

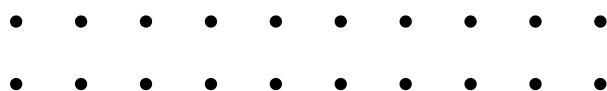
The Next Generation of Business Ideas: How Mohawk Students Are Changing Our Industry

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Participation in health, wellness and fitness activities take place in many different forms, and students in the Health, Wellness & Fitness program at Mohawk College are innovating new ways to share their passion for this field with new business concepts in a unique and exciting way.

It all starts with identifying a problem in the fitness industry, and developing an innovative solution. For example, Chris Spack, owner of Chez Christopher's Meal Prep found that people were looking for healthy, home cooked meal solutions but didn't always have the time to prepare the food. By going to a client's home and bulk cooking, he has helped create a solution to this problem that is both tasty and healthy. As a former student, Christopher shares; "Mohawk's program and this special project is unmatched in its ability to inspire young minds to create their own path within the most important field of work, our health as a whole".



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Taking this newly developed concept, students work through a business plan from start to finish and it all culminates in a business pitch. Out of over 30 groups, the top three business pitches are selected, based on business concept and presentation skills. The students in these groups are invited to present at Fit to Pitch - a chance to share their concept with over 200 peers and industry experts. Industry expert, and Fit to Pitch judge Kennedy Lodato explains that "giving these students confidence to present their ideas to a panel of judges in the field for true, honest feedback is a great way to prepare them for the real world".



One unique aspect of this event is speed networking. Over 30 industry experts and meet with 130+ students in groups of 5-8 and share their experience in the industry and provide valuable advice to the students as they are getting ready to embark on their careers. This event has been incredibly valuable, and has even provided job opportunities to students! Brian Humphrey, owner of Shift Fitness, finds that "the concept of bringing students, staff and industry experts together allows for new networks, new conversations and always new business". Historically, this event has been held in person. In 2021, we held our first ever virtual Fit to Pitch with resounding success highlighting the importance of this event for our students.



Perhaps one of the most exciting aspects of this has been watching students take their business concept and create an actual business out of it. Former student, Brad Johnston, is now the proud owner of Optimum Movement in Ancaster, Ontario. According to Brad "It's hard to put into words how valuable it is to receive advice on building your business from people who are continuously building theirs through Mohawk's Fit to Pitch program. Professionals who have spent the time, worked the long hours and have already made the mistakes students haven't thought of truly opens their eyes before they start their process after graduation".

Another graduate that is now running a successful business in Hamilton is Jake Reddick. "The Fit to Pitch project was fantastic for myself. It gave me great motivation to become an entrepreneur, able to run my own fitness facility and it really helped me understand how to get things started - the most difficult step for me. The project that I presented to the fitness professionals and as well my professors pretty much came to fruition and I'm living that dream right now. At the time it just seemed like a school project, but in retrospect it's what got my mind thinking more as an entrepreneur and a busy savvy personal trainer who has the knowledge to go to the top."

Professor and Fit to Pitch creator Tara Dinyer, shares her top tips she shares with the students for going from business concept to execution:



1. Identify a problem in the industry and come up with a unique solution to that problem. Be sure you can share your idea with others in a 30 sec or less pitch.
2. Make sure you are passionate about the business - you will be spending a lot of time both on and in your business, so love what you do.
3. Do your market research. Is there a need for your idea? What is the competition doing and how are you different? How much are they willing to pay?
4. Stick to your niche - don't try to be everything to everyone. Find what you are good at, build your business around that, and keep it at the core of everything you do.
5. Surround yourself with people that support your business. Find a mentor, attend workshops and take advantage of pitch competitions to help fund your business.
6. Take the leap. It will never be perfect! Just get started and build from there. You will go great places if it is built from a place of love and passion.

Visionaries and game changers are going to be providing the health, wellness and fitness solutions of tomorrow. Using problems as inspiration leads to more feasible business concepts that are more impactful. Learning the language, tools and techniques get these students started on a path to entrepreneurship or intrapreneurship. The result? Great friends, great networking, great ideas, and a love of lifelong learning and earning! And most of all, Mohawk grads that are "Fit to Pitch"!