

PlayCubed: Revitalizing Vendor Presence at WCA Competitions

Executive Summary

PlayCubed is a microbusiness dedicated to enhancing the experience of Rubik's cube enthusiasts, particularly speedcubers, their families, and competition organizers, by revitalizing the presence of vendors at World Cubing Association (WCA) competitions. The business offers hands-on play-testing services, expert guidance, and a curated inventory of high-quality cubes. By addressing the gap left by the decline of in-person vendors, PlayCubed aims to bring excitement, convenience, and value back to the Texas cubing community.

Mission Statement

At PlayCubed, our mission is to revive and enhance the Rubik's cube shopping experience for speedcubers and their families. We provide a unique, hands-on experience where customers can play-test cubes in person, ensuring every purchase is informed and satisfying.

Our commitment is to:

- Deliver a curated selection of high-quality cubes, tailored to the needs of speedcubers at all levels.
- Offer parents peace of mind by providing expert guidance and the opportunity to explore products firsthand before making a purchase.
- Reignite community engagement by reestablishing a vibrant vendor presence at local Texas WCA competitions, fostering connections and enriching the competitive experience.

Background

Rubik's cubes have been a part of my life for more than 10 years. I have been a supporter of my brother who is a dedicated competitor, known as "speedcuber" in the Rubik's competitive scene. Traveling with him to various World Cubing Association (WCA) competitions across Texas, I've witnessed the excitement these events bring to competitors and their families. One of the highlights used to be the vendors—tables filled with the latest cubes, accessories, and merchandise.

Competitors could try out different cubes, and parents could purchase meaningful keepsakes for their children.

Unfortunately, the presence of vendors at local competitions have dwindled over the years. Now, many first-time competitors and their families leave without the chance to test or buy cubes in person, relying instead on online shopping, which lacks the tactile experience and guidance needed to make informed decisions.

This personal connection, combined with over a decade of familiarity with the competitive cubing community, inspired me to create PlayCubed. I understand firsthand the gap left by the decline of vendors and the value they bring to competitions—not just in products but in fostering community engagement and excitement.

PlayCubed is my solution to this growing problem—a microbusiness designed to reintroduce vendors to local WCA competitions, ensuring competitors and families have access to the hands-on experience and expert guidance they deserve.

Business Description

PlayCubed is designed to enrich the experience of WCA competitions by offering:

- **Play-Testing Services:** Speedcubers can test various cubes to ensure an informed purchase.
- **Curated Inventory:** A diverse stock of cubes tailored to competitors of all levels.
- **Parental Support:** Expert guidance for parents to make confident purchasing decisions.
- **Community Engagement:** A vendor presence that sparks excitement and fosters connections among attendees.

Market Analysis

The Rubik's Cube Market

- Rubik's cubes have evolved into a competitive sport with over 200,000 unique competitors globally.
- Demand for high-quality cubes grows steadily as competitions attract both newcomers and seasoned speedcubers.

Decline of Vendors

- Historically, vendors were a staple of WCA competitions, providing opportunities for attendees to explore and purchase products. However, their presence has significantly declined, particularly at smaller, local events.
- The absence of vendors creates a gap in the market, leaving attendees reliant on online shopping, which lacks the tactile experience of in-person purchases.

As illustrated in Appendix B, competitions with vendor presence, such as the Western Championships, experience higher attendance and engagement compared to those without, such as the Heartland Championship. PlayCubed aims to replicate this positive impact by reintroducing vendors to local WCA competitions.

Opportunity

- By addressing this gap, PlayCubed can provide a valuable service that supports competitors, parents, and event organizers, fostering a stronger sense of community and enhancing the overall competition experience.

Operations, Marketing, and Management

PlayCubed combines an efficient organizational structure with targeted marketing strategies to provide a seamless experience for customers and ensure sustainable growth. The internal operations support external outreach efforts, creating a cohesive framework for delivering value to the Rubik's cubing community.

Organizational Structure

- PlayCubed operates as a sole proprietorship, led by Cuong Tran
- Day-to-day operations are managed by Cuong, with support from family members during high-traffic events.
- The lean structure ensures agility in addressing customers needs and managing logistics at competitions.

Marketing and Sales Strategy

- **Customer Engagement:** Leverage social media platforms to announce vendor appearances, promote featured products, and share competition highlights.
- **Community Building:** Maintain a strong presence within the Texas Rubik's cubing community through targeted outreach and partnerships with WCA organizers.
- **Sales Channels:** Focus on in-person sales at WCA competitions, emphasizing the added value of play-testing and expert guidance.

Alignment of Operations and Marketing

- The streamlined organizational structure supports responsive customer service and efficient event management.
- Marketing efforts amplify PlayCubed's presence within the Rubik's cubing community, driving attendance and engagement at competitions.

Key Qualifications

- Extensive experience attending WCA competitions and supporting competitors.
- Strong connections to the Rubik's cubing community.
- In-depth knowledge of competitive cubing trends and product preferences.

Methods

Objectives

PlayCubed will achieve its objectives by doing the following:

- Partner with WCA organizers
 - How: I will navigate to worldcubeassociation.org and contact them, detailing my business and what I have to offer as a sponsor, such as my trial services, stock diversity, and mutual benefits
- Keep a diverse stock of cubes
 - How: I will consult my brother during the early stages of opening to stock my inventory, then as the business grows, I will incorporate a customer survey, where I will ask my customers what products are they looking for
- Emphasize the value-added services to justify premium pricing
 - How: The premium services I will provide that separates me from the competition is play-testing. My play testing services will be modeled after a library. I will have several cubes available for "checkout" by customers. If a customer wishes to try a cube, they will select a cube, bring it to me, and trade something of value (e.x. driver's license, wallet, car keys) to access the cube. Once they are done testing, the customer will come back with the cube and trade it in for their personal item again. I understand that this may seem unusual, but I will offer them an incentive as a goodwill gesture, such as a discount on that particular cube checked-out.

- Additionally, before each competition, I will collaborate with my brother to advertise a selection of cubes in my inventory, highlighting the benefits of each cube. This will inform my customers about the current market and educate them on making the right decision. For example, there are a couple of cubes in the market that is priced higher, but we would recommend not buying them, as the features are “too much” and might be a negative for speed cubers.

Funding Request and Financial Projections

PlayCubed seeks **\$10,000 in initial funding** to cover startup costs and operational expenses for its first year of operation. Below is a breakdown of the requested funding and how it will be allocated:

1. Cube Inventory (\$4,063.80)

- Necessary to stock a diverse range of cubes tailored to competitors of all levels.
- Examples of inventory:
 - **3x3 Cubes:** GAN 15, Moyu Weilong WRM V10
 - **2x2 Cubes:** GAN 251, Qiyi M Pro 2x2
 - Other variations like Pyraminx, 4x4, 5x5, etc.
- Refer to the detailed breakdown in Appendix A for more specifics.

2. Travel Expenses (\$2,000)

- Estimated costs for attending local competitions in Texas include:
 - **Hotels:** \$100–\$150 per night, depending on location.
 - **Gas:** \$30–\$100 per round trip.
 - **Parking:** \$0–\$50 per day.
 - **Meals (Optional):** Allocated as needed.
- This ensures flexibility to reach multiple WCA competitions and provide consistent vendor presence.

3. Donations to WCA Organizers (\$4,000)

- Contributions to event organizers to secure vendor spots and support local competitions.
- Strengthens relationships within the Rubik’s cubing community, enhancing mutual benefits.

Projected Revenues and Breakeven Point

- **Expected Revenue:** \$500–\$1,000 per competition based on attendance and sales.
- **Breakeven Point:** Achievable after attending 12–20 competitions within the first year.
- Long-term sustainability relies on increasing repeat customers and enhancing brand loyalty through community engagement and exclusive services.

Why This Funding Is Essential

The requested funding allows PlayCubed to:

- Provide a reliable, high-quality service to the Rubik’s cubing community.
- Bridge the current gap in vendor presence at smaller WCA competitions.
- Establish a strong foundation for future growth and community impact.

\$4000 will be set aside as donations to WCA event organizers whenever necessary.

Benefits

Benefits include the following:

- **Play-testing:** Implementation is mentioned earlier. This service will provide speed cubers with the opportunity to test cubes of interest and make sure their purchase is informed. This service also provides parents with reassurance when investing in cubing products.
- **Convenience and Accessibility:** By being physically present at these local competitions, PlayCubed simplifies the customer's research process of Rubik's cubes. The business provides a curated selection of cubes that is both competitive and valued.
- **Community engagement:** My service will revitalize local competitions, sparking interest in speedcubers in the area and bringing a second point of interest back to these competitions. Parents will also have something to look forward to, as they can purchase products as mementos for their child. Additionally, my business will be a cornerstone of connections, as PlayCubed will have a social media account, posting where the business will be next, allowing speed cubers to follow along and connect with different members of the Rubik's Cube community throughout Texas.
- **Quality Knowledge and Live Feedback:** The business is backed by people with over a decade in the Rubik's competitive space. This history brings forth a knowledge base unmatched by many (and matched only by a few), giving customers confidence in PlayCubed. We will provide expert opinions on the latest cubes and recommendations for the next purchase to elevate the customer's Rubik's experience, both casual and competitive.
- **Boosting Competition Attendance:** By actively posting on social media where PlayCubed will be next, my business may attract more competitors to smaller competitions, helping organizers grow their events and fostering a stronger community.

Summary

PlayCubed represents a fresh, innovative approach to serving the speedcubing community by combining hands-on shopping experiences with expert guidance and community revitalization. By addressing the current lack of vendors at local competitions, PlayCubed enhances the overall event experience for speedcubers, their families, and organizers alike. With a commitment to fostering connections, delivering quality products, and boosting local competition attendance, PlayCubed not only enriches the cubing journey but also strengthens the community that supports it.