



Small Businesses in Palo Alto

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INTRODUCTION

The Bay Area in general, and Palo Alto in particular, are known as the tech centers of the world, and justly so. This status traces back in history to the 1950s, when the center of silicon microchip production was right in the heart of what has become known as Silicon Valley. Today, some of the largest tech companies have their headquarters in Palo Alto/Silicon Valley. However, the major tech companies such as HP and Google all began the same way: an idea and ambition. The small businesses of Palo Alto were often in the shadows of these corporate powerhouses. There are many elements that factor into running a small business in an area with such high caliber business as Palo Alto.



What does it take to run a small business in Palo Alto?

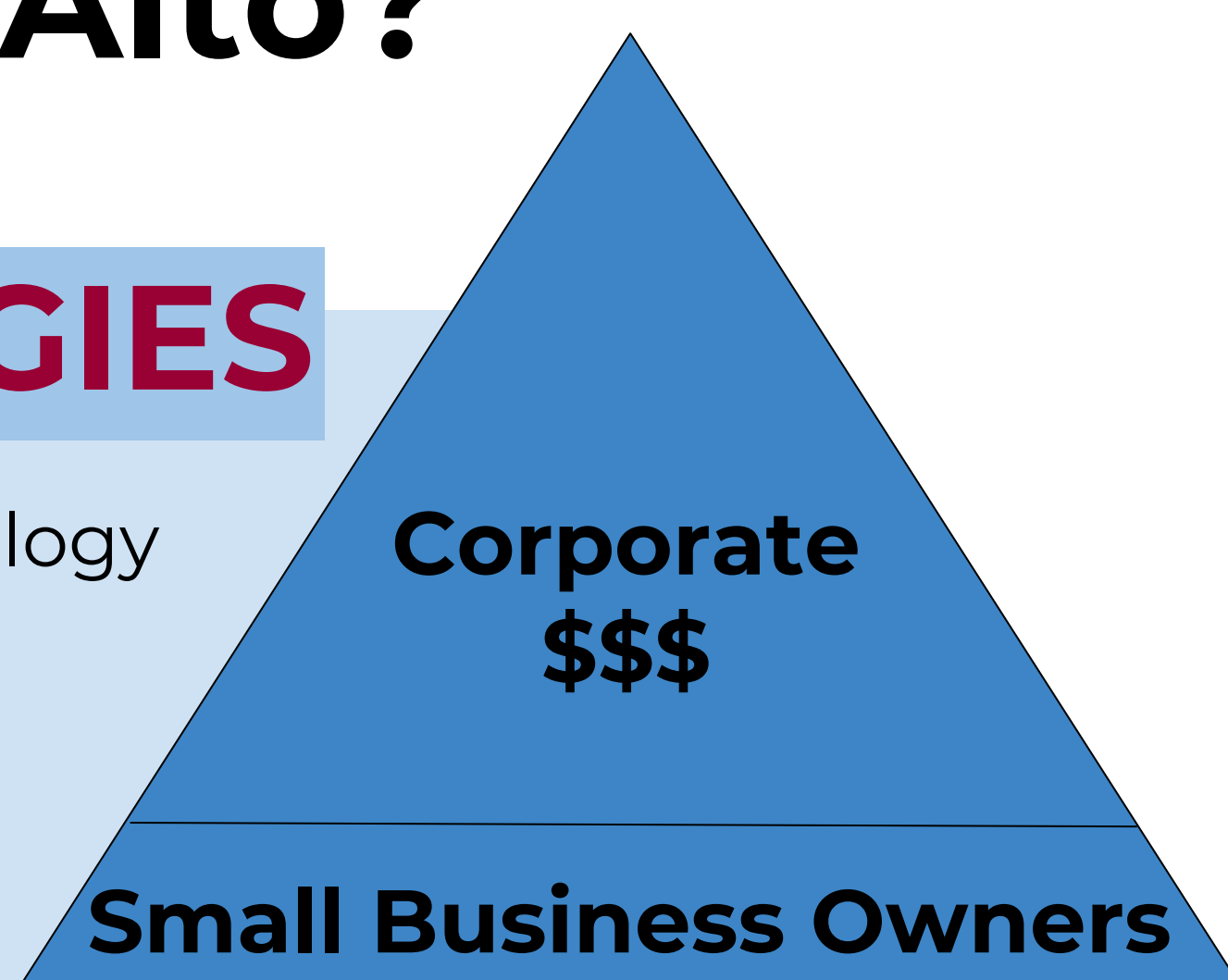
RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

I conducted interviews, so my research methodology is the case study method. For my techniques, I conducted the interviews in a survey format, with a set list of questions for all interview participants. By profiling the people in the interviews, I got a more personal understanding of not only what the individual/group went through, but how it has led them to where they are and where their company is today. With the information I collected from the individuals,

- I grouped and analyzed their ideas using the method of coding.
- I broke down the quotes and narrowed down the genres of the answers that I was receiving to try and discern any patterns or similar ideas that may have been shared.
- I separated the responses into three categories in terms of what went into the creation and success of their businesses. The first was **logistic skills**, some of the responsibilities that they have as business owners, budget and inventory etc. Second was **soft skills**. This category held more personal responsibility. Third, the last "bucket" were **big picture skills**, or skills that are necessary for the big picture of the business.

Because my data comes from people's open-ended responses, the data is qualitative. I focused less on the duration of the interviews and more on what each individual was saying in response to my questions.

To conduct interviews with my contacts, I used a document and asked the individual to answer my questions by sharing the document with them. Companies are operating 365 days a year, and school is in session right now, so it was challenging to contact enough companies and make sure that I established good communication while getting enough information from them.



DATA AND FINDINGS

Staff

- Hiring and firing employees
- Properly training employees

Workplace

- Safe and "effective" workplace for employees

Stock

- Ordering materials and supplies
- Shipments
- Inventory

Budget

- Rent + expenses
- Prices
- Funds in starting

Staff

- Emotional state
- Employees feel heard and appreciated

Community

- Community presence and role model

Communication

- Between donors, clients and staff

Mission

- Maintaining progress on mission statement

Obstacles

- Rising prices of area

Social Enterprise

- Mission

Learning

- Learning curve
- Gaining confidence

DISCUSSION + ANALYSIS

Kathleen Foley-Hughes is the founder and owner of Ada's Cafe, a cafe and social enterprise that employs adults with disabilities. Located in the Mitchell Park Library Complex, Foley-Hughes runs the non-business entity with the hope of lifting and providing for her community. She explained her role and her responsibilities as a small business owner and some of the challenges that she faces everyday.

As a business owner, Foley-Hughes is in charge of the logistics of her business, including the management of her staff, hiring, proper training, and firing. She also manages her budget in keeping up with the inventory and the ordering of new stock.

On top of the logistics and calculations of running a business, there are also ethical responsibilities that she has to uphold, including the seeing to the emotional state of her employees and the role that her business plays in her community. Ensuring that her employees feel appreciated and valued in their positions and that her business can be something positive and contributory in her community.

She has faced challenges along the way on all levels, from rising rent prices to making sure that there is good communication between all personnel of the business. Lastly, Foley-Hughes emphasized that her mission to provide is what gets her up every day to continue what she is doing.

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