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## FINAL REFLECTION PAPER

Piece Makers is a group of five students with a combination of Business Administration and Management Information Systems backgrounds. The problem we are tackling is the improper management of textile excesses that become waste in Ghana. We have analyzed this problem's adverse effects on the environment through research. Our solution seeks to reduce textile waste by repurposing fabric excesses into Symllows (symbolic cushions) that serve decorative purposes.

My team's composition was well put together and has been a driving force from the beginning of the semester till now. The team selection by our leader Benjamin Nkansah was done based on our abilities. As a team, we capitalized on each person's strengths to help yield the highest results in various aspects. For example, Karen Blay is a good writer, so we took advantage of that skill. She works at the writing center. Thus, anything that had to do with documentation, scripting for presentations, or pitches were always reviewed by Karen. Felix Afanam on the other hand is analytical and mathematical. So, during the semester, he offered a lot of analytical reasoning at each point that we needed to apply critical thinking. Berchie worked well around logistics thus making him very instrumental in research activities. Benjamin runs a business and is a founder of a Humanitarian Organization. It was easier for him to transfer his knowledge into our capstone. We had to relay our business concept and progress properly in pitches, office hours, and sessions with advisors. This is where I was able to demonstrate my public speaking prowess to help my team.

The Piecemakers can be described as a resilient team. We have had several points where moving forward was hard. We struggled so much with problem justification and nearly considered changing our problem. However, our can-do spirit kept us going until we found the right answers. At times, everything seemed bleak, but we never gave up. I would also say that my team is more like a basket of mixed fruits. We all have different personalities that help us fuse together socially. One thing that runs through is our sense of humor. Everyone is interesting. All these personalities aided us in working harmoniously because we enjoyed one another's company. However, the over-friendliness among us sometimes made us waste time during meetings because we ended up talking about things outside of entrepreneurship. Also, our good relationship has helped us to address issues that emerge from teammates amicably.

Opportunity identification is a concept that has played out in my team. Entrepreneurs need to identify a problem and then think innovatively to provide a solution. We do not bring needs to solutions but rather solutions to needs because the former leads us in the wrong direction. As such, we explored the waste management space in Accra and identified that improper textile waste management harms the environment. We identified this problem which gave us an opportunity to

create an innovative solution. We used primary and secondary research to understand the problem space and identify our stakeholders, create value for them through solution development, market analysis, and industry analysis. This process gave us a clear picture of how to walk through our business venture in the idea stage. Doing this was in line with one of the milestones in our team charter: to develop the best possible solutions to address the identified problem.

Another concept that has stuck with my team is the characteristic of commitment to our business venture. We met three hours each Thursday to work seriously on our pending tasks without using our phones to avoid any form of distraction as per our team charter. Even when we were tired, we knew the only way to get to the finish line was through commitment. We always called each other when it was time for meetings and sent reminders to our group to keep everyone on their toes. We learned that dedicating time to work on our venture helped us to identify certain gaps that we had overlooked because of the ability to scrutinize and pay attention to detail. This commitment has been reflected in our grades, growth, and knowledge base. This also ties in with our resilience.

One key takeaway for the Piecemakers is that customers' needs are volatile. They always change from time to time so research must be a constant thing. This will ensure that our business plans and activities are in consistent alignment with our customers' needs. For us, gathering information from our various customer segments (tourists, interior decorators, and households) must not end. We must not feel like we know enough because knowledge is very broad. We cannot satisfy our customers if we do not know what they want. Another lesson learned is that having mentors or advisors has improved our business model. These are people with experience and high levels of knowledge who assessed our work and gave us insights into things we had never thought of. We identified this through our advisor sessions and office hours. The sessions also improved our pitching.

A ship does not sink because of the water around it, but because of the water that enters it is an idiom that captures our experiences and goals. We have been our own motivation. Even though customer validation is great, internal validation is equally important. If we do not believe in ourselves and our vision, we cannot get to that desired destination of excellence. Sometimes, opinions from stakeholder engagement, office hours, and advisory sessions may be quite discouraging. There is always a thin line between critique and discouragement, but we need to choose to see the brighter side and take advantage of good feedback to make our venture better as we gradually get to the finish line. Another idiom is that we cannot eat our cake and still have it as entrepreneurs. As we are entering the next semester and about to conduct our MVP testing, we would need to sacrifice. If we decide to think about what we would lose such as rest and energy, we cannot provide the best results. We need to sacrifice our time, effort, and focus despite the Christmas break to do what is necessary. So that we can look back at what we have done with eyes of appreciation when all is said and done.