

# Rural Revitalization – case study

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## Reeseville, WI

- Rural, many dairy farmers, 12 miles to nearest supermarket
- '70's -- '80's: population stability. Local school expanded. Downtown had active bars, stores, bank, churches.
- '90's – dairy farm numbers decrease, population shrinks, school age population drops.
- '00's – school closed (kids must bus 10 miles each way), closure of bars and shops.
- '10's –meth lab, gun running, prostitution, Village finances underwater, food pantry starts

## Specialty Cheese Company

- 1991 – start
- 2004 – buy vacant school. 50 employees.
- 2012 – expand building. 100 employees. WI helps fund both plant expansion and improvements in Village wastewater system.
- 2019 – 265 employees. Help employees with housing if in Village.
  - Employees can walk to work.
  - Local trailer park goes from 35% eviction notices to under 20%.
  - Help fund opening of a coffee shop in Village
  - Fund local art/music fest

Is it possible that we could....

- **bring light manufacturing to rural areas?**
- Wisconsin had this a long time ago....

## A model or just lucky?

- Rural competitive advantages: ag products and “hidden workforce”
- Public/private collaboration
- Manufacturing firm
  - offers entry level jobs
  - focuses on small scale niche markets – hard to automate
  - Distribution of niche products avoids usual issues

## Outline of presentation

- Company History
- Dis-intermediation – avoiding usual problems of distribution
- Emotional intelligence helps employee retention
- “Hidden workforce” and ridesharing

## Our Company

*We Make Weird Cheese!*



**Indian**



**Middle Eastern**



**Hispanic**



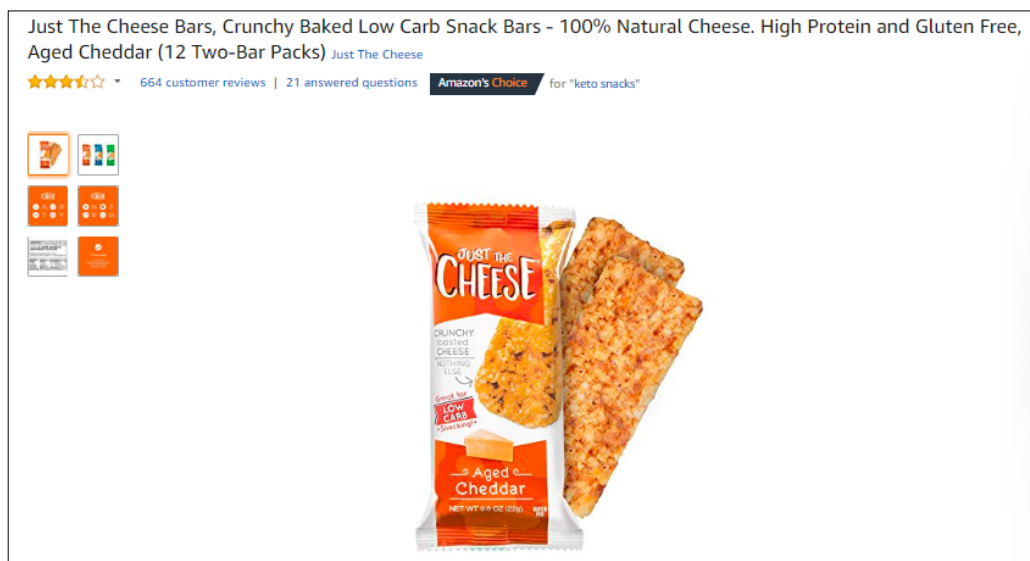
**And More...**

## Company Growth



## Today

- Approved financing to double the factory.
  - Target \$100 million revenue
- Among the largest manufacturers in the world of:
  - Paneer
  - Home-style Queso Fresco
  - Naboulsi
  - Baked Cheese snacks



\$0 to \$5million in a year



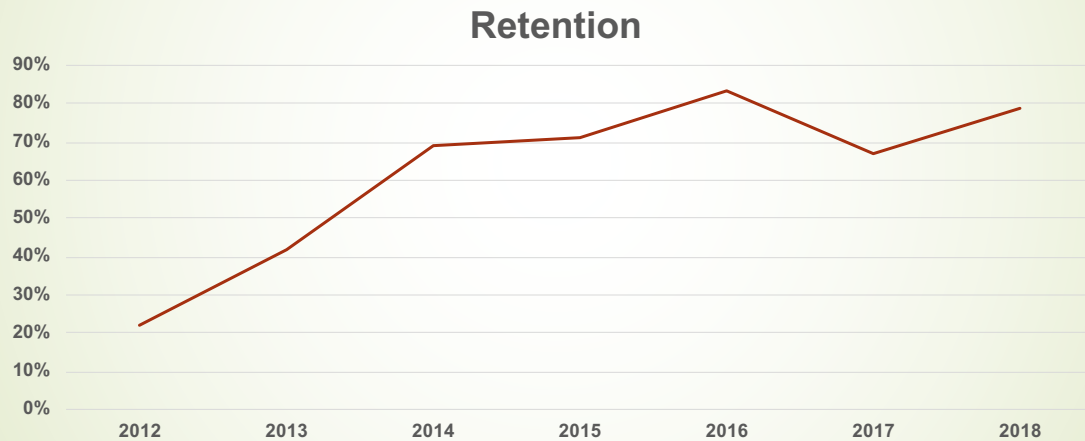
- ✓ AMAZON best-seller
- ✓ Category has several dozen entrants
- ✓ Ours is now a leader!

## Dis-intermediation: e-commerce

- Avoid slotting fees
- Avoid introductory costs
- Allows local mfg to find consumers
- Allows consumers to find quality



## Employee Retention



## Emotional Intelligence

= “Feelings Matter”!

- People behave emotionally.
- Often, we don’t want to admit we have feelings.

## Feelings are like phlegm

- Everyone has both
- Both are vaguely disgusting to discuss

## Why are feelings so hard to admit, let alone discuss?

- We feel powerless to control them.
- They reduce us from self-control to “simpering children”.



## **Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace**

- We are not the best teachers
- We are not experts
- We made progress.

Neuroscience: Here's our Reward System:

- **Ugh**
- **!!!**
- **aaaaahhhh**

## Why do we do stuff?

- *to get our internal rewards.*

How it feels	How we interpret	What We Do
<b>Ugh....</b>	<b>Shame/fear</b>	<b>Avoid</b>
WOOOOO!!!!	Arousal	Seek
Ahhhhhhh	Enjoyment	Get

## Motivating Teams

- **Avoid UGH** -- pain and shame -- fight, flight, freeze
- **Seek arousal !!!** -- excitement, “a rush”
- **Get ahhhhh** -- pleasure – amusement, awe, compassion, curiosity, fascination, gratitude, hope, love, purpose

## Theory into practice. Our company does this.

- Safety: make it very difficult to get fired or demoted.
- Excitement: ensure staff have a path to a better future based on accomplishing objectives that
  - Are measurable
  - They endorse
  - They understand fit with the organization's purpose.
- Pleasure: encourage laughter, awe, compassion, curiosity, fascination, gratitude, hope, love, and a feeling of shared purpose: teamwork.

## Can we learn to control our feelings?

- Reactions vs responses. Fast vs slow.
- We can't control our reactions. They come fast.
- We can control our responses.
  - **We can guide ourselves from fear, anger, boredom or disgust to**
  - **Safety, Gratitude, curiosity and hope.**

## **All bad feelings stem from fear**

- Shame – fear of social rejection
- Jealousy – fear of rejection because you are less worthy
- Sadness and regret – fear of facts of the past.
- Anger and frustration – fear of today's facts.
- Disgust – fear of connecting with it

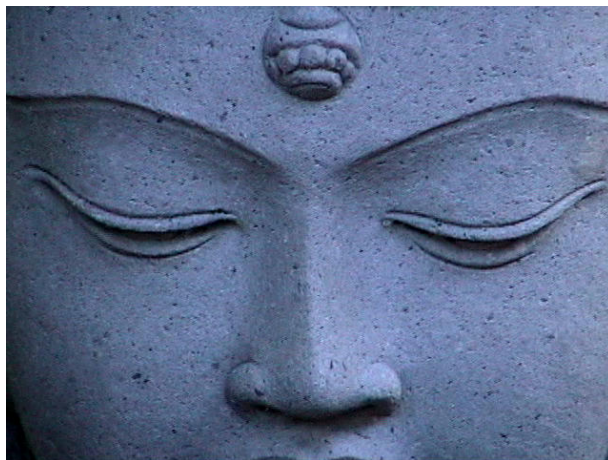
So, if we can manage our fears...

- then we can manage our bad feelings -- the stuff we are afraid to admit we even have!

## How do we manage our fears?

- Breath. Sigh. Slowly exhale a few deep breaths.
- Accept the facts. Give up all hope for a better past. You are safe in the moment. Find gratitude for that.
- Find curiosity and hope for a better future

Sound goofy? Let's try it.



## Let's try it: Deep Breathing Meditation

- Get comfortable and close your eyes.
- Roll your shoulders three times to relax.
- Put your hand on your belly.
- Take a deep slow breath in. Fill your lungs all the way to your belly. Feel your belly push out against your hand.
- Slowly release your breath.
- And again. Deep slow breath in, feeling your belly push out. Slowly let the breath out.
- Do this three more times. Deep in breath and a slow breath out.
- Then let your breath return to its natural rhythm. Now open your eyes.

## Find curiosity. Hope for a better future.

- Assume the other person has good intentions – even if they are having an “outburst”.
- Find your curiosity: ask yourself what they are afraid of.
- Feeling curious fights your unpleasant feelings.
- Tell them that you want both to feel safe and for them to feel safe.
- Use the words “how can we work together” to help the situation.

## Example

- “You idiot!”
- That’s what Joe is calling you.
- “You don’t pay me enough to do this crap!”
- What do you do next?
- Breathe
- Accept. Yes, that is what he said.
- You are safe. Thankfully, all he has thrown is an insult, not a fist.
- Can you find the desire to help Joe feel safe?

## If you are curious about what happened...

- Then you are ready to motivate.
- If you feel like hitting Joe or..
- If you feel like running away from the troubles of managing people...
- THEN YOU ARE AFRAID.
- WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?
  - Either he has something to say from which you can learn
  - OR, you can help him get out of his suffering.
  - OR BOTH.

## What should you do?

- “I feel bad when you insult me. I don’t think it is true that I am an idiot. I am curious about why you would say that. If there are things I can do better then I want to do so. If you would like to talk about your pay and rewards, let’s find some time to discuss it after your shift. How can we work together to help the situation improve?”
- We assume the other person has good intentions but is suffering so his actions don’t show his true intentions.
- We allow everyone to have occasional outbursts.

## Manage with feelings

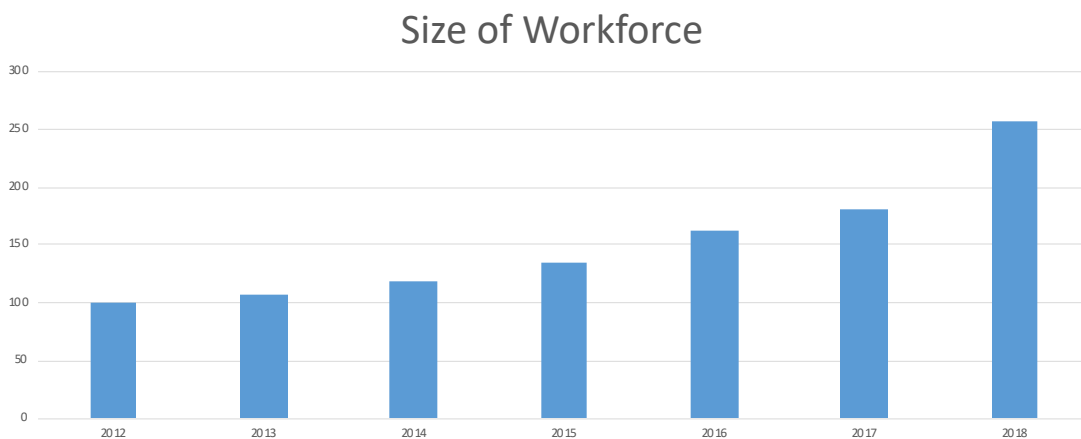
- First, we accept that we have feelings even if we are not proud of them.
- Second, when we have bad feelings, we BREATHE.
- Third, we accept that we make mistakes. So do the people around us.
- Fourth, we find curiosity.
- We wish everyone to be safe despite our flaws.
- We ask what can be our common goals.
- We determine the facts.
- We ask, “what can we do TOGETHER to better achieve the goals?”
- When necessary, we ask for help.



## The Specialty Cheese “Way”

- Our Goals – Safety, food quality, teamwork
- Our Beliefs – Compassion works. Feelings matter.
- Our Process -- how do we work through difficult feelings?
  - Safety: Breathe. Accept. Quell fear and shame.
  - Goals: Seek common goals
  - Facts: Search for shared facts
  - Plan: How can we work together to achieve our goals?
  - Get help: Ask for resources and advice. Ask!

How to get workers? Unemployment < 2.8%!



## “Hidden Workforce” in rural areas

- Dodge County, WI – 32,000 registered cars. 31,000 households.
  - Are there adults who want to work who are “trapped” at home?
- Census: 40% of households are low income
- Survey: 35% of these households have an adult who wants to work

## Dodge County Community Needs Survey What Prevents Willing People from Working?

Getting-to-Work Program  
Jeff Stoltman, Dec 2018

### Question

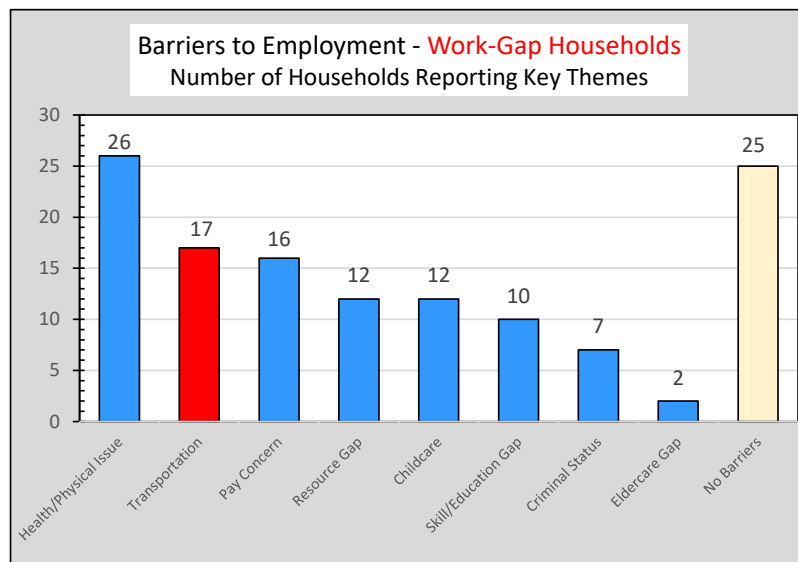
*For as long as you have lived in Dodge County, have any of the following barriers ever prevented you from working or looking for work?*

- 20 barriers listed + Other
- Check all that apply

64 households reported:

- 128 barriers to employment
- average of 2.0 per household

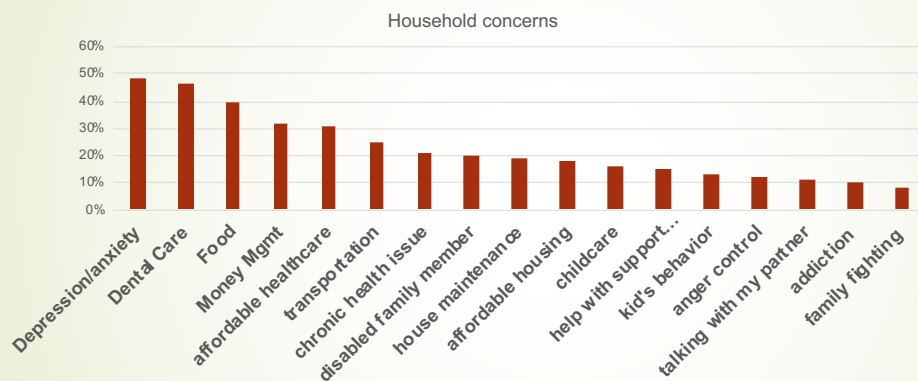
In-progress data, n = 64



## Getting to Work program

- We employ 14 drivers
- They bring us 80 workers.
- Average cost per worker per day ~ \$25.

## What concerns these new workers?



## **New employees have feelings**

- New employees can feel shame and fear.
- Current employees can feel frustrated with new employees
- How do we motivate all employees to work together?

## **Acceptance and serenity**

- “May I have serenity to accept the things I can not change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference”.