

The Duke MBA Global Consulting Practicum 2009-2010 Projects in Belize

In 2009-2010, students in the Duke MBA Global Consulting Practicum (GCP) completed projects with several organizations in Dangriga, Belize. The Duke MBA Global Consulting Practicum matches student teams with nonprofits, NGOs or for-profit organizations serving base of the pyramid markets.

DANGRIGA TOWN COUNCIL – Tourism Development



The Dangriga Town Council is a group of men and women who aim to develop and strengthen Dangriga Town. With a population of 11,000 people, Dangriga Town is the capital of the Stann Creek District and the largest town in the south of Belize. While Dangriga is “the cultural capital of Belize,” there is no town center available to the local community to celebrate the ethnic heritage of the Garifuna culture or to congregate for social purposes. The Town Council owns a small island (“Why-Not Island”) that has potential to serve these needs and also help drive tourism to the area, but the

Council has been unsure how to satisfy all stakeholder needs and secure funding for the project.

The Duke GCP team was asked to gauge needs and interests of primary stakeholders and develop an implementable development plan for Why Not Island. Through extensive research and data analysis, interviews with Belizean stakeholders (including potential funders and partners) and multiple site visits, the team was able to gain an understanding of the competitive environment, project development costs, investment opportunities, competitor business models, consumer interests, and consumer behaviors.

As a result, the team generated a phased development plan for Why-Not Island and its surrounding area. The plan details the steps necessary to first prepare the land for development, then construct temporary stalls to begin revenue generation, followed by the construction of permanent facilities, and finally completing a recreation center and restaurant for the town. In the end, the team was able to present an implementable plan that would meet the Town Council’s goals of conserving and developing the Garifuna culture, attracting domestic and international travelers, and benefitting the local community by providing facilities for recreation and education.

PETTERS RESEARCH INSTITUTE – Capacity Building in Technology

Petters Research Institute (PRI) is a non-profit, private, politically-neutral institute in Belize charged with creating an interdisciplinary center of excellence in the application, theory, and pedagogy of STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), as well as their synergistic interactions with business administration and entrepreneurship to induce economic growth.

PRI believes that the Belizean economy needs to diversify



away from tourism and agriculture. The nature of these industries in Belize does not require education past the grade school level, making them ineffectual in developing human capital in Belize. Given that 62% of the population is below the age of 24, providing quality education and building skills among the population is crucial to the development of the economy.

PRI aspires to address this need by building an organization that will train Belizean youth to assemble and repair desktop computers, and will meet the computer needs of various institutions in the country such as schools, hospitals and the military. In order to explore this viability of such a business, the Duke team conducted extensive research and analysis, including a series of focus groups and interviews targeting three main groups of stakeholders - customers, competition, and the potential talent pool.

The team analyzed market demand for computer repair in Belize, identified specific services needed, and assessed the capacity of potential employees. The team's final deliverables included a financial model of the maintenance and repair services company; a narrative report with detailed recommendations, and an implementation plan. The team recommended pursuing partnerships to create market demand and build capacity and identified large market segments such as educational institutions, government ministries and the tourism industry to target. Finally, the team recommended vocational learning (e.g., providing certifications, e-Learning) to ensure that the employees were receiving appropriate training and skills.

PETTERS RESEARCH INSTITUTE (PRI) – Green Eco-Resort Analysis



A second project was conducted with the Petters Research Institute (PRI). The Duke GCP team was asked to create a plan for an eco-resort to house the Institute's programs while also providing a steady income stream to fund PRI's expanding agenda. The team used a hypothesis driven approach to identify primary patrons of the resort and explore opportunities for revenue and education. The team discovered that despite the client's initial hypothesis that tour operators and tourists would be the most fruitful avenue to market the eco-resort to; a more realistic and potentially profitable target audience would be visiting professors/educational groups and conferences/seminar

participants.

With these potential customers in mind, the team developed a business plan and implementation schedule for the resort. This plan included a proposed resort layout and recommendations for areas of focus to make the resort ecologically and culturally sustainable. These recommendations ranged from organic gardens/restaurants and green materials, to educational considerations (agri-tourism, medicinal trails) to cultural programming (highlighting Garifuna music, arts & crafts, historical sites).