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The "d'you" story: gearing the startup during the pandemic

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Publication date: 12 August 2022 Permissions

ALTMETRICS

CASE TEACHING NOTES

Abstract

Learning outcomes

This case focuses on the scaling up of the business. The students/the users of the case will be able to understand the following:1. to analyse the present state of the business to identify the actions necessary for scaling up;2. awareness of the leadership styles demonstrated by the entrepreneurs to grow the business;3. the concept of pivoting for business expansion; and4. organisation building and life cycles for business growth.

Case overview/synopsis

Shamika was a lawyer by profession and had a successful career with leading law firms in India, North America and Hong Kong. She was passionate about beauty and skincare and developed a keen interest in that business. Shamika extensively researched brand management, supply chain and production. She had a burning desire to be an entrepreneur in the skincare business. So, she founded the brand "d'you".The skin care industry in India had seen massive growth. There was a huge increase in people's interest in cosmetics because of the rapid rise of the middle class. The skincare industry was dominated by firms offering various herbal products. Multiple product categories and a large amount of information confused the end-consumers. Shamika identified an opportunity to offer a skincare product to eliminate the need for a consumer to use multiple serums and compete with products of repute from the international market.South Korea was the top manufacturing hub for skincare products for all leading international brands. Shamika approached many manufacturers there to produce a unique formulation for her. It was challenging to get them interested because of the lack of big orders and the language barrier. Phoenix Cosmetics, a top R&D lab, agreed to partner with Shamika.In spite of severe opposition from her family, Shamika established d'you. She had to figure out customs duties, imports and food and drug regulations. She had to get specialists on board early to avoid time and cost overruns. To be cost-effective, Shamika innovated her promotion strategy. A special airless pump packaging from South Korea was finalised for the product.The pandemic outbreak, national lockdown and pressures of trying to run the business alone were very taxing for Shamika. She struggled to manage the timelines with various agencies, engage with Phoenix and maintain a steady flow of imports from South Korea.After the relaxation of lockdown, Shamika launched "Hustle", an age- and gender-neutral solution to the skincare woes, in October 2020. She extensively used digital marketing and social media for product promotion and set high service standards. Hustle was recognised in micro beauty awards as the best serum in India. The leading fashion magazines reviewed it very positively. The sales zoomed up.Shamika initiated discussions with venture capitalists (VCs) to scale up. VCs, though positive, were surprised that she had no prior background in skincare. She strategised to create new products with Phoenix, who now desired to collaborate with her after the success of Hustle.Shamika felt the need to expand her team because of the workload stress. She followed the rolling business plan, allowing an immediate course correction because of the dynamic business scenario. She desired to delegate day-to-day operations to the professionals. She would mainly focus on strategising. Shamika was raring to grapple with the challenge of scaling up the business.

Complexity academic level

This case can be used in courses on organisation behaviour and human resource management in postgraduate and graduate management programmes. It can also be used in general and development management courses and during executive education programmes to teach entrepreneurial leadership and organisation theory.

Supplementary materials

Teaching notes are available for educators only.

Subject code

CSS 6: Human resource management

Keywords

Entrepreneurship Organisational behaviour Human resource management Corporate growth

Acknowledgements

The author sincerely thanks Ms Shamika Haldipurkar, Founder & Director, d'you, Brunch Beauty Pvt. Ltd. for providing the data and Dr Suhas Haldipurkar for providing further insights for writing this case.Disclaimer. This case is written solely for educational purposes and is not intended to represent successful or unsuccessful managerial decision-making. The author may have disguised name; financial and other recognisable information to protect confidentiality.

Citation

Ajgaonkar, M. (2022), "The "d'you" story: gearing the startup during the pandemic", , Vol. 12 No. 2. https://doi.org/10.1108/EEMCS-06-2021-0198

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