

Vegan Business Alliance

Building Economic Engines of Liberation

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I. Overview

Motivation: Our movement could be more powerful. There are millions of vegans. Many vegans see animal issues as a defining characteristic of their identity. But the available paths to express that identity are narrow, difficult, and often exhausting. Doing activism can be demanding on time and difficult to sustain. Being an advocate in one's personal life all the time can be draining.

Most of people's time and energy is spent at their primary vocation in life: the workplace. The workplace is also the primary source of social interaction and community for most people.

Idea: What if we could transform the workplace into a place that connects, empowers, and strengthens the vegan and animal rights movement?

The Vegan Business Alliance aims to do just that.

Vegan businesses are normally thought of as just vegan food products and restaurants. We would like to expand this concept to include all sorts of businesses, such as service providers, professional firms, and technology firms.

Solution:

The Vegan Business Alliance is structured as a non-profit venture capital firm. Initial capital is provided by the Phauna Foundation and other funders. Deal terms are written more favorably (larger stakes for VBA) than typical private equity, which is achievable because the founders / entrepreneurs share the long-term objectives of VBA, and because VBA is not for profit.

An example:

1. Paloma is a longtime ethical vegan and tattoo artist. She's been an activist on the side for many years but she has to put in long hours at the tattoo parlor to make ends meet. She decides she wants to start her own parlor, and she approaches the VBA with a business plan. VBA agrees to take 50% of the company in exchange for seed funding that will carry her through the first 18 months of operations.
2. Paloma's new business is officially part of the VBA. This is a network of mission-powered companies that are all connected, and featured in a central directory

online. This directory enables vegan customers to find Paloma's company, and it also makes it easier for Paloma to find employees.

3. In order to be part of the VBA, the business must agree to give 10% of profits directly to non-profits working towards animal liberation, and the employees get to help direct where this money goes. Paloma gladly agrees.
4. Paloma hires several employees through the VBA's website.
5. After just 6 months, the business begins to turn a profit and starts to issue distributions. After the 10% which is given to non-profits, the remaining profit is split evenly between Paloma and VBA. VBA will use its share of the profits to seed more vegan businesses so that the model can continue to grow and generate more and more economic power for animal liberation.

II. Discussion

There are additional benefits to VBA that may not be readily apparent.

- People with all different kinds of skill-sets can contribute to the movement with whatever skills they have. Right now, a lot of people feel that they have to choose between a career that takes care of their personal needs, and a career that has meaning for the cause that they care most about. With VBA, people can have both.
- Employees and founders get to experience vegan community, every day, in the majority of their social interactions (at work). Vegans are supported socially and reinforce each other's beliefs. If social isolation leads to recidivism, then social connections inoculate against it.
- Through the directory, vegans are able to find vegan establishments to patronize for a greater portion of their goods and services demands. This allows us to retain more of our consumptive economic energy within the movement.
- By working for vegan, mission-oriented companies, a much larger set of people now has the opportunity to put their productive economic energy to work for the movement as well.

III. Job Opportunities

A. VBA Portfolio Manager

The ideal candidate would have experience in venture capital, private equity, or as an entrepreneur. Responsibilities to include evaluating business plans, working with potential companies to create realistic projections, formulating investment term sheets, maintaining accounting records, and advising portfolio companies. Marketing and branding experience a plus. Some travel likely required.

B. VBA Tech Lead

The VBA tech department is responsible for building a platform that presents vegan businesses in a searchable way to potential customers, and also presents job listing interfaces. The ideal candidate has experience shipping real-world database-backed web and mobile applications, as well as full-stack development capabilities.

C. Founders

While we're not yet ready to fund our first VBA member businesses, we are interested in beginning discussions with entrepreneurs to build a list of potential investments.