

Craft Talk Agency: A non-traditional agency and incubator for traditional makers and designers

Montreal, CanadaIndia, Guatemala, Colombia, USA, Myanmar
Daphna Lewinshtein



Year Founded:

2015

Organization type:

hybrid

Project Stage:

Start-Up

Budget:

\$1,000 - \$10,000

Website:

<http://www.crafttalk.org>

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Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

Talented artisans shouldn't be in shadows but in limelight. We're an Artisan Agency which forges relationships of trust with traditional artisans (mostly women from the global south). We share knowledge, best practices, and connections to collaboratively develop their business and make them stars!

WHAT IF - Inspiration: Write one sentence that describes a way that your project dares to ask, "WHAT IF?"

What if Marta, Leidy, and Bertha left Colombia (for the first time) and went to the New York opening of their latest collaboration with Opening Ceremony and to give hat weaving workshops to design students at Parsons, Pratt, FIT and Manufacture NY.

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

If our world is a global village, then it is a walled one. Many outside the village walls are artisans. They make up the second largest work cohort of the global south, most are women and find themselves marginalized from globalized and even local communities. Many artisans lack access to the global market, they lack connection to it, and knowledge of it. Many lack digital literacy & business skills, are without certifications, and workspaces.

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

There is a renewed appreciation for handmade crafts that goes beyond Brooklyn and beyond Etsy though it might not yet resonate far enough. A lot of us who celebrate craft speak of the importance of preserving cultural traditions and knowledge. Artisans need to see this new valuation reflected in their living and working conditions for this movement to be sustainable. Craft skills might not have the greatest economic value for the next generation. By offering business and programming training we encourage them to innovate the enterprise. As an agency: we connect artisans with designers; we coordinate workshops, exchanges, collaborations, and partnerships; we advise on working conditions, certifications, and sourcing.

Impact: How does it Work

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.

(1) We forge relationships of trust with traditional artisans and use Human Centered Design to assess their needs, future goals, and dreams. (2) We, the artisans, and experts work through a collaboratively designed program. Core features are healthy working conditions, quality control, certifications, sourcing, logistics, & financial and digital literacy. etc. (3) We coordinate collaborations, and partnerships with designers (mostly emerging designers) and assist the designers in working ethically with artisans. (4) We assess the project's impact on the artisans, how is the program working for them and do we need to innovate or make modifications.

Impact: What is the impact of the work to date? Also describe the projected future impact for the coming years.

We are currently working with a group of embroidery and handwork artisans from the Bangladeshi diaspora in Queens, NY. We're helping them brand their enterprise & make a portfolio, and have secured for them a few small orders from NYC designers. In September we organized MADE BY PEOPLE – a conference on clothes & the people who make them, at The New School in New York. "Working with artisans" was the leading topic of the Panel Discussion and it became apparent that many in the audience were fashion design students and what they really wanted to know was how to meet and work with artisans. We'd heard this before but it strengthened our resolve to undertake this project. We have friendships with artisans in Guatemala, Colombia, India, and Myanmar and we are ready to start this project in earnest. And in January we'll be going to Myanmar, for several months, to begin the needs assessments.

Spread Strategies: Moving forward, what are the main strategies for scaling impact?

We want to "save crafts" by supporting craft makers in creating sustainable careers. As we are small, our direct impact is narrow. We intend to operate on a small scale, be excellent at our work, and to grow organically. Our hope is that we might be a beacon and an example for others.

Sustainability

Financial Sustainability Plan: What is this solution's plan to ensure financial sustainability?

We plan to be mostly funded through foundations, grants and private donations. We are also doing consulting work for other enterprises and assisting them in working better with their artisans. We will also generate revenue through the fees paid by designers in working with our artisan partners.

Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?

Many enterprises do capacity building with their artisans, but not to the point of full power. There is one organization in the USA which specializes in capacity building who we very much like and respect. But we'd like to do a little more with the artisans on their own business and practices so that they might have full power with international buyers.

Team

Founding Story

Daphna grew up in the textile industry in Montreal and became a ceramic artist as a teenager. As an adult she has had the opportunity to travel for work, for study, to volunteer, and to exhibit. By meeting other women artisans and forming friendships, the material differences between artisans of different countries became obvious and disturbing. These experiences were formative and have informed her path for over a decade and have led directly to the development this project.

Team

Daphna - ORGANIZER & FOUNDER - Daphna has a B.F.A. in Ceramics and an M.Sc. in Nonprofit Management with specialization in Design for Social Entrepreneurship. As a Research Fellow, at the Parsons DEED Lab, she headed a research project on Fair Pricing in Artisan Enterprise — interviewing 127 enterprises and learning a lot about what people are doing and what is needed. Jonathan Williams - BUSINESS - Jonathan holds a B.Sc. in Mathematics with a concentration in Statistics from Wake Forest University ('13) and a M.Sc. in Strategic Design and Management from Parsons School of Design ('15). Jonathan founded his first company, Delightfully Daisy, in 2005 and founded a non-profit, The Rural

Entrepreneurship Lab in 2013. Jonathan currently works as a Research and Teaching Assistant at Harvard Business School, helping to deliver an online course in Business Analytics. María José Sáenz - DESIGN - Maria José is the founder of ATIPIQUO an artisan jewelry company. She is a designer from Guatemala City where she works with many companies in collaborating with artisans.

Value Chain: Where does your work fit into the apparel value chain? [check all that apply]

Manufacturing.

Your Role: What is your relationship to the apparel industry? [check all that apply]

Advocate/Organizer, Designer, Factory Owner, Non-profit Staff, Researcher, Sourcing Manager / Supply Chain Manager, Supplier - subcontractor, Trading Company Representative.

Target Population: What stakeholder groups do you engage or empower in your work? [check all that apply]

Auditors, Brands, Designers, Factory Workers, Factory Owners, Policymakers, Researchers, Sourcing Manager / Supply Chain Manager, Supplier - contractor, Supplier - subcontractor, Women.

● Intervention Focus: What are you trying to achieve / influence? [check all that apply]

Access to Essential Services (i.e. Healthcare and Education), Access to Finance, Access to Social Protection Services (i.e. Insurance, Pension, etc.), Accountability, Labor Rights (i.e. Collective Bargaining, etc.), Anti-forced Labor or Anti-Human Trafficking, Physical Working Conditions, Transparency.

Lever for Change: Select up to 3 ways your work is helping to transform the industry.

Capacity Building, Standards, Training.

Is your project targeted at solving any of the following key barriers?

A Job is Not Enough: Low-Income Workers Cannot Secure Long-Term Well-Being, Sustainability is Not Yet in the DNA: Fast Fashion's Current Model Disincentivizes Value-Driven Economies.

Does your project utilize any of the innovative design principles below?

Activate Local Know-how for Driving Solutions: Build Opportunities for Workers to Become Leaders, Transform the Chain into a Web: Link Unlikely Sectors that Open New Pathways to Sustainability.

Innovation Inspiration: When you first conceived of your project, did you think of it as applicable to the apparel industry?

no

If you answered "no" to the previous question, which industry was your project originally aimed at transforming?

Child labor, Community development, Corporate social responsibility, Conservation, Economic development, Fair Trade, Financial services and markets, Human Rights & Equality, Human Rights, Human trafficking, Information & communication technology, Labor, Microfinance, Poverty alleviation, Rural development, Sustainable development.

● Replicating in the Apparel Industry: If your project didn't initially target the apparel industry, how are you specifically tailoring it to do so now?

Targeting Designers

Are you nurturing or inspiring others to be changemakers? If so, how?

Yes, we want to make all the artisans we are working with changemakers in their communities.

● Tell us about the partnerships that enhance your approach. How have you collaborated with others in the industry to increase your impact?

Our project is about partnerships.

Source URL: <https://www.changemakers.com/fabricofchange/entries/craft-talk-agency>