

"FLEXI STRAWS" BY AMANDA CALDARI

OFFICE ZOOM CALL - DAY

PowerPoint Presentation, Flexi Straws, LLC. Q2 Earnings Report, shows a graph in steady decline.

BOSS

I called this meeting because sales on plastic straws are in a downturn, and I'd love to brainstorm solutions.

EMPLOYEE #1

We could expand our inventory, maybe invest in biodegradable plastic? Or paper?

EMPLOYEE #2

Paper's nice because it's compostable.

EMPLOYEE #3

I read an article about seaweed-based alternatives that are marine degradable.

HANK

Seaweed? Paper? That hippy dippy nonsense might work for Whole Foods, but this is Flexi Straws, and we sell plastic. Manufactured right here in the U.S. of A.

HANK stirs his coffee with an excessive amount of plastic stirrers.

HANK (CONT'D)

You know, I used to be one of those guys who came to work for the paycheck and the free toilet paper in the supply closet. But the war on plastic changed all that. You want to save this company? It's time we remember what it's built on.

HANK cues up a slideshow of happy people with straws, animated using a slow-zoom/pan effect.

"Chariots of Fire" plays.

End on slide reading: Save The Straws. HANK waits for applause that doesn't come.

BOSS

(breaking silence)

Okay, Hank! Love the enthusiasm. But today is really about how we can increase profit margins. Dave, why don't you finish telling us about plant-based alternatives?

EMPLOYEE #2

Sure. So they look and function like plastic except they're-

HANK

(interrupting)

Riding on the coattails of what plastic built.

EMPLOYEE #3

C'mon Hank. This is serious. By 2050 oceans will have more plastic than fish. Didn't you see the video of the sea turtle with a straw up its nose?

HANK

And whose fault is that? Maybe people should stop throwing plastic into the ocean. Personally, I throw mine into the trash, where it belongs.

Hank holds up a waste bin and places a plastic cup inside it for effect.

EMPLOYEE #3

No one's throwing plastic into the ocean, Hank. Even plastic that ends up in a landfill can be carried into the ocean by wind and rain.

HANK

Okay, Mr. Captain America. Didn't I see you sipping margaritas with a straw back in February?

EMPLOYEE #3

Yeah. They come with the drink.

HANK

You looked pretty happy about it. And Michelle, don't you want your bachelorette party to have one of those fish bowl drinks with like, nine

straws?

EMPLOYEE #1

Honestly, no, that doesn't sound sani-

Hank moves onto another employee.

HANK

And Daniel-

EMPLOYEE #2

It's Dave.

HANK

Didn't you just get your wisdom teeth removed? Imagine if you couldn't use a straw during recovery? You'd probably be dead right now.

EMPLOYEE #2

Actually, I wasn't allowed to use a straw...at the instruction of my surgeon.

HANK

My God. They got to him, too.

Hank turns his attention to the boss.

HANK

Valerie, you once asked me why I wanted to work here. And I didn't have an answer for you. But I do now. Because my Grandpa came to this country with just a straw and a dream. And I'm not ready to give that dream up.

BOSS

Listen, Hank. All we're saying is we need to evolve a little. Times are changing and if we want this company to have a future, we can't rely solely on plastic.

EMPLOYEE #3

Look at the earnings report. Enough said.

HANK

Uh-huh. And what are you gonna tell me

next? "Nothing personal, it's just business?" Because this is my life. And I woke up today ready to do the same thing I've done for the last 17 years. Sell straws. *Plastic* straws. I never thought it was anything to write home about. Until it became illegal. First it was Starbucks, then McDonald's. What's next, Applebee's? Not on my watch.

Boss clicks to next slide: projected earnings for next quarter. It's the same chart as the last, just flipped.

EMPLOYEE #2

Wait, did you just flip the other chart upside down?

HANK

Doesn't matter. Point is, I don't want to live in a world where kids drink milkshakes through bamboo. Or where straws are sold on the black market and smuggled into Disney World. I want to live in a world where every soft drink is served with a straw, no questions asked. Because at the end of the day, it doesn't matter what color your straw is, or if it's bendy, or striped. All that matters is that it's made of plastic.

Hank holds up a Capri Sun.

HANK (CONT'D)

Now who's with me?

Silence.

EMPLOYEE #3

(holding up her cell phone)

I have to take this.

Employee 3 exits Zoom.

HANK

Michelle? Daniel?

EMPLOYEE #2

We're late for another meeting.

One by one, employees exit Zoom call until only Hank is left.

Alone, HANK stabs the Capri Sun with a straw and misses. He tries again, and again, and again.

BLACKOUT