

Case Studies in Community Engaged Business Education

Nelson Amaya Collision Center

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Abstract

Students in a Small Business Management class created a business plan for a community partner in the automotive collision repair industry.

1. Introduction

Nelson Amaya, a local business owner, founded his business, Nelson Amaya Collision Center, in Huntsville, Texas, and he is the community partner for this Academic Community Engagement (ACE) project. With decades of experience in the auto body industry dating back to the 1990s, Mr. Amaya has successfully grown a modest operation into a multi-million-dollar corporation alongside his brother. The automotive collision repair industry, in which Amaya specializes, focuses on restoring the damaged parts and bodies of vehicles that have been in accidents or affected by adverse weather and other incidents. A significant aspect of this work involves collaboration with insurance providers to ensure that repairs are completed through his customers' insurance.

Rooted in his core belief to help and give back to his community, Amaya focuses on providing quality repairs while exceeding customers' expectations and cultivating long-term relationships. The center's commitment to customer care is especially important given its proximity to a college campus, Sam Houston State University, where many customers are students who may be unfamiliar with vehicle maintenance and repair. To this end, Amaya takes pride in explaining vehicle issues and necessary repairs in detail, empowering

customers to make informed decisions. Mr. Amaya also prides himself on his belief that establishing an honest relationship goes a long way, something that he considers central to his business philosophy, which is reflected in their lifetime warranty on paint jobs and their commitment to redoing any previous work free of charge if necessary.

2. The Business Problem

As part of the mutual understanding between our community partner and Professor Mchiri and his students, Mr. Amaya was invited at the beginning of the semester to briefly talk about his business and respond to students' questions. After the brief introduction and meetings with the students, Mr. Amaya highlighted the main problems that his business is facing. Among the issues that Mr. Amaya needed help with the most revolved around marketing strategies that best attract customers and maintain trust and consistency in service and care.

3. The Class

The class is Small Business Management. The course provides theory, application, case studies, and personal narratives for the entrepreneurial-minded student to learn critical thinking in starting, building, and growing a small business. In addition,

students are given the opportunity to learn how to make critical decisions that should reduce risk in their future entrepreneurial efforts. This course is a designated Academic Engagement Course (ACE) that uses business knowledge and skills from the classroom to make a difference in the hometown of Sam Houston State University with a real community partner.

Designated as an ACE course, this program enables students not only to acquire knowledge and skills but also to actively apply them by collaborating with a local business in Huntsville, TX. By engaging with real-world challenges, students enhance their ability to apply course content in practical contexts. Simultaneously, the course offers local business community members an opportunity to share their expertise with students, creating a valuable exchange of innovative ideas. This collaborative approach provides students with a unique experience to build connections with local business leaders and positively impact their community through meaningful contributions.

The course has the following learning objectives:

1. Identify the key factors affecting small businesses, including internal and external environments.
2. Demonstrate the ability to engage in constructive criticism and creative solutions to small business challenges, using analytical and problem-solving skills.
3. Interpret, analyze, recommend, and defend solutions to major business issues with reliable supporting evidence, in practicing writing a business plan.
4. Develop and enhance collaborative teamwork skills to actively contribute to group projects with other students.
5. Demonstrate effective written, and oral communication skills crucial for success in business through written assignments, presentations, and small class discussions.

4. Integration into the course curriculum

The students were organized into four groups, with each group designating specific roles and responsibilities to facilitate both individual and collaborative efforts on the semester-long project. Within each group, members elected a leader responsible for serving as the primary point of contact with the community partner, thus reducing

the frequency of meetings outside of class and the redundancy of information exchanges. Furthermore, each group conducted periodic meetings with the community partner, enhancing communication efficiency. This structured approach allowed both students and the business owner considerable time saving and helped achieve project objectives more effectively.

5. Task

For this project, students were asked to create a business plan for our community partner's small business. Students were tasked to identify the main 'pain points' as elaborated by our community partner on his first visit to the class.

All groups conducted a SWOT analysis of the business. Since all students were working with the same partner, each group was encouraged to act as business consultants competing for the best winning consultation assignment award. Thus, while each of the groups was provided with the same instructions, their approach to analyzing, interpreting, and gathering evidence varied.

Some groups focused on increasing and improving marketing efforts for the small business. For example, one group addressed and recommended brand improvement, due to a lack of consistency in messaging. Another group also addressed the need for more community engagement through the hosting of trade workshops; strengthening online presence; and expanding service offerings. recommended that the business create Facebook ads, implement a Google ad preference to move the client's business to the top when car collision center is looked up, add more posts to his social media platforms, bring more focus to the client's strengths, customer loyalty should be shown on the website by adding in some reviews, fixing signage outside, and adding the Selective Service with State Farm to the website.

A third group addressed issues related to the incorporation of new technology and recommended the following including investing in equipment and training with Advance Driver Assistance System (ADAS) calibration and repair, electric vehicle repair, advanced paint matching, mobile repairs services, and digital customer engagement.

A fourth group focused on the competitive strategies highlighting the need for adopting a differentiation strategy by providing high-quality

repairs and exceptional customer service. Another focus was the lack of businesses within the Walker County collision center market that utilize social media, recommending the use of targeted advertising on social media can help reach specific demographics or geographic areas. Similarly, the issue of establishing a strong presence in the local community can attract customers who value convenience and quality service, while building relationships with other automotive businesses can create valuable referral networks.

Our community partner was pleased that each group had different questions and tackled different problems.

6. Deliverable

At the end of the semester, each of the four groups submitted their complete business plan copies to the instructor as well as to the community partner. Our community partner, as well as a representative from the ACE office, were invited to attend the presentation pitch (consultation briefs). Following each presentation, our community partner, Mr. Amaya, asked further questions to the students when necessary and commended students' (i.e., business consultants) efforts in identifying areas for improvement and providing actionable recommendations for his business.

Appendix

A1. Client Logo



A2. Project Guidelines for Students

The report should be uploaded to Blackboard as a word document and include the components similar to those discussed in Chapter 6 (see Exhibit 6.4) of your textbook. More specifically, you should have a title page or cover page and then your table of contents. You will next have separate sections for each of the following:

- I. Executive Summary – this should clearly and concisely provide the reader an overview summary of the business consisting of 1-2 single spaced pages. [0 – 8 pts.]
- II. This next section is titled “The Motivation/Reason”. Others may call it “The Problem/Pain”. Either way, this section may consist of one or two single spaced paragraphs stating the business owner’s motivation behind starting their business venture. Remember, most plans will be for imitators BUT here you set out their niche or differentiation of what they are bringing to the market that is needed. [0 – 8 pts.]
- III. This section will be Product and/or Service Description and may consist of one or two pages of narrative and a bit more if you provide pictures or graphical representations of the business product (or service). [0 – 8 pts.]
- IV. This Market section may consist of one or two pages or more if needed, clearly demonstrating and discussing your knowledge of the current market space with potential customers within your target demographic. And as part of the market discussion, the competitors must be clearly identified and addressed to demonstrate your understanding of the current and future competition. [0 – 8 pts.]
- V. In light of Sections IV you now need to provide your business model in words and/or pictures that connects you to your target market demographic and differentiates you from the competition. The reader must be able to fully understand your complete business, including location, hours of operation, etc. This Business Model section also is where you will include what type of entity you (or the business owner) are, LLC, Sub S, etc. and WHY selected along with the ownership structure of who owns what percentage. [0 – 8 pts.]
- VI. This Marketing section cannot simply provide a paragraph about generic ad campaigns but rather you will need to provide specific and detailed guidance and related discussion for your marketing plans in detail and expectations regarding how they will help you to connect to target market and why you think will work and any contingency marketing plans if not working. Please do not simply say we will use social media but be very specific about your website, Twitter or Facebook, etc. And keep in mind your competition may be doing the same thing so why are you going to be more successful. [0 – 8 pts.]
- VII. The Operations section should be your business model in action discussion/ description [0 – 8 pts.]
- VIII. The Management Team is very important for small business so perhaps provide some brief bios for each key member and what s/he will bring to the business to answer WHY this is the best team. Again, this may take several single-spaced pages so whatever is necessary to convey and you can include pics if you feel necessary. [0 – 8 pts.]
- IX. IX. This Financial Summary section will simply be a few pages discussing your estimated cash flows. You should have a subsection for the estimated startup costs, the estimated operating expense details, estimated revenues, and where you will get the capital. In other words, be

specific discussing each section and justify each as to why. Please do not simply say you estimate a 5% growth in revenues or expenses ... based upon what? Be realistic as to what it will take to open the doors and keep the business open for at least a few years and be very conservative on your revenues. Bankers and investors appreciate realistic numbers not overly optimistic projections. And please be sure to address the labor costs, especially if the owners are the employees. This should all be in light of Business Model section VI and referencing the detailed Financial Projections appendix.

- Pro forma Profit & Loss statements [0 – 4 pts.]
- Pro forma Balance Sheets [0 – 4 pts.]
- Projected Cashflows [0 – 4 pts.]

- X. This Exit Strategy may be one or two pages but needs to provide some detail regarding the timing of an exit strategy and also this is the section where you would include any contingency plans. [0 – 8 pts.]
- XI. This Conclusion/Next Steps section is where you now have a demonstrated business and your next anticipated early growth steps commensurate with the business plan. [0 – 8 pts.]
- XII. The Appendices for this project can simply be your financials to include your detailed startup cost estimate; your projected 36-month cash flows (cash budget); your estimated (Pro forma) Income Statements and Balance Sheets; and estimated debt/equity sources detail. Please try to provide as much in-depth and realistic details that truly captures and includes everything your business model would incur. [0 – 8 pts.]

Again, there is no set page limit or length but I would expect that sufficient and meaningful content will be included to provide the necessary meaningful depth for a realistic report.

Note: These guidelines are written in such a way that you are acting as the owner(s) of the business or in the presence and guidance from the business owner(s).

GRADING

For written report sections:

- 0 points if missing
- 2 points if minimal coverage and content
- 4 points if adequately discussed and content included
- 6 points if more complete content and coverage provided
- 8 points if “over the top” both in depth of discussion and content covered

Financial statements:

- 0 points if not included
- 2 point if included but minimal and/or with error(s)
- 4 points if included and complete without errors