

• Skye Nguyen •

unicorn trajectory

The Sure-Fire Path to Building
UNICORN STARTUPS

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In the fast-paced world of modern entrepreneurship, building a Unicorn startup is the ultimate dream for many aspiring Founders. A Unicorn company, defined as one with a valuation exceeding \$1 billion, not only represents immense financial success but also the ability to change the world with innovative solutions. One compelling way to achieve Unicorn status is by capitalizing on the infrastructure gap – unaddressed needs and opportunities in various industries – and expanding rapidly.



In unstable economic conditions which has become the norm, this is THE strategy of choice for building profitable and sustainable startups. Yes, you can have both – hypergrowth and resilience in this environment.

As someone who has been in the trenches growing tech startups across many industries, I want to show you the strategy that can pave the path to becoming a potential Unicorn even in economic downturns, with a step-by-step approach and real-world examples to illustrate the process, I call it The Unicorn Trajectory™.

If this resonates with you and you want to discuss how The Unicorn Trajectory™ can propel your startup onto its own Unicorn Trajectory, reach out to me [here](#).

I work with a selected group of post-revenue, pre-Series A and Series A startups as a hands-on advisor and we enjoy deep strategic collaborations that bring out the possibilities of exiting big and changing the world; and working together to get the job done.

Here's to your [Unicorn Trajectory](#).

[Skye Nguyen](#)

ABOUT SKYE NGUYEN

Skye Nguyen is the Founder and Creator of The Unicorn Trajectory™, the Operating System and Advisory Group that create sustainable hypergrowth for technology-driven startups.

An award-winning Chief Growth & Expansion Strategist and Board Director for high-profile tech startups, Skye has successfully redesigned business models through pre-series A to successful exits in high-demand markets in Asia and the Middle East.

Skye is an unrivalled expert in transforming post-revenue startups into sustainable, hyper-growing and acquisition-ready market leaders commanding premium valuations.

A relentless advocate for profitable startups, purposeful tech Founders and the investment community, Skye is known for catalyzing massive innovation, strategic transformation and profitability in a once growth-at-all-cost-oriented startup industry that lacked fundamentals and resilience through tough economic conditions.

As a highly sought-after advisor, speaker and investor, Skye's work focuses on bringing out brilliance in Founders and Investors, speaking commercial truth and defying conventions.

The Dubai-based award-winning Growth Strategist, named by Entrepreneur.com and Mastercard as one of EMEA Women Leaders, now advises Founders, Family Offices, Venture Capitalists, and the media on sustainable startup scaling and investment practices that spare no innovation, creativity, momentum or financial success.

Discover more at theunicorntrajectory.com



THE INFRASTRUCTURE GAP

A Transformative Business Strategy

The concept of the “**infrastructure gap**” is a powerful lens for startups to strategically identify underserved markets and reimagine industries.

There are at least
two types of infrastructure gaps:

Identifying Underserved Markets

Startups can cater to consumer groups or segments of society that are not adequately served by existing products or services.

Understanding the needs of these groups and creating tailored solutions opens vast opportunities.

Reinventing Industries

Startups can revamp industries infrastructure and services that are missing, have become outdated, or no longer serve their intended purpose.

This approach also requires inclusive design, placing the target audience at the centre of product creation.

Define the Gap

The “infrastructure gap” addresses physical gaps and gaps in services, opportunities, and accessibility. It involves recognizing untapped opportunities among demographics that current offerings overlook, for example, millennials and Gen Z, women, the elderly, etc.,

Untapped Opportunities

The “infrastructure gap” offers a multitude of untapped opportunities. Businesses can cater to substantial and diverse groups like the elderly, divorced individuals, and people with disabilities. etc. meeting their unique needs with innovative solutions.

Inclusive Design

To succeed in addressing the “infrastructure gap”, businesses may adopt a human-centric and inclusive design to centre their product around the specific needs of the target demographics, so that they can increase sales and foster long-term customer loyalty.

Navigating Challenges

While promising, addressing the infrastructure gap comes with challenges, including navigating complex stakeholders. Thoughtful decision-making and nuanced approaches are essential to overcome these hurdles.

Strategically aligning with underserved audiences to create new categories allows businesses to fulfil significant societal needs. This not only fuels remarkable growth but also improves the lives of underserved groups and creates sustainable impact at scale.

Driving
Growth &
Impact

Addressing infrastructure gaps related to essential needs like housing, healthcare, transport, and connection... provides a defence against economic downturns. startups can ensure stability and sustainability even in challenging economic environments.

Resilience
Against
Downturns

The “infrastructure gap” presents a structured and forward-thinking strategy for startups to drive sustainable growth and create positive impacts on society. While complex, the potential rewards for startups and society are extraordinary.

Harvest
the
Rewards

BUILDING A TECH UNICORN: The Essentials

To build a potential Unicorn startup, entrepreneurs must focus on the essentials:

01

PURPOSE: IDENTIFYING THE TRUE NORTH

Dive into the Founder's deepest personal motivation driving the creation of the startup. In other words, "What is the change you (the Founder) wish to see in the world?" is the backbone of "the revolution or movement" the Founder wants to create through the startup.

02

POTENTIAL: THE VAST MARKET SIZE

Potential indicates the untapped growth opportunities for a startup. Whether entering an existing yet undercapitalized market or creating an entirely new category, the infrastructure gap opens doors for startups to become future Unicorns. Consider spaces that can accommodate multiple Unicorns, signalling a vast market with room for growth.

03

PRINCIPLES: THE PILLARS OF CULTURAL VALUES

Principles (or foundational cultural values) are the bedrock of successful Unicorn startups. They drive decision-making decentralization, foster a strong and unified culture, and guide teams towards a shared vision. Defining and embodying clear principles empowers your startup to navigate challenges and growth opportunities with unwavering unity and focus.

04

PROFIT-ABILITY: THE DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

At the core of any successful startup, as a business venture, lies Value Creation – which means building a sustainable business, creating products or services that customers are willing to pay for, and exceeding the cost of goods sold and operational expenses. Achieving Profitability through solid unit economics ensures long-term success and financial resilience.

05

POSITIONING: THE POWER OF THE BRAND

Perception and narrative hold immense power in the startup world. Your brand should be memorable and communicate your unique value proposition in an image and just a few words.

06

PRODUCT: DELIVERING TRUE VALUE

A startup's success hinges on Product-Market Fit, where solutions solve genuine pain points and deliver tangible gains to users. Validating your product through customer feedback and iterating based on real market demands is vital to building a compelling value proposition.

07

PEOPLE: ASSEMBLING THE DREAM TEAM

People are the lifeblood of any organization. To attract exceptional talent, offer a purpose-driven organization that values community and empowers employees with a meaningful mission to challenge the status quo. Building a passionate team dedicated to your Purpose sets the stage for accelerated growth.

08

PROCESS: STREAMLINING EFFICIENCY

Process optimization and automation are the cores of scalable operations. Identify areas that hinder growth and streamline processes to create a lean and efficient operation. Automating repetitive tasks reduces human intervention, ensuring consistency and minimizing errors.

09

PERFORMANCE: TRACTION AND ENGINEERED GROWTH

Continuously measuring and improving Performance through defined growth metrics is vital for a potential Unicorn startup. Keep a close eye on key metrics specific to your business types, such as top-line revenue, retention, and financial performance, etc. and steer clear from vanity metrics. Focusing on achieving *meaningful* traction in the market fosters a positive growth trajectory.

CONCLUSION

The **infrastructure gap** provides a sure-fire path for startups to build potential Unicorn companies and change the world. By understanding the world's realities and progress, identifying underserved markets, and addressing actual pain points for end users, entrepreneurs can create innovative solutions that drive financial success and societal impact. In a world of ever-increasing industry-disrupting opportunities, startups have the potential to catalyze extraordinary changes; and focusing on the “infrastructure gap” is their pathway to achieving this feat.

Building a Unicorn startup is an audacious yet achievable goal for determined and visionary Founders. By understanding the world, embracing Purpose and Potential, and adopting a Value-creation and Profit-driven approach, startups can leverage the infrastructure gaps to drive massive growth. Aligning key foundational Principles and values, building truly innovative Products, and assembling a motivated team of great People are essential steps in this transformative journey from startup to scale-up. By focusing on Profitability, Positioning, Process, and Performance, startups can confidently navigate the complexities of the economic landscape and emerge as the trailblazers of tomorrow's industries.

Skye Nguyen





CASE STUDY: AHOY.ae

Skye played a pivotal role in shifting AHOY from a cash-bleeding last-mile delivery startup to a leading logistics technology company in MENA. She identified that the startup's proprietary mapping and logistics software had the potential to bridge an infrastructure gap by serving various industries requiring the automation of the movement of goods, people, and money.

Recognizing this underutilized asset, AHOY embraced a B2B value proposition instead of the original B2C model, leading to transformative contracts with publicly traded conglomerates, government entities and their subsidiaries. This strategic move enabled the startup to raise \$20 million in Pre-series A, primed for deep technology development and global expansion.

*“Skye is a growth and scaleup hacker
with deep empathy and understanding of others.
She puts what matters most in
a “business first and foremost” way.”*

Jamil Shinawi

Co-Founder and CEO at AHOY.ae



CASE STUDY: Stella Stays

Addressing the Infrastructure
Gap in the global rental market

As Head of Global Expansion at Stella Stays, a propTech startup in the Middle East, Skye identified an infrastructure gap in the traditional rental market. Millennials and Gen Z renters are seeking flexible rental spaces that offer a sense of community and a high-quality living experience. Stella Stays strategically positioned itself to cater to this demographic's needs, tapping into a 3-trillion-dollar global rental market.

By pivoting the brand from holiday homes to creating tech-enabled branded residences with a community-driven lifestyle and a seamless digital experience, Skye strategically created an entirely new category of “flexible rental” with Stella Stays becoming the pioneer and market leader. The success of Stella Stays in pivoting showcases the power of leveraging the infrastructure gap - rental accessibility for the next generation - to put the company on to its Unicorn Trajectory.

*“Stella Stays is the
Most Innovative E-Solution of The Year”
Entrepreneur.com*

SCALABLE BUSINESS MODEL CREATION

Business Model Creation Example 1:

A Ride-Hailing Service for People with Disabilities

In many cities around the world, traditional ride-hailing services have become ubiquitous, providing convenient transportation options for the general population. However, one demographic that has often been underserved by these services is people with disabilities. Accessible transportation options are limited, and many individuals with disabilities face challenges in getting around their communities.

Recognizing this infrastructure gap, a startup decided to focus on addressing the transportation needs of people with disabilities. They launched a ride-hailing service specifically designed to cater to this demographic. The service included wheelchair-accessible vehicles, trained drivers who were knowledgeable about assisting passengers with disabilities, and a user-friendly app that allowed passengers to request specialized transportation with ease.

This inclusive design approach put the needs of people with disabilities at the centre of the service, ensuring that it met their specific requirements. The startup worked closely with disability advocacy groups and engaged in extensive user testing to refine its offering further.

The impact was twofold: Firstly, the service provided a crucial solution to a significant underserved market, improving the mobility and independence of people with disabilities. Secondly, it created a new and untapped revenue stream for the startup, leading to business growth and expansion.

As word spread about the innovative ride-hailing service for people with disabilities, it gained recognition not only for its positive societal impact but also for its strategic approach to addressing an infrastructure gap. The startup's success attracted additional investors and partnerships, further fueling its growth.

By identifying and catering to a consumer group that was overlooked by traditional transportation services, this startup transformed the ride-hailing industry by reinventing its business model by creating value for a previously underserved demographic. This example demonstrates how addressing the infrastructure gap can lead to business success while making a positive impact on society.

Market Sizing

Estimating the exact size of the global market for the ride-hailing service specifically designed for people with disabilities would require detailed market research and data analysis. However, I can provide some insights into the potential market size and the significance of addressing this infrastructure gap:

GLOBAL POPULATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than one billion people worldwide live with some form of disability. This represents a substantial market segment with specific transportation needs.

TRANSPORTATION ACCESS GAP

The lack of accessible transportation options for people with disabilities is a widespread issue globally. In many countries, there is a significant infrastructure gap when it comes to providing inclusive transportation services.

GROWING AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY

Disability advocacy groups and organizations have been actively raising awareness about the need for inclusive transportation options. Governments and public institutions are also becoming increasingly conscious of the importance of accessible transportation.

REGULATORY SUPPORT

Some countries have introduced regulations that mandate transportation providers to offer accessible services for people with disabilities, further driving the demand for specialized ride-hailing services.

Considering these factors, the market potential for a ride-hailing service catering to people with disabilities can be substantial. It could attract not only one billion people with disabilities but also family members, caregivers, and organizations that prioritize inclusive transportation options.

However, it's important to note that the market size may vary significantly from region to region, depending on factors such as the prevalence of disabilities, the level of existing transportation infrastructure, and the overall economic conditions. Conducting thorough market research and analyzing specific geographic markets would be essential to determine the precise size and growth potential of the business.

In conclusion, while the exact global market size for a ride-hailing service for people with disabilities is challenging to quantify without comprehensive research, addressing the infrastructure gap in transportation for this underserved demographic presents a substantial opportunity for growth and positive social impact.

Tech-Enabled Inclusive Education Platform

PURPOSE

A Tech-Enabled Inclusive Education Platform is created to bridge the education gap and provide accessible and inclusive learning opportunities for children with disabilities and underserved communities globally.

POTENTIAL

Global Education Gap:

According to UNESCO, more than 250 million children worldwide are out of school, with a significant proportion belonging to marginalized communities or having disabilities.

Demand for Inclusive Education:

Parents and caregivers of children with disabilities seek quality education that caters to their specific needs and abilities. Additionally, there is growing awareness about the importance of inclusive education in mainstream schools.

Digital Penetration:

The increasing adoption of technology and internet connectivity worldwide opens up possibilities for delivering educational content to remote and underserved areas.

PRINCIPLES

The Tech-Enabled Inclusive Education Platform will be built on the principles of inclusivity, accessibility, and personalized learning. It will focus on empowering children with disabilities to reach their full potential by providing tailored education programs.

PROFIT-ABILITY

The revenue model will include multiple streams, such as subscription fees for premium content and features, partnerships with schools and educational institutions, and targeted advertising for educational resources and services.

POSITIONING

The brand will stand for inclusivity and quality education. It will be positioned as a reliable and trusted resource for parents, caregivers, and educators seeking inclusive learning solutions.

PRODUCT

The tech-enabled platform will offer a comprehensive range of educational content, including interactive lessons, educational games, and assistive tools to accommodate different learning styles and abilities.

PEOPLE

The platform will collaborate with educators, experts in special education, and content creators to develop high-quality and engaging learning materials. It will also have a dedicated support team to assist users and ensure a positive learning experience.

PROCESS

The platform will leverage technology to streamline content creation, curation, and delivery processes. It will use data analytics to assess individual learning progress and continuously improve content relevance and effectiveness.

PERFORMANCE

Key performance indicators will include user engagement, retention rates, customer satisfaction, and impact on learning outcomes for children with disabilities.

Market Sizing

TOTAL ADDRESSABLE MARKET

The addressable market includes over 250 million out-of-school children globally, as well as students with disabilities currently attending schools with limited inclusive education options.

MARKET PENETRATION

Considering the increasing demand for inclusive education and the accessibility of digital platforms, a conservative estimate of a 5% market penetration within five years is feasible.

REVENUE POTENTIAL

Assuming a conservative subscription fee of \$10 per month per user (parents and educators) and an estimated 5 million users within five years, the platform could generate annual revenue of \$600 million.

Conclusion

The Tech-Enabled Inclusive Education Platform has the potential to address the education gap for children with disabilities and underserved communities, providing a lucrative opportunity for growth while making a significant positive impact on global education accessibility. The estimated market sizing indicates a substantial addressable market and revenue potential for the business model. However, further market research and validation would be necessary to refine the market sizing and revenue projections.

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**START YOUR
PRIVATE**

**6-Month
Growth & Expansion
Strategy Blueprint**

APPLY TO WORK_

WORK PRIVATELY WITH SKYE NGUYEN

Skye Nguyen works with ambitious post-revenue pre-Series-A and Series-A startups to put themselves on the sustainable Unicorn Trajectory.

Working together on **‘The Unicorn Trajectory™ 6-Month Growth & Expansion Strategy Blueprint** enables Skye to deeply assess the business model and market potential, and reimagine the commercial and growth strategies to transform the startup into a rising market leader in their own industry-disrupting category.

Investment: \$300,000 plus equity agreement

‘The Unicorn Trajectory™ 6-Month Growth & Expansion Strategy Blueprint is an intensive 6-month process to structure and kick start the **transformation of a post-revenue startup into sustainable, hyper-growing and acquisition-ready market leaders commanding premium valuation.**

Skye personally assesses the current business model, market opportunities, products, commercial strategy, organizational structure, team, and the company’s capabilities, leading to finetuning or redesigning the business model, the product ecosystem, and a high-growth commercial strategy.

She works exclusively with the Founders on a Strategic Alignment process to extend their vision and strategic long-term goals towards solving an infrastructure gap. Skye then completes a Product and Category Design exercise which articulates the market positioning and commercial strategy that prepare the company for market penetration and fundraising. Finally, she prepares **‘The Unicorn Trajectory™ Strategic Roadmap**, which is a profit-first and growth-focused strategy document ready for implementation by the Founders and team.



‘The Unicorn Trajectory™ Growth & Expansion Strategy Blueprint’
is an intensive 6-month process including several modules:

01

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Work with Founders to
redefine the company’s
vision and direction towards
solving an infrastructure
gap which represent large(r)
market opportunities.

Create strategic and
actionable long-term (5-7
years) objectives and goals
of the company.

02

GROWTH STRATEGY FORMATION

Work with Founders and
core team to develop
comprehensive growth and
commercial strategy aligned
with vision, objectives, goals
and exit plan.

Create strategic action plans
to drive profitability,
sustainable growth, visibility
and increase market share.

03

STRATEGIC EXPANSION

Work with Founders to
focus the company’s efforts
on selected markets with
high potential and
favourable market
conditions.

Minimise the distraction of
unprofitable and
operationally complex
markets.

04

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS & POSITIONING

Develop strategic narrative and communication plan to position the company as market leader of its own category.

Enhance brand visibility and reputation in preparation for launches, fundraising, and acquisitions.

Anticipating potential reputation risks.

05

PRODUCT ROADMAP & CATEGORY DESIGN

Work with Founders to creating the high-level roadmaps for both non-tech and tech products.

Work with product team to apply human-centric design principles into product development to deliver unmatched values for the target consumer group.

06

GROWTH STRATEGY HIGH-LEVEL EXECUTION

Create roadmaps that outline the execution of growth strategies.

Oversee the implementation on high-level and advise Founders on holding management team accountable for results.

Advise on strategy and action plan iterations based on market dynamics and real-time feedback.

07

FOUNDERS ADVISORY & COACHING

Provide mentorship and coaching to Founders to enhance their strategic business, communications, leadership and decision-making capabilities.

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APPLY TO WORK