Jimena Pardo

Carrot

“ I saw an opportunity to launch Mexico's first car sharing service. ”

COUNTRY	Mexico
INDUSTRY	Consumer
EMPLOYEES	4
YEAR SELECTED	2012
PARTNER	Diego Solorzano
WEBSITE	www.carrot.mx

COMPANY SNAPSHOT

It is no secret that Mexico City is home to some of the world's worst traffic. However, Diego Solórzano and Jimena Pardo are setting out to change that by launching Mexico's first car sharing service: Carrot. For a monthly membership fee and hourly rates that include rental, gas, and insurance, members of Carrot can borrow a fuel-efficient car at any time from multiple locations around the city. Carrot believes its service will displace 10-20 individual cars from Mexico City's congested roads as users realize that they do not need to purchase a car, but can conveniently borrow one instead. The potential for future growth throughout Mexico is significant: by 2020, it is expected that 10% of all drivers worldwide will use car sharing services. After a successful pilot program in spring 2012, Carrot officially launched that June with a fleet of 18 cars in 16 locations in Mexico City. The company is poised to transform transportation in Mexico, which will not only translate to significant growth for the company, but will also have external benefits for the environment and the residents of the cities in which Carrot operates.

As Mexico City natives, both Diego and Jimena spent hours in traffic—particularly on the way to and from school. Diego studied Actuarial Sciences at the Mexico Autonomous Institute of Technology (ITAM), graduating in 2010. Jimena studied Industrial Engineering at the Universidad Iberoamericana, graduating in 2008. Although entrepreneurial in college (Diego acquired and restructured a small travel agency), both Diego and Jimena sought work experience with established companies post-graduation. Diego joined LaSalle Investment Management, a Mexican private equity fund, while Jimena worked in HP's B2C sales and marketing team and later worked in business development for a division of Televisa's mobile business.

In 2011, while at LaSalle, Diego enrolled in the Entrepreneur Diploma, a postgraduate certificate program offered by ITAM that required all students to create a startup business plan. During the program, he travelled to Boston to visit his cousin who, like many young people in American cities, is a member of the car sharing service Zipcar. Diego was impressed by the convenience afforded by Zipcar's offering and decided to write his business plan on a car sharing service for Mexico. His plan caught the attention of professors Fernando Lelo (an Endeavor mentor) and Federico Antoni, both founders of the Venture Institute, a seed capital fund, who encouraged Diego to turn his business plan into a reality. In February 2012, Diego quit his job at LaSalle and enrolled in the Venture Institute's Feasibility Map Program. Fernando and Federico introduced Diego to Jimena, who joined the team as Director of Sales soon thereafter. With seed capital from the Venture Institute along with some of Diego and Jimena's personal savings, Carrot launched its "Beta" pilot program. Encouraged by better-than-expected results, Carrot officially launched on June 11, 2012 with the help of Mexico City's Mayor and the Secretary of the Environment. Within three days, nearly 500 people had registered, and demand was so high Carrot's website temporarily crashed.

Carrot provides clients with an affordable, convenient alternative to car ownership and mitigates traffic and pollution problems by offering shared access to automobiles. Any licensed driver above 18 with two years of driving experience can sign up for Carrot online. The service is targeted at three demographics: those who don't own cars but occasionally need one; those who have one car and occasionally need a second one; and business clients. Clients pay monthly membership fees and an hourly fee for use of the car, which includes gasoline and insurance. Within days of registering, Carrot drivers receive a membership card that gives them access to Carrot cars, which they can reserve online at any time. As the first service of its kind in Mexico, Carrot has an agreement with the Mexico City government for special parking permits, access to electric cars, required infrastructure, and free promotion of car sharing.