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Building the Perfect Network

Trey Lauderdale (MSE '07) remembers his "A-ha" moment well. It came on March 6, 2008. As a student in the Master of Entrepreneurship program, like many others, he had awaited Apple's release of the iPhone Software Developer's Kit with great anticipation. Literally thousands of developers couldn't wait to start making simple games and amusing applications, but Lauderdale sat in his office, plotting something far greater—a communication revolution that would redefine the point-of-care in hospitals.

In his position as a respected industry professional, he had listened intently to his customers as they searched for better options for receiving phone calls and alarms. As an engineer (BSISE '04), he also knew there had to be a better solution, and he was excited about the possibilities that an innovative communication platform such as the iPhone could deliver.

Armed with just this belief, Lauderdale headed to the Apple World Wide Developer's Conference in San Francisco—without a ticket—and stood outside for five days, talking to anyone wearing a developer's badge, searching for someone who shared his vision. He eventually met his match in Benjamin King, software guru for CardioMems (a healthcare start-up in Atlanta) and founder of Demand EO.

Convinced that this was their chance of a lifetime, they left their jobs to begin work. But, they quickly realized that an innovative product would not be enough. Lauderdale turned to Oscar Callejas, a longtime friend and MSE classmate, and veteran of the hotel industry. His work in upscale boutique hotels made him the ideal candidate to develop the unique customer experience that the industry was lacking. All they needed now was someone to shepherd this talent and help bring their first product to market.

Enter Rob Campbell—he had been working with the Center of Entrepreneurship and Innovation as an executive board member since 2001 (he was selected as its 2005 Entrepreneur in Residence). A former executive for Apple and Microsoft, he holds the distinction of having worked directly for Steve Jobs and Bill Gates. As a "serial entrepreneur," his companies have created such products as the innovative Power Point and File Maker programs. It was a start-up's dream come true—he agreed to lead the company as CEO and, Voalté Inc. was formed.

"CEI has played an absolutely crucial role in the building of, Voalté" says Lauderdale, "from relationships to education."