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YC-backed Playbook wants students to make plans online, hang out offline

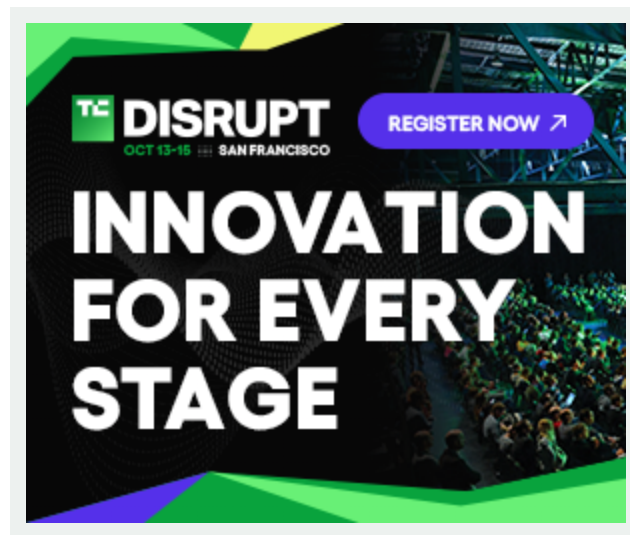
Jordan Crook

7:00 AM PST · March 9, 2018

Social planning apps have yet to take the world by storm. A handful of these apps tried and failed years ago, and even Swarm decided to [ditch that methodology](#) and focus on location logging.

But a new Y Combinator-backed company seems to be picking up traction. And shockingly enough, the winning ingredient seems to be location. Location. Location.





The startup is called [Playbook](#), and its main focus is to let you see what people around you are doing so you can join them offline. In fact, the company doesn't want you to spend much time in the app at all. But what differentiates Playbook most is that the app is focused on college campuses.

In fact, you might see some similarities between Playbook and another social app's runaway success. Just like Facebook, the Playbook founders (Luke Heine and Raphael Rouvinov) attended Harvard and Heine originally built the app (then just a simple spreadsheet) to see where his friends would be over the summer. The original premise back in 2014 was that students could travel cheaply during the summer if they knew where there friends would be and could crash on the couch a few nights.

Eventually, Heine built out a rough website and expanded the Summer Playbook service to thirteen other schools while still attending Harvard, during which time he met Rouvinov.

In 2016, Heine and Rouvinov rebuilt the site from scratch and started work on an app. Instead of focusing primarily on summer travel plans, the app focuses on what people are doing in their every day lives.

Once a user has signed up for the app, they can post their plans (or, a play) to the rest of the people on campus using the app. Plays can range from going for a run to a party to studying in the library or simply grabbing



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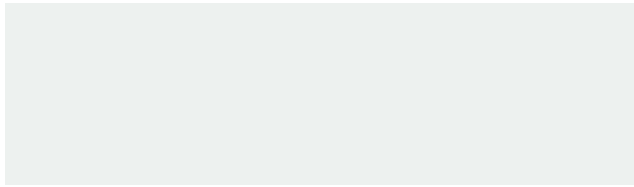
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“We saw an opportunity not around scheduling time in advance but spontaneously,” said Heine. “We reckoned that while the 5 friends we message might not be able to play basketball in 15 minutes, someone on campus we know would, if only they knew not only that I was around but also that I wanted to play basketball.”

You can share these plays with specific groups or the entire campus, or even to other schools nearby. The app is being piloted at Harvard (launched in February), and Playbook plans to launch at Princeton, Wellesley, Yale-NUS, and the University of Michigan.

Last summer, around 2400 people from 230 universities across 126 countries signed up for the desktop site, with around 1600 conversations started. Since launching the app on February 11 of this year, there are 244 users on the app with 30 percent checking back every day.



Playbook has raised a total of \$120K from Y Combinator.

Update 5/27/20: An earlier version of this article stated that Sean Sullivan is a cofounder of Playbook. He is the first employee at the company. The article has been updated for accuracy.

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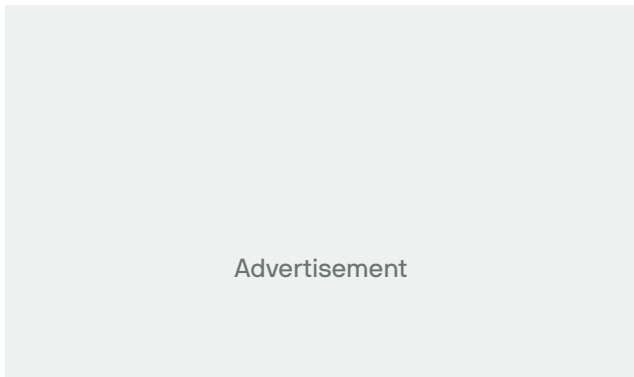


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Jordan Crook was the Deputy Editor of TechCrunch.

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