

# Stop #1

June 3rd to 7th

My first week at UniteGPS was not typical of your average internship. The only coffee fetching I did was for myself. Creating an addressable market spreadsheet, reaching out to prospective clients, talking about the scope of the transit world with the boss, creating promo videos for various campaigns/meetings, and actually configuring a GPS device basically sums up my first week.

I started the week creating a [spreadsheet](#) of an addressable market for UniteGPS' transit and shuttle solution (2-15 vehicle operations). I never knew how many emails, phone calls, and hours of Googling it would take to create a list of 15 targets. My goal is to target clients that are smaller so that I am able to win them as customers during my summer internship. I find it difficult to find clients with few vehicles because they generally have a weak online presence. My main strategy has been to find as much information about possible clients that I already know about that fit this target market and call them to obtain the contact information of the transportation directors.

On Tuesday I created my company [email](#) and talked about what the transit industry is like today with my boss. We talked about how there are many things to juggle when you are the CEO, CFO, COO, marketing manager, accountant, and salesman, of your own startup. I began making promo videos like [this](#), [this](#), and [this](#). The promotional videos are intended to highlight UniteGPS' new route optimization solution. I really enjoy making the promotional videos, and I believe that marketing done well can be the difference between a successful startup and going out of business.

The next day I combined some of my promo videos, some existing videos, and created a [video](#) for the Nebraska Transportation Association meeting on June 7th. I used Canva, Promo, and iMovie to create the video and I flashed back to seventh grade and remembered how fun it can be to create an iMovie video. I created a new campaign called "[The Power of Knowing](#)", to illustrate the value proposition to potential UniteGPS clients if they use UniteGPS services.

On Thursday I continued the "Power of Knowing" campaign and began drafting promo videos. The videos are intended to highlight a key area where UniteGPS can help involved parties. For example, UniteGPS can save our clients time, so the video says "The Power of Knowing" and below that it says "How much time you have" and below this line I wrote multiple suggestions of things you can do with the time saved by UniteGPS, like eating breakfast, cleaning the kitchen, feeding your dog, or hugging your mom. I think it important to connect the promo videos to things that everyday people routinely do because UniteGPS should be incorporated in our client's routines whether they are parents of students, superintendents, or transportation directors.

I began contacting some potential clients from the addressable market spreadsheet on Friday. It feels like most of the time you can get a sense of whether it's going to be possible to work with a client in the first 5 seconds of interacting with a potential client. It's interesting to see how some people react when asked the question "May I have email or phone number of the transportation director/operations manager", it really seems to be a 50/50 chance of either being treated pleasantly and receiving useful contact information or being treated by a robot-caller.

Working with my boss (who also happens to be my dad) has already been very insightful as to what it takes to start your own business. Last summer I worked for a large fortune 50 insurance company call Cigna where I learned many valuable skills, that greatly differ from the skills I have learned at UniteGPS in my first week. I learned that you are able to notice your output in a startup, whereas in a major corporation, you might never notice your contributions. Every dollar counts when you are trying to make a startup succeed. Work hours are much longer than the classic Mon-Fri 9-5. At UniteGPS there are no official hours and if a customer ever has a question you must respond as quickly and accurately as possible.

## Stop #2

June 10th to 14th

This week I really got into the swing of things at UniteGPS. At the end of last week, I set up a meeting with the Manager and Assistant Manager of Transit at the University of New Hampshire. The reason for the meeting was to learn more about the transportation industry and understand the needs of potential UniteGPS customers. During the meeting, I asked Beverly and Mark nine questions.

1. How did you get into this industry?
- 2. How has UNH Transit changed since you joined the team?**
- 3. What are your long-term goals for UNH Transit?**
- 4. How do you decide where to place new stops?**
5. Is UNH Transit traditional, moderate, or high-tech?
6. How are the vehicles fueled, maintained, and managed?
7. How do you decide the size of the bus to use?
8. Do all UNH system schools use NextBus?
9. How did you communicate with NextBus to create the perfect solution for UNH?

Their answers were:

1. Beverly- I started driving for UNH as a work-study when I was a student.  
Mark- I came into this role about a decade ago from the transportation industry.
- 2. Beverly- When I joined the team routes were made using pen and paper, radio, and phone calls. There were two routes on campus and we partnered with a company called Coast. Kari-Van split from Coast in 1998 to form Wildcat Transit.**
- 3. Beverly and Mark- our long-term goals for Wildcat Transit are to be as rider friendly as possible, stay current with where students are, and to increase ridership.**
- 4. Beverly- Stops have not changed for the most part since I have started. We have mostly added stops in the surrounding towns like Dover, Newmarket, Newington, and Portsmouth.**
5. Beverly- UNH Transit is moderate in terms of technology, mainly due to budget constraints.

6. Mark- The vehicles in our fleet are filled with either biodiesel or compressed natural gas (CNG). We are currently looking into using electric vehicles in the future.
7. Beverly- We mainly have buses between 32 and 39 ft and five access vans. The size of the bus is either 32 or 39 feet depending on ridership.
8. Beverly- UNH is the only School in the University of New Hampshire system that uses NextBus. Plymouth State and Keene State are not under the same contract as us.
9. We communicated with NextBus by filling out large spreadsheets about bus stop times, the number of the stop, and many other factors. We met with NextBus to have their solution tweaked to fit our needs.

I found the answers to 2, 3, and 4 to be the most insightful. I realized that there could be a business opportunity between UniteGPS and UNH. I sent Beverly and Mark the following letter:

“Dear Beverly and Mark,

During our meeting on June 10th, I asked you what your long-term goals are for Wildcat Transit. You indicated being “as rider friendly as possible, staying current as to where students are, and increasing ridership”, are some of your main long-term goals.

We may have a solution that could help you quickly identify “where students are” in a way that may help you increase ridership and become more rider friendly. UniteGPS has a route optimization engine able to pinpoint the “rooftop” location of each student using their local address. The engine uses the home location to create common bus stops based upon a maximum walking distance you designate. The end deliverable is a list of potential stops ranked by the total number of students able to access the stop within a short walk from their home. In other words, we can precisely answer the question “where are the students.” Your office will be able to assess each stop and make informed decisions about possibly serving new locations.

If you would be open to a discussion about this idea I would like to visit you again with the founder and CEO, Chris Bunnell.”

Meeting with Beverly and Mark opened my eyes to a new opportunity for UniteGPS, being stop optimization, as many customers with existing GPS partners have not updated their routes recently.

## **Stop #3**

June 17th to 21st

This week at UniteGPS I was able to create three LinkedIn ad campaigns for the creative that I have made so far. The three campaigns are for the Crosswalk K-12 solution, the Town Transit solution, and the third campaign is for creative that fits into both categories. For the specific campaigns, different demographics are targeted to ensure that the correct people see the ads. For example, for the K-12 Crosswalk campaign, only ads pertaining to the Crosswalk solution are shown to LinkedIn members with the titles of business operations managers, board member, transportation manager, transportation director, route manager, superintendents, and many other specific jobs. People with these titles *must* be in the Primary/Secondary Education industries.

Our main goal of the LinkedIn ad campaign is to increase leads. During the first couple days of the campaign, we were getting steady clicks on our ads, but no leads. By day four, we finally got our first lead and another lead shortly followed. This goes to show that LinkedIn ads are a longer-term approach than one may think and it's important to remain patient with these ads.

On Tuesday I went to MIT with my boss for a final presentation at MIT's I-Corps program. I-Corps is funded by the National Science Foundation and is a great opportunity to receive federal funds to pursue start-up ventures. The presentations were insightful as to how one should go about starting a company. A key takeaway from the class was as an entrepreneur, it is very valuable to interview as many people as possible about your solution to ensure that your product is a good fit for your market before wasting money.

## Stop #4

June 24th to 28th

Last week I set up a meeting with the Director of Operations at SNHU. This Monday my boss and I met with the Director of Operations to discuss SNHU transit operations. This was a great opportunity to pitch UniteGPS to SNHU to help coordinate their bus route schedules. I learned a few things about SNHU's operations from this meeting:

- SNHU's revenue was \$1.2 billion in 2018
- SNHU is a non-profit
- SNHU doesn't have a bus tracking application
- SNHU just built a parking garage in downtown Manchester, NH

Given all of these takeaways, it was surprising to me that SNHU seemed resistant to change. They did not seem like they wanted a solution to their transit tracking. I found it insightful to see how business interactions can sometimes not make sense. In business classes, I'm showed case studies of how business is done, how to negotiate, and other things of that nature. The truth of the matter is there is a lot more to it than following a few rules in a book. There is a real element of luck in this business.

On Friday we discontinued our LinkedIn campaign after spending our budgeted amount and gaining four leads.

## **Stop #5**

July 1st to 5th

The boss and I met with the Director and IT Director for Manchester Transit Authority (MTA) to see if UniteGPS' solution would be an appropriate fit for their operation. MTA is in charge of all of the Manchester busses, and Manchester School District's transportation. UniteGPS' largest customer is about 60% of the size of MTA.

Going into the meeting, we were expecting one of our selling points to be affordability. UniteGPS mainly deals with smaller customers, where a low fixed cost (equipment), and a higher variable cost (monthly data and other costs) are common. Among smaller customers, UniteGPS is one of the most affordable solutions. After meeting with Manchester Transit Authority, we learned that our pricing model has to be appealing to small, medium and large clients.

The meeting with MTA was insightful as it showed that a new pricing model must be created, ADA regulations become important with transits that have over 100 busses. I think that meetings like these make UniteGPS more competitive going forward, as we are able to change some of our weaknesses into strengths and make our solution a better fit for more transits.

## **Stop #6**

July 8th to 12th

Through MIT's ICorps grants, my boss and I were able to fly to Chicago and meet with several current and potential customers of UniteGPS. Our first meeting was in Milwaukee with Milwaukee Area Technical College, which is a current client of UniteGPS. They have been on a trial for around a year with UniteGPS and this meeting was made to move MATC from a trial basis to a paying customer. The meeting went well for the most part, but I have some takeaways from a sales point of view.

UniteGPS and US Cellular have a partnership with their cellular towers. The US Cellular salesmen are not very incentivized to sell UniteGPS units, so when they come to the meetings their first priority isn't always to make a sale. It is important that commission structures incentivize salesmen to make sales rather than to just check an attendance box. The entire feel of the meeting would be different if they had mattered as much to the US Cellular salespeople as they did to UniteGPS.

After our meeting in Milwaukee, we met with a potential client called Badger Bus in West Allis, WI. The questions that the director of Badger Bus asked were very well-thought-out and you could tell that he is familiar with products like ours. He even gave us some suggestions for additional features that we may want to include to satisfy our customers. Badger Bus is another example of a large client, but unlike Manchester Transit Authority we had already tweaked some of our weaknesses so that we would have a better shot with Badger Bus.

Our next stop was in Sheboygan, WI where we met with Shoreline Metro. Their facilities were very well constructed and organized. It was enlightening to find out that many members of the community in Sheboygan are using UniteGPS regularly. The people in charge of Shoreline Metro were very satisfied with their partnership with UniteGPS, and proud of their operation as a whole.

Next, we went to Hortonville Area School District where UniteGPS and Hortonville have had a partnership for about 2 years. For the past two years, Hortonville had only had 11 UniteGPS units, but after our meeting, they decided that it was time for more buses to have our service. The partnership with Hortonville has been mutually beneficial as UniteGPS has been able to perfect their product, while Hortonville was able to beta test brand new features.

## **Stop #7**

July 15th to 19th