A Community Building Business

Doc Burnstein’s Ice Cream Lab was founded by Greg Steinberger in 2003, in Arroyo Grande, California where Burnardo’z Ice Cream had built a reputation for quality ice cream since 1976. Greg was blessed to collaborate with Chuck Burns, founder of Burnardo’z, to learn the art of ice cream making. Greg then added his extensive business background and a heart for service to create a Central Coast phenomenon, known for not just its quality product and memorable experiences, but also for its unique business model and community contribution.

From its inception, Doc Burnstein’s Ice Cream Lab demonstrated its clear intention to do business differently. Greg was determined to create a business model that set the highest standards for business, and made a measurable positive impact in the community. At Doc’s the model has been dubbed, the “Community Building Business Model”, with the core components as:

- **Giving Back to the Community**
- **Employee Development**
- **Community Ownership**
- **Faith-Based Values**
- **Benefit Corporation**

These core components work collaboratively with an underlying need to bring a fair return to its investors to create a distinct and beneficial community institution. Let’s explore each of the components in turn.
Giving Back to the Community

Doc Burnstein’s was founded with a commitment to give back at least 10% of profits to the local community, and Greg and the Company have followed through on that promise ever since. Initially working with local schools to host fun and financially successful fundraisers, the Company raised thousands of dollars for schools while providing a fun night of social interactions for families and faculty.

Doc’s is also an ongoing sponsor of blood drives, having donated over 7,000 pints of ice cream to donors. Mona Kleman, Recruitment Manager at United Blood Services, put it in perspective by stating, “That’s 7,000 lives that have been positively impacted, in some cases it’s a life-saving contribution. No other company has stepped up like they have.”

Doc’s also works with a large array of local nonprofits, veterans’ organizations, youth support organizations, and more. Recipients of the Giving Back Pledge include Make-a-Wish, Hospice, Lifewater International, and over 100 different local organizations each year. The Giving Back Pledge yields enormous satisfaction for Greg and the Company as well as a deep appreciation from the community.

We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community. Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own. - Caesar Chavez

Employee Development

The challenges facing the next generation are unique. As entry-level jobs disappear to technology and outsourcing, (remember paper routes, cutting lawns, and helping in the fields), young people today have more free time that is being taken up with social media and online games. Doc’s strives to create a culture and environment that is safe for the youth of today to learn and grow in the workforce.

That is why Employee Development is one of the core tenets of the Doc Burnstein’s business model. Greg says, “Young people want to do a good job, but they often don’t know what that looks like. So we show them, train them and set good work habits for life.” The Company has built training programs and a safe environment where young people learn and flourish.

The broad company goal for the Company’s young team is gaining essential life skills, such as work ethic, creativity, initiative, problem-solving, conflict resolution, leadership, financial management and budgeting. Understanding the role of an inspired purpose for both the business and each individual is shared from the very first employee training, and immersed through Doc’s work environment. The goal is to create a place where young workers build skills for success they will use for the rest of their lives.

Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world. - Nelson Mandela

Proverbs 22:6

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Community Ownership

When Greg Steinberger, founder of Doc Burnstein’s, chose to make shares of the company available in 2013, a lot of local people got excited. They, like their neighbors, had been enjoying Doc’s for years and the opportunity to become an owner was thrilling.

Local residents had many different reasons for purchasing stock. One grandma, who had regularly taken her grandchildren to Doc’s, bought them shares so they received the understanding that good investments take time to mature. Another local stockholder appreciated how much Doc’s does in the community and wanted to support it. And a third stockholder spoke of the experience at Doc’s with his children and grandchildren, marveling at the multi-generational sharing of joy.

Since Doc’s opened its Company to community ownership in 2013, and the stock value has doubled since that time resulting in a stock split in 2016. In early 2017, the Company opened an additional Stock Offering, with shares valued at $50 per share (determined by an external and independent evaluation). Capital from the stock sale is being used for the expansion of Doc Burnstein’s to locations in California. The goal for the Company is to eventually grow throughout the United States.

Inspiration for community-ownership came from Greg’s hometown football team, the Green Bay Packers. The only professional sports team that is community-owned, Greg witnessed the multi-generational passion Green Bay residents have for their beloved Packers, and he wanted to repeat that on the Central Coast. A goal is that Doc Burnstein’s Shareholder Ice Cream Socials become as exciting at the Packer Shareholder meetings, and need a stadium to include everyone!

It has a completely different feeling than before (I became a shareholder) when I was rooting for them, because it was like, 'Look, really, this is my team. It is OUR team.'

— Ann-Marie Richione, Green Bay Packer Shareholder

Faith-based Values

As Greg built his company, he looked inward for guidance as well as to his education and experiences. Greg appreciated the blessings in his life and believed these blessing are intended to be used to serve others. These same values are extended to the business, where the blessings of a business can improve the lives of customers, staff, shareholders and the community.

At Doc Burnstein’s, “Faith-Based” is as simple as beginning each team meeting with an expression of gratitude for our blessings, and acknowledging our role to serve others. We continually remind ourselves of our intent to use our talents to bring to life the words painted in every parlor, “God Bless All”.

Silent Gratitude isn’t much use to anyone.

- G.B. Stern (Novelist)

James 1:17
Benefit Corporation

In 2007, a small group of companies got together and started a movement. Seeking to separate genuinely good companies from good marketing, the B-Lab was formed to create the highest standards of verified social and environmental performance, public transparency, and legal accountability. They dubbed those who meet this high standard Benefit Corporations, or “B-Corps”. The B-Lab aspires to recognize businesses that use their expertise and the power of the markets to solve social and environmental problems, leading a growing global movement of using business as a force for good.

Doc Burnstein’s Ice Cream Lab registered in California as a Benefit Corporation in 2012, and is in the process of becoming certified by the B-Lab. This is a major step in the Company’s public accountability towards their goals for social, environmental, and community impact. Certified B-Corps redefine success in business, with well-known B-Corps including Patagonia, Ben & Jerry’s, Natura, Etsy, and The Honest Company.

The B Corp movement is one of the most important of our lifetime, built on the simple fact that business impacts and serves more than just shareholders—it has an equal responsibility to the community and to the planet. - Rose Marcario, CEO, Patagonia (a B-Corporation)

Summary

In an era of ‘too big to fail’, can a business become ‘too important to fail’ within its community? Yes! Start by genuinely caring about your customers, your staff, and your community as much as you care about your shareholders. Then weave these principles into your operation, making it a part of why your customers and your investors want you to succeed.

The mission of Doc Burnstein’s Ice Cream Lab boils down to creating enduring memories for our guests. We also recognize a responsibility to make a positive impact on our communities, develop our staff, and honor our Creator who makes it possible. We just happen to make amazing ice cream along the way.

A Community Building Business – it’s not just a good idea, it’s a good business. - David Long, Investor