

Phase I - Invest in a Haitian Internet Startup

As a first step in what I expect to be a long-term commitment to helping to create opportunities for Haitians in technology, I'm looking for a Haitian Internet startup in which to invest.

I'm traveling to Haiti February 20-24 along with Sam Soffes ([@soffes](#)) and Caleb Davenport ([@calebd](#)) with the goal of meeting with Haitians who have already started or are considering starting an Internet software company. Specifically we're looking for people developing mobile apps for Android.

The goals for the trip are to:

- Meet with Haitian entrepreneurs and software engineers seeking investment
- Engage a Haitian attorney who can help with business formation and structuring the investment
- Connect with other people in the Haitian technology community and learn what others are doing
- Identify people who may be interested in playing a role in creating a startup accelerator in Port-au-Prince

Itinerary

Thursday February 20

10:20am - Arrive in Port-au-Prince
12:00pm - Lunch at Bellevue Guesthouse
2:00 - 5:00pm - Pitch Sessions at ESIH
6:00pm - Dinner TBD

Friday February 21

9:00am - 11:00pm - Pitch Sessions as CEI
12:00 - 1:00pm - Surtab Factory
1:00pm - 2:00pm - Possible meeting
2:30pm - Leave for Jacmel

Saturday February 22

2:00pm - Return from Jacmel
3:00pm - 6:00pm - TBD (Time with entrepreneurs from pitch sessions)
6:00pm - Dinner

Sunday February 23

8:00am - 1:00pm - Chill time at Bellevue Guesthouse
3:00pm - 6:00pm - Children's Academy Anniversary Celebration (Baocia)

Monday February 24

9:00am - Deanna Durban - Pasquet, Gousse & Associés - 5, Rue Cheriez, Port-au-Prince
11:15am - Depart PAP

Phase II - Haitian Accelerator Exploratory Trip (Timing TBD)

Overview

We're a group of people from the tech industry, traveling to Haiti to explore opportunities to contribute to the development Haiti's technical sector. Specifically we're looking for ways to identify and support Haitian entrepreneurs starting or running Internet businesses, then identify how we can support them by lending our **expertise** (business strategy, marketing, product, engineering, team building, administration) as well as leveraging our **professional networks** to help them to be successful. On this trip we'll be **meeting with leaders** from business, government, education and NGOs to learn as much as we can and connect with other efforts.

Questions to Answer on the Trip:

- **Who are the most promising entrepreneurs already at work?**
- **Tactically, what's the best way for us to provide coaching, mentoring both immediately and ongoing?**
- **What are the best sources to recruit entrepreneurs and others with technical skillsets that would want to get involved?**
- **What's the best model--philanthropic with education focus, accelerator with LPs or something in between?**
- **What other entities may be interested in supporting the effort in some capacity (space, resources, access, etc.)?**
- **What are the next steps?**

Idea 1: to create an accelerator or an incubator for promising Haitian tech startups. We need to know how those startups can be helped and who we should meet.

Idea 2: One of the people Jesse spoke with recently, [Patrick Riley](#) from [Global Accelerator Network](#) suggested that we might plan a hackathon or startup weekend while we're there. It seems to me that the only way this would make sense is to connect with folks who can help organize this on the ground. Patrick, has run programs like this in the past. Does he have any scheduled? Could we schedule one for the weekend that we're there (Feb 22-23)?

[There are detailed notes with comments after "Itinerary"]

Participants (invitees until confirmed)

Dylan Boyd - cannot make it this time

www.linkedin.com/in/dtboyd

<https://twitter.com/dtboyd>

Mark Dowds - cannot make it this time

www.linkedin.com/in/markdowds

<https://twitter.com/markdowds>

Jesse Engle - confirmed

San Francisco - Internet entrepreneur, startup advisor and angel investor. Brother to John Engle. Haiti Partners Board member.

www.linkedin.com/in/engle

<https://twitter.com/engle>

Aaron Gotwalt

www.linkedin.com/in/gotwalt

<https://twitter.com/gotwalt>

Ryan Sarver - cannot make it this time

www.linkedin.com/in/rsarver

<https://twitter.com/rsarver>

Sam Soffes — confirmed

San Francisco — Developer & designer working as a freelancer. Previously worked with Jesse as employee #1 at Seesaw.

www.linkedin.com/in/soffes

<https://twitter.com/soffes>

Kyle Sollenberger - cannot make it this time

www.linkedin.com/in/iamkyle

<https://twitter.com/kyle>

Matthew Thomson

www.linkedin.com/pub/matthew-thomson/0/786/157

<https://twitter.com/daddymention>

Jessica Verilli

www.linkedin.com/in/jessicaverrilli

<https://twitter.com/jess>

Elizabeth Weil - cannot make it this time

www.linkedin.com/in/elizabethweil

<https://twitter.com/elizabeth>

Kevin Weil

www.linkedin.com/in/kevinweil

<https://twitter.com/kevinweil>

Who we'll meet with

Philippe Armand

<http://www.linkedin.com/pub/philippe-armand/1/652/575>

Patrick Attie

<http://www.linkedin.com/pub/patrick-attie/6/73a/375>

Maarten Boute

<http://www.linkedin.com/in/mboute>

<https://twitter.com/mboute>

Darragh Dolan

<http://www.linkedin.com/pub/darragh-dolan/29/483/982>

John Engle

<http://www.linkedin.com/in/johnengle>

<https://twitter.com/johnengle>

We will be planning additional meetings with prospective entrepreneurs and students.

Travel/Accommodations

We will be staying at the [Bellevue Guest House](#) at the home of John and Merline Engle. The cost is \$700 per person, which covers all meals, lodging, ground transportation and interpreters for the trip. See Payment Instructions below. Each person will be responsible for their own travel to and from Toussaint Louverture International Airport in Port au Prince (PAP) and should arrange to arrive at PAP on the morning of Thursday 2/20/14 and plan to leave PAP on the morning of Monday 2/24/14.

There is more information on [traveling to Haiti with Haiti Partners here](#).

Flight Itinerary

Here's Jesse's itinerary. Book the same flights if possible.

Your flights

Date	Departs/ Arrives	Route	Flight	Travelers	Seats
Wed Feb 19	08:47 p.m. 05:10 a.m.	San Francisco, CA (SFO) to New York City, NY (JFK)	916	Jesse Christian Engle	12D
Thu Feb 20	06:30 a.m. 10:17 a.m.	New York City, NY (JFK) to Port-au-Prince, Haiti (PAP)	1835	Jesse Christian Engle	8D
Mon Feb 24	11:14 a.m. 03:15 p.m.	Port-au-Prince, Haiti (PAP) to New York City, NY (JFK)	1834	Jesse Christian Engle	8D
Mon Feb 24	05:00 p.m. 08:28 p.m.	New York City, NY (JFK) to Oakland, CA (OAK)	167	Jesse Christian Engle	8D

Total price

Fare: [\(details\)](#)

\$408.00 x 1 = **\$408.00** USD

Taxes & Fees: [\(details\)](#)

\$149.60 USD

Total:

\$557.60 USD

Payment Instructions

Fill out the registration form at <http://haitipartners.org/2010/01/haiti-tech-trip-february-2014/>

Detailed Notes

Idea 1: to create an accelerator or an incubator for promising Haitian tech startups. We need to know how those startups can be helped and who we should meet.

[comment from Patrick Attie]

This would be a wonderful idea as we are currently working with the Ashoka network to integrate, in ESIH's curriculum, an entrepreneurship program. Also, one of our (most dynamic, leader oriented and entrepreneurial) Master level student (he created a Haitian social network called jolisjolis.com), just started to teach the Startup creation MOOC available on Udacity.com and he is doing a great job. So there are a few initiatives going on. The reality is that those will probably not be enough to create entrepreneurs. We need to induce a culture of entrepreneurship and to be able to fund those with the greatest ideas. We can try to find 5 or 6

projects that we could pre-select and submit to you before your coming to Haiti. Then we can organize an event around it (Hackathon or other). The chance is that they will not be well trained to present a great pitch, organize an efficient business plan, etc. They are generally trained to focus on the technical details, not on the big picture. So ideally, we would need to process potential candidates (6 or 7 projects as a pilot) before organizing a “final” event in Haiti. The pilot would serve as a “replicable proof of concept” from which we would draw lessons to further push this at a bigger scale.

There is also an incubator initiative at Université Quisqueya that we should put in the loop. It is run by M. Bénédicte Paul (benedictep@yahoo.fr), a guy who I would recommend to work with. Creating an incubator in Haiti requires commitment and time. So my question to your team: are you ready to dedicate commitment and time for the “after Haiti event” period? How many hours a week can you guys dedicate to this (as your expertise is unique and can hardly find a match in Haiti)? for the pilot, we need to maximize the chance that the selected projects go all the way in the journey of creating their venture and making it work.

Also, I would like to mention the opportunities of creating a maker lab in Haiti to give the creators the possibility to design/create prototype of objects. A good maker lab today costs around 15K-US\$ (look at www.makershed.com). There are today so many opportunities in the maker movement that do not limit us only to the more classic software idea and opportunities! Creating a maker lab means having someone to train 2 or 3 human resources on the equipment (3D printer, CNC mills, laser cutting equipment, etc.) so they can redeploy the knowledge here to our students or professionals. Should we use tools like www.kickstarter.com and/or www.quirky.com. Just an idea, I think, worth exploring as this would also be the first maker lab in the Caribbean and the trend is still building critical mass in the world:-)

Idea 2: One of the people Jesse spoke with recently, [Patrick Riley](#) from [Global Accelerator Network](#) suggested that we might plan a hackathon or startup weekend while we're there. It seems to me that the only way this would make sense is to connect with folks who can help organize this on the ground. Patrick, has run programs like this in the past. Does he have any scheduled? Could we schedule one for the weekend that we're there (Feb 22-23)?

[comment from Patrick Attie]

No, we do not have any scheduled for the moment, but we are discussing with UNDP to organize one before March 2014. But nothing precise yet. We have already organized the first 2 Hackathons taking place in Haiti. The first one with Digital Democracy (Haiti contact: Emilie Rieser emilie.reiser@gmail.com or ereiser@digital-democracy.org, she is currently in Boston at least until March 2014. you can contact her directly on my behalf if you need to) (you can also take a look at:

<http://techpresident.com/news/wegov/23477/techies-gather-port-au-prince-haitis-first-hackathon>)

The second one with the State Secretary for the Integration of Handicapped (BSEIH: you can take a look at:

<http://www.haitilibre.com/en/news-9236-haiti-technology-3rd-hackathon-to-the-benefit-of-non-signted-people.html>).

Both those Hackathons brought amazing results with long term impact on our institution and the

students.

Questions to Answer on the Trip:

- Who are the most promising entrepreneurs already at work?

[comment from Patrick Attie]

Define promising entrepreneurs...

Hard to say as they are not very much advertised. But Bénédict Paul (see above) is certainly another resource to contact. Also, Richardson Ciguene (www.jolisjolis.com, richardson.ciguene@esih.edu) is an amazing young man moving forward. He is also the one teaching the udacity.com startup class and the main helper to organize the 2 hackathons mentioned above.

- Tactically, what's the best way for us to provide coaching, mentoring both immediately and ongoing?

[comment from Patrick Attie]

We need to decide, at least:

- *which electronic tools we want to use as this will mostly be done remotely (before and after)*
- *how to structure it (a schedule for mentoring for example)*
- *what type of mentoring is needed*

- What are the best sources to recruit entrepreneurs and others with technical skillsets that would want to get involved?

[comment from Patrick Attie]

What type of entrepreneurs are we looking for? (see comments above)

- What's the best model--philanthropic with education focus, accelerator with LPs or something in between?

[comment from Patrick Attie]

What is LP? I would remove the word "Philanthropic" in this. Do we want to create entrepreneurs or not?

- What other entities may be interested in supporting the effort in some capacity (space, resources, access, etc.)?

[comment from Patrick Attie]

We should also involve M. Plaisimond who has a big space in Port au Prince that he wants to use as incubator space (I will get his contact information shortly).

- What are the next steps?