

## Case Study

### Amy's Ice Creams

**Location:** Austin, Texas

**2015 Revenues:** \$11 million

**Employees:** 276

**Industry:** Restaurant

## Highlights



### Challenge

Find a way to grow the next generation of leaders inside the business that would help break down the walls that existed between employees and employer.



### Solution

Develop a business framework and common language to get everyone inside the business on the same page and working together to reach common goals.



### Results

In the 10 years since Amy's embraced the GGOB, revenue has grown 150% while net income has risen by 283%.



*Amy's is chain of ice cream shops established in 1984 that serve handcrafted super premium ice creams, dairy-free ices, and frozen yogurt.*

### Company Background

From its very start, Amy's Ice Creams, which was founded by Amy Simmons in 1984, has embraced the mission statement of "making people's day," which has helped the company grow over the years to now include 15 stores in three cities: Austin, Dallas and Houston. When you buy a frozen treat from Amy's, you're also buying an experience. Perhaps you'll be treated to an impromptu dance performance from those making your ice cream or you might even witness a trick like someone throwing a scoop of ice cream up onto the ceiling and then catching it on their chin.

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*"We have created a workplace that promises and constantly strives for trust and transparency."*

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## Playing the Game Together

Amy's relies on the regularity and proliferation of their huddle network to share information and keep everyone on target. Across the company there are 22 weekly huddles and 1,100 quarterly huddles – which total 4,400 huddles per year. “It keeps us in regular and constant communication,” says Simmons. There are also end-of-quarter company-wide huddles that are used to introduce new products, present videos and electronic presentations of company performance, and even play MiniGames for overall attendance and highest attendance by department or store. “We also just enjoy being together to celebrate our efforts whether we win or lose,” says Simmons, who says that MiniGames keep the business nimble and address short-term solutions to problems.

Similarly, the company bonus plan has helped spur collaboration and new ideas throughout the company.

One of their notable success stories was the creation of Amy's “Big Kid S'mores Kit” in 2012. The company had moved into the fourth quarter of the year without having made any of its targets to date. If the team wanted to hit their end-of-year target, they needed a Hail Mary. That took the form of a deluxe S'mores kit that drove an extra \$60,000 in revenue that pushed results over plan for the quarter and enabled the company to earn its bonus for the entire year. “Wins like this bolster the sense of ownership, accountability and ability to personally affect change in the organization,” says Simmons. “They offer the personal satisfaction of accomplishment; and – for those who are more interested in the financial reward of being a stakeholder – a bonus!”

*“Like Harry Truman said, ‘It’s amazing what you can accomplish if you don’t care who gets the credit.’”*

## Rapid Financial Results; Lasting Cultural Change

The biggest obstacle the team at Amy's faced in implementing the GGOB was the common belief among employees that they “weren't good at math,” says Simmons, who adds that nearly two-thirds of her workforce aren't old enough to legally drink.

But Simmons' goal from the start has been to cultivate and ignite entrepreneurship among her employees – which has become a boon for recruitment and retention.

As a result, an army of educators and GGOB advocates has evolved over the years inside the company to help teach open-book management to new employees. “Education and evolution is at the core of all we do,” says Simmons, who created an “MBAmy's” program, which offers new employees a core of four classes -- Leadership, Customer Service, Open-Book Management and Product Knowledge. Peer to peer education is also common at Amy's, where videos created by employees for employees have had an enormous impact.

More recently, Simmons has started a new venture called Amy's EDU which provides customer service and leadership training to other small businesses and even members of Austin's city government.

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*“The GGOB fuels us through all of the errors that we continue to make. But when you play the game, the difference is you always have a plan and can adjust quickly.”*

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