Case Study

Portland Freelancers' Café: Amy and Steve's Business Idea*

In 2003, Amy Chan and Steve Lee formed a partnership to start an Internet café in Portland, Oregon. For many years, Amy and Steve had worked as freelance writers. They enjoyed bringing their laptops to local coffeehouses to complete their writing projects. Having an endless supply of good strong coffee at their disposal helped them to stay focused on their work.

Over time, they began to daydream about owning their own café. Although Portland already had many great coffee shops, Amy and Steve felt that none of them catered well to freelancers like themselves. More and more, people in Portland seemed to be doing their work in informal settings. Everywhere they turned, twenty- and thirty-somethings were sipping lattes while conducting business deals on cell phones. Amy and Steve sometimes wondered if anyone worked in a traditional office anymore.

We Can Do Better

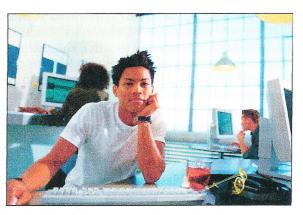
As much as they enjoyed Portland's café culture, they felt that a fatal flaw compromised each of their favorite coffee spots. One was too loud. Another had uncomfortable chairs and tables that weren't well suited for laptop users. Their particular favorite, The Magic Bean, only had three celestrian lautlets within many table tongly at the many laptops could be plugged in at one time. Just a handful of the coffee shops in downtown Portland offered high-speed Internet access at that time.

Amy and Steve felt that they could do a better job of running a café that catered to the needs of freelancers. They made a list of everything they would want in a café, and then asked their freelance friends for additional feedback. The two partners resolved that, in their café, customers would be able to enjoy high-speed Internet access; laser printers; a soundproof, quiet room; and comfortable, up-to-date work stations. To attract their target market, Amy and Steve decided to name their business the Portland Freelancers' Café.

Deluxe Purchases

They spent \$10,000 up front installing superfast T1 Internet lines. They imported a \$7,000,





(Ryan McVay/Photodisc)

top-of-the-line espresso machine from Italy. To make the café look sleek and modern, all of the furniture was custom-designed for the space, as were the curved metallic ceiling and wall panels. Installing the soundproof interior room was more costly than they had anticipated. Their equipment costs totaled \$25,000. At \$500 per month, they had negotiated a good deal on their rent, so they figured that they could afford to splurge on these other features.

Financing

The cafe's start-up investment totaled \$100,000. This included a \$10,000 cash reserve. Amy and Steve contributed a combined \$20,000 from their personal savings. Steve's brother invested another \$20,000, in exchange for a 20 percent equity stake. Amy's mother wrote a check for \$10,000, which she gave to the partners as a gift. Also, Amy and Steve received a \$50,000 loan from Amy's uncle. The partners agreed to pay back the loan with interest at an annual rate of 12 percent.

Funding Source	Equity	Debt	Gift
Personal Savings	\$20,000 (80% equity)		
Steve's Brother	\$20,000 (20% equity)		
Amy's Uncle	но вения в съчество (ил посто на сто по посто по посто по посто и по посто по	\$50,000 (@12% interest)	
Amy's Mother	Hall-Market helm the hall entergency construction of such court source and court	AND THE PARTY OF T	\$10,000
Subtotal	\$40,000	\$50,000	\$10,000
Total Start-Up Investment	\$100,000		

Computer Glitch

Because so much money was needed for start up, Amy and Steve tried to cut costs by hiring a local high school student, who agreed to work 100 hours per month for an hourly wage of \$10. It soon became apparent to frustrated customers, however, that none of the staff, including Amy and Steve, knew how to solve the technical problems customers encountered with the computers and printers. Amy and Steve tried to find a permanent technical-support person, but computer experts were in high demand at the time, and the partners felt that they couldn't afford to pay a competitive salary.

Business Troubles Brew

Before starting their business, Amy and Steve assumed that revenue would come from two primary sources, food and beverage sales and computer/Internet services. Together they had calculated two economics-of-one-unit analyses, one for each of the two sources.

Amy and Steve's EOU

The partners originally assumed that the average customer would spend \$6 at the café and that \$2 of this revenue would be generated by food and beverage sales. The remaining \$4 would come from the sale of computer and Internet services. They believed that the business could be very successful if they did well selling computer services. After all, they could charge customers \$4 for an hour of service that would only cost them 45 cents to provide. In comparison, food and beverage sales would not be nearly as profitable. For every \$2 of lattes and muffins sold, they would pay \$1 in direct costs.

Amy and Steve built a 5 percent manager's commission into their EOU, even though they did not yet have the funds to hire a manager. They wanted to account for this cost because they did plan to hire a manager at some point in the future, and the commission would be a real cost of doing business. It was time for Amy and Steve to examine both revenue streams together.

In Hot Water

When the Portland Freelancers' Café first opened, Amy and Steve were encouraged by how busy things seemed. The café was buzzing with customers and they received some positive reviews in the local papers. They expected to lose money at first, but figured that, in a few months' time, the business would become profitable. After three months, they had a major shock when they realized that this was not happening. What went wrong?

EOU for Food and Beverage Sales	\$
Average Sale per Customer	
Food/Beverage Sales	\$2.00
Variable Costs per Unit	
COGS per Unit	
Food/Beverage Costs	1.00
TOTAL COGS per Unit	\$1.00
EOU for Food and Beverage Sale:	5
Other Variable Costs per Unit	
Manager's Commission @ 5%	0.10
Total Variable Cost per Unit	\$1.10
Contribution Margin per Unit	\$0.90
EOU for Computer/Internet Service)S
Average Sale per Customer Computer Services	\$4.00
Variable Costs per Unit COGS per Unit	
Paper, Toner	0.25
TOTAL COGS per Unit	\$0.25
Other Variable Costs per Unit	
Manager's Commission @ 5%	0.20
Total Variable Cost per Unit	<u>\$0.45</u>
Contribution Margin per Unit	\$3.55

Changes in the Environment

Initially, Amy and Steve's customers willingly paid \$4 an hour to use the computers and high-speed Internet connection. However, soon after the grand opening, wireless Internet service became available throughout the Portland area. Within two months, the café's customers no longer wanted to pay to go online. They put pressure on Amy and Steve to become a wireless hot spot. This meant that Amy and Steve would have to foot the bill of providing free Internet service.

The partners carried out some research and learned that it would cost \$300 to purchase the basic equipment for wireless Internet connectivity, plus an additional \$30 per month in service fees. They had counted on charging their customers for Internet access and now it looked like *they* would have to pick up the tab. They wondered how they could pay for this unexpected cost and also make up the lost revenue. On the other hand, they feared that the Portland Freelancers' Café would not be able to compete unless they adapted to changes in the market.

EOU: Average Sale per Custom	er
Average Sale per Customer	
Computer Services	\$4.00
• Food and Beverage Sales	\$2.00
Variable Costs per Unit	
COGS per Unit	
Paper, Toner	\$0.25
Food/Beverage Costs	1.00
TOTAL COGS per Unit	\$1.25
Other Variable Costs per Unit	
Manager's Commission—Computer Services @ 5%	\$0.20
Manager's Commission—Food and Beverage @ 5%	0.10
TOTAL Commission Costs	\$0.30
Total Variable Cost per Unit	\$1.55
Contribution Margin per Unit	\$3.20

Amy and Steve's EOU Revisited

Three months after they opened the café, Amy and Steve discovered that their monthly unit sales of computer services had been cut by more than half. In their first month, they had sold 1,500 units, but by month three they were only averaging 600. They worried that this number would only continue to decline.

The café was holding steady with its food and beverage sales-in fact, the monthly units sold had climbed steadily from 4,500 units in month one to 5,000 in month three. Customers were enjoying the café's free wireless service. This feature created a situation where people would stay longer and order more coffee. But even with increased sales of cappuccino, the overall finances of the operation were not improving. In looking at their economics-of-oneunit analysis of food and beverage sales, the partners could see that their gross profit per unit for food and beverage sales was only 90 cents. Even if they sold 5,000 food and beverage units per month, they would still only be earning \$4,500 in gross profit. In the scheme of things, this was not very much money—not nearly enough to cover the monthly fixed costs of \$8.332.

An Uncertain Future

One year into their venture, Amy and Steve began to seriously doubt their decision to start the Portland Freelancers' Café. In hindsight, they realized that they knew a lot about being customers but running a state-of-the-art coffee shop was a lot harder than they had imagined.

By the end of the year, the Portland Freelancers' Café was on the verge of going out of business. Take a look at the café's financial statements in **Exhibits 8-14** through **8-17** and then analyze why this happened.

Case Study Analysis

- 1. Evaluate the economics-of-one-unit analysis that Amy and Steve conducted and then answer the following:
 - a. Amy and Steve assumed that, for every \$6 in sales, \$4 would come from selling computer-related services.
 Calculate what percentage of their total sales revenue per unit this \$4 represents.
 - b. For every \$2 in food and beverage sales. Amy and Steve assumed that their COGS per unit would be \$1. Calculate the markup percentage.
 - c. For every \$4 in computer services sales, Amy and Steve assumed that their COGS per unit would be 25 cents. Calculate the markup percentage.
- 2. List three things that Amy and Steve should have considered doing to adapt to the changes in the environment after their customers no longer wanted to pay for Internet services and expected the café to provide free wireless connection.
- 3. Evaluate Amy and Steve's income statement for their first month of operation:
 - a. Is the café operating at a profit or a loss?
 - b. How many units above or below breakeven were sold?
- 4. Amy and Steve decided to take on a \$50,000 loan to finance their start-up investment. Each month they are paying \$1,469 in interest charges. Look at their total monthly fixed costs. What percentage of their total monthly fixed costs does this \$1,469 represent?
- 5. What is the debt-to-equity ratio of the Portland Freelancers' Café?
- 6. Look at each section of the café's cash flow statement. Based on what you see, write a memo highlighting three reasons why this business is not succeeding.
- 7. Review the café's balance sheet. Explain why the net value of the café's property and equipment has decreased from \$80,000 in month one to \$64,000 by year's end.

Start-Up In	vaetmant		
State-Oh III	vesunent		
Start-Up Costs			
Soundproof Room		\$15,000	
Espresso Machine		7,000	
High-Speed Internet Access Setup		10,000	
Workstations		20,000	
Supplies/Equipment		25,000	
Furniture Fixtures		8,000	
Cash Reserves		5,000 10,000	
Total Start-Up Investments		\$100,000	
		\$100,000	
Economics of One Unit (EOU)			
Unit of Sale: Computer/Internet Service	es (average per	customer)	
Average Sale Total (Revenue)			\$4.00
Less COGS			
Computer time	-		
Printer materials	0.25		
Total COGS	0.25	0.25	0.25
Gross Profit			\$3.75
Less Other Variable Costs			
Commission 5% to manager	0.20		
Total Other Variable Costs	0.20	0.20	0.20
Total Variable Costs (COGS + Other VC)		0.45	
Contribution Margin			\$3.55
Economics of One Unit (EOU)			
Unit of Sale: Food and Beverage Sales	lavorago por o	istomarl	
Average Sale Total (Revenue)	laverage per es	ustomer)	\$2.00
Less COGS			\$2.00
Food	0.00		
	0.80		
Beverage	0.20		
Total COGS	1.00	1.00	1.00
Gross Profit			\$1.00
Less Other Variable Costs			
Commission 5% to manager	0.10		
Total Other Variable Costs	0.10	0.10	0.10
Total Variable Costs (COGS + Other VC)		1.10	
Contribution Margin			\$0.90

12,770 \$ 7,855 73,543 \$ 83,558 \$ 29,400 127,700 51,080 \$ 65,688 \$ 91,413 6,385 \$157,100 63,850 Year \$ 1,600 4,800 1,200 \$ 6,100 \$ 6,820 \$ 7,500 6,780 12,000 8 900 680 Dec 6,000 \$13,600 100 \$ \$ 5,900 \$ 6,640 Nov \$ 1,600 11,600 100 4,640 1,160 \$ 7,300 8 580 099 6,560 \$13,200 400 5,800 6,473 \$ 5,813 \$ 7,388 \$ 6,728 \$ 1,800 11,400 4,560 1,140 8 570 999 5,700 \$13,200 450 Oct 4,480 1,120 \$ 5,713 \$ 7,288 6,363 \$ 6,638 5,600 \$ 1,800 11,200 8 560 650 Sep 450 \$13,000 \$ 1,800 11,000 4,400 1,100 \$ 5,613 \$ 7,188 \$ 640 6,253 \$ 6,548 8 550 450 5,500 \$12,800 Aug \$12,800 4,320 \$ 5,525 \$ 7,275 6,165 \$ 6,635 \$ 2,000 10,800 9 640 125 080'1 200 5,400 三 The Portland Freelancers Café for the Year Ending 12/31/2011 INCOME STATEMENT \$ 2,000 \$ 5,425 \$ 7,175 630 \$ 6,545 \$12,600 4,240 9 Jun 10,600 125 530 200 5,300 090'1 \$ 6,633 May 4,160 \$ 2,200 \$12,600 1,040 \$ 5,338 \$ 7,263 630 550 10,400 138 110 520 5,200 \$ 7,163 \$ 6,543 \$ 2,200 \$ 5,238 620 5,100 10,200 \$12,400 1,020 5,858 Apr 550 4,080 5,770 \$ 2,400 \$12,400 4,000 1,000 \$ 5,150 \$ 6,630 5,000 10,000 \$ 7,250 620 120 500 9 \$ 4,000 3,800 \$ 5,000 \$ 675 5,675 \$ 7,825 \$ 8,500 9.500 \$13,500 200 475 1,000 4,750 250 920 Feb \$ 9,375 \$15,000 \$10,125 \$ 750 \$ 6,000 9,000 375 3,600 \$ 4,875 300 450 1,500 8 Jan 4,500 Exhibit 8-15 Income Statement (2%) Total Var. Costs (COGS + Other VC) No. Units Sold—Food and Beverage No. Units Sold—Computer Services Printer Mat'ls (paper, ink) Commission, Food/Bev. Total Other Variable Costs Commission, Computer Less Other Variable Costs Food and Beverage Sales Computer Service Fees Contribution Margin* Total Revenue Beverages Total COGS Less COGS Food Revenue

* Remember: Revenue - COGS = Gross Profit - Other Variable Costs = Contribution Margin.

Exhibit 8-15 (Continued)														
					The Por INC for the	Portland Freelancers INCOME STATEMENT he Year Ending 12/31	The Portland Freelancers Café INCOME STATEMENT for the Year Ending 12/31/2011	fé 17						
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	la _C	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
Less Fixed Costs (USAIIRD)														
Utilities														
Electricity		150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	1,800
Gas		250	250	250	250	250	250	250	250	250	250	250	250	3,000
Water		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	1,200
Telephone		75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	900
High-Speed Internet		425	425	425	425	425	425	425	425	425	425	425	425	5,100
Wireless Internet Service	- Contraction of the Contraction	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	360
Total Utilities	\$1,	\$1,030	\$1,030	\$ 1,030	\$ 1,030	\$ 1,030	\$ 1,030	\$ 1,030	\$ 1,030	\$ 1,030	\$ 1,030	\$ 1,030	\$ 1,030	\$ 12,360
Salaries														
Amy & Steve Salary	7	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	12,000
Tech Support (Part time)	1	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	12,000
Total Salaries	\$2,	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 24,000
Advertising	2	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	12,000
Insurance		200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	00009
Interest	1,	1,469	1,469	1,469	1,469	1,469	1,469	1,469	1,469	1,469	1,469	1,469	1,469	17,628
Rent	1,	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	12,000
Depreciation	-1	1,333	1,333	1,333	1,333	1,333	1,333	1,333	1,333	1,333	1,333	1,333	1,333	15,996
Total Fixed Costs	88	\$8,332	\$8,332	\$ 8,332	\$ 8,332	\$ 8,332	\$ 8,332	\$ 8,332	\$ 8,332	\$ 8,332	\$ 8,332	\$ 8,332	\$ 8,332	\$ 99,984
Pre-Tax Profit	\$1,1	\$1,043	(\$ 507)	(\$1,702)	(\$1,790)	(\$1,700)	(\$1,787)	(\$1,697)	(\$1,785)	(\$1,695)	(\$1,605)	(\$1,692)	(\$1,512)	(\$16,427)
Taxes (2	(50%)	509	-	1	1	.1	ı	ı	-	1	ı	1	1	
Net Profit	\$	\$ 834	(\$ 507)	(\$1,702)	(\$1,790)	(\$1,700)	(\$1,787)	(21,697)	(\$1,785)	(\$1,695)	(\$1,605)	(\$1,692)	(\$1,512)	(\$16,427)
			-	-			Annual Control of the							

Exhibit 8-16 Cash Flow Statement	ement						an an							
					The Pc CAS for the	rtland Fre H FLOW S Year End	The Portland Freelancers Café CASH FLOW STATEMENT for the Year Ending 12/31/2011	afé T <i>011</i>						
	Jan	Feb	Σ	Mar	Apr	May	- In	Inc	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec	Year
Number of Units— Computer Services	1,500	1,000		009	550	550	200	200	450	450	450	400	400	7,350
Food & Beverage Sales	4,500	4,750		5,000	5,100	5,200	5,300	5,400	5,500	5,600	5,700	5,800	6,000	63,850
Cash Inflows:														
Computer Usage Fees	\$ 6,000	\$ 4,000	€9	2,400	\$ 2,200	\$ 2,200	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,800	\$ 1,800	\$ 1,800	\$ 1,600	\$ 1,600	\$ 29,400
Total Cash Inflows	\$15,000	\$13,500	149	\$ 12,400	\$12,400	\$12,600	100	100	\$12,800	\$13,000	\$13,200	\$13,200	\$13,600	\$157,100
Cash Outflows: Variable Costs														
\$900	\$ 4,875	\$ 5,000	49		\$ 5,238	\$ 5,338	8	⇔	\$ 5,613	\$ 5,713	\$ 5,813	\$ 5,900	\$ 6,100	\$ 65,688
Other Variable Costs	\$ 750	\$ 675	\$	620	\$ 620	\$ 630		\$ 640	\$ 640	\$ 650	\$ 660	099 \$	\$ 680	\$ 7,855
Utilities Electricity Cas Mater														
Telephone	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$	200	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 200	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 6,000
High-Speed Internet Access	425	425	5	425	425	425	4	7	425	425	425	425	425	5,100
Wireless Internet	30	30	0	30	30	30	8	8	8	8	8	93	8	360
Salaries														
Salary	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	69	1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000		\$ 1,000	\$ 12,000
Amy and Steve's Salary	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	69	1,000			69	49	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	
Advertising	\$ 1,000		69	1,000	_	-	49	\$	-	-	-	-	-	
Insurance			↔	200			↔ .	↔						
Interest Expense	\$ 1,469	\$ 1,469	69 6	1,469	\$ 1,469	\$ 1,469	\$ 1,469	\$ 1,469	\$ 1,469	\$ 1,469	\$ 1,469	469	\$ 1,469	\$ 17,623
Henr	000'1	00'-	9	7007	- 1		9	9	2001		1		2,	
Onerating Activities	\$ 12.549	\$ 12.600	40	12,696	\$ 12,784	\$ 12,895	\$12,983	\$13,095	\$13,183	\$13,294	\$13,405	\$13,494	\$13,715	\$156,626
Net Cash Flow from													1	
Operating	\$ 2,451	\$ 900	\$	(962	(\$ 384)	(\$ 295)	(\$ 384)	(\$ 295)	(\$ 383)	(\$ 294)	(\$ 205)	(\$ 294)	(\$ 115)	(\$ 474)
						And the second s					desire to a state desired the same of the same of			And the second s

				The C	The Portland Freelancers Café CASH FLOW STATEMENT for the Year Ending 12/31/2011	Freelan W STAT Ending	ncers C FEMEN 12/31/2	afé r 777									
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	2	Mav	- Pro-	179			1						
Cash Flow Out from Investing:				-				2		Aug	*ep	_	0ct	Nov	2	Dec	Year
Soundproof Room Espresso Machine High-Speed Internet Access	\$ 15,000	9 9	0 \$	6	69	\$ 00	0 0	69	*	00	€>	\$ 0	0	69	0	0 \$	\$ 15,000
Setup	10 000	•							,	>		0	0		0	0	7,000
Workstations Sundies/Equipment	20,000	00	00	00		00	0 0		0 0	0 0		0	0		0	0	10.000
Supplies/Lyduplinem Furniture	25,000	0	0	0		0			>	-		0	0		0	0	20,000
Fixtures	8,000	0 0	0	0		0	0			-		0 0	0		0	0	25,000
Net Cash Flow Out from	000'6		0			0	0					0 0	0		0	0	8,000
Investing	\$ 90,000	69	\$	e e	,	•						0	0		0	0	2,000
Financing:				>	A.	ss =	0	φ	\$	0	•	S	0	49	•	0	\$ 90,000
(12% APR) Cash Received from Brother	\$ 50,000	o o	o (€	69	\$	0	∞	69	0	64		ć				
Cash Received from Mother Cash Received from Personal	10,000	0	0	0 0		00	00	0 0		00		A 0 0	00	es.	se 0 0		\$ 50,000
Savings Net Cash Flow In From	20,000	0	0	0		0	-			, ,			0		0	0	10,000
Financing	\$100,000	0	0 \$	S		•			1 .		-1	0	0		0	0	20,000
Net Increase (Decrease) in Cash	\$ 12,451	\$ 900	(\$ 296)	33	(\$ 295)	A 45	384)	(e 20E)		0		0	0	49	\$ 0	0	\$100,000
Cash, Beginning:	\$ 10,000	\$22,451	\$23,351	\$22,055	2		\$22.376	2		(\$ 383)	(\$ 294)		205)	(\$ 294)	4) (\$	115)	\$ 10,474
casn, End:	\$ 22,451	\$23,351	\$22,055	\$22.671	S22 276		400 000	404 001		160'170	\$20,414		\$20,020	\$20,815		\$20,521	\$ 10,000

Exhibit 8-17 Balance Sheet

Portland Freelancers Café BALANCE SHEET for the Year Ending 12/31/2003

	Opening	Closing
ASSETS		
Current Assets:		
Cash	\$110,000	\$20,474
Accounts Receivable	0	0
Total Current Assets	\$110,000	\$20,474
Fixed Assets (Property and Equipment):		
Soundproof Room	\$ 15,000	\$15,000
Espresso Machine	2,000	2,000
Workstations	30,000	30,000
Supplies/Equipment	25,000	25,000
Furniture	3,000	3,000
Fixtures	5,000	5,000
Total Property and Equipment	\$ 80,000	\$80,000
Less Accumulated Depreciation	\$ 0	\$15,996
Total Property and Equipment (Net)	\$ 80,000	\$64,004
Total Assets	\$190,000	\$84,478
LIABILITIES AND OWNER'S EQUITY		
Current Liabilities:		
Accounts Payable	\$ 0	\$ 0
Total Current Liabilities	\$ 0	\$ 0 \$ 0
Long-Term Liability (Uncle's Loan)	\$ 50,000	\$32,377
Total Liabilities	\$ 50,000	\$32,377
Owner's Equity	\$140,000	\$52,101
Amy	40%	40%
Steve	40%	40%
Steve's Brother	20%	20%
Total Liabilities and Owner's Equity	\$190,000	\$84,478