MICHAGAIN
SIGNERY

BUSINESS GROWTH PLAN
BY ZACH PRYOR

PIONEER DECA
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I. Executive Summary

An epic storm swept through our northern Michigan town of Glen Arbor in August of 2015, leaving some 3,000 downed trees in its wake. While crews hauled away profitable logs for resale lumber, what remained were damaged fences, docks, and farm structures considered scrap. An idea, to turn this seemingly useless wood into signs depicting places iconic to the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, began to grow. Michagain Signery was born.

Michagain participates in northern Michigan farmers’ markets and art fairs throughout the summer. Our signs are unique in that no two pieces of wood are the same; they are salvaged from different structures and places, and they each have a story to tell. This is different from businesses that mass produce products with new wood made to look rustic in an overly saturated market. At Michagain, consumers are not only purchasing authenticity, but a piece of history.

Michagain’s success has been proven with net income increasing more than threefold since inception three years ago. Because 100% of our wood is sourced for free, Michagain’s low overhead cost results in solid profit margins.

Additionally, our mobile style of sales allows us to cater to the location of the customer and their interests and geographic connections when designing our best-selling signs. This, in tandem with the personal interaction with customers, is a useful means of securing feedback while establishing long-term relationships. The decision to headquarter in Glen Arbor is supported by National Park Service figures which show a steady rise in the number of visitors to the area, year over year, following the 2011 “Good Morning America” selection as the most beautiful place in America. 2016 alone boasted 1,683,554 visitors to the Lakeshore, spending some $183 million in nearby communities, which benefited Michagain sales.

As Michagain continues to address areas for improvement, they serve as a catalyst for growth. For example, while a mobile sales unit has its strengths and we will continue to reap its benefits, Michagain is working to establish a more permanent retail and online presence to reach audiences who cannot attend farmers’ markets and art fairs restricted to specific dates and times.
We are nearing final negotiations with the owners of a blacksmith shop in downtown Glen Arbor to use it as a “pop-up” store this summer. Located directly across the street from Cherry Republic, which draws 3,000-4,000 visitors daily during the summer, this will be the ideal location to attract customers with discretionary income to spend. And while Michagain’s website presence is a great landing place to learn more about our company, its limitations have prompted a redesign to include an e-commerce platform for online sales which will launch later this summer.

Regarding product materials, we continue to source alternative options as storm wood supplies have long since been used; establishing friendships with market farmers who work off-season construction has proven to be a great current and future resource for wood. Finally, finding ways to streamline the labor intensive production process, without sacrificing the hand-made appeal, is a work in progress with strides being made to hire and train employees to meet increased production demands.

Michagain is currently fielding many growth opportunities including offers to wholesale at local retailers, being represented at out-of-state gift trade shows, and invitations to attend additional art fairs and events in the greater Michigan region. While current cash equity is sound, to further grow and expand Michagain, I am seeking an investment of $25,000 to move from my basement workshop to a larger production facility, purchase more tools and equipment, hire and train employees, and buy additional supplies for an expanded product line. This investment will allow Michagain to produce more signs and products in a streamlined manner to meet increased demand from the new retail presence, e-commerce offerings, and extra fair events slated as part of Michagain’s growth plan.
II. Introduction

A. Type of business owned and operated and a description of the current business operations

My name is Zachary Pryor, and I am the owner of Michagain Signery, a reclaimed wood sign business based in Glen Arbor, Michigan. For my entire life, my family and I have been spending summers there, home to the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, encompassing miles of pristine Lake Michigan beaches, towering forests, and epic views. In early August of 2015, a devastating storm propelling 100-plus-mile-per-hour winds, swept through my town damaging houses and businesses and leaving devastation in its wake. Logging crews began removing some 3,000 downed trees that proved profitable and useful elsewhere. However, it was the seemingly useless old docks, farm structures, and fences, abandoned for scrap, that caught my eye. With the help of my sister, we envisioned a plan to revive these remnants by creating wooden signs depicting places iconic to the place we cherished.

We returned home that fall with a trailer full of wood, and with the help of a graphic designer, began creating images to paint on them. After many rounds of trial and error to create stencils and a paint application that would yield a product worthy for sale, we began sign production in our basement workshop and garage. Execution continued through the winter and spring, after school, and on weekends. We then finalized a name, logo and a few branded marketing materials and were accepted into the Glen Arbor