

“The Break”

A Bachelor of Integrated Studies
Creative Capstone Project

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December 8, 2015

The Break

Millions wake up every morning to it, and numerous claim they cannot start their day without it. A large percentage will wait in line and pay \$3.95 to buy it while relishing the rich aroma of vanilla bean and toasted bagels. Coffee houses, along with the sought after cup of Joe, is a staple of American life. Throughout the ages, countless thoughts, discussions, and epiphanies have accompanied an individual when enjoying a cup of coffee. Even in Alexander Pope's poem, *The Rape of the Lock: Canto 3*, he remarks about the powerfulness and influence of coffee. "For lo! The board with cups and spoons is crowned. The berries crackle, and the mill turns round... At once they gratify their scent and taste and frequent cups prolong the rich repast... Coffee; which makes the politician wise and see through all things with his half-shut eyes." (1) It can be argued that this ageless beverage has impacted each communications, professional sales, and even arts in different ways. In understanding this, these certain aspects and strategies from each area of study can be used in conceptualizing a business plan for opening up a small coffee shop that adds variety, interest, and impact that results in a platform that stands out from the crowd. A business plan modeled around these ideals and one I lean towards and propose is that of *The Break*.

The Break coffee bar/bistro has been a conceptual idea of mine for over a decade, but has solely resided in my brain and not actually brought to life by pen and paper, until now. Eighteen years of life experience has ultimately brought me to this apex of having a better understanding of business and the aspects that help drive successful businesses. Within these years, I have been associated with numerous new and established business

platforms and have been able to see what ideas and practices work well for each business along with those that do not. I have also noticed, that the successful ones share some common practices such as well thought out marketing plans and employee retention programs. Although each business has been different in their own cultural ways, there are a few important ideals that I have found that always remain the same within each business structure or model that helps propel and develop that business into a sustainable position. Even though unfortunate news is frequently heard about many small businesses closing or moving, not all is bad. In fact, thousands of small businesses open up their doors every year, and a good percentage of those companies have learned what it really takes to survive the early startup years and become successful establishments. As different ideas and concepts surface among business principles, so do the possibilities of strengthening the business model, hence this idea for the seamless integration of communication, professional sales, and arts along with key ideas in each emphasis to draw upon in building The Break business plan.

In examining communication aspects and how they would contribute to the business plan of The Break, I learned that there really are countless topics that communication could encompass. Communication can be seen throughout every facet in business. It is imperative to have good, clear, and informative communication because without it, quite frankly, businesses would fail. For example, if a company were in business to sell a certain product or service, and was not able to communicate effectively with the public in order to gain its trust, it will be extremely difficult for that business to thrive, as sales would be low due to the lack of the public's trust. To add to this, the manner in which the image and authentic voice of the business communicates to the

masses is indeed a very important topic to address, along with the internal communication patterns that are applied within a business model. There are however, a couple of communication topics that play a crucial part, but are equally important to The Break business plan. They are core values and marketing strategy.

In forming The Break's core values, I asked: What does The Break stand for? What values should my employees embody? How will The Break's products contribute to the world? Quality, community, passion and integrity, all came to the front in pinpointing the answers for The Break. Answering these questions briefly, but meaningfully, was challenging, but worth pursuing, especially while fashioning The Break's "Why Statement" or mission/vision statement. Mike Moser states in his book, *United We Brand*, "Without a clear set of core values, the very foundation of your brand is in jeopardy, and so is your ability to communicate your brand believability to anyone inside or outside your company. In addition, if you go too long without stating your core brand values in black and white, it's too easy to be who you are not, and that is no way to create a brand."⁽²⁾ The principle of core values will help anchor every aspect of The Break in a set of commonly held beliefs and commitments. These values along with the "Why Statement," are what are expected to become the deeply ingrained backbone and fabric that will help guide The Break's employee behavior and company decisions and actions. With the core values established, a vision statement or "Why Statement" will assist in inspiring loyalty, hard work, and innovation at The Break. Not too long ago, I viewed a Ted-talk and I remember the speaker, Simon Senik, mentioning the idea that people don't buy what you do, but rather why you do it. In Simon's book, *Start With Why*, he states "The WHY provides the context for everything else. As you will see over

and over in all cases and examples in this book, whether in leadership, decision-making, or communication, starting with WHY has a profound and long lasting impact on the result. Starting with WHY is what inspires people to act.”(3)

For The Break, motivating people of the island and visitors alike to visit and purchase The Break’s offerings is paramount. In order to achieve these results, The Break will start with taking into account the importance of delivering a favorable experience to its customers. Due to the fact that most individuals are no longer making decisions on where they would like to go or what they want to buy solely on price, amount, or size, a well-developed marketing plan that will include social/digital media, print ads, along with radio advertisements and local events, will hold the customer experience found at The Break on a pedestal as a key focus for just this reason. According to André Richelieu and Bernard Korai, in their article, *The consumption experience of Tim Hortons’ coffee fans*, “The concept of experience is a deciding and unavoidable notion in the mind for the postmodern consumer... Studies support the idea that customer satisfaction, through a pleasant consumer experience, positively impacts the customer’s judgment.” (4) Within the same article, Pine and Gilmore reported that, “...when a person buys a service, he purchases a set of intangible activities carried out on his behalf. But when he buys an experience, he pays to spend time enjoying a series of memorable events that a company stages to engage him in a personal way.” (5) (qtd. in Richelieu and Korai 193.) From the exceptional customer service, to the expressive artwork and atmosphere The Break will provide, The Break aims to do just that. Not only will providing an extraordinary experience for the customers increase the desire for people to visit, and in turn increase sales, but it will distinguish The Break as a place that is

uniquely desirable and will differentiate itself from the many corporate institutions out there today. As the marketing strategy for The Break represents the road map to achieving greater results, such as sales growth, brand recognition, higher market penetration, etc., The Break will position itself as not just another coffee house, but a sanctuary where customers can expect an authentic and enjoyable experience.

In terms of building the experience for the customer and inspiring The Break employees to act, I refer back to the “Why Statement” and its importance with the core values of The Break. In doing so, it brings to the forefront a very important topic within the professional sales emphasis in the business plan. I feel that without this ideal or principle, there is no point to have a business in the first place. This ideal is customer service. Simply defined, customer service means taking care of your customers. Many companies incorporate customer service into their business culture through training and the design (and sometimes redesign) of significant business processes. In most cases, the business plan directs how they will provide customer service. However, what ever happened to going above and beyond for the customer? The problem with many of today’s business service models is that standardized customer service has been presented to employees as something they should merely follow without having any sort of accountability that will ensure the practice and exhibition of extraordinary service. Customer service however, is something that cannot be forced. It all begins with the passion, desire, and attitude to offer amazing service to patrons. Extraordinary customer service is an act that is authentic and meaningful. Service that is given in an impersonal way can be very obvious to most coherent customers. To these patrons that can see this unauthentic service slap to the face, it may leave them feeling cold or unappreciated.

This will not be the case at The Break. The idea and concept of customer service at The Break is centered on the idea and culture of “Aloha.” “Aloha” is a Hawaiian symbol that has a meaning of love and affection. Its meaning goes beyond any definition you can find about it in the dictionaries. Treating each client as a long-time friend, showing them love and appreciation will be supported by positive communication and interaction, and by going the extra-mile for them. As Ron Kaufman states in the *Journal for Quality & Participation*, “Having employees read a manual on customer service won’t uplift your service performance or build your service culture. Refreshing a mundane script won’t do the trick, either. It takes new action to uplift your service and delight the people around you. Service education pays off when principles are put into action, new insights are discovered, new skills are developed, and new understanding and competencies are secured.” (6) In light of what Ron offers in this scholarly article, and what I have taken from my personal experience, that in order to infuse service education into The Break’s culture and it be successful, there will need to be embedded dedication from the top down and responsive action from the bottom up. Then, and only then, will great stories be shared, people understood, and great experiences and moments of truth be had at The Break coffee bar/bistro.

The next ideal that is important to address in this business model is company culture. According to Investopedia, company culture can be defined as

“The beliefs and behaviors that determine how a company’s employees and management interact and handle outside business transactions. Often, company culture is implied, not expressly defined, and develops organically over time from

the cumulative traits of the people the company hires. A company's culture will hiring decisions, treatment of clients, client satisfaction and every other aspect of operations.” (7)

For successful companies, culture is about attracting and hiring the people who would be most successful in that particular organization. In this scenario, the culture of The Break is that of “Aloha,” yet sales driven and determined to be the best in all that it offers. It's about driving the behavior with all employees that makes the company successful. Sarah L. Simoneaux and Chris L. Stroud state, “A strong corporate culture reflects the values of the owners, the management team, and the employees. It also reflects the company's mission and has a direct impact on company policies and strategies. The corporate culture defines how employees interact with each other and with clients and other stakeholders. Successful firms exhibit strong and vibrant corporate cultures.” (8) In developing sales as part of this strong company culture, providing positive support to an employee though investing time with an employee's sales talents, can be very meaningful and beneficial for the employee. This in turn will assist in driving that positive behavior. By working with an employee on maximizing these sales talents, it can improve the position of the business by growing the employees knowledge base and turning their sales talents into strengths. Tony Rutigliano and Brian Brim assert in their book, *Strength Based Selling*, “Your talents are innate. But talent alone doesn't make strength. To develop your natural talents into strengths, you need to add skills, knowledge, and practice. These are important parts of the strengths equation... Talent x Investment = Strength... It's crucial to remember that *all* talents are important and they all can contribute to success in a sales career.” (9)

Vibrancy and not just good, but great, is the terminology that is expected to hear when one is describing his or her experience at The Break. It will be the passion and desire within The Break's culture that will help propel it to be the place to go when someone is looking to enjoy a great cup of java on the island of Maui. The idea of the passion and desire to be the best is colorfully presented in a story that was mentioned by Jim Collins, in his book *Good To Great*. The story tells about a man who was a world-class athlete and won the Hawaiian Ironman Triathlon six times. Throughout this man's training, he would burn over 5,000 calories a day. He had no weight problem whatsoever, but decided to eat a low-fat, high-carbohydrate diet in order to give him an edge. This triathlete would literally rinse his cottage cheese to get any extra fat off to enhance his regime. "Everyone would like to be the best, but most organizations lack the discipline to figure out with egoless clarity what they can be the best at and then will do whatever it takes to turn that potential into reality. They lack the discipline to rinse their cottage cheese," (10) Says Collins. At The Break, although it only being a quaint place to enjoy a cup of java with some friends or even by oneself, will fashion its business, service, and sales ethics around this model of "rinsing the cottage cheese." If an employee does not like the fact that there are certain distinguishable company culture traits such as determination to be the best, and respect and integrity above all else, then he or she will be finding himself or herself being rinsed away along with any remaining unwanted fat. This business design is much like a concept that I have learned throughout many art courses, where sometimes less can be more.

In speaking of this, art is the final emphasis that has been integrated into The Break business plan. It plays one of the most vital roles, as it is the authentic voice and

vehicle for how this coffee bar/bistro will communicate to the customer. As Cythia Freeland states in her book, *But is it art?*, “ Both the expression and the cognitive theories of art hold that art communicates: it can communicate feelings and emotions, or thoughts and ideas. Interpretation is important because it helps us explain how art does this.”(11)

In interpreting the design of The Break, one would first need to understand the context in which it is positioned. The status of The Break would be that of a slower-paced idea of life compared to that of New York City for example. It also surrounded by creativity and an appreciation for it. Island life offers much more time for people to stop and smell the roses, so to speak. In the case of The Break, more time to sit back and enjoy expressive artwork and your favorite coffee beverage that was made with care and appreciation. The design and layout of The Break, both inside and out, while partnering with the key idea of artistic expression, is the attention grabber. It is the notion that at The Break, you can expect artistic “espress-ion”, “espressive” experiences, while enjoying your favorite espresso beverages. Even the preparation of drawing the espresso itself and steaming the milk for the beverage can be considered an art.

In an era that seems to be saturated by corporate conglomerates, many people tend to desire and enjoy establishments that are different from what is seen repeatedly in numerous cities around the globe. In light of this, expressive and successful business owners aren't afraid to take calculated risks with clear outcomes in mind. Most owners, who take risks within the business platform they practice, do so because they are aware that it could be disastrous not to embrace economical change and differentiate itself from

competitors. This is why at The Break, its visually artistic design is something that is of importance to address as it accentuates and draws attention to the business model.

The ideas and thought process involved in how The Break will look, feel, and smell, all are part of appealing to the senses of the customer in hopes to not only attract clientele, but to also to hopefully inspire them to be expressive as well. In doing this, it will ultimately bring a sense of well-being and a sense of community and connection to The Break's customers. As Lois Foreman-Wernet and Brenda Dervin state in their article, *Cultural Experience in Context: Sense-Making the Arts*, "Arts and cultural activities offer opportunities for social bonding in a variety of ways. Creators, performers, spectators, friends, families—all may engage with each other as well as with their cultural heritage or broader community." They go on to say, "...Engagement with the arts and culture often results in an overall sense of well-being, of pleasure and relaxation."(12) The Break will be a location where local residents and visitors from all over the world can come to build on a connection between friends and family and a place of pleasure and relaxation. The Break would communicate this through being involved with the local art organizations and supporting local artists' talents that they provide for the coffee/bar bistro and its patrons such as: paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures, photography, along with performance art as well.

Naturally, the arts drive creativity. However, arts also drive creative inquiry, and creative inquiry can be seen as the driver of all disciplines. It is through creative inquiry that questions are answered, problems are solved, and new possibilities are discovered not only in arts, but in communication and professional sales as well. By accepting and

understanding the direction of The Break and what it embodies, one can see that in this scenario specifically, there is more than one way to make a good cup of joe, so to speak. In conceptualizing The Break business plan, it was essential for me to integrate what I have learned from communication, professional sales and arts along with my own personal experience in business. Samantha Lawrie articulates it well in her article, *Graphic design: can it be something more? Report on research in progress*, “Through greater attentiveness to our own direct experience of the living world, we can guide the direct experience of others. We can aspire to be ‘something more’... design need not be merely an adjunct to consumerist lifestyles, but a mediator of balanced human relationships.” (13) The Break coffee/bar bistro business plan is designed by being centered on appealing to the senses and being fully aware of the people who are in search of that extraordinary customer experience.

With this successful integration of strategies and ideas from communication, professional sales, and arts, The Break is something more than just an average coffee shop. It is a place where people will go to not just buy a cup of coffee, because lets face it, there are a lot of places where you can buy a cup of coffee. People will go rather, because of the experience brought forward from the quality of culture, service, design, and reasoning behind it. The Break is a strategically designed business platform that differentiates itself from the stale cup of corporate coffee that is all too mundane today. Coffee, the “Aloha” way, separates and puts The Break ahead of the crowd by being visually inviting, culturally engaging, in a positively positioned.

‘Don’t wipeout before your bottom turn of the day...

*get your fix at The Break and charge it buddy!’ ~ **The Break***

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