**On the Job Video Cases Questions**

On the Job: Bissell Brothers Brewing: Managing Start-Ups and New Ventures

1. **What are some of the entrepreneurial traits found in the two Bissell brothers that help make them successful? Are there any skills or traits you think they could improve upon?**

Since founded the beer brewing business in the year 2013, the two Bissell brothers Peter Bissell and Noah Bissell have been the best beer brewers based in Portland. In my opinion, to be successful in their business, besides having the vision and ideas for new products and services, they have achieved a lot of entrepreneurial traits such as autonomy, high energy, self-confidence, personal sacrifice, locus of control and the need to achieve.

* **Autonomy**

The two Bissell brothers started their business small, hence they run their own company, take their own decisions, and do not depend on partners or higher authorities or investors. In short, they are the bosses. Only when their business grows big, they have managers to help them in their business.

* **High Energy**

The Bissell brothers give out great effort and all their energy to fully focus on growing and developing their business. They are obsessed with what they are working on and just want to be successful.

* **Self-confidence**

The Bissell brothers had the self-confidence to continue growing their business even though the business started off not so well. They believe that their efforts will be rewarded.

* **Personal Sacrifice**

The Bissell brothers had undergone struggles and sacrifices when starting their business, and then growing it. Growing up in a small town, with no experience in commercial brewing or manufacturing, it was Noah’s homebrewing passion and Peter’s interest in entrepreneurship, together with their willingness to sacrifice their money, time, age, and not giving up that they became successful.

* **Locus of Control**

The Bissell brothers also have locus of control where they place their responsibilities within their business to achieve more in their business.

* **Need to Achieve**

The Bissell brothers set their targets and goals, force themselves to achieve them and motivate each other to achieve success. They have the desire to try something new, always think out of the box, and then explore further into mixed fermentation to produce wide variety of beers. They always set their challenges difficult as they want to feel the satisfaction of achieving them.

In short, the Bissell brothers have portrayed all entrepreneurial traits required to make their business successful, namely autonomy, high energy, self-confidence, personal sacrifice, locus of control, and need to achieve. However, to say that they need not improvements or improvisation on those skills is not true. I think that they can work on the autonomy part, not by taking more control, but instead to be open for hiring more employees and managers to help them with their business. This is because their business is growing rapidly that there will be one moment when they cannot handle all the demand from customers. We are not perfect and not always right, and there are times we will need help from others to accomplish a task. For me, it is trust that they must build, and work on their networking relationships, this is also a great way to have more constructive ideas on how to make their business more successful.

1. **How would you summarize the steps the brothers took to launch their business? What challenges did they have to address?**

Bissell Brothers was created in November 2011 by brothers Noah and Peter Bissell, in response to Noah’s homebrewing obsession and Peter’s interest in entrepreneurship and marketing.

The Bissell brothers grew up in a small town in central Maine called Milo, where the population was only around 2000 at that time. They had no experience in commercial brewing or manufacturing, but they saw a hole in the market that was untapped in Maine, in terms of beer types and the ways to sell it. The brothers spent two years on a crash course of professional development to bring their ideas to reality, and the first kegs of The Substance Ale were sold on December 2013.

The starting stage was of course not as easy as it looked. They faced so many obstacles like any other entrepreneurs and millions of reasons to quit form what they were doing, but they do not give up. They have always had the desire for something new and different, and soon Cans appeared in February 2014 when the demand for The Substance Ale skyrocketed. The Maine beer world has since set a new stage for new type of sales model. While in April 2014, the first tap room opened at the brewery, in which they could easily make their beer in and by summer of 2015, to develop their beer business, the Bissell brothers had already worked together with several choice mobile food vendors and beverage producers to change the industry in Maine.

The Bissell brothers are never satisfied with their small achievements, they began searching for a larger home or a larger brewery as soon as they had settled in the previous one, and a new Bissell Brothers brewery and tap room opened to public on June 4th, 2016. Their next step is to expand their business beyond Portland and they successfully did it when the group’s boutique distributor, Sleek Machine was launched by fall of 2016. This strategic move provided the brothers with maximum flexibility in getting their beers to places beyond Portland. Then, they explore further into mixed fermentation and barrel-aging which led the business to open its second production facility in their hometown Milo. They have successfully produced beers with mixed cultures of yeast and bacteria, as well as aged in barrels. The rural community of Milo also get to enjoy a wide variety of canned and draft beverages from Portland.

To summarize, the brothers were able to find the perfect market to develop their business at the start which was pivotal for their business launch. Along the way it was difficult, but they took strategic changes when it needed. They know when and how to pivot, for example when they expanded their business beyond Portland, and when they explore deeper into mixed fermentation. This was also an important step in their successful beer business. Now, they even have their own professional Website (*bissellbrothers.com*) where customers can easily navigate through.

The main challenges the brothers have had to address in their beer business were the cost and their initial ideas and how long will it take them to be successful. They started off their business with no prior knowledge and no previous experience, but it was their passion and their desire for something new that helped them reach the heights that they are at now. The challenge of sacrificing their time, money, energy was also there as they had to give their all for their business. The transition from their first small brewery and tap room to a larger brewery, the change of strategic direction to mixed fermentation and production of wider variety of beverages were all challenges they faced and they tackled them all with the correct entrepreneurial traits.

1. **Which one of the business tactics did the Bissell brothers use to become business owners? What are some possible reasons why they rejected the other options?**

The Bissell brothers are seen being successful in establishing their own business venture as they possess self-confidence and were able to take the right decisions on time. They acquired entrepreneurial traits such as high energy, locus of control, autonomy, and personal sacrifice. They were also able to reject options that could have led to their downfall.

Among the business tactics starting a new business from scratch, buying an existing business or franchise, I think the Bissell brothers used starting a new business from scratch to become business owners. They started the business with no personal experience in the brewing field and started the business only with their passion and homebrewing obsession. Noah had the homebrewing skills, while Peter had interest in entrepreneurship and marketing. The Bissell brothers started their company with a straightforward idea and goal, which was to craft flavours and experiences that the people of Maine had not had before, and to serve them as fresh as possible. Their idea proved to be a success, and to start off the business from scratch seems to be an advantage for the Bissell brothers as the brothers would have full control and autonomy on their company, they run their own company, they make their own decisions, and they are the bosses of their business.

While buying an existing business offers the advantage of shorter time to get a business started, in my opinion the Bissell brothers rejected to use this tactic is mainly because of outdated technology. As mentioned, the brothers wanted to serve their products as fresh as possible and focus on the customer experience for their business, hence the technology and machines used for brewing is particularly important. Yes, an existing business would already have its own beer making system, and the brothers would have been able to start off their business more easily, but they are willing to sacrifice money on this and they wanted the best and newest technology for beer making. Next issue for an existing business would be its existing operating procedures. The Bissell brothers wanted full autonomy on their business, hence they wanted operating procedures based on their ideas, and would not want any ill will or bad practices towards the business, this is probably why they rejected buying an existing business in my opinion.

Starting a franchise is almost like buying an existing business where there is already existing products and existing operating procedures, hence there is no need to develop a new product or create a new company. One main advantage of a franchise is that franchisees only need to invest money and will own the business and can offer products and services under the franchisor’s brand name. The management help is also provided by the franchisor, which makes the job easier. In my opinion, the Bissell brothers would see this as a disadvantage as there would be limited freedom to manage the business in their own way, which opposes their main goal which is to provide the best services and products all by their own. Another disadvantage for starting a franchise would be the high start-up costs needed, followed by monthly payments to the franchisor. If the franchisee fails to maintain and improves on the services provided, the main franchise’s reputation could also be ruined. Therefore, the Bissell brothers went on to start their own beer business from scratch.

Over the years, as the business has grown, Bissell brothers are now able to share their beers with people in other areas, be it regionally, nationally, or internationally, however their hometown, Maine always comes first. They have never forgotten their first goal, which is to strive to take care of those things closest to them. They always wanted to give out their best on making beer, give the best services to their loyal customers, and the surrounding communities that have supported them. This is the reason the Bissell brothers have been successful, they have the courage to start their own business from scratch, and together with the support from the ones closest to them. Hence, I think they have chosen the right business tactic.