

2014 Small Business Plan Essays

Mission Statement

FIRST® Team 1741, Red Alert Robotics, will operate in the spirit of *FIRST*® in our minds and actions. We will operate in *FIRST*®'s image with quality, safety, Gracious Professionalism®, and respect; inspiring future generations to incorporate the core values of *FIRST*® into their lives.

Team Origin

FIRST® Team 1741 Red Alert Robotics is located at Center Grove High School in Greenwood, Indiana, USA. Since the beginning, Red Alert has been led by a group of students, mentors, and parents focused on spreading the mission of *FIRST*. In 2005, Center Grove School Corporation noticed a void in their school activities with regards to science and technology. Summer Ehresman, a computer education teacher, and two families, the Baxter's and the McCoy's, decided to form a *FIRST* team to fill the vacancy. They were the founding mentors of Red Alert Robotics. Linda McCoy and Sharon Baxter established the Non-engineering side of Red Alert Robotics (NEngA), and were the founding members of the Red Alert Robotics Parent Organization (RARPO), a non-profit organization, formed in 2008, run by parents in order to sustain our team. Steve McCoy and Dwight Baxter founded the Engineering side of the team teaching students life skills in science and technology. Over the years we have had a lack of consistency with corporate sponsors and teacher connections with our school. In August 2012, Mark Snodgrass became our new teacher sponsor and head coach, being instrumental in enhancing team development as well as growth and raising more funds for our team. Since the founding year of *FIRST* Team 1741, Red Alert Robotics has steadily grown from fifteen students and five mentors to sixty dedicated students and twenty-two passionate mentors, with thirty-three percent of the students being female.

Organization Structure

Our team raises funds by conducting fundraising campaigns and seeking business sponsors to sustain our team financially. For fundraising, we sell *FIRST*® LED bulbs, candy, popcorn, and students send friend and family letters for donations. To reach out to prospective and current sponsors, our students give presentations about our team, as well as *FIRST*, and invite local businesses to partner with our team. When requesting these sponsors, we also inquire about employees who would be interested in mentoring our team. Student members pay a yearly fee to cover all travel costs. To ensure our team responsibly uses the money we receive, we have RARPO, a 501(c)(3) organization, which handles financial transactions. To sustain our team for upcoming years, we have 2 Jr. FLL, 8 FLL, and 21 teams at our local elementary and middle schools. These students are inspired by our FRC student mentors to continually participate in *FIRST* and then join our FRC team. We display our robot and have team members talk to students to interest them in joining our team at the Freshmen Orientation and ice cream social that are held at the beginning of the school year. Interested students are

encouraged to attend our call out meeting where we provide more in depth details of our team. We strive to incorporate the values of FIRST into all members by having specific expectations put up them in our team handbook as well as on our team's unique business card. These business cards list our teams three core questions on them: Can I trust you? Are you committed to excellence? Do you care about me?

Relationships

FIRST Team 1741 Red Alert values our relationships within our team and throughout our community. Our team is student led, while our mentors serve as guides to engage us in our advancement and ensure our productivity. From the beginning, our mentors have been fundamental to the growth of our team. Students are given a variety of leadership positions, a great responsibility to a model for respective members. Members can work their way to becoming sub-team captains, assistant captains, and eventually captains. To expand our community's knowledge about FIRST, we hold a number of outreach events. At library demonstrations, we display our robot and spectators are allowed to drive it. This motivates kids to join and be involved in FIRST programs, strengthening our relationship with our community. Students and mentors educate the community on technology safety during our annual Community Tech Night. Partnering with our school system, we provide programs of every level of FIRST ensuring students who have an interest in science or technology have the opportunity to join FIRST and continue in STEAM from an early age. Over the years, we have developed many great relationships with our sponsors. Other than our national sponsors, we partner with two local business, "Strange Brew" and "Not Just Popcorn." At these companies, we have our own products in which we get a portion of the profits. Every year we go to our sponsors and provide a demonstration of our robot while also inviting them to our competitions in order to educate them on what we do.

Deployment of Resources

Corporate sponsors not only donate financial contributions, but in kind services that fulfill all our resource needs. On the robot we have anodized parts, water jet cut parts, laser cut parts, and welded frame. All of these services specific to the robot were provided by companies instead of financial assistance. Within our community we are able to display our robot at our outreach events. Hundreds of children have driven our robots and have been inspired to join a FIRST team. At our Community Fair we had carpet donated to us, allowing us to drive and display our robot outside for the public to see and interact with. While the children are participating in the activities, we have our team members talk to the parents about the importance of STEAM and how FIRST can help their children grow. We host a FLL Tournament and a Dodgeball Tournament yearly, where all proceeds from these events support our FLL teams to provide them with resources they need. Through these resources, we are able to inspire others and spread the message of FIRST. Center Grove has been generous by providing a tool

closet, our own classroom, laptops, and availability of both wood and metal workshops. From the start of our team, we have aimed to make every member of our team get the most out of their experience. They are inspired to learn about important life skills necessary to succeed in STEAM and are able to put them into action. Our team is not only about technology, but is about the relationships we create.

Future Plans

Innovation and development is vital for continual growth of our team and community. To increase attendance during off-season in the next few years, we have set a higher standard for all of our members, encouraging dedication. Increasing attendance during off season events allows our team to have an even stronger bond going into build season. An aspiration of ours is to obtain a facility that is solely ours. We have been setting aside savings, and continually discussing this with the school board members and school officials. By having our own facility, we are able to practice uninterrupted. Our plan is to also invite local teams to practice with us on our field we construct yearly. For the past several years, we have mentored eight FLL teams, two Jr. FLL, and two FTC teams, but we plan to establish a sustainable high school FIRST FRC team in the future. In other school districts, we want to create Jr.FLL and FLL teams in hopes that there would be enough kids wanting to have a FRC team at their school district high school. Each year we host a FLL tournament that team members coordinate and we assist at another tournament. In the future, we also plan to organize and run one FTC tournament at a local school by inviting all local Jr.FLL teams. We plan to establish a summer camp to encourage young children in pursuing STEAM and raise funds for our team, preparing for possible corporate sponsorship loss. By providing opportunities for children to become involved in STEAM, we hope to inspire children to pursue futures that incorporate FIRST.

Financial Statement

In the past, all finances were handled of by the RARPO Treasurer, who informed each mentor of their yearly budget. Students were never involved in this process. As part of our goal to increase student involvement in team financial process though, this year we created a student financial advisor incorporated in the duties of the Assistant team captain. The Assistant team captain is the liaison between the treasurer of RARPO and the team, beginning the process of monitoring expenses from all sides of the team. Student leaders are expected to become more active in the budget that is set for them by having monthly meetings with the RARPO board. We have kept annual budget records for references and how we can improve.

Each year our team completes a SWOT analysis along with a PEST (Politics Economy Social issues and Technology) and a WWW/WNI (What Went Well, What Needs Improvement) review. To maintain stability, we have multiple plans in case of any problems that may arise. To determine these problems, our veteran members participated in the SWOT and PEST analysis before build season. We

want to continually improve our internal team and to always be prepared. Included in our risk analysis is a plan for every weather scenario and natural disaster. Our team has a plan based off of past experiences and other teams' difficulties. We have made a plan for the loss of space, the loss of tools, the loss of sponsors, the loss of student leadership, the loss of key mentors, and the loss of connection to the school. Our risk analysis, established in 2011, has proved beneficial over the years, providing a reliable resource to consult for resolution of various dilemmas, some of which we experienced this season.