



RedACTIVOS Case History

Brief Background

La Usina is a non-profit organization founded in 2002 by Bea Pellizzari (Ashoka Fellow). Its mission is to promote a change in attitude towards people with disabilities by creating awareness and promoting an active citizenship. In 2007 La Usina supported the development of RedACTIVOS, a non-profit organization that commercializes goods and services produced by people with disabilities. RedACTIVOS aims to produce incomes in order to be economically independent from public support and charity.

Description of the redACTIVOS Model

RedACTIVOS identified a group of government Protected Workshops (PW) for people with disabilities. RedACTIVOS signed agreements with 8 PW (out of 147 PW in the Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina) in order to help them improve: processes skills (e.g. production, technology, training); commercial skills (e.g. find new customers, achieve sales stability, improve contracts with customers); and purchase skills (e.g. develop joint buying teams, increase negotiations power). RedACTIVOS also supports the PW with a full-time occupational therapist and a marketing consultant. The extended network of redACTIVOS also includes universities, consultancy firms and CSR areas of multinational corporations.

Currently, the redACTIVOS PW produce boxes and plastic bags for gastronomic delivery (pizzas), drugstores, laundries, amongst other customers. They also produce crafts such as candles, leather and wooden products. In terms of services they operate as outsources for small and medium firms (e.g. in fashion design).

Customers choose to work with the redACTIVOS PW because of traditional business reasons such as the quality of the products and competitive pricing, but also because of the social aspects associated to working with PW (CSR) as well as the adaptive and flexibility of the PW to their specific requirements.

One of the big challenges faced by redACTIVOS is the distrust that working with PW as suppliers generates. This is overcome by the cross-referencing of existing customers to new prospects. The cross-referencing network which includes redACTIVOS, the PW, customers and La Usina is fundamental to reach new potential customers. The high professional standards achieved by the PW, not only in terms of the quality of the specific products but also in terms of meeting deadlines help sustain and increase the virtuous circle.

After the first two years of ‘learning’ redACTIVOS is planning to escalate the model from 8 to 40 PW integrating 1.320 people with disability into the formal workforce and impacting the lives 13.000 people when taking into account the families involved. Figure 1 shows the 4 year development plan in terms of product portfolio, number of people with disabilities, number of PW and industry target.

Figure 1: redACTIVOS development plan.

