

Degree engineers success stories

Homework is real-life business startups

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Avid golfer Kelly Curry, who is currently a graduate student at McMaster University, is looking for ways to commercialize his invention - a golf training aid called Swingnature.

Until recently, entrepreneurs who dreamed of successfully funding, developing and commercializing an innovation had few options than to jump into the sink-or-swim school of hard knocks. But three years ago McMaster University unveiled a new concept in post-graduate business education: the Xerox Centre for Engineering Entrepreneurship and

Innovation, which offers a Master of Innovation and Entrepreneurship. The curriculum consists of every step an entrepreneur needs to take to successfully launch a new business, except the classroom is real life, and the homework is the creation of a real startup, with help from the centre in everything from mentoring, to raising funds, product development and testing. Students graduate with a degree -- and an actual startup ready to take on the market.

"Doing it on your own is the MBA of hard knocks. Going through this program picks you up and puts you on the 50-yard line," says Kelly Curry, who is enrolled in the program. Mr. Curry already had not just one but two startups under his belt, including his current company, ZeroedIn Technologies Inc., which specializes in customer relations management software. But he had never commercialized an invention.

And that is what his new startup, KR Golf Solutions, is set to do: commercialize a golf-training aid Mr. Curry, an avid golfer, invented in 2004. Called Swingnature, this revolutionary driver-lookalike uses a removable weight-system in the grip to help the golfer improve his speed and has software that notifies him in real-time if he is swinging incorrectly. With the help of the program, Mr. Curry has already raised \$50,000 for the company and is currently conducting a focus group with the Royal Canadian Golf Association's exercise consultant.

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