





COMPANY HIGHLIGHTS

LAUNCH

LLC formed May 22, 2015

SOLUTION

eLearning Community Platform

TECHSTART MEMBER

Since 2017

WEBSITE

blickel.com

CORE CAPABILITIES

- eLearning community
- Tiered eLearning modules
- Mark content as private, protected, and public
- Real-time analytics
- Create, edit, and share content instantly
- Individualized look-and-feel
- Customized eLearning experiences

BLICKEL ORIGINS

When it came to naming his new company, Gregory and Chris Maul, his graphic designer, brainstormed various brand names. He returned to his roots—the first “word” his parents recalled that he ever said as a child—Blickel.

ELEARNING MODULES

TOPIC

EXAMPLE

PROGRAMS

Subject

COURSES

Area of Study

UNITS

Topics

LESSONS –

Individual Unit

PARTS –

Individual Lesson

Middle School Science

Geology

Cell Structure

Mitochondria

Video on Mitochondria

HUMBLE + STORIED

The great business success stories have humble but storied beginnings—from Henry Ford using the assembly line to mass produce the Model A and subsequently the Model T, to Bill Hewlett and David Packard launching HP in a garage, to childhood friends Paul Allen and Bill Gates creating Microsoft.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE BLICKEL STORY

Gregory Carlson is building his beginnings story with Blickel. It started when he was serving a two-year assignment in Grants, New Mexico for not-for-profit Teach for America. Teaching math in the secondary school system, he tapped various types of eLearning software to help his students learn math concepts. “None of them were very effective,” he notes.

After finishing his teaching commitment in New Mexico, during which he completed a Masters of Education in Secondary Education, Carlson returned to Cañon City, Colorado and Fremont County, where he had grown up (his parents moved there when he was one year old). With three bachelor degrees—one in math, one in political science, and one in economics (which he completed in four years at the University of Colorado at Boulder)—Carlson decided to tap one of his other degrees and spent a year working in politics. Yet, he found himself looking back to his time teaching secondary education in New Mexico and his frustrations using subpar eLearning platforms.

Never daunted by a new challenge, Carlson began to teach himself Flash programming with the objective of creating his own eLearning solution. “I coded a game in Flash to teach others how to use Flash,” Carlson relates. “It was an interactive game where you created a character and the character moved up levels as you passed different learning stages.” The game turned out to be a huge hit. Carlson released the game on Kongregate, an open game platform for indie games with a revenue-sharing model for developers. “In the first month, we had over 100,000 plays,” Carlson says. “It was really exciting to see Flash learners engaging with the game. We received feedback such as, ‘I learned more playing this game than I did during my entire first semester as a computer science major.’”



PRESIDENT & FOUNDER | GREGORY CARLSON

SCALING UP BLICKEL

With this success, Carlson concluded that he had found a niche. He took an adjunct teaching position at Pueblo Community College teaching math and launched Blickel—commencing work developing an eLearning platform. “At the time, I was teaching a GED math course and was probably using my 10th eLearning software solution,” he observes. “All of them had been terrible, and I decided to focus our initial development on creating something that would address the needs of GED math.”

Carlson also determined that he needed help on the front-end graphics development. “My graphics capabilities are limited, and it was time to bring in someone else to take the lead in developing those,” he explains. “Having him create the front-end graphics really makes a big difference in terms of audience engagement.”

Carlson and his graphic designer then ran into a new challenge. In July 2017, Adobe announced plans to decommission Flash, with an end-of-life declaration at the end of 2020. The work they had completed had to be redone in a new programming language. “It was certainly frustrating rewriting all of the code that we had completed to date,” he recalls. “But we had no choice other than to pivot, electing to rewrite the front-end code in HTML5 JavaScript. And as it turned out, Adobe ending its support for Flash turned out to be a blessing, as our GED math program was already starting to push the limits of the Flash Player.” In addition to changing out the underlying technology for the eLearning platform, Carlson also decided to focus on developing an exceptional eLearning platform that could be used for any number of use cases rather than just GED math.

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GREGORY CARLSON
President & Founder, Blickel

ONE OF THE FIRST AT TECHSTART

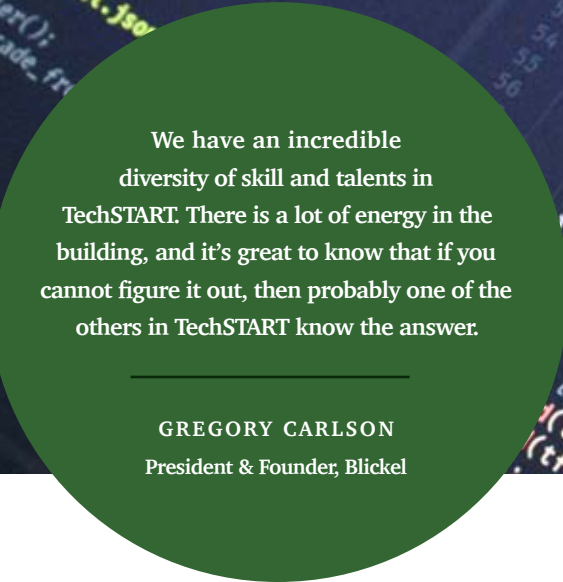
Carlson found that working from his home was proving problematic. “My graphic designer and I were working from my home,” he notes. “Work was around me all the time, and it was stressing me out.” As Fremont Economic Development Corporation (FEDC) TechSTART had just launched, Carlson jumped at the chance to become one of the first tenants. “The rent was extremely affordable, and I was able to separate my work life from my personal life,” he says.

But the benefits of TechSTART are proving to go far beyond these original objectives for Carlson. “We have an incredible diversity of skill and talents in TechSTART,” he observes.

“We have some great hardware engineers who know a lot about virtual reality, among other things. We have a company that is run on Facebook and the founder is an expert in Facebook marketing and how to leverage Facebook for customer acquisition and sustained engagement. We have web developers who know WordPress backwards and forward. It’s really astounding that you can find all of this talent under one roof in Cañon City, Colorado.”

Thus, whenever Carlson or his graphic designer run into a problem they cannot solve, they don’t have far to look. He explains: “There is a lot of energy in the building, if you can’t figure it out, then one of the other tenants in TechSTART know the answer.”

As any entrepreneurial effort has its ups and downs, Carlson believes TechSTART has helped him sustain the company’s efforts over the long run. “I have been funding Blickel myself, and I guarantee our successes would not be possible without TechSTART,” he contends. “Other entrepreneurs help sustain focus and energy, even when we run into difficult challenges.”



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LAUNCHING AHEAD OF COMPETITORS

All the hard work Carlson and his graphic designer have put into Blickel is about to pay off. Blickel is currently in beta, and they have a launch date in May. "We are close to locking in three or four different paying business customers, all with different use-case requirements," he says. "We have a real competitive advantage from other eLearning platforms, and it starts with ease of use and flexibility in building out modules. Not only do we believe that private and public sector organizations will benefit, but individual consumers, families, and groups also can use Blickel to share recipes, agendas for vacations, bible lessons and sermons, and much more."

In addition, the community aspect of Blickel is certain to interest many users. "Content can be marked in three different ways—private, protected, or public," Carlson explains. "Private obviously is only visible to the person who created it. Protected is only visible to whom the creator designates. Public is content that any Blickel customer can see and reuse in their own eLearning curriculum. We anticipate that community members will share and reuse large blocks of content, making it much easier and faster to build and launch an eLearning program."

Blickel is more than a technology platform for Carlson; it's a philosophical aspiration. "Blickel came to me when I was teaching kids in the classroom," he conveys. "I was teaching 20 or 30 at a time, and I thought, 'what if I can teach 20,000 concurrently?' I've nearly quit several times, but I've always gotten up and kept pushing forward. TechSTART has been an invaluable proponent for me in those instances. It's very exciting to see our persistence and focus come to fruition as we get ready to launch the solution in May."

