



PITTSBURGH OPTICIAN CASE STUDY

 **ÜLYSSES**

DIGITAL STUDENT COMPETITION ON FAMILY BUSINESS



Erasmus+



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SLOGAN/TAKE AWAY MESSAGE:

A chic and prestigious place to go, but where family love still runs through it.

KEYWORDS:

generational change, change of business profile

ABSTRACT:

Pittsburgh Opticians is a family firm with a 50-year history. The company is constantly expanding its range of products and improving its business model. The close relationship between brothers and sisters is a constant feature of the family business, making work easier at times and more difficult at others. Generational change is one of them, which might result in involving young people and outsiders in the firm, who are all different from the current management and employees of the company. A rejuvenation is long-awaited from the customers' side as well, which is the main reason why their new store was created that focuses on the possibility of purchasing fashion products alongside eyewear. This new store model is rewriting habits and is therefore challenging for the company.

INTRODUCTION TO SITUATION (STORYTELLING)

After a gloomy Monday workday, the family came home and the adults went to the kitchen to prepare dinner, as they had done every day. *"Daddy... there's a big problem! The redundancies continue...I don't know who else I can fire. It's been a very difficult time for me to say goodbye to friends. I can't do this anymore...but I love my job so much!"*, the mother began, frustrated. Andy, the father, listened intently, not saying a word but hugging his partner. *"I don't know how I can help you, but I really want to!"* he



whispered in her ear. After the reassuring hug, they were preparing dinner in silence and were deeply immersed in their thoughts. Suddenly, Mom spoke up, *"I'm putting myself on the layoff list, so I only have to fire 1 more person besides myself...there's no other way."* Dad looked wide-eyed, shocked by the idea, but supportive as always, *"Let's set up a mini optician business for you in a corner of the shop. Many people in town already know you, they'll come to you."* *"That's not such a bad idea..."* smiled Rose, *"Let's tell the kids, see what they think!"*

Thus began the story of the Pittsburgh Opticians. Although parting with the old company was not easy, Rose resigned. To add to the story, their family house was under construction at the time, so it was not a good situation financially, but they were saying, *"every beginning is difficult"*.

Since then, the children have grown up and gradually taken over the family business, which has moved away from being a fashion store and turned into an optics store. Parents prepared for the handover of their position and consciously guided their children. They knew in advance that although Andrew, the only son, was the youngest, they would have to take over the running of the company, but being good brothers, this was no problem for anyone.

Now the third generation is reaching adulthood, so the problem of generational change has come up again. The need to think about the continuous steps of integration, and the large business park has brought the integration of outsourced employees. The latter is also difficult to cope with, as they have a completely different work ethic from what previous family members have demonstrated. *"These kids don't want to work 8 hours a day anymore. They get tired and don't feel ownership of the company like we do, and it has become a niche profession, making it almost impossible to find skilled workers, let alone entry-level ones."* Andrew said. *"We are used to working together, we know each other, so it is very difficult to let new people into our confidence... no wonder,*



we often bring family matters into the work, which is intimate and confidential." However, for this new type of business, they need young people, as they are the target audience for the new combination of fashion goods and optician products, which again will give them a unique business model in the market.

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS AND FAMILY BACKGROUND

The founder, the father:

When Andy signed the lease on his shop 23 July 1973, he had no idea how successful family business he was about to start. His expertise paid off, as he managed to establish a high-class tailor shop in the city, where professors, actors and foreign students came before graduations. At that time, quality was a priority for customers, so the wealthy sought out his staff of five or six. However, as time went on, less durable fashion goods became available in Hungary, and the P-model was born, with a unique brand name and logo, and the pieces were sourced in Budapest by the family man.

The wife, the first optician in the family:

The founder's wife used to be the manager of the largest Ofofórt (optician) in Central and Eastern Europe, and its 40 employees. She loved her job, was respected by both her employees and her managers. She was the only woman to attend the big meetings in Budapest on Fridays, where her husband took her every time. A major downsizing meant that she decided to put herself on the list instead of her husband. That's how she ended up in 1993 in a corner of the 26-square-metre family business, where she used her contacts to continue her profession. That's when the tiny shop became a fashion and optics store. Later, she organized events for women who wore glasses because she enjoyed the way they felt in the shop and found that they persuaded each other to



buy even more. Her children learned the trade alongside her.

The youngest, Andrew, the manager:

Andrew, who has a great social sense, was born as the fourth child and as a sole son among his siblings. His parents wanted him to run the company, so he was consciously steered in this direction and very soon found himself working alongside his mother in the business. A master optometrist, he has been working full-time in the family business since 2002. In addition to running the business, he has not forgotten his profession, so he also carries out eye examinations and fits contact lenses. In his leadership role, he is constantly focused on development and helping those in need. His latest development is the purchase of a defibrillator, as his shop is opposite a bus stop where anything could happen. But the idea for the first website is also linked to his name. He was still a child, so to speak, when he convinced his parents of the importance of it, and they were open to the idea. He's also held the family together since the loss of his parents. As he puts it, he gets his sisters and their families together for huge Italian-style meals, where they have a good time together, with loud words and a little work aside the dinners.

The entourage of ladies, Andrew's sisters, and niece:

"In the mornings while we were at school, Mum worked with Grandma, and then me and my sister would take turns working with Mum." – said the eldest sister, Sue. Gabi worked at Ofotért and then moved to a contact lens company as a field representative, so she was always considered the *"outside contact"*. Dina joined the MÁV clinic, where the family character of the company was also evident, as she worked in the shop with her infant daughter Jule. Among others, Andrew looked after the little one during this time. Nita worked as a photographer, which is a co-profession with ophthalmology, as many shops used to have image processing and eye examination in the same place, while Dina studied ceramics, so that in the Black House, one of the city's most



prestigious museums, she is responsible for the complete retouching of the arm of one of the sculptures.

INFORMATION ABOUT FAMILY BUSINESS

General information about the company:

The concept of boutique optics was the fruit of a romantic family life story, the foundations of which were laid in 1973 by the head of the family, and the concept was born when his wife changed jobs. Today, the company is the absolute market leader in Szeged in terms of size and quality compared to similar companies, not counting the huge franchises. *"In 2008, we managed to buy the apartment next to ours, so we could open the two together and have a bigger business"* - Andrew.

In autumn 2022, the family opened their newest store, Boutique Optics. *"The basic concept with this shop was to bring back my father's idea of mixing fashion goods and optics"* - Andrew. As part of this, the following products are currently available on the fashion merchandise front in the opticians: scarves, hats, purses, hats, belts. These are all high-quality products, with brands including Gucci, Furla, Alexander McQueen, as well as specialties, such as hardened rabbit hair from a local artisan hatmaker lady and 18 carat gold jewelry.

The spirit of enterprise:

The family feel is evident in every corner of the shop in the kindness they convey to their customers. The primary aim has always been to ensure that customers have a good shopping experience, a good atmosphere, and a desire to return. Inspired by Rose's events, they now also organize a children's day with gifts and activities to reinforce engagement. Furthermore, helping others is becoming more prominent in the company's approach. They take every opportunity, such as organizing a collection



during COVID and buying a defibrillator for their shop to help anyone.

PROBLEM TO SOLVE

In the light of the above, ophthalmology is striving to develop on several fronts at the same time in order to maintain its leading position in the region. It must therefore simultaneously prepare for a generational change and, during the transition period, find and integrate the right external staff. During this period, it will also be necessary to work out how and at what pace the young adults in the family - two of them under 20 - will be able to join the company and take up the familiar work ethic.

In addition to the above, the newly opened Botiqie-Optique business should be ramped up. A completely unconventional optical shop model needs to be introduced to customers and made popular. Here it would be worthwhile to first specify the target group and then develop a blueprint to help them achieve their goals. Furthermore, Andrew's aim is to create a shop where customers can go "prestigious and chic". However, building such a reputation does not happen by itself.

QUESTIONS

1. What processes should the family business put in place to make it easier for it to absorb and integrate external workers?
2. How should the two young offspring be integrated? What steps and processes should precede this? How can these children be kept motivated?
3. Who are Boutique Optics' potential customers and how should they be reached?
4. What are the benefits of combining a fashion product with optics from the customer's point of view? What USP could be formulated for the store? What



makes the shop prestigious and fashionable for the consumer?

INSTRUCTIONS FOR STUDENTS

- Students should answer the questions posed above.
- Handing in: Written solution (5-6 pages)
- Video presentation → can be video of team, animation etc. pitch 3 min

EVALUATION

- Aims and Process: the team was able to identify the problem/crisis/issue, defines clear and comprehensible aims on how to solve it and describes its approach and the reasoning behind it.
- Structure & Form: the form and structure of the final output and its presentation is creative (editing, tools used, design, attractiveness), comprehensible (red line), follows academic standards (citations), and uses adequate language.
- Research (literature and theory): the approach and processes to solve the problem are based on relevant literature and theory.
- Content / Solution / Outcome: the team's solution provides an added value for the family business and its members. Relevant criteria:
 - Level of Creativity
 - Level of Innovativeness

Level of Feasibility / Possibility of Implementation





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Ulysses Contest – Digital Student Competition on Family Business

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