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Problem Solving for Student Businesses

So you have an idea: **Making the transition from idea to proposal to business decision.**

Scenario: Let's say you just came up with a great idea for your business:

Selling Grass Roots root beer

How do you convince your business and other co-managers that your idea is good and that it will work for the business? Clearly you need a plan.

Essential steps to move from idea to reality.

- Research: check out the product information.

What are the units that are delivered by the company? (bottle, case, etc) What are the costs per unit? Is there nutritional information available? Can you get samples? Does the company deliver in this area? What days? What is the minimum order? Does the business already deliver to UMASS; if not are they willing to fill out a W-9?

Using the Internet, current vendors, sales contacts, you get information on Grass Roots root beer. Perhaps a sales rep has contacted you. Ask the rep the above questions and get the answers in a written format that you confirm with the rep.

Your research produces the following results:

Grass Roots root beer is \$20 per case; minimum order is 5 cases, delivered on Thursdays. The Grass Roots company has a vendor number since they already do business with UMASS. They are also proud of the fact that the root beer is not made with high fructose corn syrup and is bottled in Worcester so the transportation charges are minimal.

- Identify the needs for your business: why it is better than a current product? Or does it fill a current gap? How do you know that your customers will like it and that it will sell?

The current root beer that you carry comes from New York and is \$25/case. Your customers are nutritionally aware and want to have some alternatives. The Sales rep has brought a sample for you, you and other comanagers have tasted it and it's great!



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- Write up what you have discovered and distribute the info to your steering committee or CORE. Be prepared to have a presentation to the committee, get their comments and then you're ready to present to your All-staff meeting.

You write up a proposal and present it to your steering committee. One comanager mentions that he has heard of another root beer that is being manufactured in Lowell, MA. So you agree to research that product before presenting the proposal to the All Staff meeting.

- Think of the questions other comanagers might have and have the answers ready.

You find out that the Lowell root beer is made with high fructose corn syrup and is \$19 per case. You mention that the Lowell root beer is cheaper in the proposal but recommend to purchase Grass Roots root beer since the ingredients are more nutritionally sound. You are able to answer questions and comanagers support your recommendation.

In order to take your idea and make it an actual business POLICY, you will need to put in some extra work. If you do the legwork, lay out the supporting evidence and offer statistics, listen to concerns, keep your mind open to alternatives, and modify your proposal as appropriate based on additional ideas, you may succeed in Leaving a Legacy to your business with your name on it!