

# Brierwood Design Co-operative

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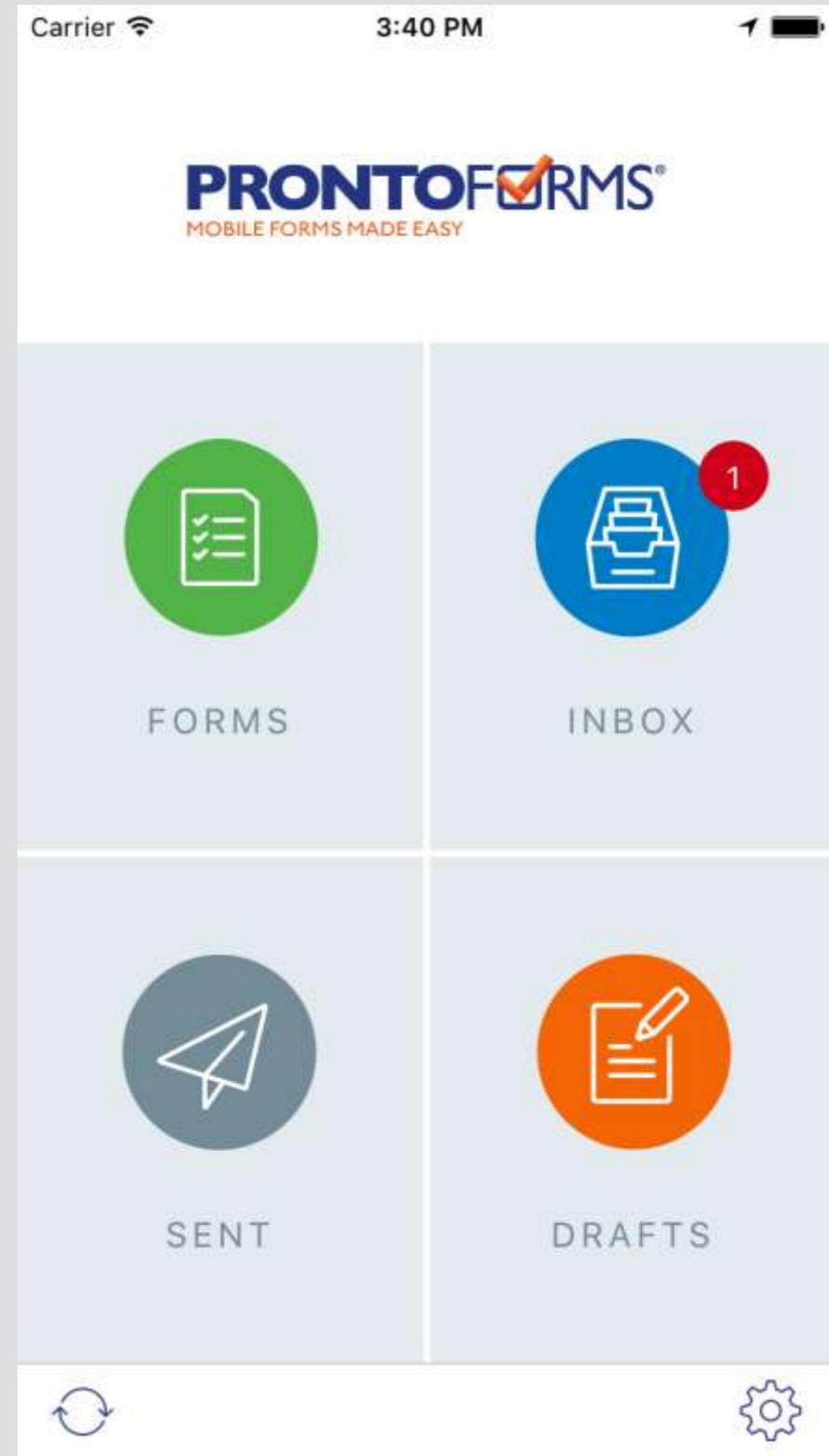


# About Us

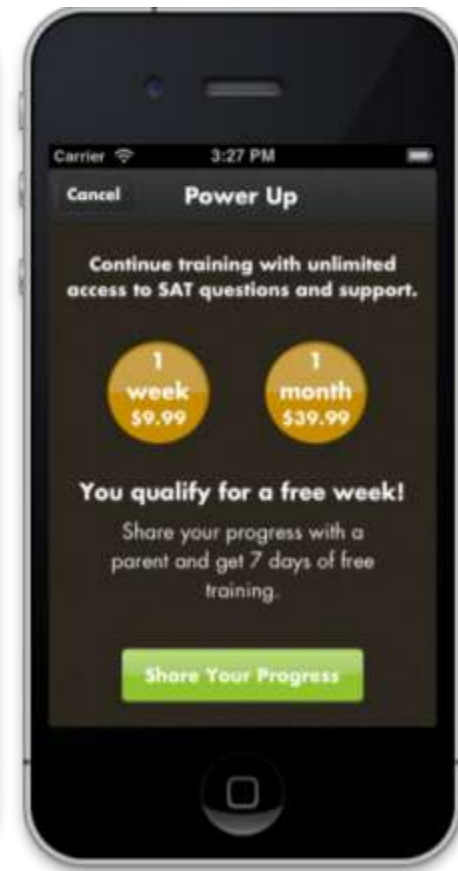
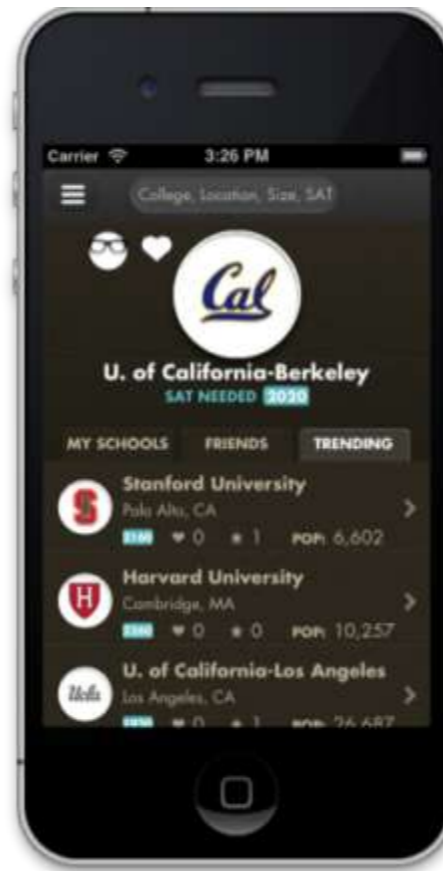
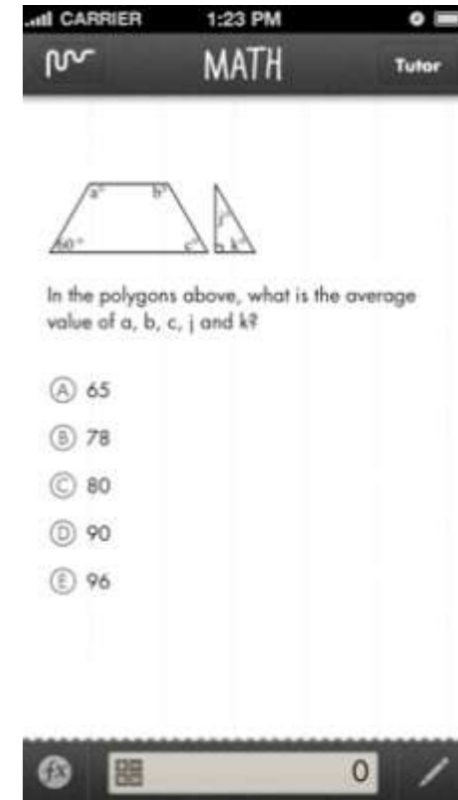
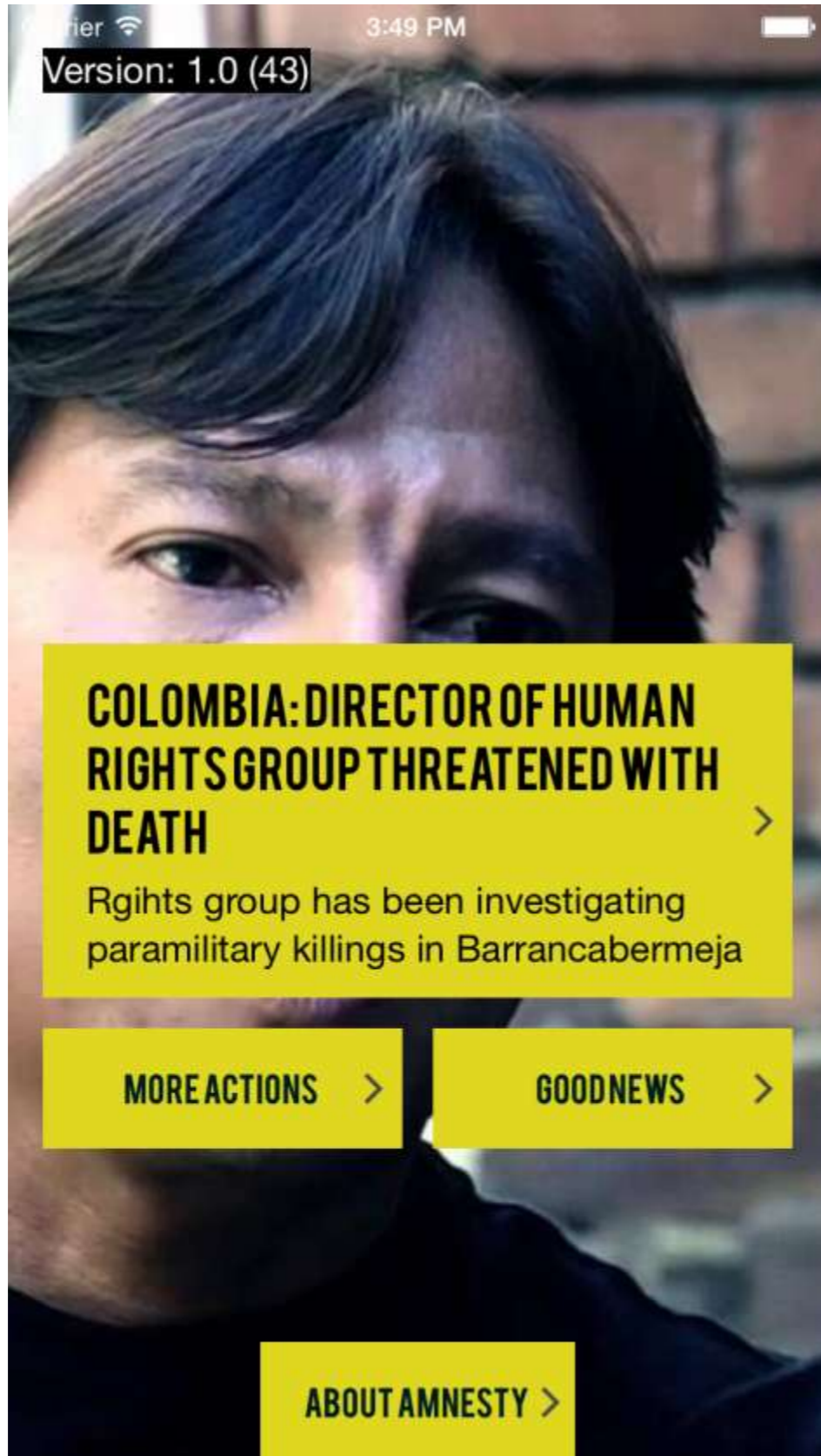
- formed as a worker co-operative in 2009
- located in Ottawa
- develop mobile apps for clients
- currently have 5 employees

# Our Work

- highly customized apps
- CUPE, Amnesty International, NDP
- Ottawa/San Francisco startups
- featured multiple times by Apple in the App Store







# In the Beginning (2008)

- teamed up with some friends from previous startup
- we need to start earning some revenue, now
- not sure how but we had a lot of skills
- gave ourselves a really generic name (Brierwood) and started doing small contracts

# In the Beginning (2008)

- how to structure our business?
- tired of the traditional tech startup model
  - chasing venture capital
  - founder/employee rift
  - some of the hardest workers see very little of the rewards



# Venture Capital

- want you to win big or fail fast
- your stable business will lose them money
- after you get the investment, you still have to succeed and earn all this money back

# Founders vs Employees

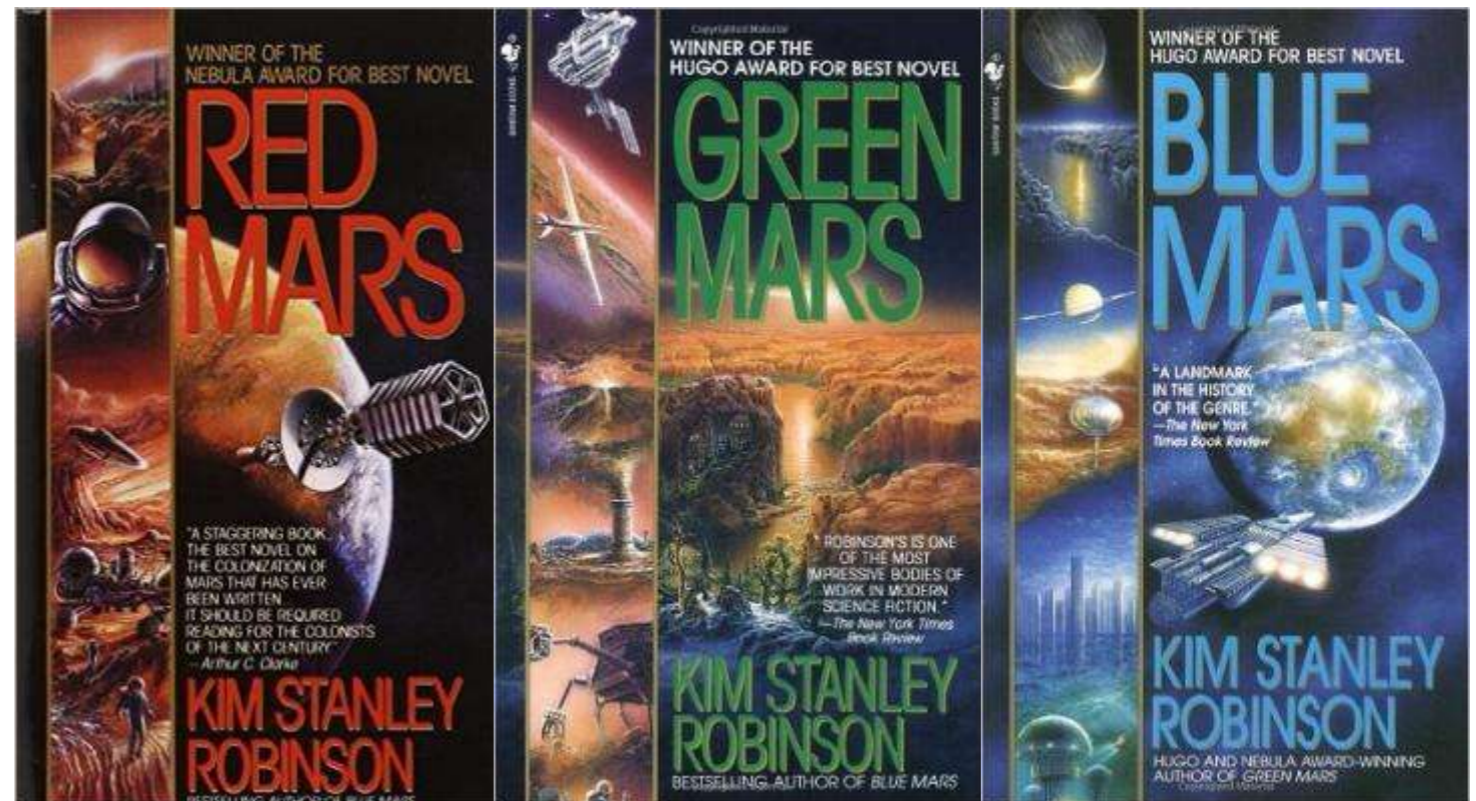
- once you have funding, there is a permanent split
  - those who were there first (stocks)
  - those who were there after (stock options)
- how do I share ownership of my business?
  - still need these people in order to succeed

# Rewards

- main employee reward is stock options
- stock options in tech startups almost never end up having any value
- years of hard work might result in success, but almost nothing for you

# Nobody Knows This

- first heard about worker co-ops from the Mars sci-fi trilogy by Kim Stanley Robinson
- seemed interesting in the books, turned out they exist in real life



# Becoming a Co-op (2009)

- idea: shared ownership as a recruiting tool
- wanted to avoid founder/employee split
- focus on organic growth
- advantage: only expense in software is wages

# Early Days

- decided to focus on this new iPhone app thing
- the co-op model really resonated with our early clients
- fairly small projects but key to our survival

# Slowly Growing

- moved out of my basement after a year or two
- rented a room in a house
- now we have the whole house
- added 5 people along the way
- thanks to our 3 ex-members



# Challenges (2015)

- growth
- decision making
- products vs services



# Growth

- finding the right people
  - when small, every member is an entrepreneur
- need something great to attract great people!
- cash and sales pipeline
- non-revenue generating employees as a small business

# Decision Making

- very little interest in traditional hierarchy
- respect everyone's opinion
- decisions need to be made efficiently
- experimenting with a more co-op friendly version of Holacracy

# Products

- still interested in building our own products
- apps are expensive and a very risky proposition
- need to find a way forward

# The End

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