

# Success Tastes Sweet

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## Abstract

The present case study tracks the entrepreneurial journey of Mr. Rami Hassan M Al Lawati. This interview attempts at finding his motivation to become the first generation entrepreneur, his personal credo, and his keen sense of business. It discusses areas of unrelated diversification into ice-creams from high end photography. This diversification sets a good example of understanding in which quadrant of the BCG matrix a brand is and consequent decisions of holding on, divesting or investing in it. The profile can be used to teach entrepreneurship, market growth matrix, and BCG matrix.

**Keywords:** BCG matrix, Entrepreneurship

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An entrepreneur needs incredible vision, astonishing perseverance, un-daunting courage, and unflagging faith in his work. It is this requirement for power of courage of conviction which enable an entrepreneur to convert any adversity into an opportunity and any challenge into an achievement. The entrepreneur's commitment to the stakeholders has to be non-negotiable. Their insistence on excellence has to be uncompromising. Mr. Rami Hassan is a live example of possessing all these qualities of a successful entrepreneur. Mr. Rami Al Lawati readily agreed to provide details on all dimensions of his inspiring profile. He was enthused by the study objectives and rightly felt that he could throw light into different roles an individual has to play in becoming a true entrepreneur.

## Scope of the Study

The study was conducted to inspire young entrepreneurs. The interview was conducted in Oman for guiding the young entrepreneurs and the challenges faced in the market when you plan to diversify your business into new sector.

## Methodology

An interview was conducted with Mr. Rami Al Lawati, founder and owner of Pro Group. It was conducted in the year 2017 when his business got diversified and was in expansion mode with Ice Cream Mama.

## Profile of Rami Hassan M Al Lawati

Figure 1. Profile Picture



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Rami Hassan M Al Lawati is the Founder & Owner of Pro Group and Ice Cream Mama. Personal Credo: Being happy with what you are doing, makes you work hard, whereas, if you are enjoying what you are doing, success comes closer to you!

Mr. Rami Al Lawati was born on 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1982 in Muscat (Sultanate of Oman). His father was a diplomat. His name was Hassan Mohsin Al Lawati and he had more than 30 years of experience working with an Embassy. Coming from service class background, he never encouraged his son to get into business as he always believed in having a secure job, whereas, his mother Khadija Ali Jawad always asked him to consider a second option to set up a business along with the secure job. However, he opted for a different path. He quit his job and focused on business. The fire to become an entrepreneur was developed during his school days when he started investing in shares. With time, he started doing promotional activities for different companies and earned his pocket money. Once his graduation was over, he joined Omantel as an Accountant, which he did not enjoy, not because of the company but because his heart was not into it. He wanted to spend his life doing what he enjoyed the most rather than doing mundane and routine work.

In 2008, he went to do his Masters in Business Administration from Bradford University, U.K., as he wanted to accomplish his dream to be an entrepreneur. The reason to have a degree in M.B.A was to see himself as a successful businessman. He wanted to hone his managerial skills. His hobby of photography pushed him to get a subsequent degree. Mr. Rami narrated an anecdote from his personal life during college days, which brought out his hidden managerial quality. Initially, he started taking pictures during wedding and different social occasions, which was appreciated by many. He became a professional service provider subsequently. This made him realize that if he needs to climb the ladder of success, he needs to upgrade himself. This self-realization made him apply for his Masters.

## Transition From a Freelancer to a Mature Entrepreneur

Figure 2. Launch of PRO Group Comp Logo



After the completion of his postgraduate studies, he formed a company under the name of PRO GROUP in the year 2009. Pro Group was started as a result of his love for photography. He started handling lots of events, capturing moments, and even shared moments from the events organized with the print media. Slowly he started climbing the ladder of success and got many projects from private and government sectors. This not only increased his value but also diminished the cash reserve. This made him take a note of his financial constraints and his previous experience of share market came in handy. He realized that putting all eggs in one basket is not a good preposition. With the support of his family and his wife, he decided to venture into a second business and that is when he came up with the idea of Ice Cream Mama. This helped with the cash flow on a regular basis and it took care of the financial constraints.

He started his new venture in the year 2012. His mother and his wife played a prominent role in implementing and putting this concept into action. This concept was time honored and he used it to his advantage by making it as his USP.

**Figure 3. Ice Cream Mama LOGO**



People were used to having ice creams in cone or cups. So, when he introduced the traditional method of eating ice cream on sticks, it became an instant hit.

## Strategic Moves

**(1) Business Diversification and Product Innovation :** While Mr. Rami was running his existing business, the Pro Group, he took many orders from the Government sector. Instead of making him financially stable, these orders turned his coffers empty. The much awaited dues from the government organizations turned into a colossal form in a year. He was left with two options: either close down his existing business or get back to a regular job. After contemplation, his wife and he came up with an idea of starting a new business. This business would be based on cash transaction rather than credit. Without much of an investment, he embarked on the journey to negotiate with different suppliers whom he knew from his Pro Group days. It was a cake walk for him to get easy credit to establish Ice Cream Mama. Soon the cash register started ringing because of his perseverance and dedication, and he was able to repay the loan from the income earned through his new innovative venture.

The leader within Mr. Rami never curbed the freedom of his employees. He believed in delegating. In his view, this would help in getting the maximum output from the employees. As an employer, he was of the opinion that giving this freedom and flexibility would ensure that the target is achieved in the stipulated time. He believed in having a helicopter view of the business and did not delve deep into it. In this way, he would have sufficient time to think out of box for further expansion of the business.

Networking in any business plays a very important role in the growth of a business. During the profiling, we found that the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) form their own networking group and they help each other to keep their business afloat. This was also the case with Mr. Rami. His growth in the business was also credited to proper networking. He had setup two businesses with an annual total turnover of \$1 million. More than 40 people are getting their livelihood from the business setup.

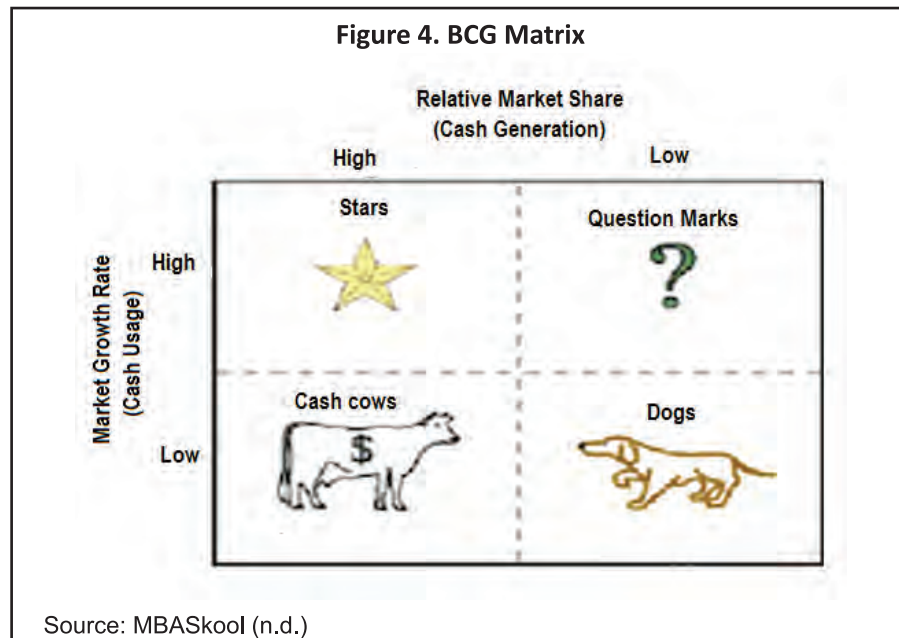
**(2) Creating Pro Shots and Ice Cream Mama Brands :** How his brand got its name has an interesting story. When he was

**Table 1. Company Set-up**

Company Name	Started In	Status
Pro Shots	2009	Closed
Ice Cream Mama	2012	Active

passing through the phase of crisis, his wife told him that he had only two options now. He decided to diversify into a second business rather than going back to a monotonous life. As the conceptualization of his second business was done in the kitchen of his mother, he branded it Ice Cream Mama to honour his mother.

## Use of BCG Matrix



When he started his business venture Pro Shots in the year 2009, it reached the **star quadrant** as there was only one competitor in the market and he had good market share but later on, he had a huge outstanding and there were lots of other competitors who started mushrooming in the market reducing both market share and profitability. This resulted in huge loss and as a result of the market condition, it soon reached the **dog quadrant** from the **question mark quadrant**. The best part of the story is that he didn't give up but diversified his business into food business Ice Cream Mama in the year 2012 which has moved from **star quadrant to cash cow quadrant**.

## Unique Selling Proposition

What made Pro Group different from the other agencies was that it was a one stop solution. He had a set of skilled workers who helped him in running the organization smoothly. Mr. Rami saw to it that he got turnkey projects. He had hired specialists in the field of printing, logo designing, photography, video shooting, and media coverage. This made him a very sought after professional in the market. Pro Group saw that people need not wander aimlessly to different places for getting the job done. They also analyzed and presented their portfolio in such a manner that they competed with the best of international agencies. They also had the advantage of understanding their culture and so Pro Group was a blend of modern technology and tradition. They were flexible enough to customize their product according to Omani sensibilities. As a one stop provider, the speed of work was fast and optimum results were obtained in the stipulated time.

Ice Cream Mama was unique because they used the traditional method of manufacturing ice creams. They also used sticks which in no way would have endangered the environment as compared to plastic or wax coated cups. So, along with their business they were also helping the environment and spreading awareness. They reignited the old traditional method of making Omani ice creams.

The choice of locations for the ice cream parlors played an important role in increasing the footfall for generating



**Figure 5. Ice Cream Mama at Shetty Al Qurum and MGM**



business. He is even planning to expand his business Ice Cram Mama by moving into the **franchising** business model all over GCC countries. Presently, Ice Cream Mama has five branches all over Oman.

## **Inspiration**

Mr. Rami has set up high goals for achieving the target. He aims to have 100 branches all over GCC countries. The person who inspired Rami Hassan M Al Lawati is Hassan Ali Al Lawat who is into share brokerage and real estate business. He used to treat him like his hero and learnt the trade. Rami Hassan M Al Lawati used to admire Hassan when he used to be engrossed in his business, yet he made it sure that he gives quality time to his family. He also made sure that he gives importance to his hobbies during his leisure time. He read more than 50 books on the biographies and autobiographies of successful people. Amongst them he was most inspired by the book by Sir Richard Branson, 'Screw it. Let's do it.'

For Rami, formal education has a very important role in shaping an individual's personality. Education brings forth confidence and skills, whereas the certificates obtained in due course support as tools to achieve goals. Education helps in developing communicative and persuasive skills which are critical to success in business.

## **Conclusion**

At the end of our conversation, the interviewee quoted Sir Richard, “have fun, money will come”. He reiterated that not everyone can become an entrepreneur, “so define what you want and not what the people expect you to do. Never ever give up, you will not face problems, you will face challenges and as there is no lock without a key, therefore, each and every problem or challenge will have its own solution”, he said. The young entrepreneur also gave the message to aspiring entrepreneurs to follow two paths; one is highway which is short, clean, and easy which everyone will like to choose to achieve their goals and the other path is off the road and very few might choose as it is long and bumpy. “You just need to buckle up yourself, choice is yours,” said Mr. Lawati. With these words of wisdom, he left us inspired by his work and his words.

## **Limitations**

There were challenges in getting information related to financial aspects. This case study is restricted to marketing and technical analysis of the product.

## **Questions**

1. Discuss personality traits of Mr. Rami Al Lawati.
2. What would you have done when Mr. Rami's money was having huge outstanding in Pro Group?
3. Identify and analyze the strategic moves taken by Mr. Rami Al Lawati.
4. Which known framework you would like to use to analyze the strategic moves taken by Mr. Rami Al Lawati and why?

5. What is your learning from this case study?
6. How can you analyze or solve this case by using Ansoff Matrix?

## References

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### About the Author

**Dr. Shantanu Shekhar** holds an M.B.A. and a Ph.D. in Service Marketing. Presently he is teaching business management subjects in Al Musanna College of Technology for Ministry of Manpower, Sultanate of Oman.

He has hands on experience in conceptualizing and delivering academic courses with more than 12 years of teaching experience in Marketing Management, Retail Management, Consumer Behavior, CRM, Service marketing and Entrepreneurship. He has hands-on understanding of Budgeting, Product Development, Promotion, and implementation of academic administrative activities, especially placement. His industry experience is rich and varied with learning of 8 years in Sales and Marketing in FMCG (Frito-Lay's, Monsanto, Wipro) and Consumer Durables Industries (IFB).

He has presented and published more than five research papers in several international conferences and journals in India & Oman on Retail sector and on entrepreneurship.