



**UNMUTED BOX**  
WE HEAR YOU

# UnMuted Box ANNUAL REPORT

A 2021 Junior Achievement Company Program

Junior Achievement of Greater Washington

Ani Sinani, Jack Henry de Frahan, Imran Saifudin



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## Executive Summary

The world is struggling to find a new normal in the midst of this global pandemic. As schools, stores, and businesses shut down in-person interactions, many individuals find themselves lost and isolated from society. Social distancing has initiated a novel increase of depression, anxiety, and stress as people face daily and global disasters without any sort of social network or support. In fact, nearly 4 in 10 adults have anxious/depressed symptoms over the pandemic, a significant increase from the 1 in 10 adults with symptoms in 2019 (Panchal & Kamal, 2021). Our company, UnMuted, believes in giving people and communities the resources they need to thrive during the pandemic. Mental health has taken a turn for the worse, so our mission is to provide much needed relief by creating and selling kits filled with products proven to aid with mental illnesses. Each kit has stress balls, journals, colorbooks, modelling clay, and our own curated key cards with helpful tips and tricks. We also provide a variety of online resources on our website, like playlists, research articles, emergency helplines, and mental health organizations. We have currently sold 13 products for a total of \$582. Through the JA Company Program, our company was able to 'unmute' struggling individuals, giving them the voice and resources they need to thrive.

# Innovation

## The Problem

Every successful product was conceived as the result of a problem. So to create a product, our company decided to identify the various issues in our society and our daily lives. Recently, there has been one glaring problem that has affected everyone: Covid-19. The pandemic has destroyed lives, forcing people online and alone to preserve their safety. However, while isolation has protected physical health, mental health has taken a turn for the worse. Many individuals, including those with preexisting anxiety and depression, are struggling to survive social distancing.

## The Solution

UnMuted has aimed to address the mental health issues that many individuals are facing in this current situation. After weeks of discussion and great amounts of research we narrowed down on the innovative idea of an anxiety kit, filled with products designed to bring relief. Our team spent a countless amount of time diligently researching products and resources to create our own curated boxes that would help aid individuals in need. This research involved perusing various studies and research journals, and conducting a market research survey (see results below). We eventually decided to fill our 'Calm Kits' with a journal, a coloring book, modelling clay, and a stress ball (see image above). In addition to our physical kits, we also offer a variety of resources on our website, like product information, research studies and articles, contacts for hotlines and organizations, multiple curated playlists featuring soothing and relaxing music, and a presentation with breathing exercises. From the increase in stress and anxiety around the world due to circumstances surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, to problems with non-verbal communication due to the switch to virtual learning and operation, it is our priority to present effective ways to solve these problems through our specially curated kits that are the first of their kind, paired with the unique virtual experience offered to everyone through our website.



### Competition

No 86.96%  
Yes 13.04%

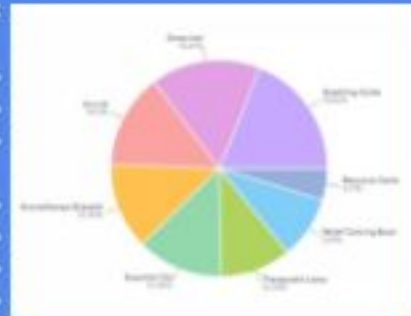
### Age

0-17 36%  
18-24 8%  
25-34 28%  
35-44 8%  
45-54 12%  
65+ 8%



### Favorite Product

Breathing Guide 18.82%  
Stress Ball 16.47%  
Journal 14.12%  
Aromatherapy Bracelet 12.94%  
Essential Oils 12.94%  
Therapy Lamp 10.59%  
Coloring Book 9.41%  
Resource Cards 4.71%



## Competitive Advantage

Our competitive advantage is that there are not many products like ours currently in the market. We have a variety of soothing products in our affordable kits, plus a variety of online resources in our website. Most other anxiety kits have a higher price tag, typically around \$40-\$100. They also do not offer a virtual experience or articles proving the effectiveness of their products. We benefit from selling a twofold product at an affordable price, offering much needed resources to struggling teens and young adults.

# Innovation cont.

## Sourcing

Since our Calm Kits are a compilation of several different products, we had to find different vendors. We mostly searched on Amazon and Alibaba for supplies. We had to examine a variety of factors, such as quality, color, price, and quantity. Eventually, we were able to narrow our options down to a supplier for each product. Even with the extensive research, we ended up with a surplus of some products and a shortage of others on our first shipment.

## Changes

We had many ideas for the implementation of our product. Since the pandemic has affected many areas of people's lives, we wanted to produce a variety of kits that would address all of them. Ideas ranged from anxiety-relief, to early learning/development, and dyslexia. However, since we were just starting out, the company decided it would be best to narrow down our idea and specify our branding. We realized that most individuals struggle with some sort of anxiety. While individuals with learning disabilities have built-in programs at school, there is still a lot of mental health stigma and a lack of resources. Additionally, as teenagers who have suffered from daily stressful lives, anxiety-relief is something that personally affected us. That is how we created the Calm Kit (see Figure 1).

Additionally, we hoped to create both single-purchase and subscription models. Individuals could buy one kit, or a subscription model and receive a new kit each month. This would incentivize customers to return and buy more products. However, since we are a short-term business, we believed the process of creating a new kit each month would be too time-consuming and not have enough payoff for the few months our company would be operating. In the end, we decided to only compile one kit to sell throughout the duration of our company.

# Leadership & Organization

## Company Culture

The members of our company were selected and organized into Company H by JA staff. Our initial introductions were at our first meeting. Since we didn't have any background with each other, and virtual meetings tend to generate feelings of isolation, one of the company's first priorities was to encourage team bonding. We started off meetings with fun, ice-breaker questions, called on other members, and frequently used breakout rooms to facilitate conversation. Department leaders and the CEO regularly emailed and messaged members to open communication and keep people accountable. We also had informal meetings over winter break to keep up communication with members. These numerous efforts have culminated in a close bond within the company members.

## Leadership

Every great company has a head calling the shots. We decided on a typical organizational structure, with multiple levels of hierarchy. Our leadership team, selected through a general vote, dedicated themselves to spearheading the company to greater heights. As the head(s) of the management and leadership team, the CEO (and COO) serve as the leaders of the company overall. They start off the company meetings, delegate tasks, keep employees motivated, and are often the ones to turn to when any inquiries arise. The next level in the hierarchy are the department leads. Our finance director deposits cash from sales, manages the company's finances, and provides regular updates on financial standing. The sales and marketing directors oversee their respective departments in brainstorming advertising strategies and increasing sales. The supply chain director manages our various resources and stockpiles our inventory. The next level on the hierarchy are the regular members, who manage tasks in all the departments, like updating company social media accounts, making sales, and writing reports.

## Organization

Despite our strict company hierarchy, we have still incorporated a lot of flexibility within our structure. For large, long-term projects, focus-specific groups are created from various, skilled volunteers. We have had a Website group and a Commercial group. These groups pull from members of different departments and offer any member the opportunity to lead the group and direct the project. These groups provide opportunity for intra- department communication and leadership development, while also fostering company bonding and progress.





# Marketing & Sales Strategies

## Strategy

Our vision for marketing UnMuted was to focus on some of the key added value our product presented over alternatives and over buying products on their own. We wanted to create the image of a product backed up by medical research and careful curation. In the early stages of the brand, we primarily built a brand presence through friends and family, JA events, and social media. Word-of-mouth advertising, talking to our friends, family, and local community, was a cost-effective and direct means of advertising and getting feedback. We also used Instagram building a posting schedule backed by usage data and keeping a consistent backlog of posts ready for publishing at all times. According to Sprout Social, Instagram engagement is highest from 9am to 4pm on weekdays, and we structured our posting schedule around this fact, placing two of our three weekly posts on weekdays to maximize engagement.

The biggest issue we faced with Instagram was initial growth; unfortunately, due to a variety of delays with sourcing and fulfillment caused by the pandemic, we were unable to implement our social media strategies at the early stages of company formation. In the future, had we tried to improve on our process of growing the account, we would have used more posts before having the product finalized to begin growing the account at an earlier stage. Waiting for other aspects of the company to be finished before fully fleshing out social media was a mistake we made. The audience we built on Instagram had consistently high engagement, with a majority of posts reporting a like-to-follower rate of over 25%.

## Target Audience

According to the APA, over 50% of teens felt that the COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted their planning for the future, a major stressor for an already historically high-stress subset of the population. We set out to market our product to teens struggling with the stressors of COVID-19 and otherwise. The lack of social interaction and options for addressing stressful elements of the pandemic makes this audience receptive to helpful tools and resources, like the ones we offer. We could personally relate to these types of experiences and this helped us develop our target audience and a product that we ourselves would find helpful, using our own experience as teens in the pandemic to brainstorm solutions and implement them in our product.

## Sales

Due to restrictions from the pandemic, the only viable sales channel for our company was e-commerce. Through events such as the trade show, friends-and-family marketing, etc. we were able to establish this sales channel and make the checkout experience smooth and uninterrupted, and the site easy to follow. We focused our efforts on ease of use of the site, ensuring that potential customers would not get lost or confused by any of the content and feel discouraged. The goal with our site was to keep contrast high, labels readable, and products featured front and center. We achieved this goal by using Square's built in suite of tools, along with some outside resources and images that we sourced elsewhere.

# Financial Summary

## Overview

As of February 24th we still have a few weeks of selling left. We have sold 13 products, and we are expecting to sell 18 by the end of the selling period. We determined this by talking to the marketing team about the number of people our product has reached and how many we can expect to buy them. To produce one box the cost was 8.83 dollars. We sold at a unit cost of \$27.50 for the Calm Kit, but had a discount for the trade show and sold at a price point of \$25.00. Including marketing, shipping, and sales costs our breakeven was 5 units. We saw an increase in sales the day of the trade show and we determined that the increase in sales was due to the large influx of customers and not the change in price. So far, we have a total income of \$313.68. We are predicting a final income of \$432.81.

## Capitalization and ROI

Our investor agreed to a loan of \$250, with a 15% return. We were able to match her investment by having each of our 10 company members contribute \$25. Based on our capital position to date, we will be able to meet the agreed terms of the investment while having a company ROI 14.17%.

Statement of Financial Position	
Net Profit	\$82.03
Collective Team Investment	\$250.00
Investor Investment	\$250.00
Team Investment Return	-\$250.00
Investor Return	-\$285.50
Net Total	\$46.53

Return on Investment	
Investor Investment	\$250
Return on Investment	\$35.5
ROI%	15%
Team Investment	\$250
Return on Investment	\$5.52
ROI%	2.208%

Expenses	
COG's	211.5
Sales Expenses (Transaction Fees)	\$31.31
Sales Tax (6%)	\$18.82
Total Expenses	\$261.63
Net Profit Before Donation	\$82.03
Charitable Contribution (50% of Profit)	\$41.01
Net profit (after contribution)	\$41.01

Sales Revenue	
Units sold	13
Average Sales Price/ Unit	\$25.58
Total Revenue	\$332.50
Total Revenue (Sales tax removed)	\$313.68



# Learning Experiences

## Lessons Learned

Through the course of the five months in the Company Program, we gained a greater understanding of intra-team communication and organization, working with deadlines, and prioritization of company goals.

Being in an online environment immediately posed our first bottleneck, hampering communication and decreasing engagement, attendance, and participation. We found that members of our team tended to be "away from keyboard" many times during our sessions, and understood that this needed to be addressed both inside and out of meetings. We understood as a team that we needed to communicate better: we did so by setting up additional meetings and reporting times on Saturdays to promote more speaking, along with icebreakers, weekly standups, and simply more interpersonal connection and development of stronger ties, and in turn learned how important intra-team communication was, going forward.

We also learned to work better with deadlines and began prioritizing company goals to do so. Due to the multicomponent nature of our kits, a major concern was the identification of product components, as well as sourcing. The initial constant shifting of product selection and consequently vendor delayed product selection, putting time pressure on the company as a whole. We were able to move past this bottleneck by understanding that we had to prioritize a product being developed above all else. Through the implementation of data from the market research survey, division of responsibility on the Trello board, and focusing on domestic suppliers, we were able to systematically build compromises and move through successes and failures to finally build our final product.

# & Future Applications

## Future Perspectives

In the original plans of our organization, we sought a two-part business model. The first was implemented: a curation of digital and physical resources, available on our website and in a kit for one-time purchase specifically. The second initiative was to go further and develop the kits into a monthly subscription model, with new options available every month targeted towards distinct demographics specific issues including anxiety, dyslexia, and early learning disabilities.

Looking towards the future, with the revenue amassed through current sales, we can increase our product selection according to our initial goals with unique products available from a wider variety of sources. Also, we can take steps to be more personable, put a face to our company, and interact with our communities even more, through the use of social media and interest groups with scheduled posts initially, but also interacting with medical professionals, schools, and hospitals.