

A-Z Consultancy

Project Proposal

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IST 612- Business Analysis

IST 612 Project Proposal

I. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A – Z Consultancy is an educational organization that offers a wide variety of aid to International students who have attained scholarships out of their countries, and who might not be fully conversant with their new study locales.

These services include accommodations, admission and admission requirements into these universities, part time jobs to keep these students on-toes given the high standards of living in many countries, flight bookings for the students, just to mention a few.

The consultancy also takes a step further to ensure that students are fully informed with the facts and figures that they need to make the decisions that best suits them. This includes information such as the flexibility of the study modules, and information such as rent and lease details for the prospective apartments that are available to them and that will allow for convenience. The consultancy also provides legal information that will ensure students remain on the safe side of the laws of their host country.

1. Problem Statement

Across international boundaries, rules and policies are ever shifting. No two countries can have exactly the same laws and policies governing them. As such, what is legal in one country may verily be a felony in another country, making it quite difficult for international students to fully adapt to these paradigm shifts. Whilst other people such as tourists and visitors might have family and friends waiting to show them around and reduce the abrasion between them and the new policies, very few International students enjoy such privileges.

This is of significant importance in reducing the miscommunications and inconveniences of impact, and as such, its importance cannot be overlooked. Consultancy agencies are present in every country to stand in for International students who do not have relations or acquaintances abroad. One major problem that all the International students face, however, is knowing the right kind of documentation that will be required of them, where to stay, and what they can do for income to ensure that they remain afloat. A – Z Consultancy steps in to bridge this gap.

2. Root Cause Analysis

With about over 6.3 Million International Student Population, there has been a stampede in universities and colleges on the handling of International Students globally. This rising numbers has caused stress on apartments in some countries, and some of the international students have either ended up in deplorable settlement conditions, or have been inconvenienced by finding apartments that are way far from

their schools. This has been coupled up by lack of information. Students have occasionally, though an alarmingly increasing frequency, found themselves at loggerheads with the new laws that they have had to abide to. These have included lack of the right identification documents, and use of expired documents either with or without the student's knowledge. This has seen what started as a beautiful and promising educational journey turn into a nightmare clouded by jail terms, just to mention a few out of a long list of legal battles that are more often than not lost.

The root causes of these problems have been traced to a variety of factors. These include language barriers, cultural differences, financial constraints, and social isolation. Language barriers can lead to difficulties in communicating effectively in the new country, making it difficult to understand and be understood by new classmates and even by the professors. This also translates to communication with the police and often leads to unnecessary arrests. A - Z Consultancy are including elaborate linguistics teams in our offices to help international students with their language. These are customized to suit students of different countries. Students can sign up to these classes a couple of months before eventually moving out into their new schools. We also evaluate students' linguistics basing on the standard levels of International languages such as

Cultural differences leads to difficulty in understanding the customs and traditions of the new country, making it difficult to feel accepted and integrated into the new environment. It also digs deeply into the relationship between an international student and their native classmates as each group will have their own and sometimes conflicting ways of viewing each other and their environment. This slows down the entire process of acclimating and adapting to the new norms. Our classes as A – Z Consultancy are designed to be culturally interactive to eliminate the cultural abrasion and make acclimation easier for International students.

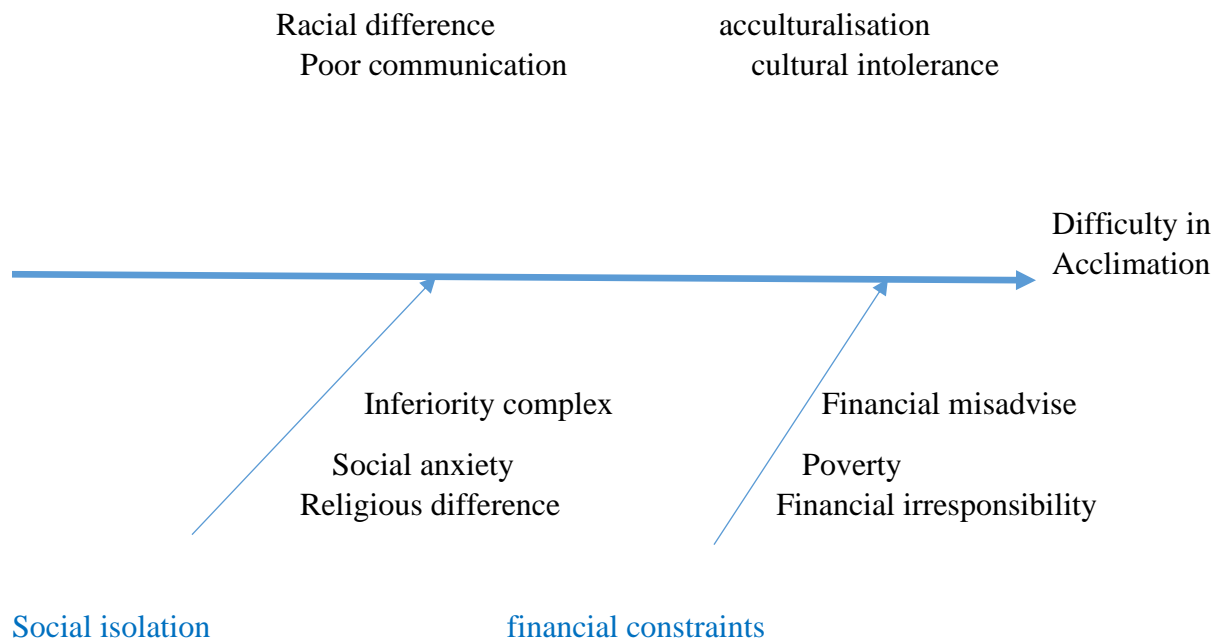
Financial constraints can lead to difficulty in affording tuition, living expenses, and other costs associated with living in a new country. These can also prove very detrimental if the student does not receive adequate financial advice and guidance. Lastly, social isolation can lead to negative feelings of loneliness and homesickness, as it can be difficult for international students to find communities and groups of people with similar backgrounds and experiences. To solve this, we give customized financial advice to students according to their financial ability and level of responsibility.

Language barrier



Cultural differences





Even when formed, these groups are always still isolated and viewed separate from the general community. They thus always recline to being sad clubs and groups of solace trying to find relevance in a community that does not appreciate or even give them a second thought. International Students have often been subjected to racial discrimination and sidelined, being seen as their race rather than who they personally are. All of these root causes can lead to difficulties in transitioning to a new country and acclimating to an alien academic environment, cutting deep into a student's grade. To ensure that the transition into a new country is as smooth as it can be for an international student, we offer customized services to every student, ensuring that the prerequisites of every single student is met and at a personal level.

We regard each student as a separate entity with a separate set of needs that must be fulfilled to their satisfaction. We tailor these services to our clients personally through our various administrative facets, making this consultancy an indispensable asset for students who require guarantee for a free smooth landing into a new country.

3. Change Strategy

Various changes can be incorporated into A – Z Consultancy to counter these problems and make acclimation far much easier and hassle-free for International students. The project team will analyze and examine to determine and gauge their benefits and associated risk and cost factors, before adopting the most suitable change strategy. These changes include the following;

1. Creation of an elaborate Support Network: Establishing a network of support for international students that will include members of the university faculty, staff members, and current international students who are willing to provide support, guidance, and mentorship to newly arrived international students who might still be trying to adapt to these changes.
2. Increase awareness and mobilization: This entails increasing awareness of the services and resources available to international students. A – Z will ensure that International students are exposed to all possible viable options of either accommodation or transport before they ultimately make their decisions. This could include hosting events and workshops that provide resources and information to students and their families, and creating awareness of these workshops so maximum attendance can be witnessed. We could make use of basketball and football games to advertise our services and endeavor to feature on Super Bowl events, given the large attendances that comes with the same.
4. Developing new programs and making the best out of existing programs: A – Z will develop programs and initiatives that help international students adjust to their new environment. These could include language classes for all the International languages, cultural exchange programs, and social activities to foster cultural, religious and racial tolerance between native and visiting students.
5. Developing and building an Online Platform: Creation of an online platform will foster the provision of resources and support to international students. This could include an online forum, blog, and other resources. Maintaining an active online presence will also ensure that a wider scope of audience is reached, and that distribution of resources and materials is fast and successful. This will include sponsored Instagram and Google ads, and partnering with social media marketers.
6. Creating and building a Mentoring Program: Develop a mentoring program that pairs international students with members of the university faculty and staff. This could help international students connect with people who can provide support and guidance. Mentoring programs could also be delivered through online platforms alongside other services such as language classes through Big Blue Button, Google Meet or Microsoft Teams tailment services.
7. Establishing Partnerships: Establish partnerships with other universities, organizations, and businesses that can provide resources and support to international students. Partnerships can also be formed with the governments of the host countries.

The level of success of these strategies will be gauged by an examination of accompanying prototypes, and their ultimate success in real time projected before they can be implemented. This will be done by close examination of these programs, and collection of feedback from our clients, both new and continuing students. Results from the feedback obtained from the students will be instrumental to informing future decisions regarding initiatives and programs.

For this project, Formation of Partnerships will be studied as the main strategy. This will include its costs, benefits, risks and its opportunistic costs.

i. Current State description

Currently, the agency is faced by a plethora of challenges, most of which are listed above. These ranges from internal and external factors such as government policies over which the agency has no control. It can only seek to abide by these policies to reduce the abrasion with local governments.

External factors

These include factors such as language policies, and demographic regulations. Immigration customs and formalities is another major hurdle that the agency can't quite get over. International relations can't be overlooked when it comes to immigration. For example, immigrants from South America and Africa sometimes find it hard to be accepted into the United States. The agency has had a hard time getting students from these regions admitted into US universities.

Internal factors

Considering internal factors, the agency is currently understaffed. It is not endowed with all the personal it so desperately needs, including correspondences and offices in the various countries across the country. The number of linguists currently employed by the agency do not match the need for their service, making it hard for A – Z Consultancy to deliver optimally.

The current state of International students is also clouded by a myriad of factors that are yet to be addressed. Things are not looking so good for them either. Financial constraints and immigration customs are just among the many stones that are yet to be turned.

Competition

International student agencies compete against each other in attempts to attract potential students. They have always marketed their services and the advantages they offer to students in terms of finding the right school and getting the appropriate visa amongst other accommodative assistance. The scope of this

competition has widened to include the basis of cost, quality of service, and the availability of resources, such as scholarships and discounts.

A large variety of strategies is used to keep an edge off in the competition and reach out to students, such as personal visits, online campaigns, and social media outreach. The market is quite competitive, as each agency strives to outperform the others in order to get more students and earn more revenue. A – Z consultancy is not left in this competition.

Currently, every university has an international students center that offers main services such as: visa support, accommodation advising, financial planning, class registration, health insurance, driver's licenses, and taxes. These services, however, are still insufficient to assist students in adjusting to living in the USA. As it is stated on (4 Challenges International Students Face in the US 2023) there is a study by WES (World Education Services) found that nearly 40% of students cited living away from family, societal differences, and language barriers as factors that made their experience more difficult than they had anticipated. One of the big problems international students faces is culture shock. Students should find a way to be prepared to avoid such a shock.

Moreover, the limitations set by the U.S. immigration law frequently frustrate the many international students who come to the country in the hopes of gaining job experience in addition to higher education degree. These students would understand that they can obtain this chance through summer jobs, part-time work on college, or full-time work after graduation if these restrictions were explicitly explained by their school.

At this stage, we currently lack a platform that provides comprehensive services that international students are looking for.

Organizational culture, policies, and services

The agency is based on a culture of trust and honesty. It is also guided to ensure that clients are well guided and that they make the best decisions possible. A – Z Consultancy looks to abide with all laws, regulations, and policies set forth by government agencies of its operating countries. These policies include ensuring that students have the proper documentation to study in the country, providing accurate information about the school and student visa requirements, and a confirmation that the students have the necessary finances to cater for tuition and living expenses.

Above all, the agency upholds and protects student privacy, provide accurate records of transactions, and keeping accurate records of student progress. These are instrumental in making of future decisions. They must also provide support services such as counseling, academic and financial counsel, and student

activities. Finally, they must adhere to ethical standards in their recruitment and placement of students abroad, upholding privacy and secrecy.

ii. **Future state description**

A – Z looks to a future where it can reach approximately 70% of international students, and a future in which global students will transition seamlessly into their new schools. This will be achieved by awareness creation through an intensive online presence and by partnering with internationally recognized universities, governments and government agencies and marketing agencies such as Black Market Propeller.

We aim towards being the first port of call for International Students, and being the first pop up on searches on International students' consultancies on global search engines such as Google. The organization is fighting for a harmonious existence of global students in the near future. This we intend to achieve by instilling a sense of inward harmony and belonging into our clients wherever they are placed to ensure they do not feel sidelined or secluded, and by giving customized help and a complete guidance as described above.

We want to internationalize in the future with a planned, all-encompassing strategy. We will collaborate with organizations that want to improve their methods for dealing with international students; this entails considering every aspect of the experience, from initial interaction to alumni standing.

This strategic approach will emphasize on communications, community outreach, health, career advising, service-learning opportunities, living cost, flight booking, getting a mobile network, pre-departure orientation for some students and family members in their native languages, working and internship opportunities and much more. We will keep improving on this approach until we achieved more than 90% of students' satisfaction.

Additionally, this approach will assist international students to achieve their academic objectives concurrently with those USA living and working experience.

Risks

The organization and its strategies are no doubt bound to face a wide variety of risks from all different angles and facets. These would include exposure and mishandling of the client's personal information. Such prolific data breach can be very detrimental to the foundations of the organization. The organization's websites and databases are set to be 2-factor authentication enabled to add an extra layer of security. This will also include biometric integration.

Partnership with the wrong organizations can end up being time consuming and cost ineffective. Partners can also change the public face of the organization,

making it appear to the public more as a corporate society inclined more too financial gains than an aid to the International students. This will hinder service delivery and form a backdrop against the organization's founding goals, principles and beliefs. We intend to ensure that this does not happen by forming partnerships with charity and non-profit organizations.

Elaboration of change strategy

Enterprise readiness

The basic change strategy under review is formation of strategic partnerships. Partnerships will be formed with charity and non-profit organizations. Some of the potential partners are listed below.

1. International Students and Scholar Services (ISSS)
2. Education USA
3. International Education Services
4. American Education Services
5. United Way
6. American Red Cross
7. Global Education Services

The organization with its human resource and network makes it more than ready to materialize this strategy.

These partnerships will be ultimately geared towards the achievement of various organizational goals. Partnerships that do not in any way bridge the gap to these goals will be called off and their opportunity costs reconsidered. Some of these goals are as listed below

1. To provide comprehensive and tailored services to international students, including visa, immigration, academic and career counseling.
2. To assist international students in navigating the complexities of US education system, including helping them understand and comply with US immigration laws.
3. To provide international students with access to employment and networking opportunities in the United States.
4. To promote cross-cultural understanding between the US and international students by providing cultural exchange activities and programs.

The earned value from these partnerships will be monitored periodically through an earned value management graph to ensure that they keep within the estimated scope of cost expenditure and that they earn their value within the scheduled time.

Investment and Resources for change strategy

The investment and resources for the accomplishment of partnership as a change strategy will include a not so wide list of input. These will both sourced from in-house and external sources.

Human resource will be of indispensable importance. Financial input will also be of undue importance to fund the meetings to strategize these partnerships and set the ball rolling. We intend to conduct a total of 3 meetings with each of our potential partners.

Opportunity costs of change strategy

To settle on partnering as our most viable strategic change, we forgone other alternatives that might have had the same end result, though were either cost ineffective or rather too time consuming. These included options like aggressive marketing and advertising acclimated to online presence. This would go a long way to enable mobilization and awareness creation but at considerably higher costs.

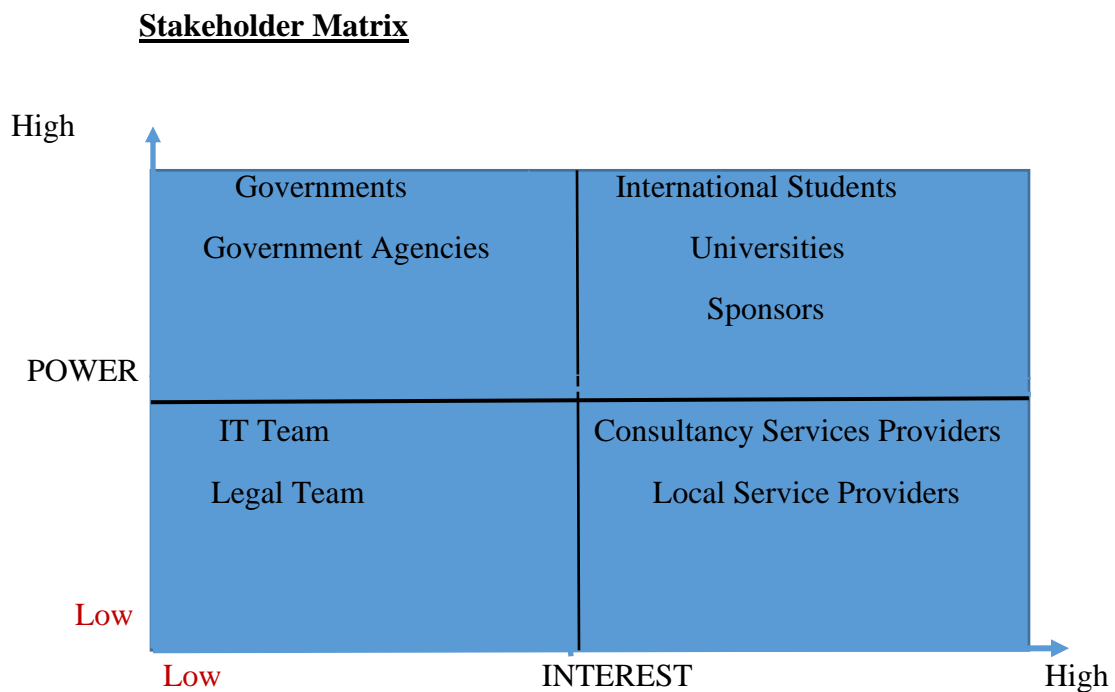
Justification

The financial viability and feasibility of this strategy makes it the most realistic and achievable strategy towards making acclimation easier for international students. It also places A – Z Consultancy at a better position to handle and guide more International students, an important asset against the ever increasing number of International students in countries across the globe.

II. STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholder list

- i. International Students
- ii. Universities
- iii. Consultancy services providers
- iv. Local Service Providers
- v. Governments
- vi. Government Agencies
- vii. IT Team
- viii. Legal Team



Governments and Government Agencies

Governments regulate the activities of International Students' agencies operating within their borders. This includes regulations such as immigration requirements including passports and visa issuances. This gives them high power though their interest remains relatively low.

International Students and Universities

These stakeholders have high power and influence, given that the agency functions basing on their interests and making their satisfaction a top priority. They indirectly have a lot of power and interests on basic decision making.

IT and Legal Teams

Consulted as third party stakeholders by the agency and communication relayed to them whenever there are prime changes for their respective departments.

Consultancy and Local Services Providers

They have a high power and low interest on the agency, earning them their spot on the matrix.

III. ELICITING REQUIREMENTS

The project uses interviews as the method of elicitation. This role is majorly played by stakeholders of the Consultancy.

1. Preparing for elicitations

Interviews

Interviews are either structured or unstructured. This proposal will take a structured approach, and Sponsors and International students will be picked as the stakeholders for the elicitations.

International Students

i. Interview Goals

This interview is aimed to elicit the preferences and requirements of international students as stakeholders. Their share cost of the entire project is also gauged. Interview questions are both closed and open ended.

ii. Questions

- a) What continent or country would you prefer for a scholarship?
- b) Why did you chose your preferred continent, or country?
- c) How much would you consider a fair consultancy fee charge by an agency?
- d) What would you expect out of an agency, and would you consider this within their scope to deliver?
- e) How did you win your scholarship?

iii. Logistics

Interviews will be conducted both on a one-on-one basis, and through online e-meetings by Microsoft Teams and Google Meet services. Recordings of these interviews will be kept as basis of future references.

iv. Interview flow

We will start interviews by introducing the interviewers and the interviewees, then a statement on the purpose of the interview will be issued by the chief interviewee.

We will then ask the questions, giving ample time for the interviewee to understand the questions and answer appropriately. Time will also be taken to gauge their responses while cross-checking with their document attachments.

v. Interview follow up

The interviewers will have time after the interviews with the chosen International Students. This time will be utilized for the verification of the documents submitted and formulation of policies basing on the responses. These policies and decisions will help inform future decisions of the consultancy.

Sponsors Interview Guideline

i. Interview Goals

This interview is aimed to ascertain the financial viability of the proposed sponsors, and their levels of power and interest on the consultancy

ii. Questions

Questions will be both closed and open-ended

- a) How much are you looking to invest into the project?
- b) What will be your projected annual earnings from the project?
- c) Would you consider being a part of the management, or employing a Chief Financial Officer to represent your interest?
- d) What would you consider feasible payments for the human resources of the company?

iii. Logistics

The interviews will be conducted on a one-on-one basis as they will require a detailed analysis and verification of responses and documents. Closed and open-ended questionnaires will aid and prepare the sponsors for the interviews.

iv. Interview flow and follow-up

The follow up and flow of this interview will take a similar course to that of the International Students' interview.

Follow up will include verification of financial documents and contracts of the potential sponsors. Their financial feasibility and viability will thus be determined.

IV. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

This section will include a review of the other possible strategic changes discussed earlier on, including a SWOT analysis of these strategies. These strategies include;

1. Creation and elaboration of support network
2. Mobilization and awareness creation
3. Creation of an online platform and maintaining online presence
4. Mentoring programs

V. VALUE

a) Expected benefits

- i. The organization will bridge the gap between international students, their countries and universities
- ii. The cost of transitioning to new countries will be greatly reduced
- iii. Acclimation to new environments for international students will be faster, easier and more fun than ever before
- iv. Costs will be saved both for families, learning institutions and countries
- v. Partnerships will allow seamless streaming of information between different consultancies by international students, for example by building a common website
- vi. Partnerships between agencies from different countries will rebuild International bridges and make relationships better between countries

b) Expected costs

- i. Platforms may not be compatible for onboarding onto the common website.
- ii. Risk of data breach and mishandling of client information
- iii. Partnerships with financially interested institutions may make the project more corporate oriented
- iv. Development of malicious websites that might prey on lack of information by customers
- v. Partnerships with some organizations may be cost ineffective.

VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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