

Business Coaching Report - Commercial Development of Aquaculture Services for Natural Lakes

1. Coaching context and commercialisation challenge

LAKEWISE & PLASTIC FREE is an educational digital solution developed by the PLASTIC FIGHTERS team and selected as a winning solution in the DigiEduHack 2025 challenge. The prototype combines environmental education, myth-based storytelling, gamification, community participation and impact analytics to encourage behavioural change related to plastic consumption and freshwater protection.

The current mock-up already contains a coherent set of user-facing features: interactive learning through the Nereid virtual avatar, a plastic life-cycle explorer, gamified sustainability missions, practical action toolkits, food and growing activities, geolocated community clean-up connections, and personal or classroom dashboards estimating plastic avoided and biodiversity benefits. The solution is primarily designed for students and young people, while teachers, families, local communities and researchers also play important roles.

The main challenge is now commercial rather than conceptual: how to move from an award-winning prototype with broad social and educational value toward a market-ready digital product with a clear paying customer, a focused offer, repeatable delivery and sustainable revenues.

2. Core commercial problem to solve

The prototype currently addresses several stakeholder groups, but these groups do not have the same purchasing power, procurement logic or reasons to adopt the solution. Students are the principal users and beneficiaries, but in most cases they are unlikely to be the direct paying customers. Families may use the app, but a direct-to-consumer model would require significant marketing expenditure and strong retention.

For the first commercial stage, the priority problem should therefore be framed around institutional buyers: schools and education networks need engaging, measurable and curriculum-compatible ways to teach sustainability and freshwater protection; municipalities and environmental organisations need tools that translate awareness campaigns into visible participation and measurable behavioural outcomes.

3. Recommended paying customer segments

Segment	Primary need	Role	Priority
Schools / school networks	Engaging sustainability education, teacher tools, measurable student participation	Primary paying customer	Very high
Municipalities / local authorities	Youth engagement, waste-prevention campaigns, local environmental education	Institutional buyer / pilot sponsor	High

Environmental NGOs / EU projects	Behaviour-change campaigns, educational outreach, impact evidence	Project customer / partner	High
Companies with ESG / CSR programmes	Visible community engagement and sponsored sustainability challenges	Sponsor / co-funder	Medium-high
Families / individual learners	Practical guidance and gamified habits	End user	Medium

Source: developed by the business coach

4. Value proposition for the first market

The recommended first market is schools and school networks, with municipalities and environmental organisations as secondary entry channels. This segment is attractive because the prototype already includes features naturally aligned with educational use: missions, storytelling, classroom progress tracking, discussion prompts, impact dashboards and activities that connect learning with home and community behaviour.

The value proposition should be expressed in terms of outcomes for the institution. Schools do not primarily buy avatars, badges or dashboards; they buy an easier way for teachers to deliver engaging sustainability education, motivate students to act, document participation and demonstrate learning or behavioural outcomes.

5. Minimum viable commercial product

The first market-ready version should be narrower than the current conceptual ecosystem. The objective is not to launch every possible feature, but to package the minimum set that creates enough value for an institution to pay for a pilot.

MVP component	Why it matters commercially	Recommendation
Nereid-guided learning modules	Creates differentiation and emotional engagement	Keep as signature feature
Gamified missions	Turns learning into repeated action	Keep; limit to a small curated mission library
Teacher dashboard	Creates institutional value and supports classroom management	Essential
Impact tracking	Provides evidence of participation and behaviour change	Essential, but use transparent estimates
Community action connector	Links digital learning to real-world freshwater action	Include selectively by location
Food / growing hub	Broadens lifestyle learning	Phase 2 unless directly requested by pilot schools

Source: developed by the business coach

The MVP should ideally be structured as a short programme that a teacher can adopt without extensive training, for example a four- to six-week 'Plastic-Free Freshwater Challenge'.

6. Differentiation strategy

LAKEWISE & PLASTIC FREE should avoid competing as a generic sustainability-learning application. Its differentiation comes from the combination of four elements already visible in the prototype: freshwater-centred environmental education, mythic storytelling through the Nereid character, gamified behaviour-change missions, and measurable community-oriented action.

The freshwater focus is especially important. Many sustainability tools address recycling or climate awareness broadly; this concept can own a more specific space at the intersection of plastic reduction, freshwater protection, cultural storytelling and action-based learning. The myth-based narrative will also support localisation in different regions.

7. Market-entry strategy

The recommended route to market is pilot-led institutional adoption. The team should not begin with large-scale consumer acquisition. Instead, it should use a small number of schools or municipalities to prove that the product is usable, engaging and capable of generating outcomes that buyers value.

A first pilot should involve one clearly defined institutional customer and a manageable number of classes. The pilot should test teacher onboarding, student activation, mission completion, frequency of use, perceived learning value, behavioural intentions, plastic-reduction actions and willingness of the institution to continue after the test period.

Stage	Main objective	Evidence to collect	Commercial output
1. Customer discovery	Validate institutional pain points	Interviews with teachers, school managers, municipalities	Refined problem statement
2. Prototype pilot	Test usability and engagement	Activation, completion, feedback	MVP improvements
3. Paid pilot	Test willingness to pay	Budget owner response and purchase decision	Initial reference customer
4. Annual package	Create recurring use	Renewal intent, teacher retention, engagement	Subscription / licence model

Source: developed by the business coach

8. Revenue model options

The most appropriate model is a hybrid institutional revenue architecture rather than dependence on grants alone. Grants and EU projects remain valuable for development, localisation and demonstration, but long-term sustainability requires recurring or repeatable commercial income.

Revenue model	Use case	Advantages	Coaching assessment
School annual licence	Access for teachers and students	Predictable recurring revenue	Recommended core model after pilot
Paid pilot package	Short programme for one school or municipality	Low-risk entry and clear deliverable	Best market-entry mechanism
Municipal / network licence	Multiple schools under one agreement	Scalability and lower acquisition cost	Strong second-stage model
Sponsored challenges	Company funds participation for schools	Fits CSR/ESG budgets and preserves free learner access	Useful complementary revenue
Project contracts / EU grants	Content development, localisation, research pilots	Funds innovation and impact studies	Useful but should not be sole model

Source: developed by the business coach

Pricing should be linked to institutional value and implementation scope rather than only the number of app users. Early packages can be priced per school, programme or cohort, including teacher onboarding, platform access, impact reporting and support. Once usage patterns are understood, the team could introduce tiered licences based on number of schools, classes, localisation needs and reporting requirements.

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