

Teaching Case

Brighthill Bakery and Garden Supply: A Case Addressing Multiple Facets of Information Systems Acquisition and Use

Dana Schwieger
Department of Accounting
Southeast Missouri State University

Abstract

Martin and Sally Brighthill recently opened a small boutique style bakery and garden supply shop to rave reviews by the community. The popularity of their first few months has overwhelmed their current operations and is pushing them to consider incorporating technology-based solutions to assist them in daily operations and for maintaining sales growth. Because their business was new and untested, they had not invested much capital into their point of sale system or providing media-based advertising.

For the past few months, they have relied upon word-of-mouth awareness and paper-based processes such as a simple cash register and sales order pads at the checkouts. However, the Brighthills now feel that they must plan for the future and prepare for continued growth. They would like to develop a plan for incorporating more Internet-based media (web site, social media, etc.) into their advertising strategy. They are also in need of a technology infrastructure to manage their operations. The Brighthills are seeking assistance for one or all of their IT needs.

Keywords: Case Project, Management Information Systems, Social Media, eMarketing Plans, Technology infrastructure, Request for Proposal

1. INTRODUCTION

Martin and Sally Brighthill, elementary school teachers, decided to start a sideline business by turning their lifelong hobbies into a business venture... gardening and baking. They were both flower enthusiasts and it seemed like each had been born with a pair of green thumbs. Martin had dabbled in the gardening business throughout his life. He had worked for a landscaping and lawn business throughout high school and college. Now, he had his own lawn mowing business that he ran during the summers when school was out of session. Sally loved to garden too, but her second love was baking. She was well known in the community for her baked goods and delicious desserts. Whenever there was a potluck at church or

fundraiser at school, her dishes were always the first to disappear.

2. ABOUT THE BRIGHTHILL'S

When Martin and Sally married ten years ago, they purchased a ten acre plot on the outskirts of town containing a fixer-upper two story farmhouse, shed, and small barn. The place was in shambles when they purchased it so the location and condition made the sight affordable. Over the years, with a lot of hard work, love, attention and money, they turned the dilapidated eyesore into a welcoming floral escape. Also during that time, the town had quickly grown out to meet their property. Passersby's would occasionally stop at Martin and Sally's home thinking that their place was a quaint tea shop or gardening boutique. Once visitors were assured that Martin and Sally's

home was indeed the Brighthill's residence and not a specialty boutique, they would often suggest that it should become such.

The Seed Is Planted

Martin and Sally were always very flattered by passerby's mistaking their home for a specialty shop and the lovely comments they would make about the property. They often joked about starting a sideline business, but never spoke of the idea seriously until they watched the tail lights disappear of the latest passerby to stop at their home. The businessman made a generous offer to buy their property to turn it into his own specialty shop. He mentioned in passing that it appeared to be "move in" ready and with the addition of infrastructure for commercial operations, he could have it ready to open within a couple of months. This was the impetus for Martin and Sally's decision to try to make a go of their own business venture based upon their long time hobbies.

3. BUSINESS LAYOUT

Martin and Sally envisioned a business with a mission centered on "Providing high quality gardening products and services in a welcoming atmosphere in which the customers feel like family." The Brighthills quickly set to work revamping the 1500 square feet of the first floor of their home for the coffee house/bakery. Sitting areas were arranged in the parlor, dining room, and along the porch that wrapped around the house. Additional seating was scattered throughout the garden area for customers to enjoy their coffees and baked goods. The kitchen area was converted to a commercial kitchen and an alcove by the front door used for seating customers, taking to-go orders, and customer bill payment. A spare bedroom in the house was converted to an office for business operations for the entire enterprise.

The kitchen serves a variety of hot and cold beverages and bakery goods. Some of the items included on their menu are:

Beverages	Bakery Goods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lattes • Iced Coffee • Iced Tea • Hot Tea • Hot Cocoa • Water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cookies • Cupcakes • Dessert breads • Scones • Pie • Cake

Approximately 3 acres of the property houses the buildings and garden areas. The 2500

square foot barn houses plants, flowers, and gardening supplies. Plants offered for sale are scattered throughout the gardens as part of the landscape. The 500 square foot shed is used for business operations and garden shop checkout. Customized landscaping and lawn services are also offered and a seating area arranged in the shed for customers to work with lawn specialists. Some of the items and services available through the garden supply store include:

Supplies	Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plants • Tools • Seeds • Soil • Fertilizers • Pesticides • Rocks • Landscaping bricks • Flower pots • Yard ornaments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lawn mowing • Trench digging • Landscape design • Landscape brick laying • Garden planting • Garden tending • Yard fertilizing • Yard seeding • Leaf raking

4. PURCHASE PROCESSES

Currently, all sales processes are performed manually. The sales associates, for both the garden supply store and the coffee house, wander about the property with a sales order pad taking orders.

For coffee house orders placed in one of the garden areas, the sales associate writes the orders in the pad and then calls them in so that they will be ready for pick-up when he/she returns to the kitchen. When receiving the call, the kitchen staff also writes the order down as it is received. Sales placed within the building are written on a sales pad and hand carried to the kitchen.

Once the order is filled in the kitchen, the sales associate picks the order up from the kitchen counter, checks the food against the order for correctness, and then delivers the order to the appropriate customer along with a copy of the sales order. Upon delivery, the sales associate collects payment, makes change, and marks the sales order as paid. Sales placed within the building are cashed out at the register which is also able to process credit card transactions.

Sales associates, delivering orders to the garden, receive payment upon delivery of goods. Although they carry \$20 in change, they must return to a register for credit card sales and to cash large bills.

Garden supply purchases are handled at a register similar to the one in the coffee house. When a sale is made in the garden area, the sales associate assists the customer in carrying his/her item(s) to the garden supply shop register for checkout and delivers the item(s) to the customer's vehicle if needed.

The checkout transactions, for both the coffee house and garden supply stores, end with the customer being asked if he/she is on the mailing list and if not, would he/she like to provide an email address to be added to receive the monthly newsletter and news about future discounts and specials. In addition, the sales staff are expected to record each sale in a notebook kept by each register to keep track of the number and type of items purchased. This information is used to check and maintain inventory counts. Unfortunately, sales associates sometime enter erroneous data or forget to update the notebook when there are a number of customers waiting to be helped.

When Sally closes the register at the end of each day, she reconciles the receipts and the sales. She also enters the customer names and email addresses into a spreadsheet that is used when sending out the monthly newsletters. With the number of transactions averaging around 300 on Mondays through Thursdays and 600 on Fridays and Saturdays, Sally spends several hours each week entering email addresses.

5. FUTURE PLANS

Martin and Sally would like to shift their operations to be more technology driven rather than labor intensive. They would like to obtain

an automated sales and inventory management system that could help them to generate and process invoices, purchase and maintain inventory, collect and maintain customer information as well as reduce the time it takes to process a sales transaction. They would also like for their sales associates to carry smart devices and transact orders and payments over a secure network where the customer is located.

In addition, customer purchases, they think, could be increased, if customers would linger on the property longer. Thus, they would like to provide free Wi-Fi in the shops and on the grounds so that customers could surf the Net as well as place additional orders online.

Advertising

The Brighthills know that the business could realize significant sales growth if they had a structured Internet marketing plan in place. So far, they have relied upon word-of-mouth advertising, daily Facebook posts, a weekly newspaper ad, and a monthly email newsletter to advertise their business. Unfortunately, they are unsure of what resources they should use, how to get started, how to keep everything up-to-date without getting overwhelmed, and how to monitor and analyze the activity on their advertising tools once they are in place.

4. CONCLUSION

The Brighthills have to come to this class seeking direction and assistance. They look forward to working with you and using the deliverables you produce to improve their operations.