

## *St. Vincent DePaul Business Analysis*

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## I. Acknowledgements

The 2013 Applied Global Business Learning (AGBL) trip to India was a phenomenal experience for all of our members. As a team we feel extremely blessed and fortunate to have had the opportunity to travel to India and work with an inspiring, passionate and energized group of people who opened their hearts and lives to Marquette so graciously.

We would like to thank Ms. Sandra Wilmer and Fr. Scaria, Fr. Pradeep and Mr. Ignatius for showing us their initiatives, hard work, future plans and dreams. They are making an enormous impact on their communities and we are excited to see their future achievements. Furthermore, we want to thank the women of the St. Vincent De Paul V-Care program and cooperative. Listening to your personal stories and watching you make various V-Care products was extremely insightful. We appreciate your time and cannot wait to see how your current hard work will create a better future for you and your families as well as the V-Care cooperative.

In addition, we would like to thank Mr. Arijit Roy and the Jagran NGO. The performance was exceptional and it was awesome to see how communities can be impacted positively by artistic performances such as the one we saw on our last day in New Delhi. Finally, we cannot express enough gratitude to Mr. Ajay Dewan for serving as our host and ambassador to Delhi. Your hospitality was remarkable and your insights and experiences were a great asset to this report. As always, it was so impressive to see how Marquette alumni are making a difference in their communities all over the world.

Lastly, we want to thank Marquette University's College of Business Administration for their continued support of the Applied Global Business Learning Program. Dr. Heather Kohls, the director of the AGBL program, made this entire trip a possibility and we are extremely grateful for her time and hard work. Dr. David Clark and Ms. Beth Krey prepared us exceptionally well for this experience and we want to especially thank them for organizing, advising and leading us on our trip through India as well as providing much needed advice in the development of this report. Our team of Marquette students is appreciative of everyone who made this international exchange a possibility and look forward to watching the relationship between Marquette and India grow in the future.

## II. Introduction

The Marquette University Applied Global Business Learning (MU-AGBL) program visited New Delhi in January 2013 to learn more about St. Vincent de Paul (SVDP) and the work of V-Care, which is a women's cooperative run by SVDP. The students from Marquette analyzed various elements of V-Care, which runs the cooperative and various programs to empower women so they can become self-supporting. Programs that we watched first-hand were jewelry making, candle making and the making of tote bags. These programs do more than just produce items for sale. They also teach the women valuable skills that can further their livelihoods and enhance their futures.

After watching the production of various items, Marquette students took the time to examine products, packaging, labeling and final presentation of the products for sale. AGBL noticed the improvements made since the previous Marquette trip in January 2012.

Through talking with Sandra and the women, we noticed that the women, V-Care mentors and teachers are extremely passionate and enthusiastic to make V-Care the best it can be. This motivation, desire and passion is crucial to your success, and we believe that you have a bright future. Hopefully our recommendations will help V-Care to grow through the improvement of its operations and through the enhanced marketing and sales of its products.

### III. Current Status and Limitations

V-Care is in the early stages of development but it has expanded its programs since MU-AGBL's last visit in January 2012. The MU-AGBL team was delighted to see tangible indications of progress and we believe that its operations can be further improved in a number of areas. We outline these below and then expand upon each point later in the report.

1. Organization and Leadership: Much of the success at V-Care is the result of the extensive efforts of Ms. Sandra Wilmer. As V-Care grows, Sandra is going to need additional help, and a more sophisticated organizational structure needs to be established.
  - Solution: Creation of a formal leadership structure will be beneficial to the efficiency and expansion of the V-Care business. (Refer to section IV.1)
  - This is a longer-term goal that will take several years to implement. V-Care should begin to initiate over the course of the next year.
  
2. Operations: The goal of the V-Care cooperative is to increase the earnings of the women members and ultimately help them to be self-sustaining. We believe that V-Care has a good start, but it needs to work to expand its production levels. This means that more women need to be properly trained, and that training procedures need to be enhanced.
  - Solution: Strengthening the cooperative through increasing membership and training. (Refer to section IV.2)
  - This is an ongoing initiative that V-Care can begin working on immediately.
  
3. Marketing strategies: Internally, V-Care is on the right path. They have a great leadership team and the product list is expanding and the quality of the work is improving. We believe that the cooperative should work towards stronger marketing of its products by effectively telling its unique story in a variety of ways.
  - Solution: Integrated Marketing Communications Campaign (Refer to Section IV.3)
  - While marketing is a longer term initiative, there are immediate steps that can be taken over the next year to improve your marketing.
  
4. Development of Partnerships: V-Care has a great mission, product and a cooperative of women. However, there are certain aspects of their business they need help with on a regular basis. MU-AGBL appreciates the opportunity to annually review their operations but we believe more consistent feedback is needed. Creating relationships with local non-profits, universities could be a great stepping-stone and resource for SVDP. In addition, partnerships with other businesses which could sell your product is an important way to expand your sales.
  - Solution: Develop partnerships with universities and non-profit organizations. (Refer to section IV.4)
  - This is a long term process that should be initiated within the next year.

#### IV. Recommendations for Improvement

In this section of the report, we elaborate on ways in which V-Care can achieve improvements in the areas cited above.

##### 1. Organizational and Leadership Recommendations

The current leadership structure of SVDP consists of one person handling almost all business operations and delegating work to others. Sandra is an excellent leader to this young organization, and it appears that this cooperative is where it is today largely as a result of her efforts. But in order for the cooperative to grow, it is crucial that some point in the near future, the leadership structure needs to evolve.

In order to make SVDP more successful, involvement in planning and organization of the company should be extended to workers and volunteers within the community. SVDP should strive to increase the involvement of its members in planning and organization of business operations in order to create a more efficient work environment.

Organizationally, we believe that V-Care should consider developing a structure similar to other cooperatives. Cooperatives are a company that is run by the membership of the cooperative. This allows for members to exercise full control over how the company is run, and it allows them to plan for its future growth. This typically means there is a Board of Directors made up of more senior cooperative members as well as other advisors (e.g., Ms. Wilmer, Mr. Dewan, Fr. Scaria, Fr. Pradeep, Mr. Ignatius and others from the local business community). The purpose of the Board of Directors is to guide the cooperative. For example, as the cooperative considers additional products, this Board could provide much needed advice as to how best to expand.

The Board can also help to ensure that operations within the organization are running smoothly and they can point out situations where they believe the best interests of the company are not being upheld. They are expected to impartially evaluate the operations of the firm and recommend improvements for greater success in the future.

Members of the cooperative also have responsibilities beyond just the production of their products. For example, there may be a subgroup that focuses on purchasing of materials needed for production. Another group might evaluate marketing strategies whereas another group may focus on recruitment of new members.

Decisions about the company are typically made through a democratic process where all members can voice their opinions. The Board of Directors would make recommendations but key decisions require a vote of the total membership. For a small, start-up non-profit such as St. Vincent De Paul the mutually beneficial nature of a cooperative would allow individuals to experience the empowerment associated with owning and controlling their own company. The ability for members to be in direct control of the cooperative also ensures that the morals and goals of members are translated in the business process. Cooperatives establish a place for human values and beliefs in the workplace that may not exist in normal business structures. This is a very important aspect for SVDP as their work is rooted in faith-based beliefs

and community values. Establishing a democratic structure is a long term process that requires the development of leadership skills amongst members.

## 2. Operations Recommendations

V-Care, like many small start-up firms is limited by the resources (both workers and equipment) that it has at its disposal. For example, whereas all production activities require skilled workers and other raw materials, some activities like candle or jewelry production require little in the way of equipment and others like sewing require more equipment.

Currently, there is just one industrial sewing machine available, and there are only a few members with the capabilities to operate the machine. If the V-Care brand is to be successfully marketed, it needs to increase its production levels and develop adequate inventory levels of its products. This requires increasing the number of women that are trained to produce products, and also increase the inventory of raw materials and the availability of equipment necessary for production. This points to several issues. First, V-Care needs to aggressively recruit and train new workers and that recruitment needs to focus on products where there are currently gaps in productive capabilities. For example, it appeared that at the time of our visit, there were very few workers who could operate the new industrial sewing machine. There needs to be a training program to bring more workers up to speed in the use of this equipment. Trainers are typically the most experienced workers who also have good communications skills. These trainers would specialize in various areas (e.g., candle production, jewelry production, bag/clothing production). They would be responsible for developing training procedures so that new workers learn the best methods for production, but also learn how to maintain the quality and consistency of the products. Second, V-Care is going to need to acquire additional equipment (e.g., additional industrial sewing machines) and this requires funding. While seeking donations to buy equipment is one approach, ultimately the cooperative needs to be self-sustaining, and that means building up a fund for capital equipment by having a small fraction of the revenues derived from selling V-Care items be held back for the purposes of purchasing necessary equipment. Finally, V-Care needs to develop adequate inventories of high quality supplies (e.g., beads, material, bulk wax, dyes, etc.) that can be purchased at reasonable prices from reliable vendors.

## 3. Marketing Strategies

Internally, V-Care has a solid team and a good variety of products to sell. It is also clear that it is looking into the production of other items such as clothing items. However, this needs to be matched by an external marketing plan to promote V-Care's products to potential customers. The following are a list of key suggestions for V-Care to consider.

### a. Logo & Brand Packaging

The MU-AGBL team believes that V-Care has done a good job creating a name. It is our recommendation that the cooperative develop a new logo to put on packaging besides the current Vincent de Paul logo. A label with a logo tells the consumer who made the product and where it comes from. V-Care has a unique story and the logo should reflect that. The design should be

integrated into the V-Care company name and mission. The V-Care vision states, “We envision an egalitarian and self-reliant society founded on human values by developing self-confidence and leadership among the underprivileged section of the society.” Furthermore, your current focal points include literacy, care for children, vocational training, shelter, HIV/AIDS care, health care, meals, saving schemes and networking. Therefore, perhaps the logo could showcase “helping hands,” women or children. We suggest SVDP approaching its friends and contacts to find a marketing professional to provide pro-bono (voluntary) services to support this worthy cause. As a starting point, the MU-AGBL team has approached a former AGBL student to come up with examples of a logo. Samples will be available later this summer.

b. Business Card Story for Packaging & Branding

Branding is very important because it helps a company attract and retain customers. Consumers will often become attracted or loyal to certain brands that provide quality products that suit their needs. V-Care has selected a company name that reflects the image they wish to portray to consumers and a new logo will further this goal as well. To make the brand image cohesive, V-Care should have its story and mission on every product.

MU-AGBL is recommending the creation of a business card sized mini story that describes the main goals of V-Care. It will tell the consumers where the product came from, who made it, the organization’s mission, website address, blog info, phone number, e-mail address and more. It could be slipped into the clear packaging the jewelry is being sold in or tied to one of the tote bags. It will enhance the packaging of every product and clearly communicate to the customer where the product is coming from. Furthermore, on the backside of the card V-care could put a unique story about the women of the cooperative. V-care is producing a unique product. It is not producing goods in large factories’ with nameless workers; rather these products are made by women living in low-income areas and are striving to better themselves and the lives of their families through this venture. Consumers like to know where products come from and this emotional connection could create a great branding story for V-Care products. This will also make your products stand out in the competitive marketplace.

It will also enable V-Care to tell its story wherever their products may be sold. For example, if V-Care has its products in stores outside of New Delhi or even in another country consumers will still know the story. By telling your story, brand and customer loyalty can be developed. Many consumers are attracted to products created for a social cause and it could increase sales and product loyalty to V-Care. Repeat customers are essential to every successful business and by telling your story on every product V-Care can begin to build a solid customer base with a consistent brand image.

Below is an example of what the business card could look like:

Front of Card

V-CARE	INSERT LOGO
<p>V-Care is a nonprofit organization working for the welfare of the poor especially in the urban slums of Delhi. The main goal is to empower the urban impoverished community's inhabitants through vocational training, housing, health care, women's self help groups and care for those suffering from HIV/AIDS.</p>	

Back of Card

<p>Example story of a successful V-Care cooperative member.</p>
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c. Assistance from a Marketing Professional

V-Care should seek the consistent help of a marketing professional. Perhaps you could recruit such a person to the cooperative Board of Directors. While MU-AGBL is dedicated to developing V-Care, our yearly visits are not frequent enough. Marketing strategies constantly need to be developed and changed. Seeking the help of a local university's marketing students could be a great option for V-Care. The partnerships section will expand on the possibility of this.

d. Create a Blog

A blog is a great way to attract the attention of customers and spread awareness about your cooperative. Websites, social media outlets, videos and more would all be great additions to V-Care in the future but the key to social media is to master one outlet before you create them all. There is nothing worse than a poorly managed media outlet and it can be detrimental to a cooperative's marketing strategy. Therefore, we suggest starting a blog first. Blogs are free, easy to learn how to use and simple to maintain. This blog does not need to be a time consuming project, but simply bi-monthly updates will be beneficial in gaining basic marketing experience and promoting their organization.

Two great sites to start a blog are:

[www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com): Blogger.com is the easiest blog to create for people that are new to the blog world. Follow the instructions, which the site walks you through. You can even customize the site with pictures of the cooperative members and products.

<http://wordpress.org/>: Wordpress is another good outlet for starting a blog but is slightly more complicated than blogger. If you have someone who is not completely new to the blog world we recommend using wordpress. It is even more customizable than blogger.

Overall, either site will create an effective blog that communicates your brand messaging to potential customers. These free sites are a great first step onto the Internet. Your organization

should create posts regularly (once or twice a month) to showcase the progress of the organization, new programs or stories of V-Care employees or participants. This will share the mission of the product and advertise the products V-Care makes and sell. After you create the blog, it is beneficial to advertise. The blog address should be put on the business card and alert all of your contacts about the blog.

After a successful blog implementation and a growth of an online presence, a website and social media outlets can be developed. MU-AGBL suggests starting with the blog and successfully developing it before starting a variety of online outlets.

#### 4. Development of Partnerships

Partnerships are relationships in which parties work for each other to promote mutual interests. For example, businesses sometimes offer their services for free to non-profits and in return they get to advertise how they help area non-profits. The services and coordination promote both parties.

We offer the following recommendations that SVDP may want to consider as it moves forward.

##### a. Brick and Mortar

In order to increase the exposure of V-Care products, it would be beneficial to attempt to partner with local stores or stalls to sell more units. Solely selling V-Care products from one location does not provide the company with enough exposure for its products. By dispersing products to physical stores locations, there will be likely be an increase in the number of units sold as well as increased exposure for the V-Care name. Having your products in physical locations will increase exposure of the organization. V-Care should start by arranging partnerships with local stores or craft stalls that cater to tourists. The business card in your packaging and branding tell a unique story and customers want to buy socially responsible products. After having local success, V-Care can think of expanding further throughout India.

##### b. University Partnership

Another option that SDVP could utilize is to seek out the help of universities in Delhi and creating partnerships with said institutions. In doing this, SDVP could use universities as resources for a variety of business problems. University economic students could come periodically to evaluate your progress and recommend solutions just like MU-AGBL does. At some point in the future, university communication students could train V-Care how to create a blog and other social media outlets. Furthermore, art students could take photographs for V-Care's promotional use. Science and technology students could help with issues of quality control and product design. Ultimately, these students will enable your products to be sold and spread the word about the cooperative. There are many possibilities to explore and MU-AGBL students would be happy to work with these other university students on our annual visits. The key is a consistent relationship and regular visits.

c. Non-Profit Partnership

It would be beneficial for SVDP to partner with one or more non-profit organizations. Non-profits are dedicated to promoting socially just business with inspirational and relevant stories, making SVDP a prime candidate for a partnership with a non-profit or non-governmental organization. Partnerships would not only give SVDP more outlets to sell their products through, but would also allow them to begin creating a network, increasing their success in the future. These non-profits could also be the same brick and mortar outlets discussed earlier.

Ultimately, V-Care has a great story. MU-AGBL was so inspired and captivated by our site visit. SVDP needs to harness this power and use it to network with others. Expanding SVDP's network can only lead to positives for the organization.

V. Concluding Remarks

Through our travels and work, the Marquette University Applied Global Business Learning team has become familiarized with the struggles that exist in Delhi in the face of extreme poverty. The perseverance of St. Vincent DePaul's initiatives to create positive change in the community and benefit the lives of others is extremely admirable to all of us. We are inspired by your passion, spirit and drive. We applaud the efforts of V-Care for finding sources of improvement in such a tumultuous environment. We believe that St. Vincent DePaul's V-Care program has a bright future. We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback, and we hope that the leaders of V-Care find them useful. We do want to emphasize that the members of the program are in the best position to evaluate these recommendations. It is our belief that through a process of continual improvement, V-Care can successfully achieve its goals of positive social change in the community.