**I. Executive Summary for Firebirds**

Firebirds Wood Fired Grill is a unique steakhouse which originated in North Carolina. Firebirds operates under three key concepts:

* Do what’s right
* Do the best you can
* Treat others as you would like to be treated.

This helps firebirds base its restaurant of the people that come through the doors and that is why they are successful. I have chosen to rebrand Firebirds in hopes that I can make it better as a whole. This is an amazing company but has some concepts lacking and if fixed will make the restaurant even better.

Firebirds lacks a strong social media basis and could use a kick start at the bar. I have constructed a social media campaign, which is a contest conducted through the companies social media websites Twitter and Instagram. In order to take part in this contest, you have to follow Firebirds on Twitter, and you also have to make a video entry of a new menu item that you want to see in the restaurant. We will be also higher/adopting a college student from UNCC to handle the social media aspect because teenagers and college students seem to have a better grasp on the social media aspect of the world.

I will also be adding 5 new sauces to the bar menu because it can add some more value to the bar by adding more customization options. It will cost around $37,000-$47,000

1. **Introduction**
   1. **Description of the business or organization**

Firebirds Wood Fired Grill is a unique Steak house, which originated in the east coast, particularly North Carolina. This unique style of American cuisine wants to bring the feeling of a Ski Lodge in Aspen to all the cities we decide to built restaurants. Firebirds, welcomes guests back to the lodge after a long day in the mountains. It stimulates the senses, relaxes the soul, and transports the guests to a special place like no other. They are sure to enjoy the trip. Firebirds is a corporation and has 26 stores ranging from Arizona to Virginia. Within the next 2 ½ years, Firebirds is planning on doubling the amount of stores by the end of 2015 from 26 to 52. Due to the fact that Firebirds is in the upper casual restaurant segment of the hospitality industry, the main target market would be towards the age groups between 25 and 45 years. The target market is also with an income of minimum 100,000 yearly and both adults in the household educated a minimum of 4 years. Firebirds unique style is based that the restaurant cooks everything over wood fire, giving the food an authentic taste that is difficult to replicate elsewhere. In addition to a unique menu offering, Firebirds provides an atmosphere that is modern, made up of dark wood, stone fireplace, high ceilings with large wood beams supported by tree like pillars.

All the locations for a Firebirds restaurants, are based around an upper middle class economy. For instance one of the first stores, which is located in Charlotte North Carolina, Stone Crest, generates net sales in the neighborhood of 6 million dollars per year. This sales figure is based largely on the fact that its surrounding areas are movie theaters, super markets, other restaurants and specialty shops. The homes in the vicinity of the restaurant, average from 600,000 to over 1 million dollars. This brings a customer base in that has a greater discretionary income that frequents the restaurant several times a week.

Dennis Thompson is the founder of the Company and he was also the founder of Lone Star Steakhouse years ago. Lone Star grew to be a Company with over 250 stores under the direction of Mr. Thompson. His philosophy for corporate expansion has been instilled in how Firebirds locations are managed. The Managing Partner is the integral part of the operation and he/she is solely responsible for the operation and profitability of the restaurant. The partner’s earning potential is tied up to the profitability of the restaurant. Manage it like your own.

The main office of Firebirds is located in Ballantyne’s Corporate Park, Charlotte, North Carolina.

Firebirds is a steak house that falls under the upper casual restaurant segment of the Hospitality industry.

The business plan of Firebirds focuses on the Steak House enthusiasts that are middle to upper and can afford to eat out multiple times per month.

The originality of Firebirds is based on the Rocky Mountain Lodge experience. Firebirds aims to offer great dining, a relaxed atmosphere, and casual environment that transports you to the great mountains of Colorado.

* 1. **Description of the Community (economic, geographic, demographic, and socioeconomic factors)**

As a growing company Firebirds has expanded to a variety of communities. The growth pattern is based on growing the company in areas that have a significant business presence, affluent residential areas, and have easy access from main roads or highways. Traffic generators such as movie theaters, super markets and specialty shops are also very important in deciding which community to built in. The business population is very important to sustain the corporate entertaining market, and off site catering, which is a big part of our business. The recession has impacted the hospitality industry as a whole, but great companies like Firebirds have stood the test of time and continue to grow despite the economic hardships..

The target market we are looking for is between the ages of 25 and 45, averaging minimum100,000 dollars yearly income, both parents working, and families of 2 kids or more, and a 4 degree minimum education.

* 1. **Description of mission statements, target market, and existing brand efforts.**

Do what’s right: A basic concept that brings the integrity of each person to the front of every decision making process. Do the best you can: All you can ask of people is their absolute best effort and performance. Treat others, as you would like to be treated: This is known as the Golden Rule and is the best philosophy of living life and doing good to others. The mission statement at Firebirds carries a lot of weight, but the main way of operating is based on People, Operations, Profit.

If you hire the best people available, train them and retain them, they will be the best operators and will generate the best profit possible. People that feel good about themselves, produce good results. We also operate every restaurant with the underdog mentality. If you want to be the best, you will always keep working to get better.

Firebirds believes that the investment of people will generate great guest satisfaction, low turnover and better performance overall.

The target of this organization is to grow in areas where the demographics are based on people with disposable income, high middle class, and families that will go out to eat and entertain several times a month. The secondary market is focused on corporate business, that need catering and social functions with their clients that they do business with. These audiences are reached through social media, e-mail blasts, national marketing, and grass roots local marketing. Every store has their own database generated by collecting e-mail information through the years and has a marketing company that specializes on cutting edge advertising on a national level.

The Company colors are black, white and gold. These colors show an edge approach to the trendy business we are in. The logo showcases Firebirds Wood Fired Grill, in bold print, which is the base of the bold flavors that distinguish every single dish at each restaurant. Employee uniforms are all black. Everybody looks better in black. It shows a streamline look to each person that works for the company. The store designs are those resembling a ski resort in Aspen, Colorado. Stone, dark wood and open space, are the main components of each restaurant along with a kitchen that is visible from the restaurant. Bring the feeling of the fire and food to the entire dining room. The marketing strategies are based on the relaxed casual dining experience you would have at a ski resort in Colorado. It also breaks the dining room up with the Fire Bar. It gives the guests two different experiences under one roof. The bar features specials such as “Wine down Monday”, with all wines at half price, and wicked Wednesdays with the bar drink menu items for only $5 dollars, and happy hour appetizers as well. The sales approach of this company is based on national social media, e-mail blasts, return guest recommendations, They feature specials, discounts, and limited time offers to every guest that receives an e-mail blast in order to drive foot traffic for each Restaurant. Most recent offers include Free lobster queso dip with the purchase of two entrees, $14.95 filet(regularly priced at $24.99), free dessert with purchase of two entrees, and spend $50 dollars and receive a $10 gift card free.

1. **RESEARCH METHODS USED IN THE STUDY**
   1. **Description and rationale of research methodologies selected to conduct the research study**

In order to access what goes on inside of a Firebirds Restaurant, I had one on one interview on October 19th at 10:30 with the General Manager of the South park location Joe Garen. The questions are below.

* What is your market strategy?
* What is your strategy for your menu?
* What is the current target market?
* What other groups of people would you like to attract?
* What is the E-club?
* Do you have any customer loyalty programs?
  1. **Process used to conduct the selected research methods**

After the interview, I decided to come back to the restaurant around 6:00 to do an observation on how the restaurant handles when it is crowded. Also the special of the night was that you could buy any steak and get a shrimp skewer (which consists of 5 shrimp). I wanted to see if the special had any impact on the amount of guests. While my family and I were waiting for our food, I overheard the table behind me you were ordering there food and they said “I’ll have the 14oz Rib eye, and does that come with the shrimp skewer?” From this I was able to see that the daily deals were actually working. I also returned on Wednesdays the 23rd because they have five-dollar drinks and half priced appetizers at the bar. I wanted to do this to see if the special had a drastic impact at the bar area, and as I assumed the bar was backed full.

For my third and final research, I went to websites like Yelp.com and Urbanspoon.com. This gave me a clear insight on what people think about Firebirds. According to Yelp.com, the South Park Firebirds had an average review score of about four to five stars. At of low scoring reviews, none of the comments were about the quality of the food but the service that they were given. For instance Robby L said that “Has been one of my favorite restaurants in the South Park area. Unfortunately, recently they haven't lived up to expectations. Tonight, I wanted to take my daughter there for dinner. Walked in through the rear door at about 6:30 PM and noticed at least ten tables open. When we got to the hostess, she informed us that there would be a wait of at least ten to twenty minutes. After waiting ten, with no one else seated during that time, we left.” As for Urbanspoon, the reviews were basically the same. More of the reviews on this site regarded the quality of the food rather than on Yelp. According to Urbanspoon.com, most of the low rated review regarded the attitudes of the hostesses and the servers and not the food of the restaurant.

1. **Findings and Conclusions of the Study**
   1. **Findings of the research study**

After the interview with General Manager Joe Garen I was able to conduct an analysis of how the company works on the inside. The questions and responses are below.

**What is your market strategy?**

The strategy to promote our brand is to advertise it as a unique steakhouse. Use local market strategies like community involvement with every local market, and have actual local involvement with each community restaurants are located in. In markets with multi units they market the brand to the entire area with the choices of various locations. E-mail blasts have become a popular staple with the company, where they just finished a special offer each week through a 6- week period. These are targeted to actual members of their E-club but the offers are for everybody once they sign up. This has built the e-mail base to almost 70,000 members in the Charlotte market. The 4 -wall marketing in each restaurant is still the most important aspect of any marketing strategy. 100% guest satisfaction is the benchmark for their service and quality of food. We offer different promotions such as; E-club thank you, Queen’s Feast, Sip back & relax, Prime Rib, and Fired up.

The objective of all promotions is to increase your foot traffic on times that we know is going to be slow. Also once these guests are exposed to our brand, they will keep coming back.

**What is your strategy for your menu?**

The strategy behind the menu is to offer hand cut steaks that are cooked over wood burning fire. Every house specialty is unique in its preparation, such as Sesame encrusted salmon served with fried spinach or the pecan encrusted trout served with peach salsa. All sauces and sides are made in house from scratch. The price point is also a special quality of this brand. They offer same size of steaks as some of the other steakhouse for 10 to 20% less. We believe that our value is better than our competitors since our ambiance and service are of higher level. We have great designed facilities, but they all have the casual feel to them, which gives our guest a great comfort level

**What is the current target market?**

The target market is for people between 25 and 45 years of age. A yearly income of 85,000 minimums. This applies to single people, couples, or families. Family size that is optional for Firebirds is 4 members. Minimum education level in each household, of Bachelors degree. The residential group is as important as the business target market also. We look at companies with over 25 employees and in a growing sales pattern. These companies sustain the catering aspect of the business that can amount to 15% in some of the restaurants.

**What other groups of people would you like to attract?**

We would like to attract more of the National market pharmaceutical companies that have branches in the area. Also hotel guests are a more desired group since they have to go out to eat and entertain. These groups are usually in the corporate expense account.

**What is the E-club?**

The E-club is our way to gain members to increase our marketing database. These members are signed up at the restaurant level after they’ve enjoyed their meal. One of the steps of service of every server is to mention the E-mail club to every guest once they present the check. We offer incentives to servers based on the amount of sign ups they get per month. Once a guest signs up for the E-club, they will receive a welcome message with a $10 dollar discount. They will also receive a free dessert on their birthdays. All the benefits and promotions they get are at no cost to them. We use a form that contains all their information such as, name, e-mail, and birth date.

**Do you have any customer loyalty programs?**

Our customer loyalty program we do as a limited time offer. We have been offering a $10 dollar VIP card, when you spend $50 dollars. We have also partnered with some charities such as Alex Lemonade stand. We donate $1 dollar for every lemonade sold and last year we donated $70,000 to this great charity for childhood cancer.

* 1. **Conclusions based on the findings**

This interview gave me a clear insight on how Firebirds is operated and how it stands in the community. I found the company to be value themselves as a renowned steakhouse, because the menu seems to revolve around high quality steaks for a lower cost. On the other hand I did find some problems with the E-club. All the members seem to get is a ten dollar discount and a free dessert along with some email shutouts that gives information on upcoming deals. The problem with this is that any customer can come in to the restaurant and use the discounts for that certain day. I would recommend that they only give these discounts or more specific ones that only E-club members could use. Other then that I found the interview to be very helpful in gathering information about the company.

I also took part in an observation at Firebird on one of its busiest nights. I wanted to do this because I could get a first hand look on how a heavy night at firebirds would be like. I also wanted to see if the specials had any impact on the night. The special of the night was that you could buy any steak and get a shrimp skewer (which consists of 5 shrimp). When I walked into the restaurant with my family I could already see that about four tables already had the shrimp skewers on their plates. This showed that the specials of the day were effective.

My secondary research was that I went on review websites like Yelp and Urban spoon. This helped me get an idea on what customers think about the restaurant . According to Yelp.com, the South Park Firebirds had an average review score of about four out of five stars. At of low scoring reviews, none of the comments were about the quality of the food but the service that they were given. The same results were also seen in the Stonecrest store as well as the Phoenix store. This showed that there is a problem with how the guests are treated. The scores on Urbanspoon were around the same 4 stars but the only difference was that the food aspect was more criticized then the customer service aspect.

1. **Proposed Rebranding Plan**
   1. **Objectives & Rationale**

As my research has stated thus far, Firebirds Wood Fired Grill clearly does not have any good form of Social Networking. If you were to Google Firebirds Wood Fired Grill all you would find would be the main website and review from website like Urbanspoon. On the other hand if you were to Google 131 Main, a direct competitor of Firebirds, you find the main website but also the Facebook page. What this says is that a main competitor for Firebirds is already ahead of the game and that more people have the opportunity to find out about it then they do for Firebirds. My proposed idea or plan for the restaurant is to create strong bases for social networking by using the websites like Twitter and Facebook. This would allow Firebirds to get out of the “word by mouth” zone and begin to enter a stronger and larger fan base. A study was down by the Huffington Post to determine how popular Twitter really is and as of mid summer of 2013 Twitter had one hundred and fifteen million active Twitter users every month with 60% of all Twitter users being 3rd party users. What this means is that Twitter gives businesses a great opportunity to let their company grow to the company that it dreams to be. I believe that Firebirds has the capability to become a stronger company but it would take time. I will also be creating five new sauces for the bar because I feel that that it will add a lot of hype to the already popular bar area. The five new sauces will add to the amount of dishes combinations and flavors. The five new sauces are labeled below.

1. Horseradish

2. Honey Barbeque

3. Sweet and Sour

4. Caribbean style (hot peppers with some exotic spices) spiciest of the five

5. Garlic

When someone orders one of the five sauces he/she will be asked to fill out a survey/comment card, this will help us see which sauces are a hit and which ones are not.

* 1. **Activities and Timelines**

I have constructed a plan for Firebirds to expand their social networking basis. At the start of the 2014 Firebirds will make a Twitter account and start asking its employee’s to follow the website and asking their friends if they would like to follow as well in the hopes we can start to build a loyal audience through people who are familiar and supportive of us. Hopefully this would increase the notoriety of the restaurant and lead to increased awareness within the community. I would also like to incorporate milestone’s to promote getting to the 1,000, 5,000, and 10,000 followers. I would hope that Firebirds would reach the 10,000 mark by late March Early April. If the company reaches more by then Firebirds can make changes based on the Results. Along with the Twitter account I would like to create an Instagram account that allows users to see pictures and videos of Firebird events. With this social network base, Firebirds has the ability to launch a social networking campaign to increase the amount of followers and the amount of hype that the restaurant receives. My plan is to create a contest where our followers from the social networking sites create a video of a new item that they want to see become a part of the Firebirds menu. Considering the fact that mangers are in the early to late 40's and busy with their current job duties; I don’t think it would be a good idea for the managers to handle the social networking of the campaign. So I propose the idea that we hire a college student from the local universities mainly the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC). The hiring of the intern would take place in the end of March, 2014 and the goal would be to kick start both are Twitter and Instagram campaigns by early April 2014.

In addition to building a strong social media base, I would also like to create a new component to our menu that is featured in the bar. I have decided to add 5 new sauces to the menu that can be added to any meal of choice whether it is beef, chicken, or seafood. This will take place between the 1st to the 31st of March 2014 because that is known as National Sauce Month. Customers who order a menu item containing one of our new sauces will be asked to complete a survey/comment card after they are done. We will offer a $2.00 discount to any patron that agrees to comply. The hope is we can use this month to see what sauces are selling well so we can determine how to properly progress with our plan. If the sauces are a hit we will add them to our menu fulltime.

1. **Proposed Budget**
2. **Costs associated with proposed rebranding strategies**

The costs of the social network campaign are relatively low due to the fact that the social media websites Twitter and Instagram are free of charge. Since we are going to hire a college intern we are offering the opportunity to come in once or twice a week and work directly with us so that they can see firsthand what we are trying to accomplish and what events are currently going on. Every time he/she comes in we will give them a free lunch & let them experience our menu and atmosphere as much as possible. The campaign will be a month long so he/she will come in about six to eight times, with an average meal costing twelve dollars, we will be spending less than a hundred dollars to gain exposure.

The winner of the video contest that is going to be held on the social networking sites, will receive a one thousand dollar gift card to the Firebirds restaurant of their choice, also they will be getting their meal added to our menu. The five runners up will all receive a two hundred dollar gift card to the Firebirds of their choice. The campaign will cost a total of two thousand dollars.This is not excluding the cost of the new menu item from the 1st place winner. The cost for that will all depend on what he/she decides to make. For instance if the winner’s recipe is a chicken and guacamole wrap, then the cost will be different if he/she where to decide to make a new steak recipe. An estimated cost of new menu item will range from $20,000 to $30,000 if you include everything from ink costs of the new menus to where the meat comes from the cost is quit large.

The cost for the five new sauces are actually quite complicated due to the variety of ingredients each entails and the food costs associated with each. The sauces are going to be created by using products sold in one gallon increments. An example of this would be one full gallon of sauce(horseradish) would be around twelve dollars. We will be selling three ounce servings for an additional dollar.. We only have to sell twelve servings of the sauce in order to break even, which means that we have an extra thirty one serving or an additional thirty one dollars of profit. We will spend $3,000 which addes up to a total cost off all the sauces to be $15,000. The total cost of both the campaign and the new menu items will be from $37,000 to $47,000

1. **Proposed metrics to measure return on investment (ROI)**