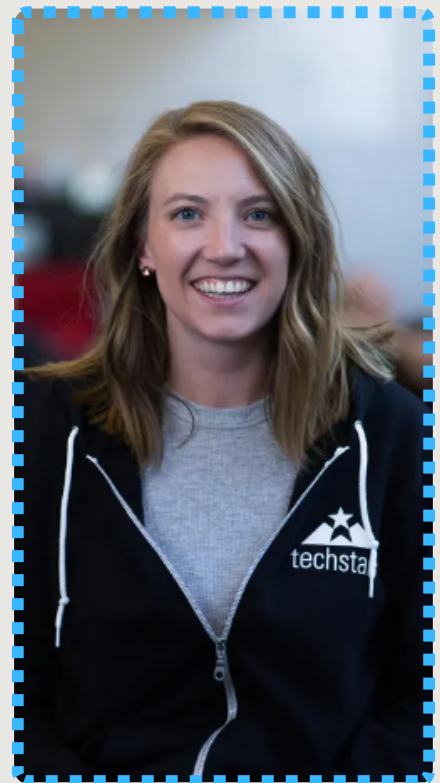




NEW TECH VENTURES BLOG

About Bryanne

Bryanne Leeming, the CEO and founder of Unruly Studios, has always been passionate about making technology accessible and engaging for everyone. With a background in cognitive science from McGill University and an MBA from Babson College, Bryanne has combined her knowledge of how children learn with her enthusiasm for play-based education to create innovative learning experiences. Before founding Unruly Studios, she worked in various roles that spanned product development, marketing, and education, which gave her a unique perspective on the barriers that exist in STEM fields, particularly for young learners and underrepresented groups. Her dedication to breaking down these barriers led her to create a platform where coding and play intersect, making technology fun and approachable for kids of all backgrounds.



The Problem

Bryanne Leeming identified a significant issue in education: technology, particularly Computer Science (CS), was seen as intimidating, dull, and lacking proper training. Many schools were not offering CS programs despite the growing demand for these skills in the modern world. Students and educators alike found it challenging to integrate technology into traditional classroom environments, often due to limited resources or a lack of understanding.

The Solution

Leeming and her team at Unruly Studios created a solution to bridge this gap. They introduced Computer Science during non-traditional times, such as in physical education (PE), math, and other subjects outside of a dedicated CS period. This creative approach helped break down the barriers associated with learning tech skills. Unruly Studios managed to impact over 40,000 students by selling to entire school districts. More than 1,000 teachers received training, making CS education more accessible. About 90% of the schools Unruly serves are public schools.



The Product Journey

The journey to creating their product involved 24 iterations and multiple prototypes, ranging from paper models to fully developed tech. One key insight was that the product was too small to accommodate many children at once, making it more expensive (around \$20,000). Initially, only museums could afford it. Based on feedback, the product went through significant changes, including adjustments to the screen, size, sound, and battery preferences to better meet teachers' needs.

Customer Development

Leeming and her team invested time in customer development through cold calls, interviews, and attending fairs and programs. This direct interaction with potential customers shaped product development based on feedback, leading to key product enhancements like 'iPad coloring' and stepping-friendly screen designs.



The Unruly Team

Unruly Studios is powered by a small but experienced team with backgrounds in business, the toy industry, edtech, and more. The company operates with quarterly goals, ensuring each team member knows their role every day. Over time, team dynamics have shifted, with some members leaving and others filling gaps. Leeming emphasizes the importance of adaptability and the ability to handle rejection, critical traits for any start-up member.



Lessons from the Unruly Journey

Leeming learned when to say "no," even to lucrative deals that weren't aligned with the company's goals. Early on, the primary target was parents, but it became evident that schools were a better fit. Feedback from schools revealed a saturated market where many robots sat unused in closets, leading Unruly to focus on creating an engaging product that was simple for teachers to use and enjoyable for students. The "3rd grade inspiration moment" became a key concept for Leeming, ensuring Unruly Studios inspires children to see technology in a new and exciting light.



Our Experience

During our session with Bryanne, we experienced firsthand her unique approach to STEM education. Unlike traditional methods that often isolate students in front of screens, Bryanne emphasized the importance of integrating active play with learning. She demonstrated this with "Splats," interactive tools that encourage kids to jump, run, and engage physically while learning to code. This experience was eye-opening because it challenged the conventional perception of coding as a sedentary, screen-based activity. It also highlighted the importance of making learning fun and inclusive, catering to different learning styles and breaking down stereotypes associated with technology and coding.

Bryanne's cheerful personality and dynamic presentation style showed how an educator's approach could significantly impact students' interest in a subject. Her ability to make a room full of people excited about coding through active play was inspiring, demonstrating how passion and creativity could make complex subjects like computer science accessible to everyone, especially those who might have felt excluded or intimidated by it before.



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