

ORGA-KNIX GROUP BUSINESS PLANNING FINAL REPORT
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By Jerry Braatz, Associate Professor
jerold.braatz@ces.uwex.edu

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this volunteer effort with the Partners of America Farmer to Farmer Program was to work with Orga-KniX group in Jamaica in the facilitation and development of a business plan. The objective was to teach the participants about the components of a business plan and facilitate the development of the plan with the group so they learned how to create a business plan.

ACTIVITIES/RESULTS

Getting to Know Partners

The first part of the trip focused on getting to know the Orga-KniX group partners. The five partners (2 women and 3 men) operated four farms. At our first meeting, I did a lot of listening to find out what their needs were as a business and how these needs could be incorporated into business planning. I also spent the first phase of the trip visiting the four farms. This gave me a broad understanding of the issues and challenges that the Orga-KniX partners faced. Some of these issues include severe weather conditions, transportation of produce from farms to market, and the intense manual labor required to produce a crop.

Orga-KniX Management Partners

I was impressed by the knowledge and skills that each of the Orga-KniX group partners brought to the table. They all have individual strengths that compliment each other and they understand they must use these skills collectively in a team environment to be successful. Some of these skills they possess are small business management, marketing, sales, fresh and dried organic production, and effective verbal and written communication.

The five partners include: Markus Braun, owner of Awassa Farm, Janice Duhaney, owner of Jandew Farm, Olive Jackson, owner of Canaan Farm, and Steve McDonald and Edward Wray, partners of Triple Eye Farm.

Markus Braun is a certified organic farmer and is recognized for his knowledge and experience in this area from throughout the Caribbean realm. In 2006, he attended an international slow food movement conference in Italy. He has been a full-time organic farmer in Jamaica for 13 years. He owns and operates Awassa Farm. Markus Braun serves as company chairperson.

Janice Duhaney has a wealth of business experience. She worked for 19 years for a major pharmaceutical company. During this time she became a manager and regional manager responsible for the Caribbean market. She has extensive experience, knowledge, and

talent in marketing and sales. For the last two years, Ms. Duhaney has owned and operated Jandew Farm where she focuses on organic vegetable production. Janice Duhaney serves as recording secretary and customer relations and marketing director.

Olive Jackson is an established small business entrepreneur. She owned and managed a furniture business for 40 years near Montego Bay. She owns and operates Canaan Farm in St. James Parish.

Steve McDonald is the executive director of Triple Eye Farm. He is a clinical psychologist and received his graduate education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He has volunteered as a community worker for over 30 years and has knowledge in the growth of organic produce and herbs in Jamaica. Mr. McDonald serves as dried produce processing coordinator at Triple Eye Farm.

Edward Wray is affiliated with Triple Eye Farm. He works as an independent building contractor for 20 years and has experience in business management. Mr. Wray serves as a project and design manager for the construction of the processing facility at the New Manor property adjacent to Jandew Farm.

I enjoyed working with each of the partners. All of them are great people and have a passion for knowledge, life, and making a difference. We developed respect and trust for each other and I felt like I was part of the group very soon after meeting them. This respect, trust and understanding for each other set the foundation for the entire volunteer effort.

I conducted three workshops with the partners. A total of 7 people (2 women and 5 men) attended parts or all of the workshops. I led them through the components of a business plan and what it takes to be successful in business. I also led them through a break even analysis and profit and loss analysis to show them where they were at and where they needed to go to be successful in business. I used a facilitation style of teaching and involved the partners in all aspects of the workshops. The partners really liked the fact that I invited their input in all our discussions. This input was very important in gathering information for inclusion in the business plan.

The first two workshops focused on small business development and how small businesses are a major element of economic development, target marketing, business and strategic planning and financial analysis and projections. The business and strategic planning module focused on revisiting the Orga-KniX mission statement, identifying strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities as well as developing both short term and long term strategies for business growth. As mentioned previously, this was all taught using a facilitation model that led to group discussion. The financial analysis focused on both the box scheme and the dried produce divisions of Orga-KniX. All of this information was incorporated into the business plan. At the final workshop, I went through a draft of the business plan that I had pieced together and asked the partners for input. This created additional discussions, updates, and editing.

The boxing scheme plan is clear for the Orga-KniX group and they understand what needs to be done to create a profitable fresh produce division. However, the dried produce division needs further analysis (See Follow-Up Section).

Orga-KniX Mission Statement

Our passion is to provide a healthy alternative in the food industry recognizing the medicinal and nutritional properties of our indigenous plants and to process, market, and deliver the finest quality organic products to contribute to the wellness of humanity.

Business Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)

This section explains the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that Orga-KniX partners identified in meetings facilitated, by Jerold Braatz, a Professor from Wisconsin.

Strengths

- Orga-KniX has a diverse group of four farms with good fertile soils for organic production.
- The Management Team at Orga-KniX has complimentary knowledge and a wealth of experience in certified organic production, business corporate management, small business management and community work.
- Orga-KniX has access to a business incubator in Mt. Carey.
- Orga-KniX is committed to the highest quality organic products
- The brand name of Jamaica is an advantage for Orga-KniX
- Jandew Farm provides a logistic and strategic advantage for access to the urbanizing Montego Bay market.

Weaknesses

- The Orga-KniX Management Team must work on developing a better decision making process. The management team will adopt *Roberts Rules of Order* as a guide in helping run meetings more effectively. Also, it is crucial that all partners of Orga-KniX, prepare for meetings, arrive to all meetings on time, and participate in meetings from start to finish.
- Communication must be enhanced among Management Team members. A group e-mail account and internet access for Triple Eye Farm would help alleviate this issue.
- Geographical diversity of group members and farm locations and the need for an improved road network is a weakness for face to face meetings and sometimes provides a challenge for getting product to market. Orga-KniX is committed to having business meetings once a month with an agenda sent out by the chairperson to work on this issue.
- Lack of flexibility and limited resources to solve problems is an every day reality.
- Orga-KniX is a pioneer in the Jamaican organic farming industry.
- Each farm has equipment needs and it is sometimes difficult to acquire them on a timely basis.

Opportunities

- Orga-KniX will serve as a catalyst to expand organic farming production in Jamaica.
- Orga-KniX can act as a resource for organic business development.
- Opportunity for small natural production farms to become more commercial.
- The Orga-KniX group can reduce agriculture product marketing constraints.
- Orga-KniX has the opportunity to increase the consumption of healthier foods.
- With its dried food division, Orga-KniX can help provide a post-disaster food supply.
- Orga-KniX has the potential to increase food security on the island of Jamaica by increasing local food production and relying less on imports.

Threats

- Larger corporate businesses from outside Jamaica are an external threat. Specifically, large fresh produce imports from the United States and Canada, flowers from South America, and dried fruits from Southeast Asia.
- Under production of produce on the island is an external threat.
- Produce theft on the island is a reality and must be viewed as a threat.
- The weather can have a major impact on crop production, especially, between the months of June and November due to the threat of hurricanes.

Strategies

The following short term (first year) and longer term (two to three years) explain how Orga-KniX will expand its boxing scheme and dried produce business divisions.

Boxing Scheme First Year Strategy (January 2008 to January 2009)

- Enhance packing and delivery time by increasing distribution of products to customers from one to two days per week (Tuesday and Friday).
- Improve both the distribution facility and get the cold storage unit in operation at Mt. Carey.
- Agree on the number of fresh produce boxes for the boxing scheme and the variety of products that is in them.
- Identify production goals on farms for a more constant supply.
- Assign a given weekly quantity schedule of a given crop to each farm producer.
- Continue to increase the customer base.
- Enhance the variety of produce and herbs offered (sweet peppers, tomatoes, carrots, lettuce, mustard greens, and calaloo).

Boxing Scheme Second and Third Year Strategy (January 2009 to January 2011)

- Create a daily supply outlet store in Montego Bay.
- In August 2008 and August 2009, redefine the levels of production, variety, and quantity plans for each farm.

- Obtain organic certification of three remaining farms (Canaan, Jandew, and Triple Eye).

Dried Produce Production First Year Strategy (January 2008 to January 2009)

- Purchase stainless steel tables, triple compartment, slicer, commercial dehydrator, bammy oven, commercial mill and vacuum and heat sealer.
- Employ Steve McDonald and Triple Eye Farm team to provide training for hired workers and begin the implementation of a process focusing on quality for dehydration.
- All farms will work together to decide on quantities for optimum use of dehydrators.
- Develop a design for a comprehensive processing facility and needed infrastructure at New Manor Property adjacent to Jandew Farm that will focus on agro-tourism, boxing scheme, dried powder and Bammy production.
- Build relationships with agricultural producers outside the Orga-KniX group.

Follow-Up

The next steps in carrying out the project for Farmer to Farmer is work with the Orga-KniX dried produce division to further analyze profit and loss and long term profitability projections. This will require additional analysis of production and drying costs for scotch bonnet, bread fruit, sweet potatoes, bananas, plantain, basil, dill, parsley, and sorrel. It will also require additional analysis of the equipment needed for this process. A consultant for this project is necessary for further education of the group and analysis.

Comments

The Farmer to Farmer project was a great program for me and I believe it provided knowledge, stimulation and motivation for the Orga-KniX group partners. What helped me immensely was meeting with Professor Martin Havlovic from the University of Wisconsin-Extension before I left for Jamaica. Professor Havlovic has worked in over 25 countries and really helped me prepare for the trip and explained cultural differences. This trip for me was outstanding, but without the mentorship that Professor Havlovic provided it probably would have been just an average experience. The fact that I was able to use the tools that Professor Havlovic taught me about working in a different cultural environment really helped me develop trust and understanding with the participants very early in the volunteer effort. This was a huge plus for the entire business planning process.

The Orga-Knix business partners are a gifted group of individuals. They are pioneers in the organic movement in Jamaica, will challenge information and are not afraid to voice their opinions. I would advise that it is important to listen to their needs and concerns and do the best you can to address them, but do not make promises. I found that listening to their concerns and trying my best to understand them helped build trust with the group.

One other issue that future consultants need to be aware of is that each of the Orga-Knix partners practice different religions. This has created a few issues during their meetings due to differences in religious customs and beliefs. It has also on at least one occasion resulted in hurt feelings. I did my best to neutralize this issue during our discussions and I think I was fairly successful.

Orga-KniX, like any small start-up business, has many challenges ahead of them. I feel that I was able to help them recognize their strengths and develop confidence in moving forward. By developing the business plan they now see the potential they have as a group and have a sequence of steps to implement.