

Dandelion Foods organic grocer a natural fit for Launch Lab's Amplify program

HERBAL MEDICINE GURU SUSAN WEED REFERS TO THE HUMBLE DANDELION AS "NATURE'S MEDICINE ... TENACIOUS AND PROSPEROUS, BRIGHTENING OUR LIVES AND FEEDING AND HEALING OUR BODIES". HER DESCRIPTION OF THE UBIQUITOUS PLANT INSPIRED THE NAME FOR DANDELION FOODS.

Dandelion Foods is full-service organic grocery and health supplements store in the thriving Eastern Ontario town of Almonte, Ontario.

In 2013 four aspiring entrepreneurs — Meg Pettipas, Farhat Sultana, Micheal McGarry and Sharon Lazette — decided to open their store as a worker co-operative, meaning that the company is owned and democratically managed by its Worker-Owners.

Equipped with a business plan and backgrounds in community development, nutrition, sustainable energy and the alternative health industry, Dandelion Foods' founders sensed a good

reception from their town's blossoming population of health-conscious retirees and young families. Start-up funding included equal contributions from each founder, followed by money raised from local investors, the co-op movement and a business loan



FAST FACTS

Why Launch Lab

The Amplify program offers in-depth mentorship from Launch Lab's Entrepreneurs-in-Residence (EIRs). These seasoned executives offer decades of been-there-built-that corporate growth experience. To qualify for Amplify, companies like Dandelion Foods have to demonstrate scalable growth potential and a team that divides management responsibilities.

Client testimonial

"EVEN THOUGH WE FEEL WE'VE GRADUATED FROM LAUNCH LAB'S AMPLIFY PROGRAM, WE ALSO KNOW WE CAN CALL UP OUR EIRS ANYTIME WE NEED MORE MENTORING. IT'S A GREAT FEELING TO HAVE THE EQUIVALENT OF A CFO AND VP MARKETING IN YOUR POCKET. I'D RECOMMEND LAUNCH LAB'S AMPLIFY PROGRAM TO ANY BUSINESS THAT WANTS TO GROW."

— MEGHAN PETTIPAS, WORKER-OWNER, DANDELION FOODS

Future growth

Dandelion Foods now understands its financials much better, and its team has a thorough understanding of how marketing plans translate into revenue projections, with a planning window that looks out 18 months. Business planning is now proactive versus reactive.

from the Valley Heartland Community Futures Development Corporation in nearby Smiths Falls. As a community-based, non-profit organization funded by FedDev, Valley Heartland provides entrepreneurs in Lanark County and North Leeds access to funding, training and mentorship.

Opening their doors in 2014 in a 3,000 sq. ft. storefront, Meg Pettipas said she and her colleagues kept hearing good things about an organization called Launch Lab.

But it wasn't until the Dandelion team hit year five and contemplated a major store expansion that they tapped into a Launch Lab program called Amplify. The Amplify program offers in-depth mentorship from Launch Lab's Entrepreneurs-in-Residence (EIRs). These seasoned executives offer decades of been-there-built-that corporate growth experience. To qualify for Amplify, companies have to demonstrate scalable growth potential and a team that divides management responsibilities. In Dandelion's case, its founders had divvied up finance, marketing, operations, human resources and product acquisition.

"We had a six-month engagement with Launch Lab as we were planning our expansion from 3,000 to 4,000 sq. ft.," said Pettipas. "We always had Point-Of-Sale (POS) data, but never really had an effective way to proactively use it. We were able to look back, but never forward to plan our growth."

Upon being accepted as an Amplify client, she explained that two Launch Lab EIRs met monthly with her team: "The meetings were very well structured, with clear action items. They mentored us in a very professional, courteous way. No issue or question was too small to mention. We now understand our financials much better, and have a thorough understanding of how marketing plans translate into revenue projections. This created a planning window that looks out 18 months."

Numbers from its annual "DandyFest" in June are indicative of Dandelion Foods' newfound business prowess. The day-long



"WE WERE CONFIDENT THAT THEY WOULD BUILD SOMETHING GREAT. VALLEY HEARTLAND IS PROUD TO HAVE SUPPORTED DANDELION FOODS' START-UP AND CONTINUED GROWTH IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LAUNCH LAB."

— TINA STEVENS, GENERAL MANAGER, VALLEY HEARTLAND COMMUNITY FUTURES

customer celebration exceeded planning projections, with a 10% increase in basket size over 2018, a 24% increase in customers, and a 37% increase in sales. The company has also increased employment from 5 to 7.5 full-time equivalent jobs over the 12-month period.

"Even though we feel we've graduated from Launch Lab's Amplify program, we also know we can call up our EIRs anytime we need more mentoring," stated Pettipas. "It's a great feeling to have the equivalent of a CFO and a VP Marketing in your pocket. I'd recommend Launch Lab's Amplify program to any business that wants to grow."

CONTACT INFORMATION

Dandelion Foods
1 (613) 256-4545
www.dandelionfoods.ca
@dandelionfoods

Valley Heartland
1 (613) 283-7002
www.valleycfdc.com
@valleycfdc



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314 Bagot Street, Kingston, ON, Canada K7K 3B4
1 (613) 533-3300 | www.launchlab.ca | info@launchlab.ca
f @launchlabRIC | t @launch_lab | in @launch-lab

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