

CASE STUDY OF ENHANCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FEMALE ASSOCIATION- AN EXAMPLE OF CHIAYI FEIYAN ENTREPRENEURS ASSOCIATION

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ABSTRACT

Women are increasingly assuming vital roles in the domestic industry, with numerous domestic organizations dedicated to assisting women in employment and entrepreneurship. The government has also allocated significant resources for guidance and support. The operational performance of these organizations reflects the tangible benefits of counseling and the influence of women in both the business and social spheres. This study employs qualitative research methods such as "case study," "in-depth interview," and "focus group interview," utilizing the "Balanced Scorecard, BSC" framework, with the Chiayi Feiyan entrepreneurship development association (EDA) as the case study. Through interviews, the study explores how to enhance the operational performance of women's organizations. Using the case study organization as an example, the research results in areas such as finance, operational processes, learning and growth, and customer relations can serve as a reference for other branches or similar organizations, aiming to improve the effectiveness of counseling for women's employment and entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Startup incubation, Business performance, BSC, Non-profit organization.

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite years of progress, women in society, while no longer confined to traditional domestic roles as in the past, still find themselves in disadvantaged positions. In recent decades, Taiwan has witnessed significant advancements in women's participation in the workforce and their ability to balance work and family responsibilities, underscoring the growing importance of women in society.

The Taiwanese government has implemented measures to support women in entrepreneurship, with organizations like the Feiyan association primarily focused on assisting women in starting businesses and securing employment. These organizations are well-structured and have long been instrumental in implementing government policies aimed at empowering women. The government's commitment to assisting women in entrepreneurship is evident, as mentioned by the Small and Medium Enterprise Administration (SMEA) of the Ministry of Economic Affairs (MEA). [1]:

- (1). Enhancing women's entrepreneurial ability and consultation services: Offering free training to women who have already started or intend to start businesses, including entrepreneurship courses, Facebook marketing courses, and Google digital courses. Collaborating with local organizations such as entrepreneurial hubs, incubators, professional institutions, and local entrepreneurial associations to provide participants with diverse entrepreneurial course experiences and learning opportunities.
- (2). Women's enterprise accelerator guidance and selection of women entrepreneurs: Supporting promising women-led startup and elite enterprises through accelerator programs, providing funding, critical resources, mentorship, and connections to international events and entrepreneurial support net jobs. Recognizing the entrepreneurial journey and innovative

models of female entrepreneurs, highlighting outstanding achievements in women's entrepreneurship to shape a trend in female entrepreneurship.

- (3). Participation in international activities to assist women entrepreneurs in expanding overseas markets: Offering assistance to elite enterprises participating in international activities, encouraging female entrepreneurs to engage in overseas exhibitions, seminars, and other events to expand their international market presence and facilitate international business opportunities. Collaborating with the American Institute in Taiwan to introduce the AWE women's entrepreneurship academy program, which equips female entrepreneurs with the skills, resources, and net job opportunities necessary for entrepreneurship and successful business expansion. This initiative aims to continually expand the international community of female entrepreneurs, promote cross-industry collaboration, and explore international business opportunities.
- (4). Establishing a women's entrepreneurship information integration portal to provide information and relevant resources for women entrepreneurs.

Currently, Feiyan is one of the well-organized and functioning Feiyan associations; however, it still faces several pressing issues, such as insufficient financial and resource support, membership attrition, and challenges in implementing standardized and systematic organizational operations. These issues have resulted in suboptimal performance in the association's employment and entrepreneurship counseling efforts, which require further analysis and improvement.

Feiyan association is a relatively systematic organization with a presence across the province, and the success or failure of this organization can significantly impact the government's efforts to assist women in entrepreneurship and balancing family and job responsibilities. Each Feiyan association in the province has its own operating model and direction. This study primarily focuses on Feiyan because it has multiple successful cases of counseling women in entrepreneurship and has been a constant companion to women in their entrepreneurial journeys, making it a highly valuable subject for research.

Given the aforementioned research motivations and background, the objectives of this study are as follows:

- (1). To assist Feiyan EDA in enhancing its operational performance.
- (2). To provide research results that can serve as references for similar associations in improving their operational effectiveness in supporting women.

According to the SMEA of the MEA website [1], with the rise of women's economic power worldwide, the construction of a completely equal and gender-friendly environment for female entrepreneurship, the promotion of women's entrepreneurship policies, related counseling measures, and assistance in expanding women's employment opportunities are policy directions actively pursued by governments worldwide. As women's education levels have risen, the ability for women to start businesses while balancing family and career has become a significant economic force.

The "Feiyan Women's Entrepreneurship Program" is an entrepreneurship initiative under the SMEA of the MEA. It is structured primarily based on the 2014 APEC declaration and aims to provide assistance to female entrepreneurs at various stages of their entrepreneurial journey. The Feiyan women's entrepreneurship program, tailored to the characteristics of female entrepreneurship, continually offers customized and integrated services to women entrepreneurs with different needs and at different stages of their entrepreneurial ventures. It establishes relevant

support mechanisms, integrates existing policy incentives, and connects entrepreneurial resources effectively to assist in expanding opportunities and fields for female entrepreneurship.

In recent years, through the "big goose leads the small geese" model, resources along the entire industry supply chain have been linked. Customized and integrated service measures are planned for women entrepreneurs with diverse needs, including courses, counseling, resource matchmaking, and networking. Additionally, an annual selection competition for outstanding female entrepreneurs is organized to promote continuous efforts in women's entrepreneurship development. The program is built on the concepts of "establishing foundations," "supporting growth," and "selecting elites." It aims to create a female-friendly entrepreneurial environment, drive the trend of female entrepreneurship, enhance women's economic power and competitiveness, and cultivate outstanding female entrepreneurs, thus igniting the dreams and vitality of women's entrepreneurship in Taiwan.

The Feiyan association program has the following goals:

- (1). Broadly integrate entrepreneurship resources from all over the country to provide a platform for female entrepreneurship capabilities and related training programs. This aims to enhance entrepreneurial expertise, foster the development of female entrepreneurship, and establish a local resource net job for women entrepreneurs.
- (2). Forge connections with internationally renowned companies or accelerators to empower women entrepreneurs with technological capabilities and strengthen the overall capacity of female-owned businesses.
- (3). Establish a mechanism for selecting promising female-owned businesses and provide in-depth cultivation and guidance. This involves identifying outstanding female entrepreneurs to serve as role models in the field of women's entrepreneurship.
- (4). Assist female-owned businesses in securing entrepreneurial funding and support them in expanding their entrepreneurial scope or improving the quality of their ventures.
- (5). Connect with international resources and energy in women's entrepreneurship, promote the participation of Taiwanese female-owned businesses in international activities, facilitate international collaborations, enhance the international net job capabilities of female-owned businesses, and assist them in expanding overseas markets.
- (6). Develop a one-stop integrated platform for women's entrepreneurship inquiries, providing information and relevant resources for female entrepreneurs.

The Feiyan Entrepreneurship Incubation Association, a registered social organization, was established on December 18, 2011. It was created to integrate the efforts of various sectors in Chiayi County, leverage resources from other Feiyan Entrepreneurship Associations across the nation, and assist local women in entrepreneurship while providing guidance to empower disadvantaged women to overcome poverty. The association's aim is to enhance its mission and strengthen operational efficiency.

Committed to recruiting professionals from various fields, the association forms a dedicated team to provide services to the community. On April 10, 2012, it officially registered as a legal entity [2].

Feiyan EDA's responsibilities:

- (1). Advocacy and promotion of women's entrepreneurship, as well as providing technical and operational management services.
- (2). Organizing training and business seminars for women's entrepreneurship.
- (3). Providing guidance and support for women creating inventions and innovations.

- (4). Conducting research, analysis, and dissemination of information related to women's entrepreneurship trends and environments. Collaborating and exchanging experiences with domestic and international organizations to assist female entrepreneurs in expanding their cooperative endeavours.
- (5). Promoting and organizing exhibitions for products from women's entrepreneurship.
- (6). Publish book and journal related to women's entrepreneurship.
- (7). Organizing entrepreneurship and talent-seeking events, either self-funded or commissioned by the government.
- (8). Handling other matters related to achieving the association's objectives.

The Feiyan association focuses primarily on assisting entrepreneurship. It offers practical training, skill development, online marketing, and tax courses led by numerous expert lecturers. In 2012, the association applied for and received approval for the Labor Department's Human Resource Development Quality Management System (TTQS) project to enhance the quality and standards of its training courses, ensuring a more structured approach to future training programs.

In 1992, Kaplan and Norton [1] introduced the "Balanced Scorecard, BSC" as a performance measurement framework. Their primary argument was that traditional for-profit organizations had long relied primarily on financial metrics to measure performance. This overemphasis on financial performance indicators could have adverse effects on an organization's ability to generate future economic value. Therefore, they proposed a balanced development approach through four perspectives: financial, customer, internal processes, and learning and growth.

The BSC framework emphasizes the need for balance between financial and non-financial metrics, external and internal factors, short-term and long-term goals, and leading and lagging indicators. It was designed to address the limitations of overemphasizing financial measurements and to provide a more holistic view of an organization's performance and its potential for future development.

Kaplan and Norton's [1] indicated that the BSC was originally designed to improve performance management in profit-oriented organizations. However, their findings suggested that the BSC also yielded positive effects in improving the performance of government agencies and non-profit organization. In their subsequent study [2], they argued that the application of the BSC was even more effective in non-profit organization. This was because the BSC could help non-profit organizations focus their efforts and enhance their sense of responsibility.

In non-profit organization, financial performance is not the primary goal; instead, their main focus is on fulfilling their mission. The emphasis is on whether the organization's performance aligns with meeting the needs of target customers or stakeholders. As a result, the top position in the BSC's hierarchy, which originally represented the financial perspective, is modified to prioritize customers or stakeholders in the context of non-profit organization.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative research methods are used to collect data for this article; when relevant articles are obtained, interpretive analysis begins, and conclusions are made after discovery and discussion. The above process is repeated continuously, and at the same time, the researchers are constantly correcting and checking according to their actual research needs, until the overall research results

are finally presented. This section describes the choice of qualitative research methods, research design, data analysis and interpretation.

This article employs qualitative research methods, including "case study," "in-depth interviews," and "focus group interviews." The research is structured around the four major perspectives of the BSC. The case study focuses on the Feiyan EDA, aiming to explore strategies for enhancing the operational performance of women's organizations. Data collection will involve interviews and discussions with relevant individuals and groups, and the BSC framework will serve as the basis for these conversations. The research design is iterative and continuously refined as the study progresses to present comprehensive research findings.

In order to facilitate the development of the Feiyan EDA, this research arranges interviews with experts from various fields related to the association's development. The reasons for inviting for interviews and their background explanations are as follows, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1. Basic data of the in-depth interview participants

No.	Name	Position	Reason for interview
A	Lee	Chairman of the Feiyan	The current chairman of the association, able to provide clear insights into the association's operations and challenges.
B	Zeng	Secretary of the Zhongshan foundation	The secretary plays a significant role in supporting the association. The interview aims to assess if the association aligns with government expectations through the Foundation's assistance.
C	Huang	Founder of Four Seasons Spring Red	The founding chairman of the association, who has a deep understanding of the association's mission and establishment process. The interview will clarify the direction of the association's operations.
D	Yea	Honorary chairman of the Yunlin Feiyan	Mr. Yea has practical experience with similar associations within the same system and can better understand the challenges faced by women's groups.
E	Huang	Advisor of the Feiyan	An advisor to the association who has served as an advisor to several women's groups, offering valuable insights into operational differences and sharing experiences.

In this study, the BSC framework was used as the interview structure. The interview discussions revolved around the four major perspectives of financial, internal operations, learning and growth, and customer aspects. These discussions aimed to address the current issues and future development plans of the Feiyan EDA.

In the financial perspective, while nonprofit organizations do not primarily focus on financial profit, they still need sufficient resources to serve their members. Therefore, questions in this perspective emphasized fundraising and cost reduction for activities. In the internal operations perspective, the focus was on the processes related to the courses offered by the association, the selection process for directors and supervisors, and the operational procedures for member counseling. For the learning and growth perspective, since directors and officers are essentially selected from the membership, learning and growth were typically combined. However, it could be assessed whether they should be handled separately. Finally, in the customer perspective, since

the members themselves are the customers within this association, serving the members equated to serving the customers.

Based on the transformation explanation of applying the BSC framework to interviews with the Feiyan EDA, the interview topics were developed as shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Semi-structured in-depth interview outline

Perspective	Item	Content
Financial	1	How can the association increase its financial resources to enhance the quality of member services and the operation of the association?
	2	How can the association reduce expenses while maintaining the quality of member services?
Internal operations process	1	Are there any areas in the current process for selecting and operating the association's directors and supervisors that need improvement?
	2	Are there any areas in the current process for organizing events and educational training that need improvement?
	3	Are there any areas in the current process for member counseling within the association that need improvement?
	4	Are there any other operational processes within the association that may need improvement?
	5	Is there room for innovation in the association's operational processes to enhance the effectiveness of member services?
Learning and growth	1	Are there areas for improvement in the learning and growth courses offered to association members? Should aspects such as course content and implementation methods be improved? How can they be improved?
	2	Is there an innovative model for learning and growth coaching for association members?
	3	Is there a need to conduct separate training for directors, supervisors, and members, or should training be conducted collectively?
Customer	1	What are the reasons for member attrition within the association?
	2	Has the association considered strategies to increase participation and overall satisfaction among existing members with association activities?
	3	How does the association plan to continually recruit new members?

In this study, in-depth interviews are conducted on a one-on-one basis, allowing individuals the time and space to express their opinions fully without the influence of others' views. As indicated in the table above, specific times and locations are scheduled for these interviews.

After completing the individual in-depth interviews, the primary viewpoints and findings are then compiled. Subsequently, focus group interviews are conducted, allowing participants to interact and stimulate new perspectives on the same topic. The advantage of this approach is that it encourages the generation of fresh insights within the same subject area. This study employs a combination of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, leveraging the strengths of both methods to explore the research objectives comprehensively.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the interview framework and the arrangement of interview participants as described earlier, the key points from individual in-depth interviews are summarized in this section. These points are categorized into the four perspectives of the BSC, each focusing on specific aspects of the organization's operations. It's important to note that not all questions from these four perspectives were applicable.

In practical terms, the financial perspective, internal processes perspective, learning and growth perspective, and customer perspective are often intertwined and interconnected within an organization. Therefore, the interview discussions may encompass topics that span across these perspectives. However, this approach aligns with the practical orientation of problem-solving and does not impact the research findings of this study.

Based on the interview framework and the arrangement of interview participants, the key points from individual in-depth interviews are:

Currently, the association relies on government subsidies and resource applications to provide free or even revenue-generating activities for members. Contributions from directors, supervisors, and consultants are not substantial. Regarding expense reduction, the association's expenses are relatively low. In the past, Jiayi little shop incurred higher expenses, including personnel, inventory of goods, and decor items. However, since Jiayi little shop is no longer in operation, the association has significantly reduced its expenses. Obtaining government subsidies for activities and courses could further reduce the association's expenses. By conducting knowledge-based courses through government programs, the association can serve its members without incurring additional costs. Monthly meetings for knowledge sharing can save on the cost of hiring external lecturers. Through the association's interactions, members can influence each other and create a stimulating atmosphere.

Currently, the selection of directors and supervisors focuses on individuals who are proactive, willing to participate, and dedicated to serving the members. The association has a system in place for succession planning, where the outgoing chairman prepares for the next one. They also have first and second vice-chairpersons to prevent conflicts. Most Respondents suggested a proactive approach to recruiting members for the board of directors. The chairman, as the leader, could assemble their own team, which would make it easier to achieve consensus and smoothly advance the association's affairs.

There is a need for better alignment between the courses offered and the members' actual preferences and needs. Post-course evaluation and follow-up should be more thorough and practical. In the future, group mechanisms can be employed to gather member feedback more effectively, allowing their ideas and requirements to be expressed more accurately. Course offerings should diversify beyond traditional events and baking classes, potentially including two-day face-to-face dialogues for personal growth courses. Education and training should be divided between officers and members, allowing for tiered development to cultivate a more cohesive officer team. Improving the management skills of board members can benefit the association and help identify potential future presidents.

A member attrition rate of 5-10% per year is considered normal, and excessive attrition should be avoided. Members who are no longer involved in entrepreneurship may leave the association, and personal or economic factors can also lead to attrition. To retain members, it's essential to dispel the perception that the association caters only to an older age group and cannot attract younger generations. Cultivating younger board members who have opportunities to contribute and innovate is necessary. Ensuring that events are appealing to younger individuals is crucial.

Promoting leadership within member teams and offering incentives can boost retention and attract new members. Association funds can be allocated to subsidize events, fostering a sense of team participation and pride, and potentially helping members increase their work-related income. The

majority of association members are aged 45 and above, making it challenging for them to participate actively. Members who have already achieved success in their entrepreneurial endeavours tend to seek out different groups that can provide additional support. The current chairman's efforts to enhance cohesion through travel and educational programs have increased overall satisfaction. Diversifying operations and offering employment guidance, from nurturing entrepreneurship to skill training, can attract new members. External trainers can be brought in to offer courses, and external courses can serve as a source for recruiting new members.

- (1).Applying for government projects to enhance service quality and reduce expenses, with a focus on applications to the MEA of SMEA and the Ministry of Labor. Increasing partnerships and collaborations with businesses, inviting them to act as advisors and potentially sponsor site visits, provide products, and resources. However, reciprocity should be considered, such as promoting their brand or enhancing their corporate image.
- (2).When selecting board members, it is suggested to consider not only their years of service but also their participation in association activities. The establishment of an evaluation committee with a mechanism for assessment is recommended. Regarding member exposure, including member products, it's suggested to establish a standardized and consistent format. During each event, allocate five minutes for each member to showcase their products. This not only serves as a marketing opportunity but also facilitates mutual understanding.
- (3).It is important to leverage the association's resources to increase opportunities for member collaboration. Building. Collaborating with alumni associations to organize training for board members and executives is a viable option. This collaboration can help share the financial burden and provide opportunities for mutual observation and the stimulation of cohesiveness and team spirit.
- (4).Member attrition is influenced by factors such as members relocating, which is considered normal attrition. Additionally, when the association's direction led by the Chairman diverges from the needs of certain members, it can lead to attrition. The association should actively engage younger members to increase interactivity and participation in association activities. Member companionship is crucial. It's recommended to facilitate small group discussions with 5-6 individuals in each group. Each member should be encouraged to share aspects of their expertise, their expectations from the association, or challenges they face in their professional and personal lives. These smaller group discussions often create an environment where members feel comfortable sharing honest thoughts and feelings.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Women are playing an increasingly significant role in the domestic industry, and there are numerous organizations dedicated to assisting women.

This study employed qualitative research methods, including case studies, in-depth interviews, and focus group interviews. It used the BSC as a framework for interviews, focusing on the case of the Jiayi Feiyan Entrepreneurship Incubation Association. The study aimed to explore how to enhance the operational performance of women's organizations.

Based on expert interviews and focus group interviews, the following recommendations are made within the framework of the BSC, addressing four major aspects: financial, customer, internal processes, and learning and growth:

- (1).Financial perspective: Seek government project grants to subsidize course and event expenses. Establish connections between businesses and the association on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).to save costs and increase resources. Create exposure and sales opportunities

for association members and establish profit-sharing mechanisms. Seek cooperation with external organizations to secure event venues efficiently.

- (2). Internal processes perspective: Establish "work circles" to increase member engagement and provide opportunities for members to demonstrate their capabilities. Standardize the selection criteria for Chairman and Directors, allowing more members to showcase their abilities. Survey members to identify their needs for guidance and educational training, and establish Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for guidance. Implement tracking and evaluation mechanisms for both educational training and guidance. Collaborate with other friendly associations to conduct joint educational training and guidance.
- (3). Learning and growth perspective: Leverage the association's influence to connect members' products, creating collaboration opportunities and exposure for sales. Separate training for Directors and Executives from educational training for members. Consider co-organizing training and guidance programs with other friendly associations.
- (4). Customer perspective: Use work groups and incentive systems for recruiting and guiding new members. Foster a sense of belonging among new members. Recruit younger members. Increase the association's exposure through events to attract more potential members. Minimize overlapping member profiles in terms of industry.

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