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## Crossroads for a Young Entrepreneur: Wings of Fame

On a hot Saturday morning in March 2016, Jaap Bala and his group waited outside a conference room at De La Salle Lipa for the decision of an academic panel on their thesis. Although they had prepared, they began to doubt if they had prepared enough to merit approval. They still had two full terms before graduation, and passing the thesis defense was critical to completing their marketing management program.

Nevertheless, this was not Jaap's only concern. He was a major partner in a three-month-old food stall called "Wings of Fame," and this was the time of the day when preparations were underway for stall's opening. The start-up operated nine hours a day from 3 p.m. until midnight.

Jaap enjoyed both his time at school and with the business. The food stall was experiencing brisk sales and popularity among the young adult market in the area. It received rave reviews from customers on its Facebook fan page.

Still, earning a degree was the ultimate goal for Jaap. He dreamed of working for a successful organization as part of a management team. As Jaap waited for the panel to call the group into the conference room, he thought about his business' demands and the degree requirements. What would happen after graduation? Would Wings of Fame continue its success? Could he and his partners sustain



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the business? Would they expand the business? Or would he look for a job at a corporation after graduation?

## Wings of Fame

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Jaap and his friends were in their early twenties and spent a lot of time together socially. They were typical male buddies who wanted to have fun, having the occasional drink and getting tattoos. Two of his friends, PJ and Earl, were both culinary arts graduates, while another friend, Ben, was a marketing major like Jaap. The group had been looking to make better use of their free time, and that's when they decided to found the Wings of Fame food stall. None of them had an entrepreneurial background or experience in operating a business. The business was financed and supported by their respective families (see **Exhibit 1**).<sup>1</sup>

### Exhibit 1

The Wings of Fame Food Stall



*Source: Wings of Fame Facebook page*

The business was located at Metro Events Zone Lipa at Ayala Highway Lipa City, Philippines. The zone was opened in November 2015 as commercial space for lease and started operations in 2016 with five food stalls, including Wings of Fame. After six months, there were 20 food stalls operating in the area. The zone had a total land area of 3,000 square meters. According to its website (<http://metroeventszone.blogspot.com>), the owners of the property apportioned 1,000 square meters for food trucks, stalls, and kiosks. The rest of the property was allocated to stalls for party events, concerts, and parking (See **Exhibit 2**). Approximately 200 meters from the area, another events space was set to open in a couple of months.

## Exhibit 2

### Metro Events Zone



Credit to the owner  
<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1335361546491822&set=a.378135458881107.98266.100000539698361&type=3&theater>

Source: Metro Events Zone Facebook Page

Wings of Fame served chicken wings as its base product. Metro Events Zone ensured that no two business served the same product which protected the lease holders from direct competition and provided customers with variety.<sup>2</sup>

With an idea and hard work, the business began. There was no feasibility study or operations plan to guide the partners. Jaap served as the marketing officer for the food stall. Together with Ben, he launched an advertising campaign on social media. Jaap and Ben also managed operations, sales, and accounting and served customers.<sup>3</sup>

As culinary graduates, PJ and Earl prepared the food and menu. The four friends also hired a manager to oversee operations, a dishwasher, and a cashier.<sup>4</sup>

## The Business

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The partners were three months into operations and the business had been doing well. They had not expected the market's strong response to their chicken wings, but the food stall had consistent sales that covered expenses. Gradually, they were recovering their investments. Most importantly, they were having fun.<sup>5</sup>

Jaap attributed Wings of Fame's success to its presence on social media.<sup>6</sup> The business had its own fan page where potential customers could watch videos, view photos from satisfied customers, and get updates from the owners. Those who visited the food stall were also asked to post pictures on their personal Facebook pages to promote the business. This strategy created a strong social media presence

for the business. The business also had television exposure when a local news network featured the Metro Lipa Events Zone and Wings of Fame.

Jaap also gave credit to his studies. His education helped him to manage the business on a day-to-day basis.

## Bonding with Friends

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However, Jaap believed that the real strength of the business was the partnerships he shared with PJ, Earl, and Ben. These were friends he trusted, admired, and enjoyed being around.

Jaap also found the arrangement practical. Each owner had equal responsibilities; no one took on the role of boss and director. They respected one another's opinions and made decisions together.<sup>7</sup>

Finances had never been an issue among the Wings of Fame partners. They shared earnings. The priority was to recover their investments.<sup>8</sup>

## The Future

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Jaap and his friends expected to recover their investments in a year. They also had plans for an indoor location. This would allow them to add variety to their menu.<sup>9</sup>

Jaap envisioned a bright future for the business. Still, this was a career he had never considered before. The partners had no experience, but the business was doing well. They had no formal business plan, but the food stall was operating smoothly. They also did not have formal accounting procedures, yet according to their calculations, they were in the black.<sup>10</sup>

## Back to Reality

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As Jaap's thesis group was heading to the conference room, Jaap pondered his future and asked himself:

*"Will I just focus on Wings of Fame? It has been doing well. Can we sustain our business? Are we just lucky so far? What if we start making bad choices? What if one of my friends leaves? Are we really good entrepreneurs? Are we doing it right? Will I just focus on my studies, graduate, and leave the business to my friends?"*

As he searched for answers, he heard the chair of the academic panel saying,

*"Congratulations, you passed the defense."*

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Jaap Bala. Part owner of Wings of Fame. Personal interview. 11 May 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Bala.

<sup>3</sup> Bala.

<sup>4</sup> Bala.

<sup>5</sup> Bala.

<sup>6</sup> Bala.

<sup>7</sup> Bala.

<sup>8</sup> Bala.

<sup>9</sup> Bala.

<sup>10</sup> Bala.