



*John Schultz's Velocity Clubhouse:  
Business launch knocks it out of the park.*

**WHEN JOHN** Schultz's teenage son showed a talent for baseball, John discovered an unmet market need. A small indoor club in Stevens Point served young athletes, but nothing existed for ball players 14 or older like his son.

John began to envision a year-round training facility for baseball and softball with batting cages, training fields, and performance coaching. A serial entrepreneur and former investment broker turned consultant, John had the experience, resources, and flexibility to launch a side venture. He would finance the startup himself, hire sports trainers, and sell memberships.

### A DREAM TEAM CLUBHOUSE

In fall 2016 the father and son began looking to rent a warehouse space. He mentioned his idea to other parents and soon had more than a dozen interested. Recognizing that he wouldn't break even in his first year when labor would be his highest expense, John tapped the parents to form an advisory board. "Fifteen stepped up to the plate, volunteering their expertise in HR, marketing, IT, to put a cohesive business together," he said. One volunteer designed gear for the Velocity Clubhouse pro shop, and another, a former baseball player, recruited the trainers. Each parent also agreed to staff the front desk several hours a month.

As John built his advisory board, he reached out to parents from each of six different youth organizations in the area for help to research and reach his market. "They're all represented here, so we can hear what those organizations are looking for."

### AN ASSIST FROM THE SBDC

John wrote a business plan and sought advice from his board, but worried about his lack of familiarity with sports facilities. He knew center director Mary Wescott at the Small Business Development Center at UW-Stevens Point had done some work with similar businesses. John approached Mary to fine-tune his plan.

To get ideas of what to expect in John's start-up phase, they reviewed sports facilities in communities outside the Stevens Point area. "He did an excellent job of market assessment," Mary said. "That's why he brought in the HitTrax" baseball simulators that combine analytics and training with real-time statistics and key performance metrics. "He knew no one else in the region had it, and that would be a worthwhile investment because it would give him one significant market advantage."

John gained a sense of comfort as his planning with the SBDC progressed. "They prepared me and gave me the confidence to make that leap," he said. John opened the Velocity Clubhouse on January 9, 2017, offering lessons and clinics, performance training, batting cages, and rentals. The Velocity Clubhouse also hosts birthday parties and corporate events in the mezzanine Velocity Lounge. But what really sets the Velocity Club apart are the HitTrax batting simulators. John explained, "The technology can do mock games, like a giant PlayStation, projected on a fifteen-foot television screen."

At nine months post-launch, Velocity Clubhouse has more than 600 young customers. Revenues are equally split between batting cage rentals and performance instruction.

### ALREADY WORKING ON PHASE 2

John and his board are planning to add a nine-week "Academy-style" training course for serious young athletes. "We'll bring in high-quality coaches and trainers to develop skills at a reasonable cost, by doing it in small groups with a planned program," John said.

"I'm not surprised that at not even a year since launch, John's looking at Phase 2 and expanding the business concept," Mary observed. "That's how successful entrepreneurs look at things. He's a detail-oriented person. The best entrepreneurs are."

## VELOCITY CLUBHOUSE

Accomplishments with the SBDC of UW-Stevens Point:

- Legal advice
- Social media marketing
- SWOT analysis

*"They prepared me and gave me the confidence to make that leap, knowing I hadn't overlooked anything."*

– John Schultz