

THE NEW AND OLD STARTER CLOTHING COMPANY: A STRATEGIC CASE STUDY OF NOSTALGIA

Brian Soebbing, Chad Seifried, Khirey Walker, Louisiana State University

Adam Pfeegor, Mississippi State University

2015

The sport apparel market has experienced significant growth over the past 30 years allowing numerous companies the opportunity to establish brand awareness, recognition, and loyalty regarding their products and services (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2014). The present case is a profile case regarding the history of the Starter Corporation, whose iconic jackets were one of the most recognizable pieces of merchandise in the 1980s and 1990s. After filing for bankruptcy just prior to 2000, Starter executives expressed a desire to stay relevant in the sports apparel industry. One way is to reintroduce the Starter Jackets, a product that generated close to \$400 million in revenues per year as late as 1997 (Lioz, 1997). From an observational perspective, the primary advantage the Starter brand appears to enjoy today surfaces with the feeling of nostalgia experienced by consumers wearing, or viewing, Starter brand clothing. The focus of this case is on recognizing the opportunity to consider the impact of nostalgia on brand awareness and the influence of identification with a fan nation toward product consumption.

“Best CASE” in the Proceedings, Western Casewriters Association 2015 Conference

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT: DIVERSITY STILL INGITES DISCRIMINATION

Jewhan Yoon & Steve McGuire

California State University: Los Angeles

Located in a “melting pot” of ethnic communities, the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) was the second largest municipal firefighting force in the United States protecting over four million people. Founded in 1886, the Department’s Engine Company No. 1 was established in 1887.

In 1972, the federal government filed a lawsuit against Los Angeles claiming that the city discriminated against Blacks, Latinos, and Asians. As a result, in 1974, the Department adopted an Affirmative Action Program and created a Minority Recruitment Unit to improve the recruitment of members of underrepresented demographic groups.

Although the LAFD in recent years had members representing many ethnic groups in the city, the LAFD faced many ongoing issues regarding recruitment of women, harassment, race discrimination, and changing its male-dominated culture to embrace diversity. A series of events, including numerous lawsuits that took a toll on the City’s taxpayers, hindered the growth of minorities in the LAFD program. Should the LAFD have continued to invest time, energy and millions of dollars on recruitment efforts? If so, how could it have modified its “culture” to embrace diversity?

“Best CASE” in the Proceedings, Western Casewriters Association 2015 Conference

HUY FONG FOODS' SRIRACHA: IRWINDALE TURNS UP THE HEAT
Neda Abousaidi, Natsuki Tamekuni & Catherine Gandara (student authors)
Stephen McGuire & Kern Kwong (faculty supervisors)
California State University: Los Angeles

In 2014, the City Council of Irwindale, California considered a resolution to call Huy Fong Foods, Inc. a “public nuisance,” and filed a lawsuit against the company for failing to address environmental concerns. Huy Fong Foods was the manufacturer of Sriracha, a very popular hot sauce made from jalapeno peppers. Residents of Irwindale had complained to the City that the strong odors of the peppers emanating from the factory constituted pollution, and endangered their health and the quality of their lives. David Tran, the company founder and CEO, had to consider (a) installing expensive filters that might or might not reduce the pepper odor, (b) moving the factory to another location, or (c) finding another solution to the dilemma. The State of Texas was aggressively pursuing California businesses and offering tax incentives to those who relocated to that state. The case provides a description of the company and its industry, as well as direct quotes from multiple interviews with Irwindale residents and City officials.

“Best MENTORED CASE,” Western Casewriters Association 2015 Conference

FIRST ANNUAL JOURNAL OF CASE RESEARCH AND INQUIRY
PUBLISHED CASE AWARD
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MOUAT'S TRADING COMPANY
Anthony Bell & Andrew Fergus,
Thompson Rivers University

Kevin Bell had been the General Manager of his family's business, Mouat's Trading Company, for over 14 years and was ready to retire. Mouat's Trading Company owned and operated three retail stores, and leased space to 33 other retailers in Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, Canada. The company had been a family-run business for over a century. Over the past three years, Bell had been informally searching for a successor to manage the company. Bell needed to consider several factors in deciding on a suitable replacement: Should his successor be a family member? Should his successor be from, or have lived on Salt Spring Island? Should his successor be required to invest in the company? Bell also foresaw major changes coming at the board level. In 2013, the board was a tight knit group (the majority of whom were Bell's brothers), but the board was aging, and it wouldn't be long before control was transferred to the next generation of the family. Bell wondered if there was anything he ought to be doing now to make this transition a smooth one.

“Best PUBLISHED CASE in JCRI”, Western Casewriters Association 2015 Conference

THE LOVE SMITTEN DIRECTOR
June M. L. Poon
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

In August 2012, William Wong, the CEO of Zejaya Corporation faced a dilemma. He had just been told some disturbing news about Larry Pang, his executive director, which may or may not have legal implications for the company in relation to sexual harassment. Two of his managers had confided in him that Linda Tan, one of his managers who had recently resigned, had asked them to tell him about Pang's repeated attempts to court her in the past several months. Several questions crossed Wong's mind. Should he talk to Tan to verify the story that he had heard secondhand or confront Pang directly? Should employees be reprimanded or disciplined for attempting to pursue a romantic relationship at work? Should he do nothing given that Tan was no longer an employee of the company? But, if he did nothing, how would the employees who have already heard of the story react? Would they spread more gossip? If word got out to more employees, what would be the consequences? Would it affect Pang's working relationship with the employees? How would Tan react if he ignored the issue? Would she decide to file sexual harassment charges against the company out of resentment?

“Best CASE” in the Proceedings, Western Casewriters Association 2014 Conference

ED BLOCK COURAGE AWARD FOUNDATION: HOW DO YOU DEFINE COURAGE?

Dave Copenhaver (student authors);
Keith H. Sakuda (faculty advisor)
University of Hawaii West Oahu

The Ed Block Courage Award Foundation was created with the mission of improving the lives of neglected and abused children. Each year the Foundation bestows its Courage Awards to National Football League Players who best demonstrate the traits of courage, compassion, commitment, community, and character to become ambassadors of the organization. Trouble emerged for the Foundation when the Philadelphia Eagles select Michael Vick, a convicted felon, as their 2009 recipient of the Courage Award. Vick's troubles with the law and reported history of animal cruelty and abuse appeared to clash with the Foundation's mission of protecting victims of abuse, violence, and neglect. As a non-profit organization dependent on donations and sponsorships, the Foundation could not afford to alienate its financial supporters, but it also needed to maintain a strong relationship with the National Football League and its players.

William David, General Manager of the Foundation, must make a decision in terms of protecting the reputation of the Foundation while considering the impacts on stakeholders. Should he honor the selection of Vick? If so, how does he explain his decision to the donors and sponsors who fund the Foundation? Should he reject the selection of Vick? If so, how does he explain his decision to the players who unanimously voted Vick as their recipient of the award?

“Best MENTORED CASE,” Western Casewriters Association 2014 Conference

FIRST ANNUAL SPORTS MANAGEMENT CASE AWARDS

2014

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SKATEISTAN

Gerard Rossy, California State University, Northridge Doreen Shanahan, Margaret Phillips, Andrea Scott, and Nancy Dodd, Pepperdine University

When Oliver “Ollie” Percovich arrived in Kabul Afghanistan in 2007 to join his girlfriend, he had no idea that the three skateboards he brought with him would change his life. More importantly, it would change the lives and expectations of numerous boys and, most significantly, girls in the Afghan capital and beyond. By late 2013, Skateistan had become an international NGO with a mission to “use skateboarding as a tool for empowering youth, to create new opportunities and the potential for change.” Skateistan has expanded beyond its primitive origin in Kabul and currently operates in Cambodia and Mazar-e-Sharif, as well as conducts cultural exchanges with the U. S. , Italy, and Columbia. As Founder and Executive Director of Skateistan, Oliver Percovich evolved from skateboarding for pleasure on the streets of Kabul to skateboarding for purpose as he sought to further deliver on the company’s vision to “grow a sustainable organization that is recognized locally and globally for changing the lives of hundreds of thousands of youth through skateboarding and quality programmes—creating leaders that change the world.” His broad goals were to 1) discern the universal lessons from his Skateistan experiences in Afghanistan that could be applied elsewhere; 2) identify the opportunities and challenges that were unique to the Afghan culture; and 3) leverage that knowledge to cultivate a Skateistan social brand that would symbolize the organization’s core values of “quality, ownership, creativity, trust, respect, and equality.”

“Best SPORTS CASE” in the Proceedings, Western Academy of Casewriters 2014 Conference

EXPERIENCE, LLC: FILLING THE BEST SEATS IN THE HOUSE

Noah Jackson, Ricky Malott, William Strome, and Joe Bisson (student authors);
Nola Agha (faculty advisor)
University of San Francisco

Experience, LLC is a start-up company that sells in-game seat upgrades during live sporting events using text messaging and cell phone apps. From a user’s standpoint, the service offers improved views, closer seats, and a better overall fan experience for a small upgrade fee. From a venue or team standpoint, Experience offers the ability to fill un-used inventory, in some cases by re-selling the seats of no-shows. The outcome is more revenue for teams and better experiences for fans who are then more likely to become return customers.

Experience is looking to expand its services beyond single-game upgrades to a full-season ticket that is based on filling open, but previously sold, inventory. This case illustrates the forces at play in the ticketing industry, describes features of each product, and allows students an opportunity to decide on the product expansion strategy for a fast-growing start-up company.

“Best SPORTS MENTORED CASE,” Western Academy of Casewriters 2014 Conference

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME: A SMALL TOWN GYM'S CHALLENGE

Deborah Walker and Elaine Labach,

Fort Lewis College

2013

This case is designed to encourage students to think critically through a series of issues dealing with the operations of a fitness center in a small town. Although the business was successful, the owners were still facing some typical problems that a gym in a small community faces. Membership had steadily increased, but was tapering off. The gym was located in a small market. Their main problem dealt with the fact that the gym's market niche was the personal service the owners gave to its members. But as the gym continued to grow, giving the depth of personal service their current members were used to receiving was becoming more and more time-consuming and difficult to accomplish. Therefore, how could they continue to motivate existing members and, at the same time, continue to bring in new members while dealing with this service issue? Would the business be as profitable if the owners offered less service and simply sold access and programs the way most gyms do? And, without hiring costly employees, would their current model of contracting with personal trainers and fitness class instructors allow them to grow and give the same personal service they were known for?

“Best CASE” in the Proceedings, Western Academy of Casewriters 2013 Conference

CAFÉ BRITT: A COSTA RICE PRIDE

Issam A. Ghazzawi,

University of La Verne

Café Britt, the Costa Rica's leading provider of gourmet coffee, chocolates, and gifts has been on the verge of the second round of growth. Britt's foreign operations sparked by the success of its foreign international airports' operations, truly transformed the company, and made it a true international company. The initial airport operation began in Lima, Peru in 2005 and continued with the opening of Britt shops in the international airport of the Americas in the capital city of Santo Domingo. Later, in August 2011, services began in the airports of Samaná and Puerto Plata in the Dominican Republic. In January 2012, Britt's CEO Pablo Vargas and the executive management team met to reflect and revisit the growth strategy. Pablo wanted a comprehensive plan that would sustain Britt's explosive growth for the future. The questions before them were straightforward: How could the international expansion opportunities best be managed? What design choice(s) were available to create an effective organizational structure that could serve as a source of the company's competitive advantage?

“Best CASE” in the Proceedings, Western Academy of Casewriters 2013 Conference

KEVA FITNESS WORKOUT

Lauren Solie, California State University, Los Angeles (student author)

Stephen McGuire, California State University, Los Angeles (faculty mentor)

What happens when logic and imagination are combined? For entrepreneur Lauren Solie, it could mean a very lucrative business opportunity. Ms. Solie was the owner and creator of Keva Fitness, a new fitness workout that planned to expand through DVD's, certifications, classes, sportswear and much, much more. Given the challenges of creating, funding and starting a new business, is the risk of producing these DVDs too great? What strengths and weaknesses will Ms. Solie have to be aware of in order to enter and succeed in such a large market? How would she get the \$25,000 in funding needed to produce the fitness DVDs, and should people even invest? Does she possess the necessary skills of an entrepreneur?

“Best MENTORED CASE,” Western Academy of Casewriters 2013 Conference

THE UPPER BIG BRANCH MINE DISASTER

Anne T. Lawrence
San Jose State University

2012

On April 5, 2010, a massive explosion at the Upper Big Branch coalmine in West Virginia killed 29 miners and seriously injured two others. It was the worst mining disaster in the United States in almost forty years. The mine's owner, Massey Energy, had a history of safety violations and a contentious relationship with both government regulatory agencies and the United Mine Workers union. It had succeeded in breaking the union and had actively resisted attempts by regulators to cite and fine its operations for safety violations. In the wake of the disaster, four separate investigations—by the federal and state governments, the United Mine Workers union, and the company itself—examined what had gone wrong.

This case tells the story of the disaster, and challenges students to consider both the ethics of Massey's actions and the causes of the disaster. Were Massey's actions ethical? Who should bear the responsibility for the deaths of 29 men: Massey Energy, its board of directors, and its CEO Don Blankenship; federal and state regulators; policymakers; or the workers themselves? What could be done in the future to assure miners' health and safety and to lessen the chances of a similar tragedy?

“Best CASE” in the Proceedings, Western Academy of Casewriters 2012 Conference

ASAP-TRANSLATION.COM
Ľudmila Mitková and Paulína Stachová,
Comenius University (student authors);
Joan Winn, (faculty advisor)
University of Denver

This case study is about a translation agency operating in the Slovak Republic. Founded in 2005 by Katka and her husband Jakub Absolon, ASAP---translation.com offers translations from different languages (over 68 language combinations), and also a wide range of additional services (e.g. language consulting, graphic services, courses in translation software). The company has customers not only in Slovakia but also in the Czech Republic and other neighboring countries.

Since the Slovak Republic's economic and political transition (from the Velvet Revolution in 1989 to its independence from the Czech Republic in 1993) from a planned economy to a market economy, small businesses have contributed to significant economic and social changes in the country. Further changes also came with the entry of Slovakia into the European Union in May 2004. Because the country is small, bordering Austria, Hungary, Poland, Ukraine, and Czech Republic, language translation is a recognized necessity for conducting business, especially for businesses that engage in international trade. Katka started offering translation services as a freelance translator, and as demand grew, she and her husband decided to make the business a full---time endeavor, with an office and regular staff. Despite the presence of large firms—primarily subsidiaries of large, well---known companies—and increasing competition from abroad, ASAP has succeeded in maintaining quality services, emphasizing values and harmony. As the technology changes and competition increases, Katka and Jakub must reevaluate their business strategy, and reaffirm their goals and values.

“Best MENTORED CASE,” Western Academy of Casewriters 2012 Conference

WCA — Best Case Awards 2015 – 2009

BALANCING ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN PUBLIC POLICY: GOLD MINING REFORM

Linda K. Gibson, Bruce W. Finnie, and David E. McNabb

Pacific Lutheran University

2011

A member of the U.S. Congress and her legislative staff undertook the daunting task of reforming federal mining policy. They encountered the political pressures involved in balancing economic and environmental sustainability when formulating policy or drafting legislation to reform environmental policy. Mining reform was one of the perennial issues before Congress since, according to the EPA Toxic Release Inventory; mining produced more hazardous waste than any other industry. Further, after a mine's resources were depleted, mining firms often declared bankruptcy when faced with the significant expense of environmental remediation, leaving the cost to the federal government. Many mines became unfunded Superfund sites. The General Mining Law of 1872 laid the groundwork for these problems; but reform of this law would not resolve the federal risk exposure resulting from environmental mishaps on private land. Options were needed to help protect the federal government from this often-overlooked risk.

The case describes the challenges faced by a western Congresswoman who wanted to reform federal gold mining policy. To help her decide what legislation she should propose, she charged her staff with locating and organizing reform options and a strategy to use to win support for reform. Her staff gathered options and background information, engaged in stakeholder analysis, and debated which decision-making process and reform strategy to recommend to their boss. They examined public choice theory and agency theory issues as possible contributors to the political inertia on mining policy reform.

“Best CASE” in the Proceedings, Western Academy of Casewriters 2011 Conference

U.S. TREASURY: RECRUITING GREAT TALENT FOR SENIOR POSITIONS IN A HIGH-PRESSURE ORGANIZATION

Peter Khanahmadi, Booz Allen Hamilton (student author);

Mark A. Clark (faculty supervisor), American University

Newly appointed US Treasury Chief of Staff Mark Patterson was in the unenviable position of recruiting to fill management roles in the worst economic crisis in recent years. It was March 2009, and Patterson was under great pressure to fill senior positions at Treasury to tackle pressing economic problems. His many challenges included appealing to private sector business leaders who earned substantially more than the government could offer, and ensuring they could pass the more rigorous vetting process implemented by the new Obama administration. Treasury Secretary Geithner wanted to have a Deputy and several Undersecretaries hired immediately, and Patterson was tasked with delivering a recruitment plan by noon on the next Tuesday, March 10, 2009.

Every four years, a newly elected administration was tasked with finding effective leaders to fill important seats in Government agencies. Finding the right leaders was no easy task. The administration needed to identify, vet, and attempt to attract the best talent to help run the nation. But what if there were little incentive to join the government other than patriotism? What if the government salary offered was only a small fraction of what potential leaders could earn in the private sector? Lastly, what if one were asked to help save the nation from the next great depression? Prior to the economic collapse of 2008 and 2009, this great depression scenario seemed farfetched. However, as the US and world witnessed --- it occurred. With renewed hope, the newly elected Obama administration set out to find the right leaders to help save the nation from economic despair, particularly in one of the most important government entities: the United States Department of the Treasury. What the Obama administration discovered was that it was much harder than anyone had ever imagined.

“Best MENTORED CASE,” Western Academy of Casewriters 2011 Conference

IPHONE APPS: BUSINESS OR TIME CONSUMING HOBBY?
Leslie Ann Goldgehn and Suzanne Yonkers
University of San Francisco

2010

David and Ian were two young entrepreneurs from Marin County, California. David and Ian started Pandav with the desire to become known for creating socially conscious well---designed iPhone software featuring a great user experience. In the spring of 2008, Apple Inc. opened up the opportunity for third party vendors to develop and market iPhone applications through the iPhone “App Store.” As of April 2009, there were over 35,000 applications officially available for the iPhone and iPod Touch and over 1 billion downloads of Apple Apps.

David and Ian created iBart, which offered instant access to all of the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) information. Its features included allowing the commuter to find the closest BART station, access train departure and arrival information and plot a trip. Since its launch, iBart had been downloaded 89,387 times by unique users. Last year, they launched a successful iPhone program and achieved a large customer base. They were at a critical juncture with their start---up. They could not continue investing their time and money into an enterprise that was not going to yield any financial return. How could they monetize their application in the future? Could they come to an agreement about the vision for their company? What specific growth strategies should they pursue for iBart and Pandav?

“Best CASE” in the Proceedings, Western Academy of Casewriters 2010 Conference

420 MEDICARD: MEDICAL MARIJUANA RECOMMENDATION CENTER
Faye Chacon, Annora Halim, Sissie McElvaine, Hector Nava and Hector Ramirez (student authors);
Stephen McGuire (faculty advisor)
California State University, Los Angeles

Marijuana, a shredded form of the plant Cannabis Sativa, was a federally illicit drug except when allowed by a state for medicinal purposes. In California, the state laws enabling medical marijuana included Senate Bill 420 and Prop 215. Medical marijuana could be acquired from dispensaries as long as a patient had a medical marijuana identification card that was attained via recommendation from a physician.

The case is about 420 MediCard, a medical marijuana recommendation center, and the legal, business, and ethical dilemmas that the 420 MediCard physicians faced in their business. Qualifying illnesses for recommendations, such as anxiety or pain, were so broad that they potentially encompassed the entire population. Since marijuana was illegal, there was little room for business growth, but this was a profitable business. Possible modifications to prevent system abuse included tightening regulations, obtaining patients’ comprehensive medical history, and networking patient data. Other than overcoming ethical and legal obstacles; 420 MediCard considered how it could gain a competitive edge by promoting differentiation by “going green,” joining advocacy organizations, and enhancing customer service by initiating options such as 24/7 verification service.

“Best MENTORED CASE,” Western Academy of Casewriters 2010 Conference

eBAY UNDER FIRE: FRAUD ATTACKS AND COMMUNITY UNREST

Scott Newman and Gary M. Grikscheit

University of Utah

2009

Set against the backdrop of an actual eBay-sponsored customer event ----- “eBay In Person” ----- the case took place on the evening of August 31, 2006 at a downtown hotel in Salt Lake City, Utah. This town hall-type forum was hosted by Bill Cole, President of eBay North America, who addressed and took questions from approximately 500 invited eBay users. He talked specifically about a Wall Street Journal article that highlighted growing dissatisfaction among eBay sellers with the company’s senior management team and recent pricing decisions. He was also made aware of a TV news story, which aired the previous evening that claimed eBay takes a relatively passive stance on fighting fraud on its site. Cole asked Tim Payton, who headed eBay’s 1,200-person Salt Lake City Customer Support Center, to respond to the story and speak on the array of fraud prevention policies and processes the company has in place to combat ecommerce fraud. The case concludes with Cole taking a question from a vocal audience member who was not convinced that the action plans shared by Cole and Payton will produce the intended results.

“Best CASE” in the Proceedings, Western Academy of Casewriters 2009 Conference

TO SMOOTHIE OR NOT TO SMOOTHIE

Michelle Tse

California State University, Los Angeles

As consumers became increasingly health conscious, the smoothie industry was the perfect business opportunity within the US fast-service industry. Sales of made-to-order smoothies were expected to raise more than \$2.5 billion in 2008, up from \$989 million in 2002. By 2012, the market was estimated to be \$3.8 billion. Large fast-service companies such as Starbucks, McDonald’s and Taco Bell expanded their beverage menus by including fruit juices and smoothies to appease consumer needs. As a result, established smoothie businesses such as Surf City Squeeze, Jamba Juice, and Smoothie King stepped up their marketing strategies to compete with these other non-smoothie specialty businesses.

The case describes a business dilemma faced by Amy and her siblings, who are entrepreneurs in spirit, but have no business experience. They see an opportunity with smoothies and want to open up a store. Before even deciding exactly what business to open, they find what they consider to be an ideal location. The dilemma is whether they should open up a franchise of a smoothie chain, try to obtain a license, launch their own independent smoothie business, or consider a different type of business altogether. They obtain some information about smoothie business opportunities, including a franchise agreement from Surf City Squeeze – complete except for their signatures. There are advantages and disadvantages to each business type. Considering the pros and cons and their business backgrounds, what is the best business type for Amy and her siblings?

“Best MENTORED CASE,” Western Academy of Casewriters 2009 Conference