



**Tough Talks**  
*Jackson High School*  
Massillon, Ohio

**Teacher: Shawn Donaldson**  
*Volunteers: Katie Tolin & Robert Garner*

# ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023



**JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT OF  
NORTH CENTRAL OHIO**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## What is the Importance of Tough Talks?

The conflict between opposing viewpoints today is greater than ever, and for many, it is a difficult undertaking to talk about these conflicts. It is important to share your viewpoints because it allows for open and honest discussion, leading to more informed and engaged individuals. Tough Talks is an education tool designed to fix communication through respectful open ended conversations.

**Our mission is to enrich people's lives through respectful communication.** Sharing your views can lead to a greater understanding and empathy for those who hold different beliefs, fostering a more cohesive and tolerant society. Sharing can also help individuals to better understand their own beliefs and values, as well as the reasons behind them. By promoting open and respectful dialogue, we can create a world where diverse perspectives are valued.

## PERFORMANCE

Break Even:  
207 Units

Profit Margin:  
\$10.05 / 67%

Units Sold:  
117

Net Income:  
\$2,362.41

**TOUGH TALKS**

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## Why is Tough Talks Important?

One of the largest issues we found in our society is a lack of communication. We found that many individuals are scared to share their social and political views for fear of offending others. We believe that our product will allow for individuals to be more respectful with one another through communication. We found by creating a product that is used to encourage individuals to openly communicate with each other, it created a unique one-of-a-kind product.

### EDUCATIONAL SHEET

#### CONVERSATIONS

Free flow of information where individuals openly and honestly express their opinions, feelings, and theories. All individuals will have time to talk and express their opinion, so no one should be interrupted when speaking.

#### TIPS

- Try and find common ground on topics
- Be open to hearing opinions different than your own
- Be engaged, ask questions to better understand others viewpoints
- Use credible evidence to back your opinions
- Body language demonstrates your engagement and respect towards other participants
- After utilizing the tool reflect on the conversations
- Remember, these conversations are going to be uncomfortable

#### KEEPING CONVERSATIONS CIVIL

- When points of tension arise utilize tension breaker cards, these can be used at any point
- Afterwards reflect on what caused the tension
- Don't be afraid to pause the conversation
- Listen to individuals complete thoughts
- Talking in circles or screaming at each other are good indicators it is time to end the conversation
- Remember you are not here to change someone's opinion, but to understand it



### HOW TO USE

1. Thoroughly read through Educational Sheet
2. Separate the cards based on color
3. Pick a card and read the statement to the group
4. Reader states whether they agree or disagree and why
5. Other participants who wish to join in the conversation can share their opinions
6. Once the conversation has concluded, the individual clockwise of who drew the first card will draw the next one and repeat the process

### SIDE NOTES

- Begin with the yellow category and progress your way to the red category when the group is ready
- As you progress through the categories, the cards will have a greater chance of making participants more emotional
- Tension breaker cards are the black cards, utilize these cards as a whole group when emotions begin to rise
- The blank cards are for you to add your own statements and choose it's color category



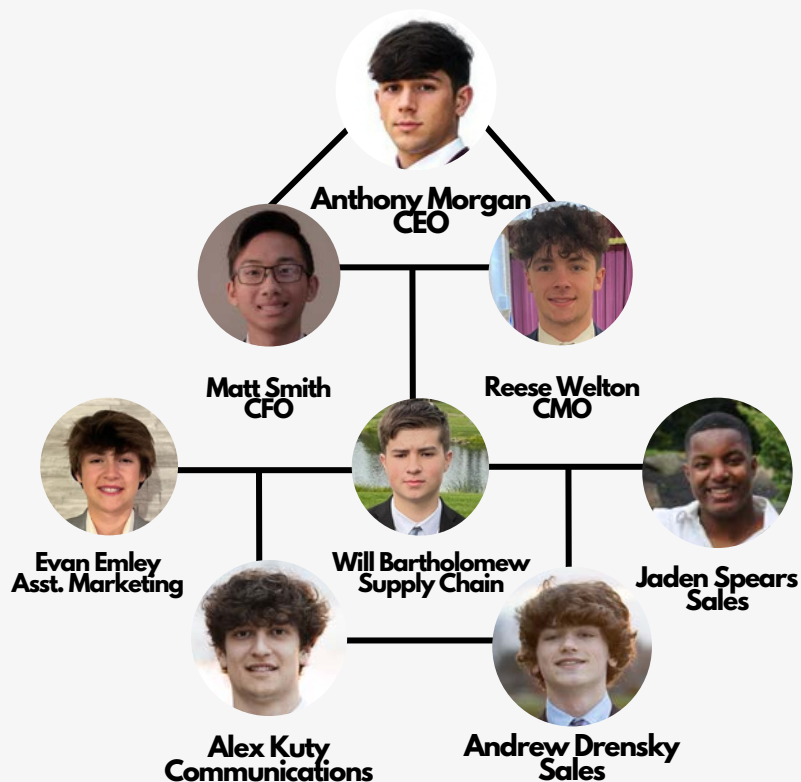
This tool consists of three different categories that statements fall into: yellow, orange, and red. As individuals progress through the categories, the statements will have a greater chance of making them more emotional. Along with these three categories, you will receive black 'tension breaker' cards to utilize when tensions seem high, and five white 'blank cards' to fill in with your own statements to be discussed. Along with the cards, you will receive an educational sheet. This educational sheet consists of various tips and tricks on how to have productive conversations. This educational sheet has been co-designed with experts, professionals and school administrators.



# LEADERSHIP

Our leadership strategy consisted of meeting as a whole group at the beginning of the week to discuss our goals. We also created a plan that separated tasks out to each member for the week. We found this to be the most effective way to keep everyone on task as well as making sure everything was completed on time. By having this setup it allowed us to communicate with each other effectively so we were all on the same page. We made it clear that if they were unsure of the tasks they were doing, asking another member for help was always encouraged. We also had monthly evaluations for each member of the company as well as the CEO evaluated by the CFO and CMO.

# COMPANY STRUCTURE



# FINANCES

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## How Did We Fund?

After months of creating the content for our product and trying to make our vision a reality, to our shock our initial approval and start up loan were both denied by Junior Achievement. We now had to find a different way to fund for our company. We had the idea to reach out to local establishments for donations. We then created a raffle basket which became a great success, generating our company \$1,794.55. This also inspired many of our fellow class companies to do the same for their start up funds. Along with this money, all members of our company initially invested \$50 totaling \$400.

### Revenue

Product Sales	\$	1,694.74
Other Income	\$	1,794.55
Grant	\$	500.00
<b>Total Revenue:</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>3,989.29</b>

### Assets

Cash	\$	914.49
Accounts Receivable	\$	39.32
Inventory	\$	1,897.17
<b>Total Assets:</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>2,850.98</b>

### Expenses

Cost of Goods Sold	\$	579.55
Shipping Expenses	\$	159.43
JA Loan Interest Expense	\$	-
Marketing and Promotional Fees	\$	686.65
Commissions	\$	112.68
Sales Tax	\$	88.57
<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,626.88</b>
<b>Net Income:</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>2,362.41</b>

### Owners Equity and Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$	-
Accrued Taxes	\$	88.57
Common Stock	\$	400.00
Retained Earnings	\$	2,362.41
<b>Equity and Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>2,850.98</b>

## PERFORMANCE

Profit Margin:  
\$10.05 / 67%

Net Income:  
\$2,362.41

Self Funded:  
\$400

Units Sold:  
117

Return on Investment:  
590.6%

Break Even:  
207 Units



# SALES

The target market for our product is fourteen and older. We know these individuals are already having uncomfortable conversations and we aim to solve that. We are selling at local marketplaces, expos, through social media, as well as on our website. We have been in contact with local schools, community groups, and therapists to spread awareness about our product. We have found a lot of success through reaching out to schools, therapists, and counselors since they have a great understanding of the issue we are trying to solve. Our greatest source of sales have come from in person events such as craft shows and trade shows. So far, we have had great reviews from these individuals helping spread our product through word of mouth along with their testimonials.



**"Tough Talks has given me an interesting and beautiful way to enhance skills within my classroom. It has encouraged open engagement and constructive agreements/disagreements. In a world where most teens only communicate through cell phones and struggle with the fear of facing real issues, I'm thankful for the opportunity to incorporate this creative, thought provoking, tool into my classroom."**

**-Intervention Specialist**

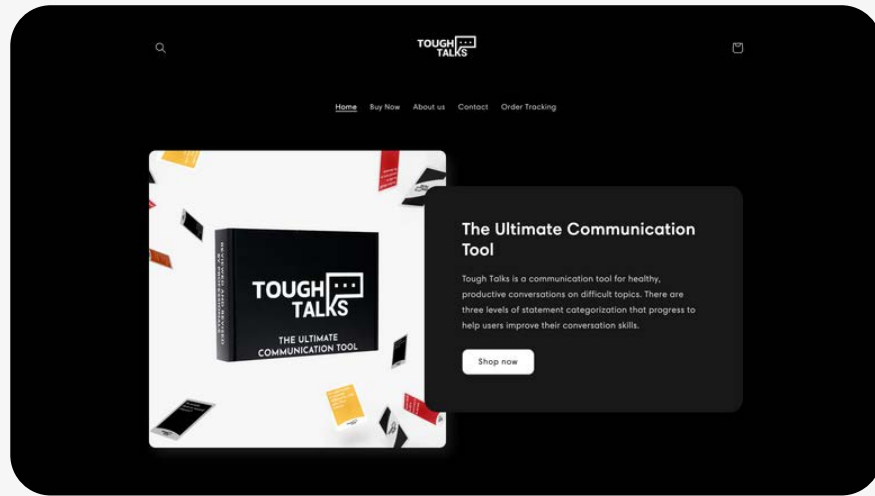
**"Agreeing to disagree is no longer a commonplace. Shouting at another person until you feel like you've 'won' an argument is, unfortunately. The need for this concept is greater than ever."**

**-Asst. Superintendent**

# MARKETING

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Our biggest form of marketing has been through our consistent social media posts. Every day we have had a social media post to spread awareness about our product. Whether this is an Instagram post, TikTok video, or Instagram reel, these posts have helped us grow our brand while providing our target market with useful information about our product. Through this, we have made it very easy for our customers to understand our product and purchase it online.

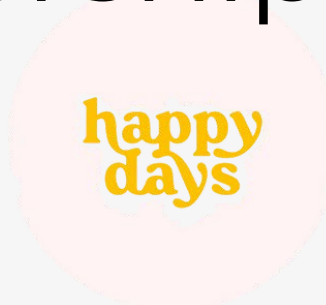


OUR WEBSITE [WWW.TOUGHTALKS.CO](http://WWW.TOUGHTALKS.CO)



EXAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POST

## Our Partnerships



Down Syndrome Achievement Centers  
educate. inspire. believe.

## WHAT WE LEARNED

While developing Tough Talks, we had to spend significantly more time than other companies in the developmental phase of our product. Though our idea was liked by Junior Achievement, they could not approve the product due to its controversial nature. However, we refused to quit and continued to work, knowing we would need to seek out our schools administration for approval. Eventually, after months of meeting with experts, making revisions, meeting with our school's staff, and fine-tuning our product, we were able to come out on the other side with a fantastic product. While at the time we viewed this as a large setback, the adversity allowed us to make sure our product was perfect in every possible way. This setback also allowed us to really put a meaning as to what we were trying to accomplish with this product.

"The biggest take away from this year was the real hands on experiences. Our company has certainly gone through its ups and downs however throughout this I have learned valuable lessons about business."

-Matt Smith  
CFO

"My biggest take away was becoming comfortable with public speaking and reaching out to others despite rejection. At events such as Hartville Marketplace many people were going to say no, but you had to have the courage to ask them anyways."

-Reese Welton  
CMO

"The biggest lesson I learned was that there will always be unexpected challenges you have to face. Many unexpected events came up this year for our company and we had to learn how to adapt and handle them."

-Anthony Morgan  
CEO

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## What is the future for Tough Talks?

Eventually, we would like to make expansions off of the original version of Tough Talks. This could include categories such as sports, kids versions, political version or even history. We believe that there will always be something to talk about and understand, making our product a forever evolving product that will always be used to help!

