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Introduction

For a long time, Thelma “Tayna” Reyes-Miclat has understood not just the plight, but equally the value, of women in the Philippine workplace. According to a gender equality study by the Asian Development Bank (2013), women in the Philippines experience gender inequality in several key areas: labor force participation, human capital, unpaid domestic and care work burden, vulnerable employment, wage employment, decent work, and social protection. Since the Philippines has a family-oriented culture, women often quit work after getting married or having children, particularly during the typical childbearing ages of 25 to 29 (World Economic Forum, 2019). When women do find work, they are limited to certain occupations and denied male counterparts' opportunities for wider employment.

One of the issues that Tayna vowed to address is the discrimination faced by women in the workplace. In Philippine society, women who become pregnant are seen as a burden to the company because of the costs associated with providing maternity leave and temporarily replacing pregnant employees while they are gone. And as the women focus on the responsibilities of motherhood, they find themselves given less priority in terms of promotions and other opportunities for career growth. “These women take a leave of absence for around 60 to 75 days, and once they return to the workplace, they become insecure due to being gone for long. I can relate because I also had my own insecurities during that time after birth,” Tayna said.

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During her stint in the corporate world, having worked as a manager in companies such as Sky Cable and Chevrolet, Tayna found ways to help women employees balance their work and family lives. “As a working mom, I value family. I believe that work should never compete with family or vice versa, she said. This belief led her to introduce programs and practices that sought to make workplaces more women-friendly and family-friendly.

During my time in Sky Cable, one of the women in my workplace complained about the unfaithfulness of her husband. She mentioned how work was getting in the way of their relationship. I told myself, ‘It shouldn’t be like this’. When Halloween came, I started a Halloween Trick or Treat for the children and the mothers. It became a tradition, and eventually became a bonding opportunity for the families. The husbands, wives, and their children became closer.

When I was managing a dealership of Chevrolet in Davao, I set up a play area for customers. I thought that customers would want a place for their children to play. We had an experience when one of our cars was damaged because of a scratch caused by a kid. When we already had a play area, this did not happen anymore.

These experiences led Tayna to establish Rey-Mic Enterprises, a social enterprise that manufactures gourmet salted fish and employs women from vulnerable communities - so much so that the social enterprise has partnered with several women groups in Mindanao, Philippines, where the social enterprise is based.

Framework and methodology

In this article, we highlight Rey-Mic’s humanistic approach to entrepreneurship and management, assessing it in terms of the practical principles espoused in the Vocation of the Business Leader (VBL) (see Table 1). Humanistic entrepreneurship and management refer to practices that build enterprises not

just to generate financial results, but also to nurture the holistic development of the people involved in the enterprise (Teehankee, 2008). Published by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (PCJP), the VBL contains guidelines that spell out the role of the entrepreneur “in the context of the current globalized economy.” It also highlights the contribution of the Social Doctrine of the Church to the organization of modern business activities.

Table 1
Six Practical Principles for Business (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2014)

Meeting the needs of the world through the creation and development of goods and services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Businesses contribute to the common good by producing goods that are truly good and services that truly serve. 2. Businesses maintain solidarity with the poor by being alert for opportunities to serve deprived and underserved populations and people in need
Organizing good and productive work	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Businesses contribute to the community by fostering the special dignity of human work. 4. Businesses that embrace subsidiarity provide opportunities for employees to exercise their gifts as they contribute to the mission of the organization.
Creating sustainable wealth and distributing it justly	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Businesses model stewardship of the resources—whether capital, human, or environmental—under their control. 6. Businesses are just in the allocation of benefits to all stakeholders: employees, customers, investors, suppliers, and the community

For our research, we utilized a single-case study design with Rey-Mic Enterprise as our object of analysis. Given our goal of illustrating how humanistic management is practiced, we collected primary data through personal interviews with the founder of the company and with one of the managers at the company's production facility in Davao, Philippines. To augment the primary data we gathered, we also collected secondary data through an online research of the company's social media channels, feature articles about the company. Photo documentation was also conducted in the company's production site, while other photos were retrieved from the social media accounts of the company. An initial case description was created before subjecting the data to a content analysis using the Six Practical Principles for Business as our guide (see Table 1).

Findings and Discussion

Meeting the needs of the world - Principles 1 and 2.

Rey-Mic mainly manufactures gourmet tuyo (dried herring) and has various distribution channels in Davao and Manila. The business started as a hobby in 2000, during which Tayna and her husband prepared these bottled goods as Christmas gifts to friends and relatives. After years selling the product produced in the home kitchen, Rey-Mic decided to register as a formal business entity in 2009. In 2011, the business built a small facility, and gained approval from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The business has several products, which are sold under the brand name "Mi Gusta Gourmet Tuyo": Gourmet Tuyo ni Gus in Olive Oil, Gourmet Tuyo ni Gus in Corn Oil, Spanish Sardines in Corn Oil. They are usually eaten with fried rice, tomatoes, onions, and salted eggs. In some cases, the gourmet tuyo is also added as a garnish to various pasta dishes. Rey-Mic's customers treat the product as a comfort food that can be enjoyed at any time of the day.

Rey-Mic's products are carried by eleven partner outlets in Davao City, including major malls and several specialty cafes and diners. Apart from its physical distribution channels, the business also has online distributors in various e-commerce sites such as echostore.ph, shopee.ph, onestore.ph, and supplaya.ph, to name a few.

Rey-Mic provides employment to formerly non-working women. According to Tayna, these women are those whose "ages and educational attainment are no longer acceptable to the corporate world". As stated in the company description: "We strongly believe that the personal needs of most women who have devoted their lives fending for the household needs have somehow been neglected, thus the need to be empowered."

Rey-Mic's efforts to meet the demands of the market and the needs of its workers led to more opportunities, which the company was able to take advantage of, with support provided by the government. With the help of the Department of Science and Technology's Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program (DOST-SETUP), Rey-Mic was able to acquire machines and equipment that included a freezer, fish cutters, hand dryers, a cooker-mixer, a crackpot, a fume hood, a pasteurizer, a bottle sterilizer, stainless tables, containers, a heavy duty blender, and a fryer. Thus, the business significantly increased just its production capacity, and improved the efficiency of its workers.

In this regard, Rey-Mic's approach is two-pronged: not only does it try to meet the domestic demand for tuyo in the Philippines; it also tries to support the needs of women coming from minority communities. The business does this by giving its workers enough autonomy and accountability in their line of work.

Organizing good and productive work - Principles 3 and 4.

If there is one thing that sets Rey-Mic apart from its competition, it is on how it values its workers. One time, Tayna and her workers were deciding what to do in the event that they get orders that are beyond the company's production capacity. "What if we get an order of 1,000 bottles? Can we do it? How many people do we need?" Tayna recalled asking her employees. To her, being transparent on these matters are essential to the well-being and productivity of her workers.

Her workers proposed that they work in shifts, to which Tayna agreed. Even when Rey-Mic was still a micro business back then, its workers had the opportunity to participate directly in the strategic decisions. It is also an indicator that the workers are not just valued for how much they can produce, but also by what they can contribute to the decision-making process.

Figure 1

Some of the workers of Rey-Mic Enterprises



Note: This photo was taken on August 6, 2016 at the production facility of the company in Davao City, Philippines.

In one of the meetings with its government partners, Rey-Mic was told how it was very generous with its compensation package for the women workers. For instance, on top of salaries, the business fully subsidized its workers contributions for several government benefits, including health insurance and social insurance. “Our compensation for them is done weekly, regardless of the volume produced. We also provide them food for lunch. When asked if I was losing money due to this, I told them, ‘I don’t think about that anymore’. I know that I will be blessed since I’m giving this much to them,” Tayna shared.

The business had a worker before who used to work for a company that was far from her home, and that did not provide compensation commensurate for her labor. Rey-Mic decided to take her in the business and provide her a higher compensation. Rey-Mic’s production facility was also close to the worker’s home, which made it more convenient for her to address certain concerns at home.

In the workplace itself, the workers see it as a ‘safe space’. “When we work, we take a lot of pictures together. That is our form of bonding here. This is a big help, especially for me who’s already more than 50 years old. It helps that I have this in the workplace,” Evelyn Reyes, one of the workers, said. Rey-Mic itself acknowledges that in a typical Filipino workplace, there are usually casual conversations like this that must be taken into account in the production process.

This is because Filipinos usually become more comfortable if they are able to converse with their co-workers casually.

More than just working close to home, Rey-Mic’s workers are also given the freedom to go back home ‘when they decide to do so’. “It becomes easy for us to partner with them because even if they work for eight hours or even more, if they decide to do so, and depending on the order or volume of production, they can still go home to do laundry or cook,” Tayna explained.

The workers also have a say on the conduct of the operations. Initially, Rey-Mic relied mainly on manual labor and hired four people. Tayna narrated:

The workers themselves timed their work and recorded it. Whenever we meet, they would have suggestions that we implemented. Due to this, we were able to reduce 30 minutes of the typical production time. My workers knew that if they would help the business reduce time, there would be more profits. They themselves initiated the improvements. From there, I can see that they love their work.

Evelyn, one of the workers, shared how production time has become faster because of the machinery. As the one leading the bottling of the gourmet salted fish products, Evelyn said: “We rely on the system we’ve established. That’s what’s important.”

Looking ahead, Rey-Mic is considering exportation. Evelyn mentioned that ever since the Tayna’s daughter joined the business to help out in marketing, the business has steadily grown. [Note: Tayna’s daughter Mithi Miilat eventually took over as general manager of the business].

Creating sustainable and fair wealth - Principles 5 and 6. Initially, Rey-Mic attempted to partner with the Moro women of Maguindanao to be the source of its fish. Being a coastal province, Maguindanao was a good source of fish. It has Liguasan Marsh, Illana Bay, Moro Gulf, and Lake Buluan, where large aquaculture activities are conducted.

Around 15 Moro women from Maguindanao were invited to the facilities of Rey-Mic, where they were encouraged to take part in the operations by providing the fish supply for the social enterprise's gourmet salted fish products. "The Moro women wanted tons of supplies," Tayna recalled. Rey-Mic also thought of ways to teach the mothers how to empower their children by involving them in the business.

After a series of discussions, however, the partnership did not push through because of the armed conflict and violence that happened in Maguindanao. In spite of this, Rey-Mic continued to find ways to help empower the Moro women by meeting and getting updates from them every now and then.

In other words, we helped provide empowerment to them, but we were not receiving any benefits in terms of partnerships, mainly for security reasons. For me, however, that was okay, because it was a high-risk decision. If we force ourselves to enter the area (Maguindanao), it will be risky.

This experience did not stop Rey-Mic from advocating for women in its workplace. One of its successful partnerships came into fruition with the Great Women's Project, a governance and capacity development project led by the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW). The project promotes and supports a gender-responsive enabling environment for women's economic empowerment, particularly those in microenterprises.

Through the Great Women's Project, Rey-Mic worked with women from Davao Oriental through the same arrangement they were supposed to implement with the Moro women of Maguindanao. The women were the source of the fish for the gourmet salted fish products. "Their husbands were farmers, so the women had the opportunity to get into fishing through this partnership," Tayna said.

Conclusion

The case of Rey-Mic manifests the Six Practical Principles for Business. It is under these experiences, for instance, that Rey-Mic was able to "contribute to

the common good by producing goods that are truly good" as well as to "maintain solidarity with the poor by being alert for opportunities to serve deprived and underserved populations and people in need". Ultimately, Rey-Mic has established its respect for human dignity and pursuit of the common good through its socially-responsible business of selling gourmet tuyo.

The work environment of Rey-Mic represents how much it values its workers. Rey-Mic, for instance, fosters the "special dignity of human work" through the autonomy and 'safe space' that it provides for its workers. Moreover, despite the workers working for the organization as essentially a regular employee, the workers are still able to exercise their "individual gifts" in the business, thereby giving them a sense of subsidiarity. This kind of work culture and environment established by the business allow its workers to be empowered and be given the chance to grow a fulfilling career.

Finally, Rey-Mic ensures the sustainable and equitable distribution of wealth to its various stakeholders: from employees, customers, investors, suppliers, and the community. Most especially, Rey-Mic places an emphasis on its women workers because they come from minority communities. The business wants its women workers to become active participants in the business, thereby ensuring a sustainable and equitable distribution of wealth. In the words of the owner: "Check yourself if you're doing it for yourself or if you're doing things that you want others to benefit from. You cannot die having everything for yourself. It's good to die knowing that you have helped others. If you do that, then perhaps you can be what is called a socially responsible person."

Ultimately, Rey-Mic is concerned with creating more productive lives for its workers. In line with the VBL, Rey-Mic illustrates a viable business model that (a) meets the needs of the world through the creation and development of goods and services, (b) organizes good and productive work, and (c) creates sustainable wealth and distributes it justly to its various stakeholders.

Given this, the experience of Rey-Mic shows that humanistic management and sustainable business practices are also economically viable. More than just

being profit-oriented, Rey-Mic is also concerned with addressing multiple bottom lines. Through this, the business goes beyond mainstream management practices and looks into a complete and holistic picture of the impact it has on several key aspects of the business. While this is not widely practiced yet, the researchers recommend organizations and other researchers to look into this sustainable paradigm of doing business. This paradigm promotes the creation not just of financial results, but also of the holistic development of the people involved in the enterprise.

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