

Technical Assistance Report

Strengthening Existing Storefront Businesses Agawam, MA

Christine Moynihan October 3, 2016



Technical Assistance provided to the Agawam, MA Office of Economic Development Technical Assistance sponsored by Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Department of Housing and Community Development



Christine Moynihan, Retail Visioning. chris@retailvisioning.com 508.660.6230

Retail Program: Strengthening Existing Businesses

The town of Agawam applied for and was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative to strengthen existing businesses in the area of the town that is being developed into a downtown of improved dining and shopping. Retail consultant, Christine Moynihan of Retail Visioning was selected to fulfill the scope of work associated with this grant request. The objective for this program was to help existing retail and storefront business learn and apply current best practices in retailing leading to a stronger downtown retail district that would attract additional quality businesses. This program, called **Best Retail Practices**, had two parts.

- A community-wide educational component that involved a 2-hour workshop to which all retailers, restaurateurs and other store front service businesses in Agawam were invited.
- A consulting component that involved five one-on-one store visit/consultations with individual storefront businesses within the downtown area of Agawam.

The timeline for this program took about 4 months with the actual activities supporting this program as follows:

- In April, 2016 Christine Moynihan met with a steering committee for this project (the Mayor, a selectman, and Marc Strange, Economic Development Director) to learn more about the plans to revitalize an area of town into a vibrant, walkable “downtown” and to share an outline of the workshop that would be delivered later in the spring. At this meeting she also provided recommendations for questions that would be helpful to the application process to help the committee select the one-on-one participants from those who attended the workshop. She also helped develop materials for fliers and press releases to help market the program and recruit participation in the overall program.
- The committee then selected a good time and date for the workshop, reserved a large community room and began promoting the program and inviting local business owners to the workshop.
- On June 14, 2016 Christine delivered a 2 hour workshop from 8am -10:00AM. The focus of the workshop was on how to apply Best Practices to your own small business in the areas of: business positioning, signage, windows and exterior

presentation, interior layout, décor and display, in-store, in-print and on-line marketing and customer service. Approximately a dozen community officials and storefront business owners attended the workshop.

- Applications for one-on-one consultations were distributed at the workshop. They were reviewed by Marc Strange and 5 local businesses were selected to participate.

- On June 27, Christine and her associate, Claudia Greenfield, along with Marc Strange, visited the businesses selected and met with the owners for about an hour and a half, each. At these meetings she reviewed their situation and took pictures of each business environment so as to prepare a set of recommendations that might improve opportunities for these businesses. The recommendations were then delivered at follow-up one-on-one meetings on July 20, 2016. A 4-5 page report was presented to the retailer with a copy to the town. Recommendations were specific to the needs of each business and came with a commitment that RetailVisioning would work with each business as they fulfilled one or more of the business improvement recommendations.

- The businesses selected to improve their businesses as follows:
 - Hair & Company selected to repaint the salon, add new lighting and install window clings to the front windows listing services
 - HMB Club rebranded the company so that more American's understood this Thai fitness-focused business. Subsequently they decided to move to a more highly trafficked area and install new signage there.
 - ICircle chose to purchase a fly-tent so that they could have a presence at local schools, colleges, farmer's markets, and other community events. They also have hired a web developer to create a more sophisticated website that will present them better on line.
 - The Pizza Guy has designed an updated logo and purchased tee shirts for his staff to wear promoting the new design. He is hoping to open an additional location eventually.
 - Music Speaks created a new window display featuring mannequins in full "performance" mode adding a dynamic presence to the front of their building.

These 5 reports are attached here.

Retail Visioning Consultation Session Report

Business Name and Address: Hair & Co.
381 Walnut St Ext, Agawam, MA 01001
413-786-0906

Business contact Person Laurene O'Keefe

Business Description Hair Salon
Consultation Date June 27, 2016

Summary of Topics Addressed

- A. Exterior and Approach
- B. Design and Experience
 - B.1 Layout and Décor
 - B.2 Visual Merchandising
 - B.3 Fixtures
 - B.4 Lighting
- C. Marketing
 - C.1 Business Identity and Positioning
 - C.2 Communications and Promotion

Background

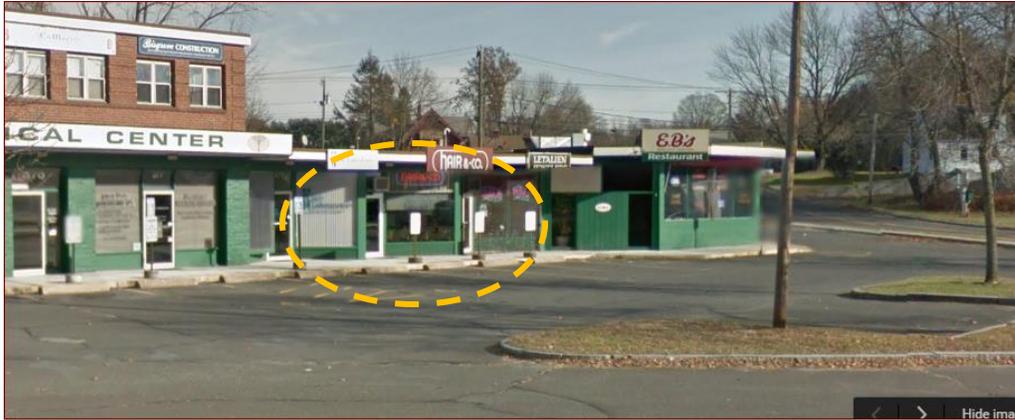
This salon is an "institution" in the area, as it has been around for 23 years in the same location. The salon is in an area that is going to be changing over the next few years. The owner has a loyal following. Customers range in age and the salon also cuts and styles men's hair. On Facebook it is identified as a barbershop.

The owner works Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. On other days when they are open (not open on Sundays and Mondays) the owner's daughter is the principal stylist in the salon. Other stations are regularly staffed by 5 other stylists. There is also have a manicurist who offers manicures, pedicures and waxing.

A. Exterior and Approach

The outside of the building is dark green and a bit out of date looking. It appears that the landlord has chosen this one color for all of his tenants. Signage is high which is good for seeing the business name from the street but not for those walking by. Lower window signage might say

Hair & Co. Cuts, Color, Styling for Men & Women Manicures, Pedicures, Waxing



The window is hard to see into because of strong sun glare. To that end the shade is down part of the time further limiting visibility into the salon. It is always good to let people see into your business – no one wants to eat in an empty restaurant and in that same vein, customers generally like to go to busy establishments. It is reassuring that others like it too.



We did see Fourth of July accessories in the window and placed around inside the store “connecting to your customers’ mind sets” -- and that is good. The scale of the items should be as large as possible – not only to combat the glare but to make as bold a statement as possible. We would recommend having a sun film on put on the window. Or adding lights to shine in on displays and signage about specials, etc.

We were not sure if the orange and blue neon colors and the rounded type face were reflective of a brand identity or not. It would be good to be consistent with a brand identity and/or if a renovation were to take place to refresh it and THEN be consistent in its use.

A. Design and Experience

A.1 Layout and Décor

a) The salon is generous – with a front area for customers to wait – a manicure and pedicure area (although more typically they are together) – a reception desk – retail displays – styling stations and washing stations. The back has a place for staff and customers to get coffee, a laundry area for towels and capes, a color room and a small bathroom.

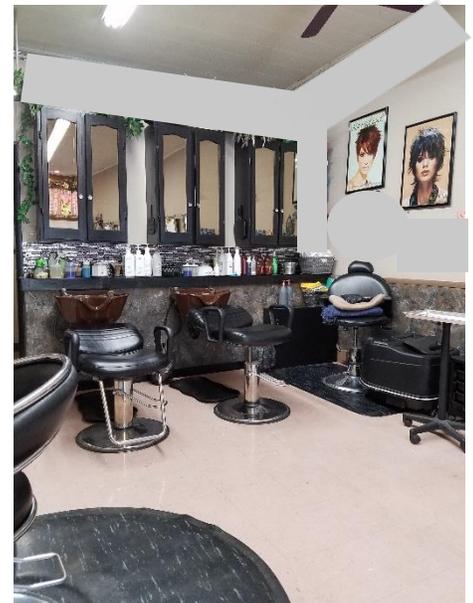


The colors are neutral with tan floor and chairs for waiting with black and silver styling stations, sinks, etc. In general the layout is fine with the waiting area to one side and the desk to the other. The waiting area could be a bit more welcoming with a small area rug or a small coffee table.

While some of the retail product is in the area other items are near the reception desk. It would be a good idea to have one or two fixtures where an example of all product is displayed and it would be best to have it near this waiting area so customers can check it out while they are waiting. It might be helpful to have more of the product near the checkout for quick selling.

A floor lamp in the waiting area might be nice. The lamp would also glow in the window on winter afternoons and evenings making the salon have an overall warmer glow.

In general we would recommend being a little less fussy and decorative. While it may be fun to use things you have collected over the years, newer salons feature “calm and quiet” styling to provide a relaxing environment for customers.





The colors are all soft and appealing. Although they are not introduced outside, once inside they work very well.

We would also recommend that the space be kept as tidy as possible. Black drawers underneath or between (Space?) each styling station would help keep the counter tops clear.

We would also recommend adding wall sconces between each mirror to cast a warm glow on your customer's face.

These small "updates" would really give your salon a present day look and feel and suggest a complete renovation for "short money."



One area of concern is the back room where so many things are happening. We would recommend keeping in mind that customers are coming through and using that space as well as staff. It might be a good idea to put up a curtain or screen in front of the laundry area, use closed trash containers and generally to keep "sausage making" out of site. Keeping things very simple and clean makes keeping up with them easier.

B.2 Visual Merchandising

a) Window Display:

When creating a window display, it's important to remember the window is a new customer's first impression. If the inside has a calm feel the window should reflect that too, particularly in light of the fact that all of the store fronts are the same. Connecting with the customer's mind in a "stylish" way could be a fun new challenge in your window.

Inside, it would be good to remind customers to purchase hair care products (and help your stylists earn commissions) with small signs. Price does not need to be posted – but perhaps some other educational messaging like – "We have ____ for hair that hates the heat... and summer is here." Or "Keep your color longer with ____" Or "Your hair can feel as good as it does today if you take some ____ home with you, now."

C. Marketing

C.1 Business Identity and Positioning

a) As a "known" business it is easy to think that "everyone knows us" and not worry too much about adding new business. Retaining these customers however does require care and attracting new ones is important. Letting your customers see you care about your business and your space assures them that you will take good care of them as well.

b) We would recommend using your Hair & Co identity consistently in all of your marketing material – on line in your Facebook presence and in a website – as well as in your signage outside and inside, business cards, gift certificates, bags, etc.

c) We would recommend clarifying the reference to Barbershop on Facebook.

d) Hair & Co can empower themselves to boost business whenever it is slow by building and using a database and sending out emails. With a longstanding business and familiarity in the community this should be easy. When specials go to your customer base they should be invited to "forward to a friend" to help you build NEW clientele as well.

C.2 Communications

Maintaining a presence on the web is important. We suggest

- ✓ Creating a simple website
- ✓ Keeping up with Facebook and adding Instagram to attract young people with photos of new styles, colors, updos and products.
- ✓ Using a database and sending out email blasts using MailChimp.

Retail Visioning Consultation Session Report

Business Name and Address: HMB
Harnassing Muay Boran
338 North Westfield St., Feeding Hills, MA 01030
413-301-5077
www.HMBclub.com

Business contact Person Vakny Chonmany

Business Description Muay Thai teaching studio / Retail Boxing Gear
Consultation Date June 27, 2016

Summary of Topics Addressed

- C. Exterior and Approach
- D. Design and Experience
 - B.1 Layout and Décor
 - B.2 Visual Merchandising
 - B.3 Fixtures
 - B.4 Lighting
- C. Marketing
 - C.1 Business Identity and Positioning
 - C.2 Communications and Promotion
 - Advertising
 - Special sales
 - Media Outlets
 - Event/Festival

Background

HMB Club, Harnassing Muay Boran, is a martial arts studio that teaches a traditional style of Muay Thai originating in Thailand. Vak, the owner, selects only the most serious students into the classes he teaches. The studio also offers, fitness and body conditioning classes, yoga and massage. They have retail sections devoted to the sale of Chinese herbal supplements and traditional boxing gear.

Vak attributes his current physical well-being to having studied Muay Thai for the last several years. He had become disabled with serious back injuries a while back, and investigated ways to regain his strength and abilities. He began studying Muay Thai and

reported that it has saved his life. He believes so strongly in the healing powers of Muay Thai that he is committed to teaching others.

HMB has been at this location for about 1 year.

A. Exterior and Approach

HMB is located in a small strip shopping plaza with ample parking for their students. Looking at it from the parking lot, it is not clear how much of the frontage is devoted to the studio. There is signage on two doors, separated by a large brick wall with the main sign located over the main door.

Clear signage is very important, since this is the first thing people passing by see.



We would recommend tying the two sets of glass doors together creating a unified storefront. We would suggest having one doorway signage dedicated to messaging about HMB and their class offerings, and the other dedicated to what they sell, boxing gear and Chinese herbal supplements.

Adding an OPEN flag helps to draw attention.

B. Design and Experience

B.1 Layout and Décor

a) The large studio is divided into two basic areas. The front section is dedicated to retail sales and the back to classes.

It is clear when walking into the studio that the owner prides himself on cleanliness and order.

To add a sense of calm and tranquility, a large birdcage housing parakeets is set up in the front of the store. An area set aside for meditation and contemplation is arranged to the left front of the studio.

Chinese herbal supplements are neatly arranged for sale in a wooden cabinet to the right of the bird cage.

On two glass shelving units located in the center, is an assortment of professional boxing equipment for sale.



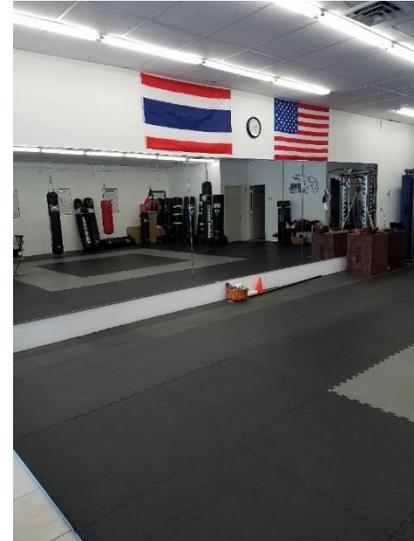
Everything is arranged with a purpose and an attention to detail.



The main part of the studio is where the classes are held. A heavy rubber mat covers the workout space, boxing/muay thai gear is arranged along two walls and practice mirrors are on the remaining wall.



The class studio is very clean and inviting.



B.2 Visual Merchandising

a) Window Display: When creating a window display, it's important to remember the window is the first impression people see. Many people do not know what Muay Thai is. The window is a way to educate and excite possible students.

We would recommend hanging a large poster like the one on their website, in the front window with a few words about what Muay Thai is. The words can be taken right off their website.

Muay Thai is an ancient form of martial arts. Here at Muay Boran we build students from the ground up, focusing a lot on stretching and body conditioning which gradually makes the bones and muscles of the body more dense to resist injury.



This may intrigue people to come in and learn more directly from the owner.

b) Signage: Signage is important to visual merchandising. Outdoor signage attracts customers as well as window displays. As we recommended above, we suggest redoing the outside signage.

c) Fixtures and furnishings: The owner has created a very inviting studio for everyone who comes into the space.

d) Lighting: The studio is well lit and inviting.

C. Marketing

C.1 Business Identity and Positioning

a) Muay Thai is not a very well-known form of martial arts, which means the public needs to be educated.

b) The owner mentioned during the consultation he would like to expand the number of students they currently teach, from 20 to a target of 50.

c) The studio sells an array of boxing equipment, but most of their sales come from current customers. How to increase this portion of the business is currently a challenge.

d) The space is underused. According to the schedule provided, much of the day between 10am and 5pm the studio is empty.

We recommend:

(1) Offering demonstrations at local high schools, church groups, and civic meetings, to help spread awareness of what Muay Thai is and especially the presence of the studio. We suggest the owner offer a discount or even a free class to people who want to learn more about it and try a class out. He could schedule a few entry level try out sessions for new and interested customers.

At these demonstration events, we recommend collecting names and email information from the attendees. A follow up email blast a week or two after the event would serve as an additional reminder to come and sample a class.

(2) Reaching out to their suppliers of boxing equipment to suggest they provide a link to HMB on their site highlighting a local store where their merchandise can be purchased. The owner mentioned how important the correct fit is when purchasing head gear, gloves, etc. so buying online is not a good option.

- (3) Developing clear talking points about HMB so the owner can meet with local papers to clearly explain what Muay Thai is and the health benefits of practicing this discipline at HMB. Local papers are always looking for topics to highlight. Even if they have already written about HMB, the owner could create a new reason to be interviewed again. It could be that they are offering new classes during the day for beginners, or they just got a new shipment of boxing gear ...
- (4) To make better use of the down times when the studio is not scheduled for classes, we would recommend renting out the studio to teachers of other modalities who may be looking for space. To this end, we suggest advertising in local papers, on the internet and by word of mouth that the studio is for rent during certain hours. Having more people using the space adds to its visibility in the community creating more awareness of HMB as well as help paying the rent.

C.2 Communications

HMB club's website is very well done. It's clear and easy to understand, but the main challenge is how to get people to view it. The universe of people knowing about Muay Thai is very small. We would recommend considering full rebranding if possible.

In addition to the above recommendations we suggest they:

- a) Speak with other studios in Boston, Cambridge and other cities to find out what they do to acquire new students. HMB is not in competition with them. The more studios around, the more people learn about Muay Thai.
- b) Connect with all arts/cultural events in the area and offer to provide a Muay Thai demonstration.
- c) Special offers: Retailers use "special" offers as best practices to sell a service or product. This is a great strategy to implement. We recommend advertising through print media and using social media platforms. As an example offer a discount on class sign up during the first week in September.
- d) Make a connection with boxing suppliers that you do not want to inventory, but will link to on your site. Ask them to link to your site too on their site. This can serve as a lead generator for new students in the area.
- e) Make a connection with area therapists and school counselors. They may have students who would benefit from learning the disciplines of martial arts.
- f) Use Google ad words to help people find you. Search words to include would be: muay thai, martial arts classes, fitness and wellbeing classes. Boxing gear sales.

Retail Visioning Consultation Session Report

Business Name and Address: Icircle Technologies
1 South End Bridge Circle, Agawam, MA 01001
413-426-6174
www.icircletech.com

Business contact Person Jeff Rose

Business Description Mobile Phone and Tablet Repair
Consultation Date June 27, 2016

Summary of Topics Addressed

- E. Exterior and Approach
- F. Design and Experience
 - B.1 Layout and Décor
 - B.2 Visual Merchandising
 - B.3 Fixtures
 - B.4 Lighting
- C. Marketing
 - C.1 Business Identity and Positioning
 - C.2 Communications and Promotion
 - Advertising
 - Special sales
 - Social media
 - Event/Festival
 - Mobile Marketing

Background

iCircle is a smartphone, tablet and computer repair shop located at 1 South End Bridge Circle, at a very busy traffic circle off route 57 in Agawam. They have been in operation for 9 years with a loyal following of current customers. The shop hours are Monday through Friday from 9am-5pm.

The owner is a self-starter, entrepreneurial guy with a background in sales, technology and in customer-facing, retail banking. He literally started this business seeking customers door to door. He is interested in growing his business and “getting the model right” so he can expand. He is aware that his space is less than retail-friendly and he mentioned that their current lease will be up in 9 months.

C. Exterior and Approach

- 1) The outside of the building has no clearly visible signage for iCircle making it very difficult to locate the business. There are small signs on stakes in the lawn near the entrance but unless one is looking for them, they are not particularly noticeable. In fact, the address doesn't seem to exist on Google maps, so a first time customer will struggle trying to find the shop. We would recommend that they highlight that they are next to the Kitchen store at the circle in all of their marketing material – brochures, Facebook page, website, etc.



- 2) The retail shop is located at the end of a long hallway in an office building that seems to have no other retail tenants.

D. Design and Experience

The retail portion of the business is located in the first of 3 rooms as one enters the front door. A repair area, storage, shipping, supplies and an office are located in the two rooms beyond the front section. Jobs that come in for repair are put in a job ticket envelope at the front desk and move through the repair system. Sales are handled at the front desk.

B.1 Store and Layout

- a) The front section of the shop is dedicated to customer interactions... drop off and pick up, and retail sales. Smartphone cases are displayed for sale alongside walls, as well as small replacement parts for smartphones and tablets.

B.2 Visual Merchandising

- a) Signage: Signage is important to visual merchandising. Outdoor signage attracts customers. Because iCircle is so difficult to find, we would suggest the use of a signature sandwich board placed outside the entrance to the building attached with helium filled blue and orange balloons, (matching the colors of their logo and advertising material). The sign on the board should be professionally produced and easy to read for people driving by.



The sign could read “REPAIRING ALL makes of smartphones, tablets, and computers” in large, bold lettering. They could check out Vistaprint or a local printer to have this made.

We would also suggest hanging bolder signage in the hallway directing customers to your front entrance.

b) Fixtures and furnishings: The retail section of the shop is very clean and inviting and we believe there is ample room to increase their retail sales.



We recommend adding some additional shelving along the front entrance wall as well as making the back wall more accessible. Besides smartphone cases, what else will customers buy? A repair customer can also become a consumer. A selection of must haves should be on hand for impulse purchases.

There is a large blank wall (next to a brick/tile wall) that could be painted with blackboard paint for specials, sales or upcoming events. Printed communications inside your retail space can be very helpful.

Inventory is kept in the back two rooms. Currently the way they keep track of inventory is by visually taking a count of what they have and what they may need. To better keep track the owner has expressed the desire to investigate a purchase a POS system.

c) Lighting:
The shop is well lit and inviting.



C. Marketing

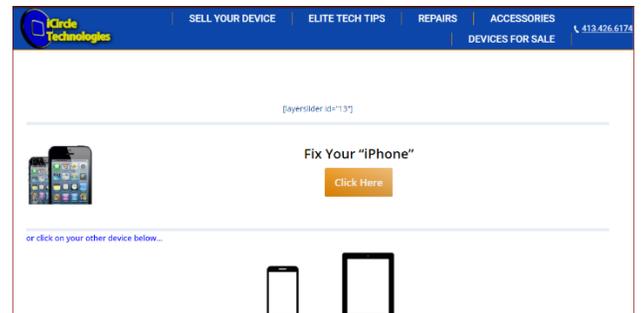
C.1 Business Identity and Positioning

a) The challenge of their current logo is that the “i” implies they service only iPhones. (Apple has done a great job owning that letter and convincing us that anything that begins with “i” is theirs!) We would recommend adding something like “We service ALL makes and models” to all future forms of advertising. You could also infuse a little fun and personality into your tag line with something like: “We don’t see brands... we see what’s broken... and fix it” or “Whatever kind of devices you like... we like to fix them.”

iCircle positions themselves as the “go to” place to have smartphones, tablets and computers repaired. Great customer service is their motto and trust worthiness is their aim. Because they are not affiliated with any particular vendor they offer totally unbiased recommendations. This can be a big advertising point. Again, tell people you are brand agnostic or they will only see the “i.”

b) A website must showcase who a business is and what they do. Because iCircle is a technology sales and repair business, their website must reflect just how tech savvy they are. To this end, we recommend they hire a web designer to rebuild their website to make it look and feel more “techy”. There are a number of issues with its current look and functionality that are lacking. This detracts from the overall message of the business.

Keeping up the website after it is built and keeping current with Facebook require attention. We suggest hiring a college or high school student who can work part time to attend to this function, leaving the day to day business to the current staff. Weekly posts would be sufficient.



This person can also update all of your online positions to use the new logo, etc. This would be a great job for a summer intern.

C.2 Communications

As long as iCircle remains at its current location, they will continue to have the challenge of expanding their business without doing much outreach. To this end we recommend the following.

- a) **Visibility:** Place the signage board, mentioned previously, outside the front entrance

- b) Special offers: Retailers use “special” offers as best practices to sell a service or product. This is a great strategy to implement. We recommend advertising through print media and using social media platforms. For example, “Labor Day Special, smartphone repairs 10% off”.
- c) Events: Increase sales and leads by holding an event in the outside parking lot with music and food. Example, “Join us on _____. Donate your old phones and receive 10% off on a repair.” Participate in community events – take a tent to Farmer’s Markets, local fairs, etc.
- d) Create a flyer that can be hand delivered to all offices and businesses in the area. We recommend follow up calls to these businesses with an offer to pick up and deliver. This would require hiring a new person dedicated to building up the customer base.
- e) Have your logo reproduced on magnetic signage that can be attached to a car. Great for mobile marketing. Vista Prints makes magnetic signage.
- f) Outfit a mobile van that can travel to office parts to offer repairs on the spot, as well as pickup and delivery for harder to fix devices.
- g) Offer giveaways such as stress balls with their logo on it or a round magnet to keep by a customer’s computer. These serve as physical reminders.

Other Recommendations:

Time management: Jeff Rose had reported that he feels like he never has time to work on new projects or brainstorm new ideas for company growth. We recommend he schedule a block of time daily or every other day to work on ways to grow the business. “The gift of time can offer a new perspective and clearer vision.”

Inventory management: Currently they manage their inventory mostly visually by checking their supply boxes to see what they are low on. Jeff expressed the desire to investigate POS systems to help with tracking inventory.

Future Growth: Analyze the cost of moving to a new location. How much revenue can they count on from new customers - repeat business and well as leveraging each customer to spread the word? How many customers will they need to make the move to a new location cost effective? Is there a short term pop up space you could try? What about hiring a commission-only sales person to sell in office parks, etc. Think about those glass repair companies, dog grooming or auto-detailing companies that go to the customer rather than have the customer go to them. Maybe one could be your “rep.”

Retail Visioning Consultation Session Report

Business Name and Address: Music Speaks...
16 Southwick St, Feeding Hills, MA 01030
413-301-7007
www.musicspeakslessons.com

Business contact Person Angelo Mazza

Business Description Music Education Facility
Consultation Date June 27, 2016

Summary of Topics Addressed

- G. Exterior and Approach
- H. Design and Experience
 - B.1 Layout and Décor
 - B.2 Visual Merchandising
 - B.3 Fixtures
 - B.4 Lighting
- C. Marketing
 - C.1 Business Identity and Positioning
 - C.2 Communications and Promotion
 - Advertising
 - Special sales
 - Media Outlets
 - Event/Festival

Background

Music Speaks is a music education facility where kids and adults of all ability levels learn the instrument of their choice: guitar, bass guitar, violin, drums, piano/keyboard and/or vocals. Group opportunities to be in small bands and/or perform with others is also part of the experience provided. Owner/operator Angelo Mazza, himself and accomplished musician, and his staff emphasize teaching in a relaxed, stress- free atmosphere. All instructors have college degrees in music. Currently the owner is working with a business coach/developer. The business moved to this location 1 year ago. They have been in this business for 6 years.

E. Exterior and Approach

- 1) Music Speaks is located in a small shopping plaza with plenty of ample parking.



The entire block is WHITE on WHITE – as is the Music Speaks sign. Adding colors and lighting inside the windows would bring this entire area alive. Color used in the windows also “pays off” the color use inside which is so appealing.

- 2) There are several windows facing the parking lot that can be dressed up to be attention grabbers. It’s a great opportunity to draw attention to the studio.

We would recommend a window display creating a band of mannequin-dressed musicians as if they are performing on a real stage, complete with lights and a microphone. By changing the window display frequently and/or to coincide with holidays like Halloween, Christmas, Valentine’s Day, and July 4th it will continue to draw attention to the studio – in fact it could be a very kitsch space and a draw for people to check it out anytime they are in the area. The owner and staff could dress up these windows themselves or they could engage art classes or muralists in participating with changing themes.



F. Design and Experience

B.1 Layout and Decor

a) The studio is colorfully designed as an open inviting space that serves for checking in, retail sales of instruments and supplies, as well as a large waiting area complete with bistro size tables for those waiting while lessons take place.



The walls are painted bright “happy” colors, creating a very enjoyable atmosphere.

The studio is equipped with wifi, allowing those waiting to have access to the internet. Coffee, snacks and beverages are also available for students “after school snacks” or those waiting.

Around the corner from the entrance, a platform stage is set up complete with instruments and a microphone for practice as well as performance.

To the right of the stage is an area set up for group classes for young children.



Around the perimeter, in sound proof rooms, individual and group lessons are taught.





B.2 Visual Merchandising

a) Window Display: When creating a window display, it's important to remember the window is the first impression people see. In addition to dressing up the long front facing window as we recommended above, we would recommend another window highlighting various instruments and music supplies they sell so customers will know that Music Speaks offers these things as well.

b) Signage: Signage is important to visual merchandising. Outdoor signage attracts customers as well as window displays. The easy to read sign Music Speaks... is prominently positioned over the front entrance. Given that Music Speaks is not open ALL the time – it would be good to have a customized OPEN sign in bright colors that can be put by the door when they are open. Perhaps a musical staff with colored notes? Here is an example of an OPEN sign for an art supply store. It conveys a clear message as long as it is religiously put out and taken in appropriately.



c) Fixtures and furnishings: Angelo has created a very inviting studio for everyone who comes into the space...students, parents, retail-customers.

There is space to dedicate more attention to retail sales. We would recommend having a few samples (particularly of popular guitars) and catalogs in one area.

d) Lighting: The studio is well lit and inviting.

C. Marketing

C.1 Business Identity and Positioning

a) Music Speaks...clearly knows their audience. Their signage outside is well positioned, and the studio lesson and group performance space is a good size for individual lessons as well as for Friday night jam sessions.

b) Angelo Mazza mentioned during the consultation he would like to expand the number of students they currently teach, from 100 to 150.

We recommend:

(5) Create a spread sheet of current lesson times and see what extra space is available for lessons. How many slots are not filled during peak hours? How many other hours could lessons be taught?

(6) State what the new target goal is and excite the staff about it by offering incentives to each teacher to help fill time slots. Currently teachers receive a \$25 gift card for each new student. We suggest offering them a larger incentive (perhaps a percentage of new business) if they bring in entirely new programs. Innovation is key in the creative economy.

(7) Offer some new classes in subjects like the use of computer technology in theater and performing arts, the business of theater and “shows”, voice over techniques. If current staff is not able to teach these new classes, hire another teacher who can.

(8) Focus more time on adult students who can help fill slots during the hours children are in school – or LATE night. Questions like “is learning to sing with a group on your bucket list.” The Blues Brothers tag: “Time to get the band back together” or “Do you want to play with the band” can be part of a new advertising campaign. Keep in mind that adults will travel further for what they want.

(9) Consider renting the space during off hours to groups who may need to rent space...

a) C.2 Communications

The current brochure is very professional and well done. Their Facebook page is exciting, lively and a great marketing tool. However, most potential customers will find them through an internet search. Their website needs to offer the same excitement and draw as their FB page.

We would recommend hiring a web designer to redo www.musicspeakslessons.com.

A landing page for www.musicspeakssales.com that leads to a retail page within your main site might also expand reach and opportunity.

Additional recommendations include:

- h) Use Event Brite to help promote events they are having, like the show at the country club. www.eventbrite.com
- i) Connect with all arts/cultural events in the area and offer to provide a group of talented musicians from Music Speaks... It's a great way to advertise and be part of the creative economy.
- j) Special offers: Retailers use "special" offers as best practices to sell a service or product. This is a great strategy to implement. We recommend advertising through print media and using social media platforms to create a variety of specials.
- k) Make a connection with music suppliers whose products you do not want to inventory, but who you can link to on your site. Ask them to link to your site on their site, too. This can serve as a lead generator for new students in the area.
- l) Make a connection with area therapists and school counselors. They may have students who would benefit from learning to play music or sing in a relaxed, stress-free environment. Perhaps even adult therapists who need space could use a music room during the day for appointments

Retail Visioning Consultation Session Report

Business Name and Address: The Pizza Guy
65 Maple St, Agawam, MA 01001
413-789-9999
www.thepizzaguy.net

Business contact Person

Business Description Brick Oven Pizza shop
Consultation Date June 27, 2016

Summary of Topics Addressed

- I. Exterior and Approach
- J. Design and Experience
 - B.1 Layout and Décor
 - B.2 Visual Merchandising
 - B.3 Fixtures
 - B.4 Lighting
- C. Marketing
 - C.1 Business Identity and Positioning
 - C.2 Communications and Promotion
 - Advertising
 - Special sales
 - Media Outlets
 - Event/Festival

Background

The Pizza Guy has a great reputation as the place to go for delicious pizza. They were voted the winner of the “Valley Food Championship Pizza” playoffs twice for the best pizza in Western Massachusetts. The owner studied in Italy to learn how to make pizza the old fashioned Italian way.

Currently they offer 17 varieties of pizza toppings to choose from.

About 70% of their business is take out and 30% delivery.

G. Exterior and Approach

The Pizza Guy is in a standalone wooden building on Maple Street. The front awning boldly displays their name and the neon signs in the window clearly say open.



To further promote the shop, at the curbside they have hung a sign on a pole.



They used to have an OPEN flag hanging from their front pole sign on the street.

We would recommend replacing it, as the motion will make it even easier to spot when a new customer is looking for them.

H. Design and Experience

The inside of the store is kept extremely neat and clean creating a feeling of “good energy”, which is the goal of the owners.

B.1 Store and Layout

a) From the entrance a customer can see the whole workings of the pizza business.

Because of the size of the space, there is no room for inside seating and the only available seating is outside in the parking lot at an old picnic table.



We would recommend purchasing another picnic table or two for outside seating, especially to accommodate more customers during the warm weather months.

B.2 Visual Merchandising



a) Signage:

The Pizza Guy uses a chalkboard to highlight specials and important notices. The lettering is carefully done using colorful chalk and creative writing. It's all easy to read.

b) Fixtures and furnishings:

All fixtures and surfaces are kept clean and neat, reinforcing the impression that the owners care about cleanliness, a very important attribute for any eating establishment.

c) Lighting: The shop is well lit and inviting.



I. Marketing

C.1 Business Identity and Positioning

- The business is currently working on a new logo and signage for the store as a way to freshen up their image and draw attention to themselves. We think this is a wise business idea. We recommend they rework their outside wooden sign with the new logo as well, replacing the two paddles with the new design.
- Continuity and consistency are also very important in branding. We recommend that once the owner has chosen his new logo, he quickly begins to use it consistently in all marketing materials, menus, signage and advertising in print and online. Then, he should not change it again.
- We recommend that all when they've settled on a new logo and created their new materials that they include in all of their flyers and handouts that they were awarded the best pizza in Western Massachusetts.

C.2 Communications

a) They have done a very good job with their website. It's simple, clear and easy to follow and basically says everything a customer needs to know. Trip Advisor, the highly regarded authority on places to eat, recommends them very highly. We suggest they add this to their home page along with announcing their winner award,

b) Their Facebook page is kept up to date with important announcements and current happenings...hours, closings...specials. The last comments were made recently. It's important that customers think they are attentive to every detail. Maintaining an up to date FB page as well as keeping the shop spotless reinforce the image that details are important, especially for a food establishment.

c) Visibility: Hanging an OPEN flag outside on the street side pole will help customers locate them.

d) Special offers: Retailers use "special" offers as best practices to sell a service or product. This is a great strategy to implement. We recommend advertising through print media and continuing to use social media platforms. We also suggest maintaining a customer database to offer these specials to your best, most loyal customers. Instagram and Snapchat are also recommended as ways of reaching the younger crowd.

e) Events: Events have a way of bringing in more business and new customers. As an example, we would suggest holding a back to school happening around Labor Day. Perhaps you could have live music at the shop to keep customers around for a bit longer – even if they are picking up. Offer some tried and true pizza toppings as well as some new creations to get customers to try something new.

Recommendations:

1. The owner and his wife work all the hours that the shop is open and stated that "customers expect them to always be on site." This translates to very little down time for them.
2. We recommend they change the narrative they tell their customers and themselves from "we need time away" to "support us as we recharge our batteries and explore some of the newest trends in fresh pizza making." It turns a potential negative into a positive.

Time away could include a trip abroad to find some new recipes or a week at a vacation spot to sample the pizza in some other areas.

We also recommend blogging while they are away reporting on what they're up to and what they've found relating to pizza all as a way to keep in touch.

3. We recommend working with a business coach to begin looking at an exit strategy for future plans and in the case of illness, injury, or some unforeseen event.