A startup with a big idea, but limited budget needs development help, and fast!

A startup with a unique idea for crowdfunding political donations was referred to Agents of Value. The founder had already started working together with another web development agency, but came to a standstill over issues related to intellectual property ownership, and project budget.

An initial period of review and collaboration was started with an Agents of Value project manager. During that time, the key functionalities of the application were reviewed and documented. Some mockups of the application were already created by the previous web development agency. These were used and reviewed as part of the requirements gathering process.

During the initial review, it was also discovered that there was a tight deadline for the project. Primary elections would start in the beginning of March. In order to allow ample time for candidates to raise funds through the system, a launch date of February 1st was selected. This allowed for a 2 month development period for the core system functionality. An additional release with 'nice to have' features would follow 1 month later.

Technical Challenge - Marketplace Payments
Not only was the deadline for the project short, but it also included several technical challenges. The system was designed to be a marketplace style application. For every donation made to a candidate, a small 3% fee would be collected by the startup. The remaining amount should be deposited into the bank account of the candidate.

BalacedPayments, a merchant account service with strong support for marketplace style applications, was selected to be used for this startup. An Agents of Value project manager then documented all possible payment scenarios that could occur within the system. These scenarios included functions such as candidate bank verification, secure handling of customer credit cards, and edge cases like refund requests.

Technical Challenge - Local Candidate Selection
Another important technical challenge, was to create a system where a visitor could easily identify who their local candidates were. Initially, it was determined that an API could be used to collect this data on demand. However, after further investigation, it was discovered that the API performance would be very slow. Even worse, the data returned was inconsistent and often inaccurate.

Brainstorming together with the client, an Agents of Value project manager was able to devise a system and technology that would perform search results against a database of candidates. This search system was able to geocode an input address, and search across several different district types to return an accurate list of candidates.

The Launch
In the end, the project was launched within a week of the proposed launch date. The entire system was developed in a period of 8 weeks. Candidates started signing up, and the startup was able to gain traction in a key period of the election cycle.