



Case Study

Amy's Ice Creams

Location: Austin, TX

2016 Revenues: \$9.1 million

Employees: 276

Highlights

Rapid Financial Results; Lasting Cultural Change

Since Amy's Ice Creams began playing the Great Game of Business in 2006, they have enjoyed impressive financial results – including income skyrocketing by 250% and Net Income, their critical number, increasing by 150% over the past decade. The company has also successfully diversified by creating multiple other income sources, including its own educational training company called MBAmy's.

The results that Simmons is most proud of, however, are how playing the Great Game of Business has helped grow the people inside the business. "By teaching everyone financial literacy, we have given them confidence to manage their own personal financial statements and take control of reaching their own goals," she says.

But that journey wasn't always an easy one – especially with an hourly workforce where 60% of the staff is under the age of 21. "We met immediate resistance when we introduced the Great Game of Business," says Joe Morris, a Production Manager at Amy's. "The constant refrain we heard from our staff is, 'Money is evil,' 'Profit is bad,' 'Money = Greed,' or 'I can't do the math, anyway.'"

Amy's has been able to overcome those misconceptions by making the business accessible and incredibly engaging for all employees to learn more about. "Through the fun and games, our programs teach our young adults how to use their resources wisely and gain financial knowledge to create a quality of life they believe in," says Simmons. "They also learn the value of businesses and how they can be designed to match your personal values."

The results speak for themselves in that even in the red-hot labor market in Austin, where talent is in massive demand, Amy's has seen the average tenure of its employees ranging from scooper to store manager double since they began playing the Great Game of Business.



Organizational Background

Amy Simmons started Amy's Ice Creams in 1984; it's since grown to include 15 stores in three cities: Austin, Dallas, and Houston. And from the beginning, the company has embraced the mission statement of "making people's day." When you buy a frozen treat from Amy's, you're also buying an experience. Perhaps you'll be treated to an impromptu dance performance from those making your ice cream, or you might even witness a trick like someone throwing a scoop of ice cream up onto the ceiling and then catching it on their chin

"Through playing the game, we help our employees become financially independent and build wealth that positively impacts their job happiness and community. We truly believe that the Great Game of Business will play a fundamental role in rebuilding the American Middle Class."

~ Aaron M. Clay, a partner at Amy's EDU and Marketing Director for Amy's Ice Creams

Playing the Game Together

One of key rules of thumb at Amy's is: "Never cancel a huddle, reschedule it."

And that's saying something, because there is a lot of huddling happening at Amy's on any given day, including 22 weekly huddles and 1,100 quarterly huddles – which total 4,400 huddles per year. There are also end-of-quarter company-wide huddles that are used to introduce new products and present videos and electronic presentations of the company's performance. "The huddles provide an opportunity to create community and impact the employee's lives," says Simmons.

Amy's is also a big believer in the power of playing MiniGames, especially as a way to create line of sight for every employee toward the company's goals. "When you have a multi-million dollar budget, it's hard for a 16-year-old to break that down into what they can do for their 4-hour shift," says Simmons.

Amy's has run successful MiniGames on everything, from generating ideas to boost sales and closing stores efficiently at the end of the day, to finding ways to increase positive feedback among team members.

"Positive change in the organization happened when employees not only saw the numbers, but learned what they meant and how they can affect them."

~ Katy Thompson, MBAmy's Instructor and Client Service Manager at Amy's EDU

What's Next?

Simmons says that regardless of how long or how well you play the Great Game of Business, there's always opportunity to do more and do it better. "It's a practice," she says. "We will always be constantly working on it."

And one way that Simmons and her team have pushed themselves to be better players is by starting to train other companies about how to implement the Great Game of Business. "Teaching is such a great way of learning," she says

"Huddles and the Great Game aren't just about the numbers, they are about including everyone so they can make a difference and take pride in themselves and the people around them!"

~ Erin Fellow, Managing Partner of Baked By Amy's