

SPRINGBOARDING FROM STARTUP TO GROWTH

Atlas Alpha Leans on SBDC Team for
Marketing and Investor Strategy

Cal Poly CIE SBDC and Atlas Alpha



ABOUT THE CAL POLY CIE SBDC

The Cal Poly CIE SBDC offers a wide variety of services for both startups and established companies. Our services include no-charge expert counseling, low-cost training, information resources, events, and seminars. All counseling services are confidential and free of charge. Our Business Advisors assist their clients with a wide range of services, including: business planning; marketing strategies

and planning; sales; access to capital, including bank finance, SBA loans, and asset financing; venture funding; government contracting; strategic technology acquisition and practical, hands-on application; financial projections and budgeting; and operating challenges.



The SBDC is dedicated to helping existing and new businesses grow and prosper. To take advantage of our services today, visit SBDC.CALPOLY.EDU.

ABOUT ATLAS ALPHA

Atlas Alpha, led by CEO Trent Ellingsen, leverages social networks into profitable marketplaces, fueled by forum experts through a proprietary Application Programming Interface (API) based solution. Utilizing a missed market opportunity, Atlas has brought individuals together in a modern discussion platform, a wiki-style database of products that users contribute to, and integrations into major shopping platforms. Atlas began their journey in the board game industry and to date and has over 125,000 monthly active users, resulting in \$200,000 monthly sales for their partner retailers.

“We had the engineering down, the manufacturing of our first games down, but marketing— that was the hardest part for us, as it was new territory.”

-Trent Ellingsen, Atlas Alpha, CEO



THE CHALLENGE

After several strategic pivots, Atlas Alpha knew they were onto something. They had successfully disguised an online board game forum into a marketplace. Their user base was starting to grow and the affiliate marketing program was gaining traction and revenue. The company had two challenges that they needed to overcome — marketing effectively and attracting investor capital. Without having background business experience in those areas of expertise and as a member of the Cal Poly CIE HotHouse Incubator Program, Atlas Alpha turned to the dedicated SBDC team for assistance.

“Through the SBDC consulting team, I got a handle on how to market — it wasn’t just buying Google Ads, but it was creating a brand and firing on all marketing channels.”

—Trent Ellingsen, Atlas Alpha,
CEO



THE SOLUTION

To kickstart their marketing efforts, Atlas Alpha leaned on veteran marketer and lead consultant, Lynn Metcalf. Lynn guided the Atlas team, in creating one of the missing pieces of their business, a comprehensive marketing plan and strategy designed to spearhead growth. With their marketing plan now in action, the next piece of the puzzle that needed to be solved was capital funding. Atlas had successfully raised \$80K in

angel investment, but needed another injection of capital to allow one of the founders to become a full-time employee, and to further iterate on product development. Trent Ellingsen reached out to CIE Economic Development Director, Judy Mahan for guidance. Judy immediately suggested that they apply to AngelCon 2020.

“The SBDC consulting team was pivotal in helping us to understand what it truly meant to market and how to market strategically and effectively.”

-Trent Ellingsen, Atlas Alpha, CEO



RESULTS

After applying to AngelCon 2020 and participating in the SBDC's LaunchPad program, Atlas Alpha was awarded the \$120K equity investment. Winning the AngelCon investment has allowed both Trent and his partner Ryan Ryuh (CMO),

to focus entirely on the business, the net result is monthly recurring revenue has grown from \$8,000 to over \$13,000. Additionally, Atlas Alpha is preparing to launch another marketplace this year.



"The guidance we received from Judy Mahan and the SBDC consulting team on investor strategy and pitch development, were key in helping us win Angel Con 2020."

-Trent Ellingsen, Atlas Alpha, CEO