

STORY OF FOUR SQUARE MILSON

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Introduction

The following report talks about the story of Arun (name changed), who is the owner of the Four Square Milson, at Palmerston North in New Zealand. The objective of this report is to assess his personal and business journey, that will include highlighting the lessons that he has learnt and the challenges that he has encountered along the way. It will also reflect on what aspects have been learned from his experience as a small business owner, working with a franchise system. Lastly, the report has been conducted based on a video call interview with Arun, as he was out of the country during that time. It is also important to know that the video has been further complemented by my past work experience at Four Square which was run by Arun.

Part 1: Story of the Retail Business

Arun is the proud owner of the Four Square Milson, which is an iconic local grocery store, being in service to the community for the last 35 years. Previously the store was known by the name of Superseven Four Square, which was later changed to the current name to meet current consumer expectations and needs. The store has been iconic because it has been serving the community with their daily grocery needs for a long period of time. The store has been consistent with providing all types of grocery to the community and ensuring that they do not need to go anywhere else.

Products and Services sold at the Store

For the community and its people, the Four Square Milson is not only a grocery store but rather it is a place that provides them with all their daily needs under a single roof. In this store, there is an extensive range of products that are both local and international, so that it can serve different members of the community. The diverse range of groceries includes materials such as fresh produce, bakery items, liquor and meat, ready to eat foods, flowers, lotto and most importantly even postal services for the community. The diverse range of products available at the store makes it easy to meet the daily needs of all its consumers across various age groups. For several members of

the community this is the convenient 'one-stop' shop, where they can get all that they require for a smooth everyday life (Gerritsen et al. 2021).

Geographical Location and Market Presence

The geographical location of the store is at Palmerston North community, and the given store is the only convenience store that is available in the area. This makes it an essential part of the entire community.

Overview of Consumer, Markets and present Staff Members

Considering the customer base of Four Square Milson, it is significantly diverse and very broad. It ranges from different families to retired individuals, students to senior individuals, reflecting the significant demographic of the Palmer stone North community of New Zealand. At present, the store employs a total of 20 full time workers, who are further supported by another 5 to 8 part time workers. Arun himself is responsible for managing the operations which he conducts with the help of a structured roster. Each of the employees are part of the community which provides an added strength in terms of understanding consumer needs and providing them with the right help (Ma et al. 2022). However, Arun also talks about one of the major challenges about finding the right set of employees. Despite having a relatively balanced number of employees who were able to manage several diverse tasks, it is important to him to find employees who can understand the needs of the community better. Arun highlighted the challenges that he faced during the Covid-19 pandemic period. He found it easier to have good and dedicated employees who were willing to work full time before the pandemic situation. However post the pandemic, finding the right set of employees has become very difficult. This causes him not to have enough staff members present at the store at all times. Not having enough staff members is especially challenging during periods of festivals or fairs, as there is a huge influx of consumers at the same time (The Entrepreneurial Mindset).

Current Industry and Major Competitors

According to Arun, there is significant competition present in the community in the form of bakeries, cafes and butchers. However, he feels that this is not a competition but rather this shows the strength of the store in terms of providing all the necessary and essential goods and the single group. Consumers rely on the products because of its high quality and reasonable prices (The Entrepreneurial Mindset). As the venture is part of Foodstuffs, which is the largest grocery retailer and wholesaler in New Zealand, it provides Four Square Milson with complete access to consistent supply chains. They also receive promotional support and other complaints structures that make it easier to deliver all the products under a single roof. Further more, while the pricing and the product ranges are completely managed by Foodstuffs, Arun feels that when it comes to building relationship with his customers, it is personal effort and attention that matter the most, providing quality service and ensuring its continuance is a very critical factor for the success of the store in the location.

Part 2: Story of the Owner

Initial Experience

Arun entered business ownership back in 2004, when he was working at a Four Square store in Whanganui. His first entry to the retail sector was as a store assistant where he was required to do every kind of job that included filing shelves, cleaning and even directly serving customers. Over the years, it was because of his dedicated and strong work ethic and his passion for entering the retail sector, which gave him his first managerial role. The managerial role was his first entry into the retail sector where he was required to work directly with store operations. He was in constant contact with the store owners which provided him with basic understanding about running a store and the other factors that were responsible for its success.

It was also during this phase that he realised that working as an employee was vastly different to a managerial role. He was required to work towards managing multiple aspects of the job, which was both thrilling and challenging (The Entrepreneurial

Mindset). It was this experience, which sowed the seeds for his wish to become a small business owner in the future.

Story of Purchase

It was while working at the store that Arun got his first idea about how the retail sector can also become a lucrative career option, if pursued properly. This was the first step that he took towards deciding on having his own store in the future. It was in the year 2009, that Arun took the first step towards making his dream come true of owning his own store. He took the first step towards purchasing his first Four Square business. One of the reasons that he discussed purchasing into an already operating store is because it provided him with better stability. This is because when purchasing any already operating store, the customer base is already present and with the backing of a strong brand name and the franchise model, it helps keep the revenue generation table. As a first time entrepreneur, this was the best step according to him. Moreover, he already had an existing knowledge of all the store operations which helped him better manage it.

Factors leading to Business Ownership

One of the major factors that pushed Arun towards owning the business was his ambition. It was his aspiration and dream of becoming a business owner from a very young age. Moreover, having experience with the Four Square system further aided him in being confident of entering the franchise system. There was no external pressure but rather confidence in his abilities and complete knowledge about the Four Square business structure, which made it easier for him.

Role of Personal Characteristics

In the words of Arun, he describes himself as a disciplined man who believed in customer service and the constant learning curve. Arun explains how he has always been open to learning and never shied away from hard work. From his experience as an employee to a manager, provided him with a significant learning directive on consumer

behaviour. along with his self-confidence and knowledge of business (Schaper book chapters 1-4). He believed these factors were central to his journey of becoming a successful small business owner.

Part 3: Lessons learned by Owner

View of the business right now

One of the major ongoing challenges that has been faced by Arun, from the pandemic period was staffing challenges. It has been one of the biggest challenges of his career so far as he has found that there is a shortage of reliable workers in the community currently. This has been significantly impacting his business, especially in managing operations. The lack of proper staff members has made it difficult for him to pay attention to consumers equally. Even outside this challenge, he feels that recruitment of the right candidates is a significant challenge. Being able to retain employees is a vital part of running any business successfully, but this has become a huge challenge post the pandemic.

Learnings about how to be successful

Arun explains how challenges will always be a part of business. In his case, he described that his business was driving and very well positioned. The major reason behind his success is because of the use of a franchise model and the strength it provides in terms of the brand name. He also believes that it was his complete dedication towards serving the community and his personal dedication towards being a successful small business owner that has been reflected in his business style and acumen. In his words, "It's half and half." In simple terms, the backing by Foodstuffs' in terms of structure and consistent supply chain along with his own passion and commitment has led to the success of his business.

Important advice they could offer to a future small business owner

Arun's advice to small business owners and rising entrepreneurs is to understand that when it comes to business ownership, it requires more than financial investment. It is important for an individual to have genuine passion and complete determination along with being on a continuous learning curve to become a successful business owner. They also need to be empathetic, compassionate and have respect for others. To be successful it is not only important for embracing the system but also bringing their own positive energy and charm to the business.

As per Arun's experience, business owners should devote time and experience to any particular venture before owning it. They should understand the viewpoint of employees, managers and consumers, so that better service can be provided to them (Schaper book chapters 1-4). They will need to be dedicated and patient when facing challenges, and provide the same support to their employees and consumers.

Summary and Conclusion

The story of Arun highlights the strong dynamic Association that is present between being an entrepreneur and the support of the franchise system. Despite the support provided by the brand name of Foodstuff's, it was the personal passion, discipline, resilience and being focused on consumers that have made Four Square Milson into a driving business store in the community. Through his journey, it is evident that small businesses have their own challenges and success stories, which can be both rewarding and demanding.

Personal Reflection

The interview with Arun has been very insightful and personal for me. Having experience working at the very store, I have strong memories of witnessing Arun being completely a hands-on owner, and never discriminating between his employees. He was very empathetic and understanding when it came to his staff members and consumers, and the same was also proven through the interview. he is experience

provided me with a nuanced understanding of how small businesses also need to be managed with strong leadership capabilities to make it successful.

For me, the most exciting part of the story was Arun's growth curve from being an employee to a store franchise owner. It helped me understand the importance of passion. It also made me understand the importance persistence and hard work when it comes to working in competitive industries. The interview with Arun also provided me with clarity on the importance of community for the success of small businesses.

Through this assignment, I was able to gain some clarity and knowledge on how to manage a small business, and the role of passion and adaptability behind it. I believe this interview has been very important for self -development of my own capabilities. It has provided me with motivation and determination to approach future opportunities with dedication and gumption.

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