**Touch-A-Life Foundation: building a global technology ecosystem for kindness**

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**Teaching Note**

**Introduction/Background**

Touch-A-Life Foundation has developed a global technology-based ecosystem for kindness that matches donors with donees and work to volunteers. Established and funded by a husband-and-wife team of successful high-tech entrepreneurs from Silicon Valley—Sai and Veena Gundavelli—the TAL ecosystem is versatile and caters to diverse users, applications, and usage contexts. It includes TALGiving, TALRadio, TALLeaders, TALTransformers, and TALGifting.

As TAL grows, it finds itself in a position of having to choose and prioritize among various opportunities at home, abroad, and cross-border including (1) expanding US–India philanthropic initiatives and catering to other diasporas in the US; (2) increasing partnership with corporates on their CSR initiatives; (3) establishing new and growing partnerships with social enterprises/non-profits; (4) broadening partnerships with high schools and universities to develop a youth force for kindness; and (5) pursuing new philanthropic opportunities in selected industries. To support and sustain its growth, TAL also would have to bolster its organization, expand its entrepreneurial team, and establish new sources of funding.

**Discussion Questions and Answers**

* In what ways is Touch-A-Life Foundation leveraging technology to transform the business of philanthropy?
  + Touch-A-Life Foundation’s vision is to “uberize” the business of philanthropy. By leveraging technology and business models that disrupted and transformed different industries (such as Uber in transport mobility), TAL sought out to build an ecosystem that promotes greater effectiveness and efficiency in philanthropy.
  + TAL’s ecosystem offers users multiple benefits in a one-stop format, including online access and usage; transaction speed, transparency, verification, and security; low or zero transaction costs; frictionless payments for donations; and access to a growing community of donors and volunteers and more effective matching between them.
* Of the various opportunities available to TAL, what should it prioritize? Where can TAL have the greatest impact?
  + Case users will have different opinions and perspective on this question and offer varying responses.
  + Instead of zeroing in on a specific opportunity, the instructor is encouraged to probe into the reasoning of the case user, why he/she chose a particular opportunity, and how best to move forward with the chosen priority to ensure greater success.
  + For example, a case user may advocate for stronger corporate partnerships on their CSR initiatives whereby each employee can choose to support a specific cause or beneficiary available on the TAL Ecosystem through donations and/or volunteer work. In the process, employee and employer can earn “kindness points,” providing both a concrete measure of the reach and impact of their philanthropic work.
  + Alternatively, the instructor may divide the class into teams and challenge each team to “operationalize” a prioritized opportunity. For example, building on the Gundavelli’s success in reaching out to the Indian diaspora in the United States as members of the diaspora themselves, how can TAL reach out to other diasporas (Who are these diasporas? How can TAL reach them? How can TAL engage them)?
  + No matter what opportunity is selected, the important point to make is that TAL has built a technology-based global ecosystem that will help philanthropic organizations (particularly smaller social enterprises that do not have the resources to build their own platforms) to broaden the reach of their philanthropic initiatives. Also, as others follow suit, TAL’s initiatives will have a multiplier effect.
* What are some of the cross-border opportunities available to TAL’s ecosystem for kindness? Provide examples.
  + The instructor could broaden the discussion by asking case users to identify beneficial cross-border uses and applications for TAL’s ecosystem for kindness.
  + For example, TALTransformers is already reaching out to grade school and high school students in India to promote greater social entrepreneurial awareness and passion. Through a quarterly social entrepreneurial pitch fest, students are asked to identify a grand challenge that fall into one of the UN’s Sustainability Development Goals, how this challenge applies to the student’s local community, and invites the student to propose a solution. TAL facilitates the matching of winning proposals with mentors in the US and India and provides students incentive awards and cash prizes.
* How can TAL bolster its organization, expand its entrepreneurial team, and establish new sources of funding?
  + Partnerships, including corporate, governmental, and academic collaborations, will play a key role in bolstering TAL’s organization.
  + The TALLeaders program provides an effective pathway for other successful entrepreneurs and business leaders to join TAL. Many retired business leaders are finding ways to give back and TAL offers them a rich volunteering opportunity to share their expertise and experience.
  + TAL should explore other sources of funding from larger foundations, public-private partnerships, and other sources.

**Summary/Conclusion & Suggested Updates to the Case**

The Gundavelli’s and Touch-A-Life Foundation continue to explore and exploit new technologies (e.g., Artificial Intelligence) to enhance TAL’s kindness ecosystem.

It has brought new partners on board (e.g., an association of doctors/physicians in the US) to contribute to TAL’s latest initiatives to build a virtual hospital where doctors can do volunteer work and consultations through telemedicine (See <https://talhospitals.org/>).

Each year in November, TAL hosts World Kindness Day (See touchalife.org/world-kindness-day-2022/) , where it invites social entrepreneurs, business and non-profit leaders, and philanthropists in a full day of sharing and discussion on how these individuals and their organizations are promoting kindness.