

CRUSHING THE COMPETITION

Back in April 2013, I noticed an advertisement on Youth Entrepreneurs Competition 2013 (YEC 2013), a nationwide business competition that challenged youths to awaken their entrepreneurial spirit and turn ideas into actual business plans. Intrigued by both the challenge and the opportunity that the competition represented, I grabbed at it the first chance I had. With my classmates, Anggita Dewi Yunissa, Faxta Subaja, Megawati Wijaya and Natasha Laksmana, we formed a team to represent the MDIS Business School (MBS).

The competition started with us submitting a business proposal to the organiser, the Singapore Discovery Centre, for selection. We knew that our idea had to be sufficiently innovative in order

to capture the interest of the committee; which was exactly why we came up with the idea for Cookies Crush.

Inspired by Candy Crush – one of the most popular games in the world, with over 45.6 million active players – Cookies Crush was set up to sell homemade cookies that were shaped and decorated like the pastries in the game.

Good news reached us on 19 May; 'Cookies Crush' was selected to compete under the tertiary category with 14 other teams! Our team received seed money in the form of S\$150 in cash, but in order to get our full start-up capital of S\$690, we would have to sell another S\$540 worth of YOUTHPhoria tickets that were also included in the package.



Armed with our tickets, we went around the MDIS campus trying to sell them at S\$6 each. With the support of MDIS staff, who purchased more than 100 tickets, scheduled class visits and social media advertising, we managed to sell 285 tickets in total. Of particular note was a lady who, upon seeing our advertisement in a Facebook group, expressed interest in purchasing 40 tickets! To show our appreciation for such a valuable customer, we commuted to Simei to deliver the tickets by hand at her request.

The week before the competition was perhaps the most challenging part of the entire experience. Not only did we have to continue making progress and submitting our regular coursework on time, we also had to desperately start learning how to actually bake from our friends; yes, this was the first time either one of us had ever made pastries.

Although our first few attempts almost made us completely give up in despair, we persevered, thinking to ourselves that practice will surely make perfect. Despite our many failures, we kept experimenting until we were finally able to make cookies that looked somewhat decent... until, three days before the competition, our oven broke down.

Thankfully, we were able to find a replacement in time, but this unexpected obstacle cut into our preparation time significantly. On the morning of the competition, all of us were up till 4am preparing for the competition. We tried to apply everything we had learnt from our Marketing modules to the event: by using the four big 'Ps' of product, promotion, packaging and place.

Our product, the cookies and choco balls, were as fresh and tasty as we could make them, and we made sure that the packaging was perfect as well by designing and printing stickers. Some of us made Cookies Crush bandanas from poly-foam as a promotional tool, and although we were not able to change the place of sale from our allocated stall at the Singapore Discovery Centre, we wore T-shirts with our brand printed on it and moved around the premises to further promote our stall.

At the end of the day, all our hard work paid off. Not only did we win the Most Supportive School Gold Award for the sheer number of YOUTHPhoria tickets sold, Cookies Crush also came in third in the online polls, with over 1,300 votes for our brand. It felt great to know that people liked our products, and true to the promise we made in our business proposal, we donated 50% of the net profit we made from our sales to the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) as a symbol of corporate social responsibility.

The team members of 'Cookies Crush' would like to thank MBS for providing the guidance and advice we required as well as the staff and students of MDIS who had helped us with the promotion and the friends who had supported us during the event. We could not have achieved this without you.

This article was contributed by Jessica Surya, who is pursuing a BSc (Hons) in Accounting and Finance with the University of Bradford, UK.