

## Highlights

### Rapid Financial Results; Lasting Cultural Change

Back in 2014, extreme fluctuations in the prices of commodities created havoc at Kiobassa – especially for its president, Michael Kiobassa. While he had members of his team clamoring to invest in more facilities and operations, Kiobassa knew that the business needed something even more important: cash.

“I was also feeling the pain of being the only one in the business who understood the financials,” says Kiobassa, whose grandfather started the business in 1949.

But it was that crisis that led Kiobassa to the Great Game of Business, which he saw as a tool that could help bring everyone on his team together. They began by implementing financial literacy training, and then rolled out MiniGames and a Stake in the Outcome program to get the firm’s team members working toward a common goal – increase the company’s margins.

After playing the GGOB for just a couple of years, the company has seen transformative results, both financially and in the strength of its culture of values. Team members have grown substantially through huddles, leadership groups, financial literacy training, and being involved in high involvement planning.

“I think the growth in our company is dwarfed by the growth in our people,” says Kiobassa, “just in the way they have been exposed to how our company makes money and generates cash. They have been challenged to make decisions based on what they know. They have grown intellectually and emotionally through that exposure.”



### Organizational Background

Kiobassa Provision Company is a fast-growing craft manufacturer of authentic premium sausage and food products. The company’s sausages, which are often described as “the best sausage I’ve ever had in my life,” are now sold across the U.S. and Mexico.

“The conversations we have today compared to four years ago are so different. When we started our financial literacy was miserable. But the GGOB has given us a way to create clear and common goals everyone can work toward together. We have seen financial results because of that, but there is more meat to it than that. It’s the change in our relationships with each other and how we go about solving problems together that has been the real tremendous impact of playing the game.”

~ Michael Johnson,  
VP of Organizational Development

## Playing the Game Together

In 2016, for the first time in 20 years, Kiolbassa struggled to grow sales. Because of that decline in sales growth, the company struggled to be able to take advantage of the weak commodities markets – which greatly impacted the company's profitability.

To try and turn the tables, a cross-departmental team from sales, operations, and other support groups like QA came up with a new MiniGame around sales. When the game ended at the end of 2016, the team had not made their goal. But they won in so many other ways. As a result of playing that game, the team established a brand new sales process, an important medium to communicate, and ultimately a new expectation for teamwork across the company. The cross-departmental team also decided to keep meeting on a regular basis because they realized how valuable it was to them and the company.

Fast forward to 2017: the framework and momentum that was created during the MiniGame has led to record sales for the company. Kiolbassa is back on track to achieve its five-year sales goal.

“Because of GGOB, I feel that many opportunities for growth have presented themselves. Conversations around the financials have helped our teams to be more flexible and think of creative ways to try to hit our goals. Before GGOB, the president of the company would tell us our gross margin, but now as a company we can calculate the gross margin.”

~ Anthony Alcorta, Canopy Administrator

## What's Next?

Kiolbassa admits that he and his team are still learning how to play the game at a higher and more consistent level. “Playing the Great Game of Business is a marathon, not a sprint,” says Kiolbassa. “It's a commitment to be on a constant journey.”

One area they are focusing on, for example, is nailing down the rhythm of their huddles, which has taken them a few iterations to figure out. One of the limitations has been the lack of a physical space for the whole team to meet in. But with new facilities in the works, Kiolbassa hopes they might be able to address that.

Another practice they want to improve upon is the consistency of their MiniGames. Kiolbassa is also continuing to hone its HIP process to find a way to capture the Wisdom of the Crowd on a more regular monthly, or even weekly basis.

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*“The change I am most excited about that has come from the Great Game of Business is being able to see our company's future financial success and status, and be able to make “plays” when we see they are needed. It has been eye opening to see our company's financial status at all times.”*

~ Tabatha Barnes, QA Manager

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