Preparation for Initial Client Meeting - Sharon Ren, Helen Zheng, Tishyaa Chaudhry

1. **Describe the background research your team conducted on your client’s organization (the description should be a brief summary – approximately 2 or 3 paragraphs – of what your team learned and sources of information).**

Our client is Spoons Kitchen Exchange, a resale shop that endeavors to provide sustainable and affordable resources for the kitchen. In conducting background research, we saw that this company was founded early last year (roughly around May 2023), which meant that there wouldn’t be a lot of information available online. Thus, we looked through what we could find, which was through the website and any public social media. What we found was that the shop is primarily online, but ships domestically across the country. They also provide delivery services within a small radius in Pittsburgh, and are currently looking to provide pick-up services. Something important to note about the Spoons is its commitment to sustainability - the emphasis of their values are on curiosity, compassion, and community, with a focus on reducing plastic use, as well as recycling resources so that they don’t clog landfills.

Outside of the Spoons website, we were able to find an Instagram page that was largely inactive with only four posts that were highly personalized to Marielle, the owner of Spoons. From this, we were able to find that Marielle started Spoons as a way to reimagine what working in retail could be like. Overall, there’s a lot of information that we are still lacking, but with this, we are able to understand the scope of the organization, as well as what is important to Marielle and to Spoons.

1. **Describe the background research your team conducted on organizations similar to your client’s organization (including major competitors, partners, etc.) (again, the description should be a brief summary – approximately 2 or 3 paragraphs – of what your team learned and sources of information).**

There are several other competitors in the kitchenware retail market that are similar to Spoons Kitchen Exchange. One of them is Williams Sonoma, a well-known retailer offering a wide range of kitchenware and home furnishings. In contrast to Spoons Kitchen Exchange, Williams Sonoma was established in 1956 and has since become one of the largest e-commerce retailers in the United States. Originally focused on hardware, Williams Sonoma transitioned into a kitchenware shop after its founder recognized the gap in the American kitchenware market compared to European countries during a trip to France. Over the years, Williams Sonoma has expanded its product range to cover nearly every aspect of houseware. Its products are also available globally through online platforms. The extensive variety of products at various price levels and its global expansion have solidified its position as a leader in the industry.

Since Spoons Kitchen Exchange is a resale shop, it faces competition from online second-hand marketplaces like eBay. eBay started as an online auction site in 1995 and has since evolved into a platform that sells both new and second-hand items. It has an extensive range of categories, each with detailed item specifications. This broad selection captures a wide range of audience, including collectors and vintage enthusiasts, not limited to individuals seeking affordable second-hand items. eBay's global online platform facilitates trade from all over the world, further strengthening its position in the online retail landscape.

There are many online resources available to learn about both Williams Sonoma and eBay, including shopping websites, Wikipedia pages, company websites, financial reports, social media profiles, etc. This information indicates their activeness and leadership in their respective industries.

Potential partners of the Spoons Kitchen Exchange might include small businesses and social media accounts that focus on cooking and recipe sharing. For instance, Mary Disomma is a baker and she shares recipes and baking tips through her website. She also owns a small online shop that sells her cookbook and a very limited amount of kitchen utensils. Spoons Kitchen Exchange could partner with Mary Disomma by selling kitchen utensils on her shop website or by supplying some of the utensils needed at her workshops and cooking events.There are plenty online resources regarding Mary Disomma’s recipe, but very limited when it comes to the background of her business.

1. **Develop an interview guide of questions you will like to discuss with your client during the initial kick-off meeting. The Context Description Chart Download Context Description Chartin the Relationship Management slides lists a large set of topics and questions to draw from. Your goal is to establish a good working relationship while getting as broad an understanding of the organization and its context as possible. You will have 80 minutes to meet, so be sure to plan to make good use of the time.**

Questions to Ask:

1. Can you tell us a little bit about your company?
2. How has it been managing the company & orders?
3. Can you tell us a little bit about the origins of Spoons?
4. What current facilities do you use?
5. Who does what and how do they interact with the tech?
6. How do you manage communication with your partners (ie. community partnerships, existing partners, etc.)?
7. What kind of problems are you currently facing with operations?
8. What are some struggles that you have with inventory management?
9. How are you currently handling inventory?
10. What are some struggles that you have with e-commerce?
11. What are some current statistics on your customer base?
12. How do you currently conduct advertising and reach expansion at the moment?
13. What are you envisioning for the database of Spoons resources?
14. How is the current site set up?
15. Who is currently maintaining the site, and what’s the software behind it?
16. How is the accounting process currently maintained?
17. How is information currently processed and stored?
18. What is your goal for the next few months at the completion of this project?
19. What are some goals that you have for Spoons in the coming future (past this project)?
20. **Review your team's mutually available 1 hour times slots so you can propose to with your community partner 2-3 times a week for the first few weeks after your initial meeting. These initial frequent meetings are important to get to know your client and to establish a deep understanding of their organization context.**

Available Times:

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2 to 4 pm | 5 to 6 pm | 7 to 8 pm | 5 to 6 pm | 5 to 6 pm |
|  | 7 to 8 pm |  |  | 7 to 8 pm |