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An Evaluation of Challenges and Opportunities for Western Heads East [2017]

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Executive Summary

Western Heads East (WHE) is “a collaboration between Western staff, students, faculty, and African partners using probiotic food to contribute to health and sustainable development”. The primary objective of this program is to establish a sustainable grassroots social enterprise using the health benefits of probiotic yoghurt in order to improve health of Tanzanian community while empowering local women to become business owners and entrepreneurs. This report investigates the challenges, opportunities, local conditions and previous works to recommend a potential intervention that could support the sustainability and the intended value of probiotic yoghurt kitchens.

There are two main end users for the WHE programs: the yoghurt kitchen clients, and the “Yoghurt Mamas” themselves. The clients of the yoghurt kitchens come from all sections of society, including HIV+, malnourished, ill, and low-income. “Yoghurt Mamas” refer to women who operate the yoghurt kitchens in their communities and provide education on health, nutrition, HIV prevention and domestic abuse.

Two of the challenges come from the end users themselves are the misconception by clients that the yoghurt is a medication, and a negative cultural attitude toward women, resulting in decreased creativity and independence. In addition, poverty, women and children’s social hierarchy, lack of education, government restrictions poor infrastructure and technology in the local community makes the health problem even more complex. To further diagnose the health problem, previous reports on yoghurt kitchens businesses by the African Probiotic Yoghurt Network, past WHE Intern Reports and the Oyugis. Kenya Project were examined before designing an intervention.

Based on research and collaborative teamwork, a three-pronged approach was essential for mitigating the current challenges and enhancing the success of the WHE kitchens. They include creating a strategic marketing plan, improving communication among the WHE team

and the Yoghurt Mamas, and empowering women to help them discover and find value in their strengths. To deliver the intervention, some of the major actions include:

- Design simple, eye-catching, visually appealing posters and using community leaders as a channel of word-of-mouth promotion.
- Improve the packaging of the probiotic yoghurt sachets, including the benefits and the instructions that is easy for users to understand and follow.
- Enhance the communication between the WHE organization, interns and Mamas by using the Internal Communication Matrix.
- Facilitate a workshop focusing on business literacy skills for empowering the Mamas.

Some metrics to evaluate the progress of the three-pronged intervention include:

- Tracking the channel of promotion that the clients experienced such as word-of-mouth or posters.
- Feedback on the relative success or failure of the yogurt kitchen in relation to the previous year (when ICM was not implemented) from the Mamas.
- Questionnaires and feedback from the Mamas after the business literacy workshop

Define The Challenges

END USERS

There are two main end users for the WHE programs: the yoghurt kitchen clients, and the “Yoghurt Mamas” themselves. First, the clients of the yoghurt include men, women, children, individuals who are HIV+, and individuals suffering from some various health concerns (malnutrition, diarrheal disease, constipation, UTIs, bacterial vaginosis). These existing clients can be generally characterized as having “limited knowledge” about the yogurt they consume (Whaling et al., 2012). This characterization of the end users led to a common problem: 38% of participants thought that the probiotic yoghurt was a medication, and 15% stopped taking their antiretroviral therapy (ART) for the treatment of HIV (Whaling et al., 2012).

The second main user of WHE is the “Yoghurt Mamas” themselves which, according to the WHE website, is a local term of respect and affection for the women who operate probiotic yoghurt kitchens in their communities. It is through their hard work and dedication that yoghurt kitchens have become not only businesses, but hubs of community life which serve to disseminate information about health, nutrition, HIV prevention and domestic abuse. The Mamas may be characterized as hard working and dedicated to their family and their community. However, due to complex cultural and gender norms, the mamas have sometimes been characterized by others as “want[ing] APYN to provide everything for them” rather than making their own decisions about their businesses or finding independent solutions (Texeira, & Wiedeman, 2015).

CHALLENGES

There are a number of challenges faced by WHE as a whole and, in turn, by the Mamas in their local kitchens. Two of the challenges come from the end users themselves, as mentioned above: (1) the misconception by clients that the yoghurt is a medication, and (2) negative cultural attitudes toward women, resulting in decreased creativity, ownership, and independence.

Other challenges are unique to individual yoghurt kitchens and their local environments. In the Tukwamuane group, the challenges include using the correct concentration of probiotics, finding a packaging solution, and increasing yoghurt distribution. In the Mecco kitchen, challenges include record keeping, and a lack of customer awareness about the benefits of probiotics. In the Upendo Igoma kitchen, challenges include a lack of probiotic use, packaging, and a lack of consistent milk quality. Other general challenges identified by WHE interns in a 2015 report include a lack of accountability about consistent probiotic use and concentration, and the fact that HIV beneficiaries often no longer receive yoghurt (Texeira, & Wiedeman, 2015).

When identifying challenges faced by WHE and the yoghurt kitchens, it is important to include the perspectives of the end users- the Mamas themselves. To this end, some WHE interns spent several months interviewing kitchens to identify their own goals, challenges, and solutions (Trudell, 2013). A summary of the challenges identified by the Mamas themselves can be seen in Exhibit 1 of the Appendix. Briefly, the women identified the root cause of the kitchens' problems as a lack of clear guidelines and actions as an organization. From this lack of organizational capacity, there stems a lack

of technical support to kitchens, which in turn manifests as low economic growth as a business, and an ultimate failure to impact community health.

OPPORTUNITIES

Like the challenges listed above, many of the opportunities facing WHE and the yoghurt kitchens are based on individual kitchens and the local context. In the Tukwamuane group, opportunities include strong sales and high customer loyalty. In Mecco kitchen, opportunities include community involvement and the determination of the Mamas themselves. In Upendo Igoma kitchen, the opportunities include strong sales, a high awareness of probiotic benefits, and a history of using the correct concentrations of probiotics (back when they were used- as they were not used at the time of the report).

Diagnose The Health Problem

SOCIOCULTURAL CONDITIONS

Half of the population lacks access to social interventions including clean water, education, and healthcare services- the majority being women and children (Our Africa, 2017). Women have been traditionally placed in a lower social hierarchy than men and are more likely to drop out of school, to be forced into marriage and to be at higher risk for sexual violence (Our Africa, 2017). Women in Tanzania lack knowledge and skills to gain formal employment and respect in their communities. In addition, for some existing yoghurt kitchens, if the women are perceived to be involved in scandal, they lose credibility in running successful businesses (Trudell, 2013).

CULTURAL CONDITIONS

The lack of trained professionals, supplies, and resources in rural areas has led the people to rely on their local “*mganga*” or traditional healer when they’re sick. This has been a cultural practice for many as it has been commonly integrated in their lifestyles, therefore, proposing the use of probiotics may create tension with their traditional routine (Our Africa, 2017).

SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS:

Poverty and Poor Conditions

One major interaction with rising poverty levels is the increase in poor nutrition among primarily children. The community must firstly be able to afford probiotic yogurt in order to witness nutrition benefits and secondly, the kitchens must have enough financial resources to profitably sustain their services. To worsen the situation, the rise

in food costs forces poor families to be trapped in the poverty cycle (Tanzania Human Development Report, 2014).

Population Dynamics and Urbanization

“At 2.7% per year, Tanzania’s population growth is one of the fastest in the world. Adding 1.2 million people per annum, the country’s population grows ever younger” (Tanzania Human Development Report, 2014). An increase in young people implies that Mamas would have to allocate more time to take care of their children. Another setback in creating a sustainable probiotic yoghurt kitchen would be urbanization. As the urban population grows at a rate of approximately 5% per year, WHE must consider the available resources for the kitchens to successfully operate and make profits in a remote and far area (Tanzania Human Development Report, 2014).

TECHNOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

In the rural Tanzanian setting, the lack of technologies may prevent the success of maintaining the yoghurt kitchens and the optimal efficiency of distributing the probiotic yogurt. For some kitchens, the lack of technical support and repair for refrigerators have been a major hindrance for the kitchens (Trudell, 2013). In addition, the high costs of purchasing and upgrading technological equipment also prevents potential expansion (Tanzania Human Development Report, 2014).

ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

Tanzania is highly recognized for its diverse topography, landscapes and habitats for over 400 species of fauna and 4 million wild animals (Our Africa, 2017). In terms of ecological context, WHE must take the climate, humidity, and topography into

consideration in preparing the yoghurt and in considering customers' means of transportation to the kitchens.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES: POLITICAL CONDITIONS

APYN has emphasized that government policies must be factored in. Based on an internship report, Tanzania Food and Drugs Authority have their own standards that add time and financial costs for their yoghurt kitchen (Trudell, 2013). Engaging with the government, other organizations, and stakeholders would be essential to kick start the social enterprise by getting aid and funding.

POOR INFRASTRUCTURE: TECHNOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

Sharing of electrical meter by many contributed to electrical problems such as power cut off and depletion of gas. Since electricity is critical in operating the kitchens, WHE must prevent the spoilage of milk and yogurt and decrease the waste of an already limited food supply (Trudell, 2013). Poor transport infrastructure would prevent penetration of the accessibility into larger markets and increase the time and costs in distribution (Tanzania Human Development Report, 2014).

PREVIOUS WORKS AND RESULTS

African Probiotic Yoghurt Network Workshop - Mwanza, Tanzania

A workshop conducted by the African Probiotic Yoghurt Network (APYN) for the kitchens in Mwanza, Tanzania focused on capacity building of the APYN staff in order to strategically use Results Based Management as a tool for tracking, collecting and analyzing probiotic kitchen data (Trudell, 2013).

Results of the workshop showed that the Mamas from various kitchens had goals to expand the business by opening more kitchens to improve the health of community

members, but faced challenges such as inadequate transportation, unavailability of yoghurt for ready markets (Trudell, 2013). Finally, through the workshop, the Mamas showed a need for the APYN to support them with additional funding to reach a wider market, to get training on entrepreneurial skills such as how to control finances and on probiotic yogurt processing and packaging (Trndell, 2013).

Oyugis, Kenya Project

In 2010, interns from the Ivey Business School carried out a five-part project in Oyugis, Kenya. Conducted market research and focused-group discussions with consumer showed that consumer preferences were based on the time cost to buy the yoghurt, the purchased quantity, preferred tastes, expiration dates of the yoghurt, and the Mamas (Armstrong et al, 2010).

The capacity to reach a wider market and thereby realize more profits seems to be a challenge cutting across both Kenya and Tanzania. However, the lack of expertise in marketing to improve sales is also a major challenge. In addition, there is evidence of inadequate book/record keepings skills which are essential to ensure sustainability of the projects. This will eventually lead to a wider market, economic growth and increased health benefits (Armstrong et al, 2010).

Design and Deliver an Intervention

Based on the analysis of the local conditions of Tanzania, past projects, current challenges and weakness, a three-pronged approach was suggested. They include: creating a strategic marketing plan, improving communication among the WHE team and the yoghurt Mamas, and empowering the Mamas in discovering their strengths.

MARKETING

Marketing is an effective mechanism that can be utilized to promote awareness of the yoghurt kitchens and the health benefits of probiotic yoghurt within the community and to increase profitability for the Mamas. To implement a marketing plan that can reach the community, it is important to market the yoghurt kitchen and benefits of the yoghurt by placing posters in high-traffic areas, such as bus parks, market halls, and nearby community centers.

These posters may be mostly beneficial when marketing to literate individuals. A study by Viswanathan and colleagues has shown that illiterate consumers usually choose one thing to focus on, such as the price or the product or the packaging of the product (Viswanathan, 2006). Using community leaders to promote through word-of-mouth and confer the health benefits of probiotic yoghurt is essential to reaching this demographic.

Another important factor to consider is to provide a clear and illustrative map to the location of the kitchen with clear contact information for those customers who would like to visit the place and purchase directly. In addition, the packaging must provide a

clear description and emphasize the benefits of probiotics to easily capture the customers.

At the kitchen, Mamas should also educate the clients on the benefits of probiotic yoghurt, encourage the clients to be compliant in drinking the yoghurt, and support the clients on a personal level. Another marketing strategy is to bring attention to the space for counselling, social support and education on entrepreneurship and on diseases awareness (Western Heads East, 2017).

IMPROVED COMMUNICATION

The second solution in our three-pronged approach focuses on improving the communication between WHE as an organization and the interns specifically at the yoghurt kitchen. One of the biggest challenges WHE currently faces is the lack of communication as a whole. Looking closely at reports by a past WHE intern, not learning from previous feedback and unclear vision and roles are specific challenges that should be focused on (Walsh¹, 2015; Walsh², 2015). In 2010, Fiti Sustainability Portfolio had a specific section outlining recommendations for WHE and one of the problems was communication between prior and future interns (Armstrong et al., 2010).

An organization must thrive through its people in order to “promote commitment to the organization, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims” (Welch & Jackson, 2007). A well-recognized article proposed a theory with the potential to improve internal communication that can be applied to the WHE initiative to improve communication (Welch & Jackson, 2007).

The most important feedback comes from the reports that constantly state the lack of communication between prior and future interns (Walsh¹, 2015). After speaking

to Kathleen Walsh herself, she said, “I thought I was the first to identify the challenges with the project, only to find the same things listed in the reports months later”. The paper proposes an Internal Communication Matrix (ICM) that can be used as an “analytical tool which may be applied to the strategic analysis, planning and evaluation of internal communication” (Welch & Jackson, 2007; Fig 2).

Strengths: The Internal Communication Matrix proposed by Welch and Jackson is well researched and well prepared. Therefore, this theory gives WHE a multi-faceted tool to approach internal communication. As a summary and example, if WHE has the goal of improving communication between prior and future interns, they can use the matrix in a variety of ways. This includes, but is not limited to, internal communication between prior interns to ensure future interns understand what has been accomplished and what needs to be accomplished before their term begins (internal line management communication). Under this matrix, there are three other dimensions: internal team peer communication, internal project peer communication, and internal corporate communication. Therefore, examples of policies that can be created include team information tasks for each term, continual update of projection information and issues, and clear and transparent goals, objectives, new developments, activities and achievements, respectively (Welch & Jackson, 2007; Fig 2).

Weaknesses: Although well researched, a quick search on the internet shows that this theory has not been applied to a real-life organization. Therefore, this theory has potential to fail when put into practice. Timing is also an inherent weakness because concerted effort must be put forth in order to properly understand this matrix and apply it to WHE.

Threats: Timing is also an inherent threat because concerted effort must be done in order to properly understand this matrix and apply it to WHE. Therefore, there is the need to delegate resources to ensure proper integration and implementation. If communication processes continued to be de-valued, the application of this matrix will be a threat.

Opportunities: The opportunity exists for a WHE intern to take on the task of improving communication processes by using this matrix. In general, this matrix can give students who want experience in organizational behavior and global health to use their skills in a practical setting.

EMPOWERING WOMEN

The third solution brings it back to the WHE mission statement of “empowering women to become business owners and entrepreneurs”. One of the challenges outlined in the report by Walsh states that there is inconsistent leadership and lack of project ownership. More specifically, with the nature of WHE there is a high turnover rate with the student interns there for only 3-6 months (Walsh¹, 2015). In addition, in Walsh’s second report, she states a lack of accountability of funds where it is difficult to keep track of spending towards the project (Walsh², 2015). Here lies the third innovation - business literacy skills must be instilled in the Mamas, creating an empowerment to become business owners that can be sustainable and adaptive.

USAID has a Business Literacy Program in Nepal that has a lot of the characteristics that this innovation can adopt (USAID¹, 2014). The program has a total of 5 modules: Literacy and Numeracy, Nutrition Education, Life Skills, Entrepreneurial Skills, and Access to Finance. The modules that related most closely to the goals of

WHE are Entrepreneurial skills and Access to Finance, however the other three modules would be beneficial for overall business acumen. Although Nepal's situation is quite different than Kenya's, the idea of teaching business literacy to individuals in a developing country lines up with the mission of WHE.

Strengths: Business literacy creates a strength in the system by changing the status quo of the system and giving the tools to Mamas to prosper and grow without male influence. Rina Chaudhury from Nepal said "I have always had to depend on my husband for money. Who else could I turn to?" (USAID 2014). Through USAID's program, Chaudhury was able to say "today, with my education, I am determined to grow my agricultural business. My self-confidence is higher now" (USAID², 2014). Figure 3 shows an example of a simple income statement that Mamas can learn from the business literacy program to use for their needs of figuring out the amount of sales needed to counteract their costs. Concrete numbers can help give direction to their efforts.

Weaknesses: Part of the experience for WHE interns include the opportunity to be leaders on the ground during their duration (Walsh¹, 2014). Therefore, giving the Mamas their own tools to run the yoghurt kitchens may diminish the role of the WHE interns.

Threats: Perception from the community, especially the men, is something to be aware of. If we give too much autonomy to the women, there may be backlash from the community. (research more)

Opportunities: Similar to solution #2, this gives an opportunity for WHE interns that want to use their business background in a teaching setting. They can be the ones to set up the program, implement it, and teach it. This opens up the breadth of positions in

WHE and creates more opportunities for interns that are willing to apply their skills in a real setting.

Test the Intervention

MARKETING

After marketing through posters and community leaders has been implemented, tracking the effect of this should focus on whether or not there is an increased trend of individuals going to the kitchens, and buying yoghurt from the kitchens. Individuals should also be asked how they heard about the kitchen - whether it was word of mouth, posters, a community leader, or some other form. Tracking this information can allow interns to see how effective the marketing strategies are, which areas of marketing had the strongest effect, and can help to identify weaker or ineffective areas of marketing in relation to the promotion of the yoghurt kitchens.

IMPROVED COMMUNICATION

To ensure effective communication between interns, implementing the ICM model will be crucial. In order to ensure that internal line management is efficiently occurring, an opportunity for past and present interns to verbally discuss in-person issues, successes, and specific information related to kitchens is required. Although intern reports written by past interns are available to current interns, there seems to still be a miscommunication between interns, as many report the same problems pertaining to yoghurt kitchens year after year despite written recommendations to avoid these problems in the future. Therefore, facilitating a space, such as a workshop, where interns can actually talk to each other face-to-face can perhaps generate in-depth conversation and outline underlying reasons for issues that persist.

Feedback on relative success or failure of the yogurt kitchen in relation to the previous year (when ICM was not implemented) from the Mamas after the implementation of the ICM should be monitored. This is because this theory has not yet been applied to a real-life organization, and feedback from all stakeholders that are affected by the implementation of the ICM model (such as Mamas and interns) can serve as a means to determine what should/ shouldn't be done, if the ICM model should continue to be implemented, or if another theory should be tried instead. Isolating the benefits and differences that arise in the three dimensions (internal team peer communication, internal team project communication, and internal corporate communication) through feedback from the interns can also be used to determine ICM's role in increased communication between WHE and interns at kitchens.

BUSINESS LITERACY SKILLS

The five modules, with a specific focus on entrepreneurial skills and access to finance, should be taught to the Mamas using representatives from WHE alongside with help from someone in the community. This would allow for the effective transfer of information and the positive reception of information from WHE by the Mamas. To track the outcomes and success of implementing the USAID Business Literacy Program, the productivity of kitchens in relation to profitability should be compared between similar kitchens that are implementing the model and those that are not. In addition, to ensure that the Business Literacy Program is being properly implemented asking the Mamas to write feedback on how the implementation of the program has changed the yoghurt kitchens profitability will allow for a user perspective that a WHE intern may not be able to capture, and also help to determine if any problems are occurring with the

implementation (such as the Mamas being unsure how to implement, the implementation being unsuccessful, or the Mamas struggling with one of the modules).

Appendix

PROBLEM TREE FLOW CHART

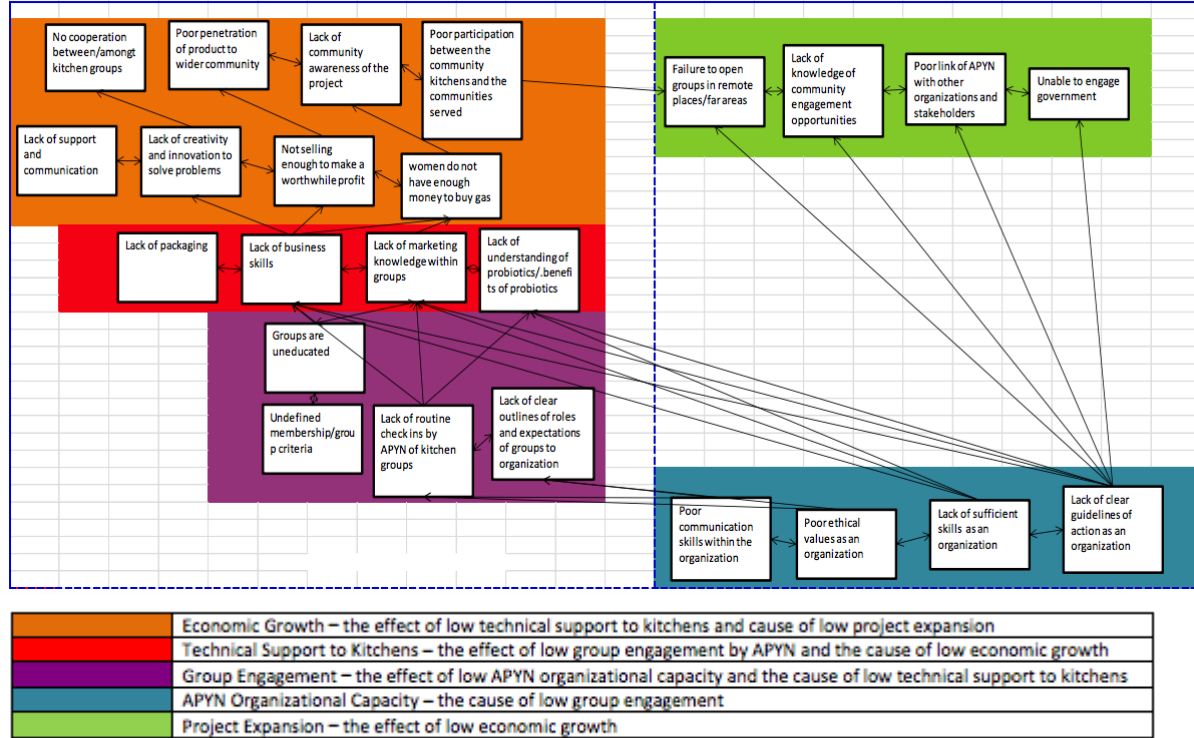


Figure 1: Problem Tree Flowchart taken from the Emily Trudell Internship Report, 2013

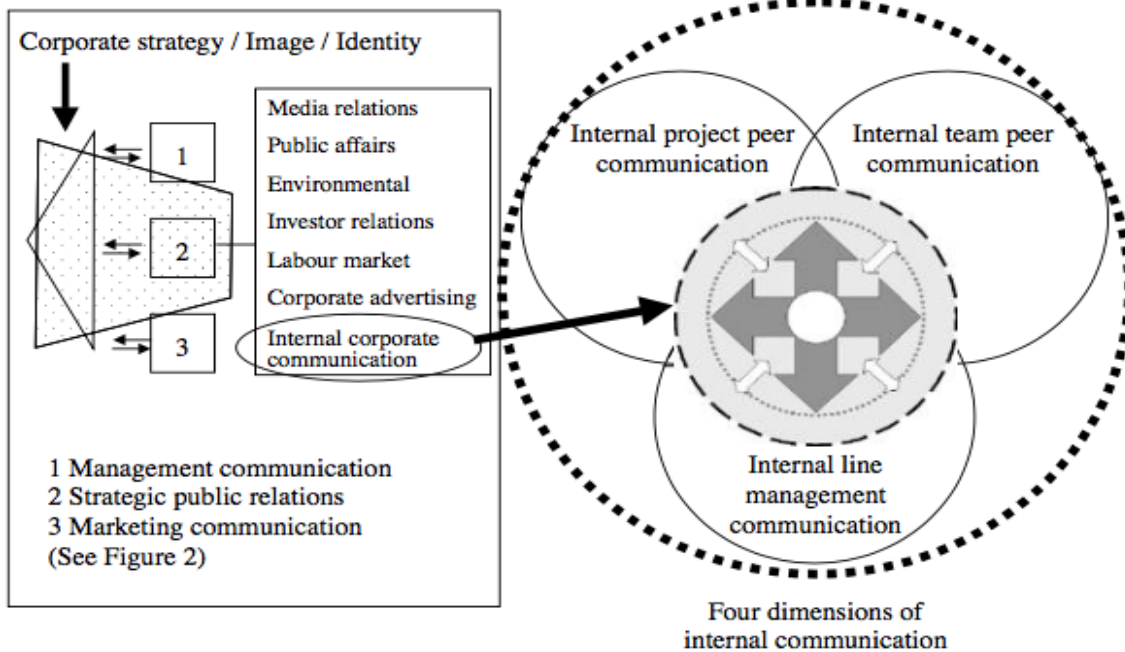


Figure 2. Internal Communication Matrix

Income Statement	Monthly (KSH)
Revenues and Income	
Sales of Products	x
Costs	
<i>Start-up costs</i>	
Large Stationary Kitchen Equipment	190,800
Small Moveable Kitchen Equipment	42,775
Office	13,500
Initial Licenses and employee training	2,400
<i>Monthly Costs</i>	
Raw Materials	125,936
Packaging	52,951
Salaries	22,000
Transportation, Gas, Electricity, and Water	50,840
<i>Subtotal</i>	501,202
Net Profit (Loss)	0
CashFlow	0

Figure 3. Sample income statement to determine required sales - numbers taken from Walsh, 2015

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