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## **From Senior Class to Senior Management**

*By: Jonathan Menager*

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIF. - Garrett Lauringson has come a long way from coding basic web applications in his dimly lit college dorm room.

He remembers fondly of his time at California Polytechnic University in San Luis Obispo and staying up late with his roommates helping them design and write web-based applications.

Lauringson, a business major, never had a computer science course in his life but learned from his roommates, taking the Cal Poly motto, 'Learn By Doing', to a whole new level. He remembers all of this clearly; it is a chapter of his life he just finished writing only one year ago.

But don't let that fool you. Although Lauringson is fresh out of college and still remarkably young, he has already achieved what many business graduates only hope to be able to achieve at some point in their career; Lauringson is the CEO of his own tech startup company.

"It's crazy. I've always known that I wanted to have my own company, but I never really expected it to happen when I was so young," Lauringson says, sitting in a coffee shop in the downtown district of San Luis Obispo, sipping on an iced mocha and enjoying the warm, Sunday afternoon. "I just can't believe it's all coming together."

The roots of Lauringson's early success can be traced back to his time at college in the small town of San Luis Obispo, a lovely California college and retirement community about halfway between the major metropolitan areas of Los Angeles and San Francisco.

It was there that he began life as a college freshman after graduating from a small high school in Nipomo, California. He excelled in his classes and became active within the university, going on hiking and kayaking trips and any other sort of outdoor activity he could access through the college.

If there were no outings scheduled for a particular week, he'd plan his own with his friends, hiking up the mountains that surround the school, or heading out to Pismo Beach which is just a few miles south of San Luis off the 101 freeway.

"I have always loved being active," Lauringson recalls, "and the more things I did and the more people I met at these activities, the more I realized that I would really like to help these people stay active."

It's true that his love for outdoor activities is what drove him to found his company, Grapple. His company created and runs a website and mobile application of the same name; a social, digital, bucket list that help users achieve their life goals.

The application and website actively engages users and encourages them to check-in while they're doing things, and puts them in connection with other people near by who also want to accomplish the same goal.

"It started as a way for you to meet other people who want to do similar things such as hike a particular trail or raft down a certain stream, but during one of the company brainstorming sessions we had this totally innovative idea – a social bucket list complete with geolocation check-ins and a social networking aspect," Lauringson says about the concept of the application.

Grapple isn't Lauringson's first stab at developing an iOS application and placing it in to the Apple app store. In fact, Grapple will be his second. His first application, a game for young children called WheresMomme, has been downloaded over 400,000 times since he placed it online early last year.

Lauringson believes that he is ready to apply everything he learned launching his first app on his own to the company he helped start and now runs.

"I guess you could call it my company although the Grapple team kind of came up with the idea all together," Lauringson said when asked about his role in the company. "My first app called WheresMomme I launched on my own and it really took off. I had this idea to get some of my friends together and see what a team of creative people could do instead of just myself."

After winning second place at a Cal Poly convention for startup companies, Grapple was awarded a spot in the campus entrepreneurial community called The Hatchery. The community, funded by the university, provides select student-run businesses with the necessary things needed to get their fledgling businesses booming.

Grapple was awarded with office space and even got some investment offers, although they plan to go as long as they can before hitting up others for some cash.

"It's crazy. If you asked me a year ago if I thought I'd own my own business one day, I would have said probably," Lauringson said as we got up to leave the coffee shop, staring off into the distance, his mocha now nothing but an empty cup.

"But I never thought, even in a million years, that I'd get such a great opportunity so early on...I really owe it all to Poly."

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