Most entrepreneurs seeking help from college students offer minimum wage internships or college credit. Griff Frost, CEO of SakéOne, a saké producer in Forest Grove, Oregon, provided an entirely different level of "extra credit." Stock options. As a class project, students from the University of Portland's Entrepreneurial Marketing course were asked to come up with innovative marketing ideas for SakéOne. The reward for the winning student teams was 10,000 stock option shares in the company.

Class instructor Rob Peterson, who is not a SakéOne shareholder, first brought the idea to Frost. The stock option seemed like a good trade for the opportunity to get into the minds of SakéOne's target market. "The students are the same age as the prospective customers," says Frost. "They teach us what our market wants. Also, they bring our company a whole new level of creativity." Inspired by the stock option incentive, the students pitched ideas ranging from an inventive three-bottle saké carrying pack to a line of bathing accessories called Saké Scents. Says Frost: "[Saké Scents] opened my mind to saké's potential within the cosmetic industry. Then, bam! We received a major contract for our saké from a cosmetic company in France." Talk about an investment.

-Nicole L. Torres