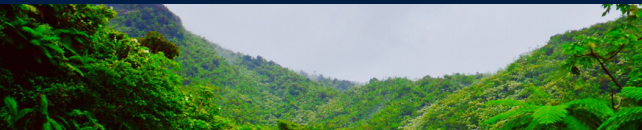


AMAZON ECOLOGY STUDENT PROJECTS

CASE STUDY



Background

The Center for Amazon Community Ecology (CACE) was founded and registered as a non-profit corporation in Pennsylvania by Dr. Campbell Plowden in February 2006. Currently, Dr. Plowden also serves as the President and Treasurer of the board of directors, whereas Kieran Holland serves as the Vice-President. In addition, the Center for Amazon Community Ecology is also supported by an advisory board, staff members, Peru affiliate organizations, community partners, NGO partners, and volunteers.

CACE's mission is to promote the conservation and sustainable development of communities (both human and biological) in the Amazon region through research, community support, education, and the marketing of handicrafts such as ornaments, jewelry, accessories, and more. CACE brought a number of challenges to MGMT365 Social Entrepreneurship students who worked to provide recommendations and create effective deliverables to help advance CACE's social mission and profitable growth.

MGMT 365 Consulting Projects

Twenty-eight Penn State students in the MGMT 365: Social Entrepreneurship class, taught by Erik Foley, CBoS Director and an instructor in Management and Organization, worked on seven consulting projects for CACE:

1. Financial Modeling
2. Impact Measurement and Reporting
3. Product Marketing
 - a. Ornaments and Woven Birds
 - b. Baskets
 - c. Guitar Straps
4. Strategic Partnerships
5. Wholesale Client Outreach

The Financial Modeling team focused on creating a 5-year financial model for CACE detailing the necessary revenues and major costs needed to achieve financial and social impact targets. The Impact Measurement and Reporting team's goal was to create a framework and methodology for data collection, analysis, and reporting that would tell CACE's story and its impact on people, communities, and the Amazon. Moreover, the Product Marketing teams focused their attention on developing a plan to market specific types of crafts through the organization's communication and social media channels. The Strategic Partnership team's role was to identify potential business partners and diverse types of partnerships who could support CACE. Lastly, the Wholesale Client Outreach team focused on identifying the specific needs of customers, buying habits, expenditures, and channels for effectively selling CACE's handicrafts to museum shops and, as a result, establishing a relationship with these and increasing sales of CACE's handicrafts.



FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Build a model to organize financial information
2. Develop an impact page on Amazon Ecology website and annual impact report to be shared with key stakeholders
3. Strengthening social media marketing to increase sales in key product categories
4. Build a pitch deck to approach strategic partners
5. Create an online wholesale catalog and discover different outreach methods for AE to reach its clients

1. Build a model to organize financial information

The Financial Modeling team created a detailed spreadsheet that illustrates the finances of the organization. Amazon Ecology should build upon this model to project many different scenarios in the upcoming years. The Financial Modeling team recommends Amazon Ecology a 20/80 split for sales and donations/grants, which is different from the past use of 40/60. For this to happen, Amazon Ecology must upload a PDF version of an impact report to their website. This would help sell the stories of the artisans and make their impact more relatable and tangible, which would increase sales and donations. Acquiring larger grants would be more impactful than sales since these have been low during the pandemic.

This team also recommends cleaning up expense categories into more defined categories and cutting unnecessary costs. Amazon Ecology should sell products by product price and unit volume. Similarly, the organization should determine the amount of project funds required annually since this information is crucial in estimating expenses and obtaining grants/donations. Amazon Ecology could also increase the prices of their product offerings by 10% to bust profit margins by 4%.

2. Develop an annual impact report on Amazon Ecology website and pitch deck to be shared with key stakeholders

The Impact and Measurement team found out that it is crucial for organizations such as Amazon Ecology to have an Impact Report available to the public. Having such a report clearly explains the impact that Amazon Ecology has on the Amazon and its surrounding communities. This team identified the number of protected forest communities, hectares of saved rainforest, and impact of the handicraft market as a result of Amazon Ecology's efforts to help them measure the impact of this organization. They have established a framework to accurately measure environmental, economic, societal, and community impact.

Amazon Ecology could use measurable statistics that prove the positive impact Amazon communities have as a direct result of the organization. These statistics should be available to the public on their website. The team also recommends Amazon Ecology to create an "Impact tab" on their website to show transparency and their work to their audience. The goal is to make the website more attractive by making it more noticeable and appealing to potential customers. Lastly, this team also included a pitch deck to use with potential clients; at the end of the deck there will be an appendix that aims to attract donations from organizations and investors.

3. Strengthen social media marketing in order to increase sales in key product categories

Amazon Ecology could take advantage of social media in order to expand awareness of their organization and products. For example, Amazon Ecology should reach out to influencers that would be interested in promoting their products or a specific product category. For guitar straps, the students in MGMT 365 discovered 3 different influencers that would help promote these straps and that have done charitable work in the past. Although they are not huge influencers, they have an active and loyal fanbase. These influencers are: henryhonkonen, remi_harris, and the_planet_of_bo. In addition to this, through research, one of the Product Marketing teams found out that it would be beneficial for Amazon Ecology to introduce a new product line of birds and promote them through social media. Three birds that this team recommends adding to the product catalog are Baltimore Oriole, Atlantic Puffin, and Kirtland's Warbler, which are the most popular birds in the bird watching community in the U.S.

4. Build a pitch deck to approach strategic partners

The strategic partnership team produced the recommendation for Amazon Ecology to emphasize the social issues that are being solved within the organization that align with potential partners when pitching to such partners. For example, Amazon Ecology could partner with Welljourn, a fair-trade store that is devoted to empowering and supporting artisans. In addition, Welljourn is an environmental and sustainable store. Welljourn would benefit from this partnership as it would have an opportunity to expand its impact into the Peruvian Amazon; in turn, Amazon Ecology would benefit as it would increase sales and have a greater impact on Amazon Communities.



Some other organizations that this team selected as potential partners include Love, Nelly – a small bakery owned by a latinx women; Indigenous – a fair trade clothing company; Sustainbar – a shampoo and soap company owned by women; Equal Exchange – a coffee shop; and The Honey Pot Company – a company that offers women’s hygiene products that are sustainably sourced. Amazon Ecology could reach potential partnerships using the mock pitch decks that this team has created for Welljourn and Love, Nelly and modifying this when tailoring different potential partners.

5. Create an online wholesale catalog and discover different outreach methods for AE to reach its clients

Amazon Ecology can create a wholesale catalog using the online service Yudu, which would allow them to make customizable catalogs for each client. Yudu offers some interesting features like advanced search, product videos, and analytics which would allow Amazon Ecology to give more exposure to their products and keep track of the engagement from potential customers that each product is receiving. In addition, the students in MGMT 365 discovered a non-profit and culture organization called Taller Puertorriqueño in Philadelphia in which Amazon Ecology could sell their products. The team also researched and discovered some other galleries, shops, organizations that could potentially sell Amazon Ecology’s products; some of these include Eyes Gallery, Indigo Arts Gallery, and the Penn Museum. Lastly, Amazon Ecology could explore the idea of selling their product in online retailer stores such as Etsy.

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