

Long Assignment: Report / Proposal / Business Plan  
**Starting a Cat Café: A Crazy Business Idea?**

Starting a cat café might seem like a tempting, novel opportunity. However, this business idea also comes with its share of threats.

Recent legislation in Japan has thrown a monkey wrench into the works of the cat café venture. Prompted by more than 155,000 complaints from the public, the law prohibits the public display of animals after 8 p.m.

The ordinance aimed to curb late-night displays of small animals confined to tiny cages in garishly-lit pet shops located in entertainment districts.

However, apparently the law extends to cat cafés as well. Animal rights advocates believe that excessive physical contact with strangers is causing animals stress. However, the period between 8 and 10 p.m. was the busiest for most cat café owners who sought to accommodate the after-work crowd. Frequent visitors and owners argue that cats are nocturnal and tend to sleep during the day.



After Café Neko in Vienna, Austria, the first U.K. cat café is now open in East London—a regular café, with coffee, scones, snacks, a Wi-Fi connection—and 11 kitties from a local shelter.<sup>i</sup>

What's remarkable about Lady Dinah's Cat Emporium (named after Alice's cat in *Alice in Wonderland*): the entrepreneurs, Lauren Pears and Anna Kogan, have decided to raise the capital needed by crowdfunding via Indiegogo. Random people on the Internet—many total strangers—have helped Lauren and Anna reach their fundraising goal of \$180,000.

The only stipulation in London is that animals cannot be near the food-preparation zone; therefore, the café is split into three areas, one for the cats alone, one where people and felines can mix, and one where food and drink will be served.<sup>ii</sup>

Lady Dinah's Lauren Pears and Anna Kogan are not only experts at using crowdfunding, but they also understand that they need an integrated social media strategy spanning the most popular platforms. Lauren and Anna keep in touch with their distant backers and patrons via quirky e-mail updates, a Facebook fan page, a professional looking YouTube channel, regular tweets, Instagram posts, LinkedIn—you name it!

**Your Task.** As writing and research consultants, you and several of your colleagues have been asked by an American angel investor to help with a persuasive proposal that outlines the strategies and predicts the success of a cat café in the United States.

You have been assigned the task of researching the prospects of cat cafés, best locations, pricing, social media strategies, and general market information. Using databases and Web resources, find articles that will be useful for the report writers.

View *Lady Dinah's Cat Emporium Crowdfunding Video* on YouTube. Brainstorm the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) of the cat café concept. Can it be adopted in the United States?

Summarize your findings in a direct e-mail or memo to your instructor. If your instructor directs, write a recommendation report for or against such a business idea. Alternatively, use your research to create a business plan for a pet café in the United States.

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<sup>i</sup> Feline lovers dig cat cafe. (2013, January 4). Npr.org. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/2013/01/04/168594458/the-last-word-in-business>; Garratt, L. (2014, April 5). A purrfect way to unwind: New pictures show what life is like inside London's first ever cat café. Mail Online. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2597571/A-purrfect-way-unwind-New-pictures-life-like-inside-Londons-cat-cafe.html>

<sup>ii</sup> Cat cafe purrfect for petless Londoners? (2013, January 12). BBC News London. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-20958687>