

Grand Valley State University

Amazig Leathers: Marketing Plan



HNR 499

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- During Brandi's two years in Morocco, starting in the beginning of 2015 and ending in 2017, she will work to build credibility with customers by sharing the artisans' stories and telling customers about the Moroccan culture on the website and other social media platforms.
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Executive Summary

Amazig Leathers is looking to grow its business, expand its customer base and make customers more aware of the brand itself. To increase what the company is capable of producing and selling, more artisans will be recruited to make the products, and an arts advocacy center and apprenticeship program will be created to help recruit more talented artisans in Morocco. Additionally, to increase the credibility of the business and make the artisans more relatable to customers, the artisans' stories will be put on the website and included when sending a product to the customer. Amazig will work to also get its products into 15 to 20 small boutiques in the Knoxville area so customers can physically interact with the products to decide whether it is something they want to purchase. The business plan will also be updated to reflect the changes in the business since it was created as well as the new goals of the business. The specifics of how these goals will be achieved are discussed in later sections.

Situational Analysis

Amazig Leathers is a start-up company that began a little over a year ago in Knoxville, Tennessee. Brandi Jordan, the founder and CEO of Amazig, started the business when she looked into how the products she purchased were made and found terrible working conditions, unfair wages and unethical treatment of the craftspeople. After going on a trip to Morocco and working with artisans in the Imazighen community, Brandi decided to begin her own business selling fine leather bags – also establishing an ethical production process and reinvesting a portion of the profits back into the Imazighen community.

Company Mission Statement

Amazig Leathers aims to create great experiences for everyone it interacts with – artisans, employees and customers. This is reflected in the mission statement:

“A social enterprise that fuses creativity, craftsmanship and cultures to bring classic and timeless leather goods from Imazighen artisans to the global market.”

This mission statement seems to be aimed at addressing all the stakeholders in the company. First, it addresses the artisans by highlighting their craftsmanship and by working with them to come up with new, unique designs. For other employees of the company, it instills pride in the cause they are working for, knowing that they are helping to make first-rate products that are ethically made every step of the way. It encourages customers to learn more about the leather goods that Amazig sells, because the products are of a higher quality not seen in many other bags. It also tells customers of the benefits they will receive from buying the products – a timeless product made with culture, craftsmanship and creativity – in addition to supporting a social enterprise that works using socially responsibly practices. Finally, it speaks to retailers that may be interested in stocking Amazig Leathers products because it tells them what the benefits are of selling the products – pride in knowing that the product is being made ethically and with quality, but also bringing in fresh designs that will appeal to their customers.

As a new company, Amazig Leathers will focus on several specific target markets. By doing so, they can educate these groups of customers on the importance of supporting ethical products with their purchasing while also receiving a high quality product. Differentiation is imperative in a business such as this that is highly competitive and is hard to convince customers to switch from their current brand. To meet the needs of their target markets, Amazig will provide educational materials on its website, blog

and other social media pages to convince customers that what they purchase is important for supporting how goods are made. It will also use its advantage of having a unique brand – as all its products are handmade and use socially responsible practices. Many of the products have very unique designs that customers can't find when looking elsewhere for leather goods and bags, which also help Amazig Leathers stand out.

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis of the company shows that while the business has its strengths, there is also room for growth – especially since it is a new business. One of the greatest strengths is Amazig's ethical practices. Many other businesses, especially those that sell consumer goods, make their products at the cheapest possible price to have the largest margins – no matter how bad the employee working conditions are, how the local community is affected or how high of a quality the materials are – and make the largest possible profit. Amazig, on the other hand, works toward building a better community for its workers and creating good experiences for those who interact with the business. The products that the company sells are also handmade, high quality leather goods that will last for a long time and give customers a good value for their money.

The biggest weakness is that the company is still very new, so there is still a lot to do in order to grow the customer base. It will take a lot of work to gain recognition from customers for Amazig products and to educate customers on the importance of ethical purchasing decisions. Besides having products in one store in Knoxville, all the current sales come from online purchases, which is another disadvantage. This gives the products less exposure for people who prefer to touch and see the product in person before making a purchase.

Research shows that there are opportunities for growth in this business. According to the database Demographics Now, from GALE Cengage Learning, 24 percent of households in the United States purchased a purse or handbag in the last 12 months. It is estimated that \$947,056,778 will be spent on luggage and leather goods in 2014. For general purchasing in 2013, 45.6 percent of U.S. households said they read label information for products they buy and 33.1 percent said they would pay more for environmentally friendly products – all data according to GALE Cengage Learning. This can be compared to Amazig’s business practices, as these customers would most likely be willing to pay more for an ethically made product as opposed to one that is not.

According to the World Values Survey, 13.5 percent of people in the United States said that there is a great deal of respect for individual human rights and another 48 percent said there is fairly much respect for individual human rights nowadays. This shows that many people believe human rights are valued in society; Amazig Leathers provides people a way to buy quality products while also protecting their belief that workers should be treated and compensated fairly.

The business also faces several outside threats. First, according to Demographics Now, 33.4 percent of customers said that they don’t buy unknown brands to save money, and only 17.5 percent of customers said they change brands often for variety or novelty in 2013. This presents a problem for Amazig, as it is still a widely unknown brand – meaning that many people may stick with a brand they already know they like rather than trying a new one. There are many direct and indirect competitors that are established quality brands, like Vera Bradley and Coach, which have stores with their products all over the country and have the prestigious connotation that comes along with the

purchase. Additionally, since the products are produced in another country, there is also a risk of political unrest or some other unforeseen consequence that could hinder the products being made or being able to ship them to the United States.

As mentioned, Amazig Leathers has many direct and indirect competitors in the leather goods, handbags and social responsibility product markets. Direct competitors – direct being other businesses that produce goods using ethical business practices – include Nisolo Shoes and Mushmina Boutique – both of which have seen an increase in their business, shown by their introduction of new products and increased interaction on social media. Both companies have increasing “likes” on their Facebook pages from week to week and the numbers of “people talking about this” is growing. Indirect competitors that sell leather goods include Atlas Tribe, Patricia Nash and Coach, but there are also businesses that compete in the handbag and luggage market such as Vera Bradley.

A well-known indirect competitor is TOMS shoes. While TOMS doesn’t sell products like Amazig, it does have a similar model in appealing to customers’ ethics. TOMS gives a pair of shoes for every pair of shoes purchased in countries around the world, and has more recently expanded to include eyewear – which helps to restore sight with every purchase – and coffee that provides a week of clean water to a person in need for every purchase. As TOMS has grown exponentially since it started in 2006, it projects positively for Amazig Leathers because it shows this business model can work and is attractive to many customers.

These direct competitors have similar strengths to Amazig in their socially responsible practices and having high quality leather goods – with Nisolo’s products

being made in Peru and Mushmina products also being made in Morocco. Additionally, Nisolo Shoes is in its third year of operation and therefore has more exposure with customers and therefore more credibility.

Nisolo Shoes has a weakness of its main focus being only on shoes, though they also produce a few bags and small accessories. This focus, and even their name, doesn't give room for expansion into other areas of leather goods in case shoe sales decline. Mushmina is based in Philadelphia and has a fairly region-specific focus, which is limiting in how much the business can grow with its attention just on growing the business in one region.

Opportunities, similar to Amazig, is that there is a fairly large market for such products, and research shows that consumers are looking for products they can be proud of – not just in the product itself but how it is made. Nisolo Shoes and Mushmina Boutique emphasize this aspect of the business on their websites to further encourage customers to buy their products.

Threats Nisolo and Mushmina face are those that Amazig also faces – being an unknown brand, other widely known competition in the handbag business and unforeseen consequences from producing the goods abroad.

Target Markets

Amazig Leathers has several target markets: young adults and young professionals, but they are also looking to expand into small retailers. The products are a style that would appeal to younger people and there are some that would make for good professional bags, for example the Fes Messenger Bag. The prices are also very reasonable for handmade leather bags, especially compared to what similar products

would cost in most retail stores. This group also tends to place more emphasis on social responsibility than older generations.

The other target markets for Amazig Leathers is retailers and other collaborators. Many customers want to see the product in person before making a purchase, and getting the products in small retailers would accomplish that as well as increasing awareness for the brand name. The retailer is provided with value from the connotation that comes with the product, which is high quality leather goods that a customer can feel good about purchasing because of the ethical emphasis. Other collaborators will also need to be involved if the business is to grow further, such as renting an office space or warehouse for the business in the U.S. and getting more artisans involved in Morocco.

More specifically, the target customer for Amazig Leathers is mostly women, although the newly launched line of products have some that can appeal more to men, ages 21 to 35, college educated with an income between \$35,000 and \$75,000. These customers have either newly entered the professional world or have started to get established there, and place an importance on social enterprises and how goods they buy are produced.

Additionally, data show that this target market is a growing one, according to Demographics Now from GALE Cengage Learning. It is projected that in the next five years, there will be over 31 million women and over 32 million men from the ages of 21 to 34. The total number of people with associate's, bachelor's and master's degrees is expected to be approximately 17.3 million, 40.3 million and 16.8 million, respectively. Finally, the total number of people making between \$35,000 and \$75,000 in the next five years is estimated to be about 38 million people.

The products are made to be durable and most can be used multiple ways – as the customer wishes – while others are more specific. For example, while a bag can be put to many uses for a variety of occasions, the camera strap, guitar strap and suspenders only have one use.

Factors that Impact the Buying Decision

Factors that impact customer's buying decision include the values the customers have about purchasing products, the quality of the product, the price and the credibility. For credibility, customers must believe in the social enterprise and also value the working conditions of the artisans and how they are treated as well as community development, instead of just looking at the price. The main influencers for the target market of Amazig customers would be their friends and coworkers. If the people they interact with just value a name brand and don't place an importance on working conditions, then that customer would be less likely to purchase an Amazig product.

Target customers will likely purchase Amazig over other companies or handbags because of its differentiation – that is its dedication to working with the artisans in Morocco and making their lives and communities better while also providing customers with a top-notch product. This goal is heavily emphasized throughout the website and social media postings, which are the majority of the company's interactions with its customers. Additionally, Amazig provides something for customers that most other companies cannot: a sense of pride in a purchase instead of a feeling of remorse or regret afterwards. Most customers probably won't experience cognitive dissonance after purchasing an Amazig Leathers' product because they are getting a great leather product

at a reasonable price, and have the knowledge that the artisans making the bags are not working in sweatshops but are treated fairly.

Other target customers, such as retailers and other collaborators, will likely stock Amazig products because they can look at other companies with similar business models and see how popular these brands have become, such as TOMS. As brands with similar product models have shown to be popular and successful, retailers will be more open to stocking Amazig products because it is proven to be popular for customers. It can also help boost the image of their store because they are selling products that are socially responsible and of high quality.

To address the consumer decision-making process, the company strives to thoroughly answer any questions received, either from online interactions or when attending events or shows. Specifically, Brandi and other Amazig staff talk about who they are as a company, why they're doing it and why it's important to encourage customers to think of their own values in purchasing and reevaluate how they go about making a decision to purchase a particular product. The mindset is that many people will be purchasing a bag anyway, so they should buy something that will last them a lot longer and positively impacts everyone involved in the process. Also, when a customer opens their package, they receive a hand-written note to congratulate them on their purchase and encourage them to contact the business if they have any issues with their purchase that can be resolved.

Though the products last a long time, Brandi said that they have many repeat customers who purchase different bags than those they have already. Additionally, many

customers refer their friends which helps increase sales. She said they try to be very attentive to make sure the customer is happy with their purchase.

Product and Brand Strategy

The brand that Amazig Leathers aims to convey is: a people-centered company that is focused on integrity – caring about the artisans, customers and everyone it interacts with. More specifically, Brandi’s aim is to encourage customers to build communities with people who are unlike them and with the people who make their products. Her aim is to show customers the integrity of “doing business the right way with customers and the communities we work with.”

This value is communicated through every interaction with the customers. Going to fashion shows, those who are interested in Amazig are told about the quality of the products and how they are produced. Over social media platforms, the importance of buying power and purchasing ethically sourced products is emphasized to educate customers on the importance every dollar makes in empowering or hindering the people who make their products. In addition to teaching customers about socially responsible products, the posts also show how Amazig Leathers fits in that category by how they do business and work with the artisans.

People value getting a good product for their dollars, and communications with customers emphasize the many dimensions in which customers are receiving a good value – monetarily, ethically and socially. The product will last them a long time, and the styles are fashionable and will remain so for quite a while. Ethically, customers can see the story of Amazig Leathers on the website and social media and look into how productions are conducted and be proud they are supporting the business. While many

leather goods are very expensive and do not use ethical practices, Amazig sells its hand-made bags at a lower price than many competitors and has the added advantage of social responsibility.

Since it is a very new business, the products are still in the introductory stage of the product life cycle. While this 2014 summer brought changes with a new product line being introduced, the customer base is still relatively small compared to other companies in the handbag industry or even other social enterprises. On the BCG matrix, this industry looks to be a “question mark,” because while Amazig currently has a very low market share compared to other companies, there is an opportunity for market growth as both the leather goods industry and the industry for ethically made products are increasing – as shown by the statistics in the SWOT analysis.

The strategy for the business is to educate customers and potential customers on social enterprises and to encourage them to do research on their current purchases and see how those products are made. If rethinking their purchasing habits isn't enough encouragement, they can also look at the Amazig Leathers products on the website and see the quality of the products and the reasonable price they can purchase them for.

Though the business is still developing, the ultimate goal is to provide customers the ability to research Amazig Leathers' products thoroughly – providing supply chain transparency to build trust and confidence with customers – and encourage them to research other companies' products in order to make informed decisions on their future purchasing habits.

Communication Methods

Amazig Leathers utilizes many forms of communication in order to reach its audience. The primary goal of this communication is to convey information regarding its business practices and what they can offer customers, which will hopefully lead to sales. The business is active on many social media platforms to increase customer awareness of its presence including Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, the website and the blog. These posts aim to inform customers about Morocco, show the similarities of people around the world, educate followers about international development, promote the products and give customers all the information they need to make the decision to purchase.

In addition to social media, Brandi also attends conferences, speaks at events, organizes house parties, tables at Nashville Fashion Week and, throughout all these activities, hands out flyers about Amazig. Brandi is also moving to Morocco at the beginning of next year to work more closely with the artisans and communicate their unique stories to customers while also further developing the business.

The ultimate goal of all Amazig Leathers' communications is to tell about the products and why it is important to shop ethically, connect people together and show that everyone is interrelated.

Product Distribution

The majority of Amazig's products are distributed through online purchases only, as the current infrastructure doesn't exist to be able to handle big orders from large retailers. Besides online, the products are only in one small retailer: Fizz in Knoxville Market Square. Getting the products in other small retailers is another channel that could be used to get the product into the consumers' hands.

Existing relationships in Morocco include lead artisan Absetic, Zakiya – currently Amazig’s only female artisan – missionaries who are in Morocco and the import managers. Amazig Leathers currently employs 11 to 15 artisans at any given time, but the eventual goal is to have 50 artisans. Brandi works with her contacts in Morocco to make sure bags are being made correctly, to come up with ideas for new products and to get the bags shipped properly and in a timely manner. Relationships in the U.S. include Carson-Newman University and Eastern University, Knoxville Entrepreneurs, the Knoxville Chamber of Commerce and fashion bloggers that give her advice and ideas.

To make the products, the leather is purchased from Agadir, Marrakech and Fez, Morocco. The hardware for the products is purchased from Marrakech, and the artisans currently make the products in their homes, located either in Fez or Marrakech. The finished products are then exported from Casablanca, Morocco and sent to Atlanta, Georgia by air. The shipment is then picked up, usually by Brandi, and kept in the Amazig Leathers office in Brandi’s apartment. When an order is received, it is mailed from the office to the customer.

Goals

Amazig Leathers will begin to expand product availability by getting products stocked in 15 to 20 small boutiques in the Knoxville area of the United States by 2018. This will be accomplished through building relationships with boutique owners to expand recognition of the brand name and reputation. Amazig will work with the boutiques to stock the newest products and product lines in the stores and the Tizi Coin Pouch, the cheapest product at only \$10. Progress toward the goal will be reviewed on an annual basis.

During Brandi's two years in Morocco, starting in the beginning of 2015 and ending in 2017, she will work to build credibility with customers by sharing the artisans' stories and telling customers about the Moroccan culture on the website and other social media platforms. She will schedule days to visit with each artisan at their homes, where they also do their work for Amazig, to talk with them about working with the company, their ideas for future designs and about their personal lives. Brandi will also take pictures and videos to write about in the Amazig blog to show customers what life is like in Morocco and explain similarities and differences. To measure this goal, the aim will be to share the artisans' stories by putting them on the website so customers can see the faces behind the products and posting a weekly blog. Each bag purchased will have a card telling customers which artisan made that particular product, and will encourage the customer to check out the website to find out more about the artisan's story with Amazig and what their life and culture is like in Morocco.

Amazig Leathers will recruit 15 to 20 more artisans by 2019. If the company is to accomplish the first goal of getting products stocked in boutiques, the infrastructure must be built up to be able to fulfill product orders. The company will need to establish a compensation system to reward artisans who stay with Amazig for two or more years so the company can build up the number of workers it has and reward fairly the workers who have grown in their talents and skills during their time with the company. One way to achieve this goal is by creating a trial apprenticeship program before launching a full-scale version of it – which is another one of the company's goals.

As stated above, Amazig Leathers will create an arts advocacy center and leather apprenticeship program by 2020. The purpose for the center is for the artisans to have a

central location to work out of, and the apprenticeship program is aimed for current artisans to train new recruits who show talent but may not have the technical abilities. The apprenticeship program helps Moroccans develop their skill and, if they show they can do the work, they are then hired to be an artisan with Amazig. The people in Morocco are known for their craftsmanship, and the advocacy center would allow the artisans to work together to come up with new design ideas and work more efficiently on producing the current products. It will also be a necessity to have a central location in order to expand the business to physical retail locations in the United States.

Amazig Leathers will update its business plan by June of 2015 to include the current status of the company as a whole and progress made toward long-term goals. Since the first version of the business plan was written, a lot has changed including the location of the Amazig office, the products available, the target market and other major areas that need to be more fully explained and developed in the business plan.

Strategies

Amazig Leathers aims to appeal to young professionals and to gain a reputation among its target customers of being an ethical producer that makes high quality leather goods. The target market gains value from interacting with Amazig both from the products received and the company's ethical contribution. There are two possible target markets that the company can target.

For the first target market, the primary source of value is from the ethical aspect of the business. The company website and communications focus on the positive impact social enterprises have on people it interacts with, and encourages customers to use their buying power to support ethically made products. This provides the customers value

because they can feel good about making a purchase with Amazig, knowing they are helping the artisans and the Moroccan community, and they are supporting other ethical business practices. A secondary source of value for these customers is that the product they receive from Amazig is handmade by top-notch artisans who put effort and care into every product they make. The raw materials are purchased from the community that Amazig contributes to, and are bought because of their durability and quality.

There is also a second target market that places more value on the fact that the products are handmade and of high quality, and that they are made ethically is just an added bonus but not a deciding factor. For these customers, there should also be information on the website and other platforms used so people looking to make a purchase can compare Amazig to other options and make a decision. Thorough information should be available to the customer so they know where the leather comes from, why it is of higher quality than another business, how long it takes an artisan to hand-make each bag and other relevant information. In this way, this market can find the information they need to see it is a good product. When they find out that it is ethically made, it may be a secondary source of value but not a main factor when deciding to purchase.

As previously stated, the target market for Amazig Leathers is mostly women, ages 21 to 35, college educated with an income between \$35,000 and \$75,000. These customers have either newly entered the professional world or have begun to get established there, and place an importance on social enterprises and how the goods they purchase are produced. The company has also started expanding the products available

in an effort to appeal to an increased number of male customers – one example being the suspenders now available from the latest product line released.

The psychographics – the personality, values, opinions, attitudes, interests and lifestyles – of the target market is another main segmentation tool for the business. Unlike many other segments of the market, Amazig Leathers aims to appeal directly to those consumers who are willing to actively look for products who follow what they believe to be ethical business practices. These customers tend to be more vested in how the employees are treated and how the company operates, rather than in the actual product itself. The attitude is often a willingness and resilience to stick up for a cause they strongly believe in, and will protest those that go against what they believe is right. While many customers will purchase based purely on lowest prices, the customers who will purchase Amazig products usually have intense brand loyalty in support of not only the quality of the product, but also the way the business is run.

With a social enterprise, there are often strongly held opinions about which businesses act morally and which do not, so it is important for Amazig as a new business to establish itself among the group of ethical businesses, and prove its ethical values and practices by providing detailed, accurate information for those looking to purchase. Customers with this mindset tend to purchase from businesses with similar values in all aspects in their lives, so providing them with suggestions for where they can purchase ethical products in other industries could help Amazig gain trust among these customers and develop partnerships with other businesses. This also gives the company an opportunity to expand on collaborators for the business, and show collaborators how Amazig can provide value to them.

In researching neighborhoods in Knoxville, Tennessee who fit in with the target demographics and psychographics, and speaking with Brandi, there are a variety of neighborhoods that are good targets for the business. Specifically, the neighborhoods of Fourth and Gill and Old North Knoxville are promising because of the young professional demographic, as well as the statistics for the income and education level. For example, in Old North Knoxville, 72 percent of the population has completed between some college and a graduate degree, according to the National Association of Realtors and verified by doing research on several other realty sites. The age distribution fits the target demographic, with about 38 percent of the community being between the ages of 20 and 39, and about 32 percent of the households making an income of between \$30,000 and \$74,000. Other communities outside of Knoxville that would be beneficial for Amazig to target, that have similar statistics to the target segment, include much of the city of Nashville and Chattanooga, Tennessee and Asheville, North Carolina.

The core competency of the business is tied inextricably with the reason for its anticipated success: the business model itself. Amazig Leathers' most crucial value in the business is creating positive experiences for every stakeholder – the employees, the artisans, the customers and everyone else who interacts with the company and its representatives. Customers can often perceive how they are viewed by a company and, in purchasing from Amazig, they are treated like a person and not a means to an end of just making a profit at any cost. The target segment can appreciate that the business works toward helping the artisans and their communities by reinvesting some of the profits back to them as well – providing value for the collaborators on the Moroccan side of the business. As stated in the situational analysis, the market for ethical purchases is growing

and is becoming a more important aspect of purchasing for many customers. The target market of has an estimated increasing market size in the millions, as the business is starting to expand to appeal to more men, people earning college degrees is increasing and the importance placed on purchasing ethically has grown – as stated and discussed in the situational analysis.

The positioning statement of the business for the first target market – who place most of the product’s value in the ethical process – is one that is conscientious to both the ethics and quality of the product: Amazig Leathers is a people-centered company that is focused on integrity. We are creative and innovative in how we interact with people, the stories we tell and the products we make, and are committed to communicating hard truths to diverse people.

The second positioning statement – targeting those who place more emphasis on the quality of the product rather than the process behind the production – focuses more on the tangible qualities they receive as customers: Amazig Leathers provides high quality, versatile, ethically produced products that encourage adventure and authenticity. We nurture a learning community of conscious customers by providing products that allow ordinary people and everyday activities to be change agents around the world.

Tactics

Amazig Leathers has several goals to increase the business and brand awareness in both the short-term and long-term. The first goal is to get the products into 15 to 20 small boutiques in the United States by 2018. The company will achieve this by offering incentives to boutiques by giving them a discounted rate if they order or sell a certain number of bags. For example, if a boutique orders 20 or more bags, they could receive

25 percent off the purchase, giving them a bigger profit margin and more willing to stock the products.

Amazig could also offer the supplementary service of customer relations to those who stock the products. If a customer had a problem with a product, they could contact Amazig instead of the boutique, giving the stores one less concern to deal with. This is an important draw to convince stores to carry the products, because it can be very time consuming to have to deal with customers who are unsatisfied with the products and makes your store or boutique less credible for carrying great products. If the customer instead goes directly to the company, the store doesn't have to deal with this side of the process and it puts more pressure on Amazig to keep customers happy instead of the small business owners who are just selling the products and not producing them.

The company also has the goal of building credibility with customers by sharing the artisans' stories and telling customers about the Moroccan culture on the website and other social media platforms when Brandi is in Morocco from 2015 to 2017. This will be accomplished by meeting with artisans for two to three hours on a semi-monthly basis to get to know them on a personal level and share their stories to build credibility with customers. Brandi will be the one to carry this out, as she is moving to Morocco at the beginning of 2015 for two years.

Since all the artisans are located in either Fez or Marrakech, in the same city as or close to where the materials are purchased, she can travel to the artisans' homes where they make the bags, see how they work and get to know them personally by spending this time with them. After getting to know them more, she can then ask their permission to share their stories with the customers to make the bags more personal and the artisans

more relatable, as this is one of the company's core competencies. This will also help drive traffic to the website, as customers will likely visit Amazig's site to read about the people making their products.

Additionally, Brandi can build credibility with customers by taking pictures and video that show what the Moroccan culture is like. During her time there, she will write a weekly blog to show her customers the similarities and differences between American and Moroccan lifestyles. Pictures and videos can give better examples, along with Brandi's written explanations from an American perspective, to show her customers that the people who are making their products are not so different and deserve to be treated ethically and with respect – which could help open their eyes to why they should be purchasing ethically made products and become loyal customers of Amazig Leathers.

Amazig's third goal is to recruit 15 to 20 more Moroccan artisans by 2019. This can be accomplished by asking current artisans to make recommendations for people who are trained in the craft and who may be good for the company to recruit. Since Brandi will be living in Morocco, she can also search for artisans who are interested and capable. Absetic, the lead artisan in Morocco, is also very familiar with the area and the people, and would be a good resource for recruiting purposes.

Creating a smaller version of an apprenticeship program could also help Amazig recruit more artisans for the future. It would also help in working out potential issues before launching a full-scale apprenticeship program and advocacy center as part of the company goals later on. In this way, the company could see what is and isn't successful in creating the program and recruiting artisans for the program, so that when it is launched officially it has a better chance at being successful.

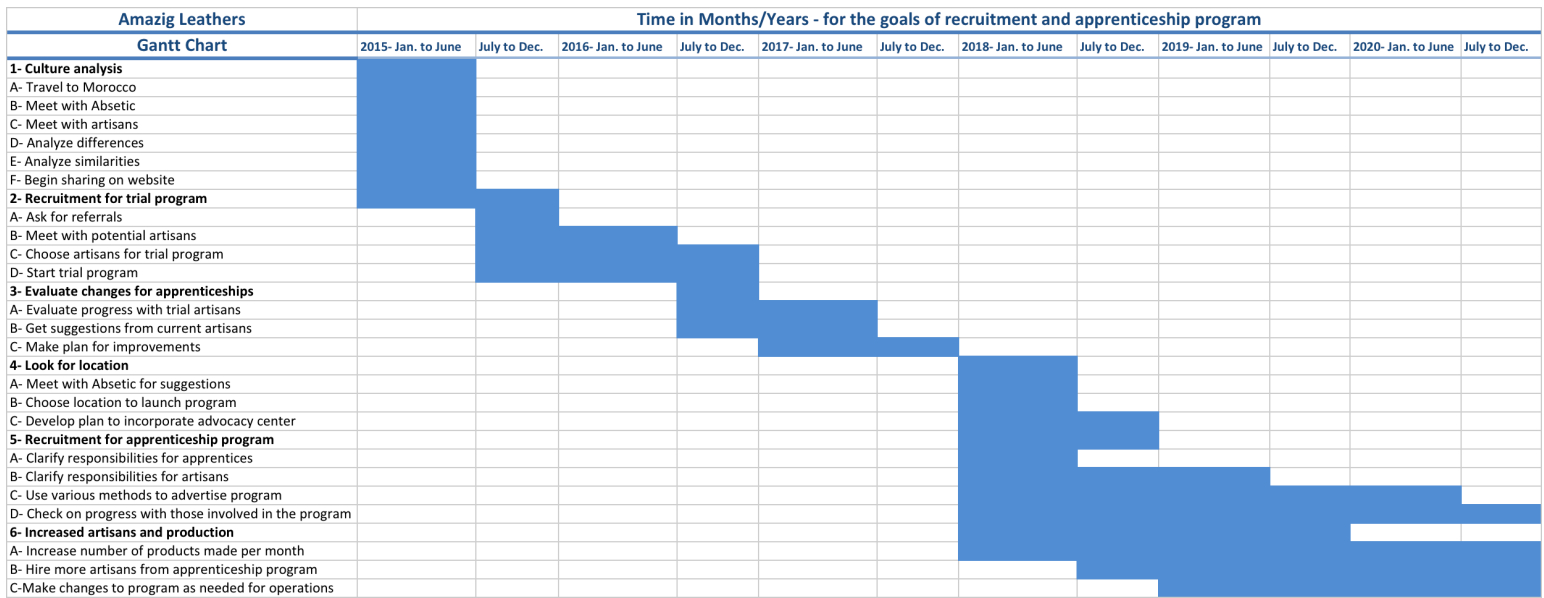
As briefly discussed, another step toward recruitment is incorporating the company's fourth goal of creating an arts advocacy center and leather apprenticeship program by 2020. The center will be established – after working out the issues beforehand by trying out the program with a few artisans – by finding a central location and building that fits Amazig's needs in terms of space and price. Again, Absetic would be a good resource to work with in this process. After finding a location, Brandi and the Amazig artisans will need to spread the word in the area that this program is available, explain what aspiring artisans can gain from joining it and tell those interested more about what they will be doing in the program. This can be done through word of mouth, referrals or using other methods.

The final goal for the company is to update the Amazig Leathers business plan by June of 2015 to include the current status of the company as a whole and what progress has been made toward long-term goals. The current plan is out of date about the location of the business, the products that are available, the target market and several other major areas. The update can be accomplished by looking through the past business plan, identifying what has changed and taking current information into account to make revisions.

Implementation

When beginning to implement the goals that Amazig Leathers is working toward, it is important for the business to plan ahead, take the right steps in order and have a time frame for when each task should be accomplished. In particular, two of the company goals tie together and depend on each other to be carried out successfully – the goals of recruiting more artisans and creating an apprenticeship program and arts advocacy center.

The Gantt chart below gives the company an idea of what steps should be taken so that these two goals can be carried out, starting with getting to know more about the culture so that Brandi can work with the artisans more effectively, and ending with increased production and artisans being hired to widen the company’s distribution.



Though only two tactics are mapped out in detail with a Gantt chart, each tactic should be carefully thought out with a similar step by step process to ensure they are completed in a timely fashion and that nothing is being overlooked. Mapping out each step and setting a time frame to keep track of progress is important in getting goals accomplished in the specified time period.

With the steps in the chart, the company can also work toward its goal of making getting its products stocked in 15 to 20 small boutiques in the Knoxville area by 2018. This goal can only be achieved if Amazig can build up its infrastructure to be able to handle orders from these businesses in a timely fashion. By recruiting more artisans and creating a trial, and eventually full-scale, apprenticeship program, the business will get the amount of artisans it needs to be able to continue its growth.

Once Brandi has expanded upon her current knowledge of the artisans and Moroccan culture, she can begin recruitment for the trial version of the apprenticeship program. This would entail getting referrals from the current artisans, choosing artisans who show potential for the program and working with the current artisans on techniques to train their apprentices.

After trying out some artisans and the program itself for a year or more, a thorough evaluation should be created into how the program went from the perspectives of the artisans and the apprentices. This way, Amazig can start to work out most of the issues that have come up in the trial program and change it when launching the full apprenticeship program with more artisans and apprentices.

While in the evaluation process, Brandi and Absetic should begin looking into a possible location that would fit their current and future needs for the apprenticeship program and arts advocacy center. Since all the current, and probably future, artisans live in one of two cities in Morocco, that should be taken into account when choosing a location. It is also important to keep in mind outside factors that could affect the business, such as politics, economics, transportation and taxes in America and Morocco.

Once a location has been chosen, Amazig Leathers should advertise the availability of the program through appropriate methods in the area, such as word of mouth, fliers, etc. The business should continue to expand the program until they have reached the number of artisans needed for future production – depending on how many retailers the products are in, how much the business has grown and other similar factors. Changes should be made as needed to improve operations in the apprenticeship program and the business as a whole.

Control

In order to confirm that goals are on their way to being met on time, Amazig Leathers will utilize several marketing controls. It is important to keep track of the progress for each goal so that potential problems can be identified and fixed earlier on in the process. Throughout each year, Amazig Leathers will check up on the progress of each goal. If a goal is not where it should be, the reason why should be communicated and ideas for solutions should be discussed. If, even with possible solutions, the goal will not be met on time, a revised plan of action should be created to set a new deadline that incorporates a more realistic time frame based on past progress, including ideas to speed up the process if deemed necessary.

The first goal of expanding product availability by getting products stocked in 15 to 20 small boutiques in the Knoxville area of the United States by 2018 will be evaluated every six months. Progress should include building relationships with business owners in the area, deciding what supplementary services or discounts should be offered to encourage retailers to stock the product and evaluate how big of an impact discounts for retailers will have on Amazig's profits. Since the company is looking to get the products just in small businesses, it is important to make connections with those owners in the area and show them the value of the products and what value will be added to their small business if they stock Amazig products. The company should set milestones, such as having the products in five more stores each year until the goal is met.

The second goal of sharing the artisans' stories from 2015 to 2017 and telling customers about the Moroccan culture on the website and other social media platforms will be evaluated every month. Since a tactic of this goal, and the tangible piece of this

goal, is to write a weekly blog post and take pictures and videos of the country and culture, it is important to evaluate whether progress is being made on a more regular basis. This is one of the short-term goals, so if the artisans' stories aren't being added to the website or Brandi isn't posting a blog on a regular basis, the issues can be identified and solved early on during her time in Morocco. To keep this goal on track, Brandi will work with Absetic to keep her accountable and check that she is posting on the website and social media pages regularly.

The third and fourth goal will be evaluated together every six months since the success of one ties in closely with accomplishing the other. The third goal of recruiting 15 to 20 more artisans by 2019 will be evaluated by finding out how many prospects for new artisans there are and starting the apprenticeship program on a trial basis. The fourth goal of creating an arts advocacy center and apprenticeship program by 2020 will be evaluated by identifying what was and was not successful in the trial program and making changes before launching the center. If the trial was unsuccessful, there should be investigation as to why and a second trial should be done with the changes made before becoming too invested into a full apprenticeship program. A milestone for this goal will be to identify three possible candidates for the trial program by June of 2015 and to find a possible location for the arts advocacy center and apprenticeship program by January of 2018.

The final goal of updating the Amazig Leathers business plan by June of 2015 to include the current status of the company as a whole and progress made toward long-term goals will be evaluated on a yearly basis. While this is a short-term goal, the process should not be as time-consuming as the other goals for the business and therefore need

not be monitored as closely as the other goals. While the business plan needs major updates since it was first created, a future goal for the business after completing an update by June of 2015 should be to look through the business plan annually and update it as needed so that large changes – such as the ones that currently need to be made – are being consistently updated in the plan.

Conclusion

Overall, Amazig Leathers is still a new business that has to have a main focus on marketing to grow its customer base and get the brand name and image better known. The business model is very unique compared to many companies that make similar products, giving the company a competitive edge over many other businesses. With Brandi going to Morocco for several years beginning in 2015, it will be easier to grow the business by working with the people personally, by developing good business practices from the operational side of things and by recruiting more artisans to make the products. With these goals, Amazig Leathers will be able to grow its infrastructure so that it can make more products, get its products in small boutiques so customers can interact personally with them and expand its marketing communications. The company is in a growing industry, so with more emphasis on communicating the unique business model, ethical emphasis and high-quality products, Amazig Leathers can create a successful business and loyal customer base.