3. **Update your KPI board daily.** If it’s not on the board, it didn’t happen.

Pitch Day Rules (Day 8)

- Open with a real number, not a plan.

- Hard 8-minute cutoff. Practice until you know your 7:30 mark.
- Every team member is assigned slides before you walk in. No fumbling.
- Know your 3 hardest numbers without looking at the screen.
- End with a specific Ask – named channel, dollar amount, timeline.
- Export the deck as PDF the night before. Record a Loom backup of any live demo.

If You Get Stuck

Problem	Fix
Can't get interview responses	Post in a different community, change the subject line, offer to share findings
Tool not working	Use the backup tool listed in your toolbox, or ask your TA
Team conflict	5-minute timer, each person states position once, majority vote, document and move on
Behind on KPIs at Day 5	Triage: pick your 1–2 most important KPIs and cut everything else
Sponsor unreachable	Use materials already provided. Document outreach attempts – that's data.

Startup and AI Glossary

Core Startup Terms

Term	What It Means
BMC	Business Model Canvas – your business on one page across 9 blocks. Fill outside-in: start with the customer.
VPC	Value Proposition Canvas – customer jobs/pains/gains vs. your solution. Mismatch = guess, not product.
MVP	Minimum Viable Product – in 8 days this is a landing page, a form, or a manual process. Not code.
PMF	Product-Market Fit – 40%+ of users would be “very disappointed” if your product disappeared.
Pivot	Change one core assumption based on data. Day 4: discipline. Day 7: denial.
CAC	Customer Acquisition Cost – total spend divided by new customers. In this program: hours spent divided by customers converted.
LTV	Lifetime Value – total revenue from one customer over their full relationship with you. Target LTV:CAC of 3:1.
Churn	Customers lost this period divided by customers at start. Fix retention before scaling.
KPI	Metric with a deadline. Red on Day 5 means fixed by Day 6.
Unit Economics	Revenue minus cost per single unit. Negative = scale makes things worse.
WTP	Willingness to Pay – found through interviews, not surveys. Ask: “Have you ever paid for something like this?”
ICP	Ideal Customer Profile – the exact person most likely to convert and retain.
TAM/SAM/SOM	Total market / reachable portion / realistic near-term capture. Investors care about SOM.
NPS	Net Promoter Score – % Promoters minus % Detractors. Positive NPS from real users is strong pitch evidence.
Viral Coefficient	New users each user generates. $K > 1$ = self-sustaining growth.
UGC	User-Generated Content – reviews, videos, social posts created by users. Lowest-cost, most credible marketing.

The Four AI Tools

Rule: Use 3–4 tools in sequence. One tool for everything = mediocre outputs.

Tool	Best Use
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NotebookLM	Upload source documents. Answers cited directly to your sources. Fastest way to turn 40 pages into a 2-page action brief. Not a brainstorming tool.
Gemini	High-volume fast synthesis. Paste 25 interview responses, get a bullet-point summary. Longer free context than most.
Claude	Long-context reasoning and high-quality output. BMC/VPC analysis, pitch deck copy, pricing models. Save for pitch-critical work – daily message limits apply.
ChatGPT	Fast creative volume. 15 taglines, 20 headlines, quick name ideas. Generate options here, polish in Claude.

The Four-Tool Cascade

1. **Ingest (NotebookLM)** – Upload all source docs, get condensed outlines.
2. **Process (Gemini)** – Paste bulk data, synthesize fast.
3. **Reason (Claude)** – Feed outputs in for strategic analysis and high-quality writing.
4. **Ideate (ChatGPT)** – Generate volume fast, bring the best back to Claude to finish.

Context Management – 8 Rules

1. Compress before you paste. Run transcripts through NotebookLM or Gemini first. 90% fewer tokens, same output.
2. Keep a VERTICAL_BRIEF.md – under 400 words, updated daily. Paste at the top of every new AI session.
3. One task per session. Each major task gets its own conversation.
4. Match tool to task. Claude for quality reasoning. Gemini for bulk. ChatGPT for creative volume.
5. Build a Prompt Library in Notion. Save every prompt that produced a great output. By Day 5 you should have 10–15.
6. Specify output format. Weak: “Give me insights.” Strong: “Output a 4-column markdown table sorted by frequency.”
7. When a session degrades, start fresh. Paste your VERTICAL_BRIEF.md and continue. Don’t try to fix a degraded conversation.
8. Rotate tools when one hits its cap. Never stop working because one tool hit its limit.

AI Decision Matrix

Task	Tool
Summarize a 20-page document	NotebookLM
Synthesize 25 interview transcripts	Gemini
Build the BMC or VPC	Claude
Write the pitch deck narrative	Claude
Generate 15 tagline options	ChatGPT
Draft one cold outreach email	Claude
Draft 50 cold emails at scale	ChatGPT
Social captions and short copy	ChatGPT
Financial model from interview data	Claude

Web research synthesis	Gemini or ChatGPT (search on)
Build an automation	Make.com
Add AI to an automation	Make.com HTTP module to Claude API

No-Code Tool Reference

Tool	Use
Notion	KPI board, interview log, task list, pitch outline. Replaces five apps.
Canva	All design. Use the Brand Kit to lock colors and fonts from Day 2 onward.
Carrd.co	Landing page in under 1 hour. Free, no code.
Make.com	No-code automation. 1,000 free operations per month.
Mailchimp	Email marketing. 500 contacts and 1,000 emails per month free.
Buffer / Later	Social media scheduling. Plan content once, post across platforms.
Typeform / Tally	Polished survey forms with better UX than Google Forms.
Miro / Whimsical	Visual mapping. Whimsical for flowcharts, Miro for personas and journey maps.
Apollo.io	Verified B2B email finder. 50 free exports per month.
Hunter.io	Find emails by company domain. 25 free searches per month.
Loom	Record demos. 90 seconds of live demo beats any slide. Record before pitch day.
Similarweb	Competitor website traffic data. Use to validate market size.
Maze	Usability testing platform. Produces a quantified task success rate.
