

# COCI Entrepreneurship Presentations 2022

# REPORT



*April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022*

St. Maarten Chamber of  
Commerce & Industry (COCI)

**Business Center**



# Introduction

## The St. Maarten Chamber of Commerce & Industry – COCI

The St. Maarten Chamber of Commerce & Industry (COCI) is a non-profit organization whose main role is to ensure that all businesses and legal entities in St. Maarten are registered in its Commercial Register. In addition, the Chamber also serves as an advocacy group for the business community.

### **Our Mission**

Our mission is to ensure the compliance of all businesses and legal entities, given our regulatory function of maintaining the Trade and Commercial Register of St. Maarten while promoting economic growth through advocacy and business support to the business community.

### **Our Vision**

To be that lead entity, propelling St. Maarten to a stronger and more sustainable economy by providing accurate business data, business connectivity, trade opportunities, and commercial facilitation through lobbying, advocacy, and business support.

### **Advocacy of the Business Community**

We serve as an advocacy group and address the varied concerns of the Business Community through various dialogues and exchanges with Government officials and various Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). We offer solicited and unsolicited advice on matters concerning the country's economic development.

## **Continual Need For Business Knowledge And An Entrepreneurial Mindset Amongst Youths**

Our developed initiative of engaging high schools and higher learning institutions was so successful in the school year 2020 – 2021 that we naturally continued for 2021 – 2022.

In our 2021 Report, we discussed the need to stimulate and foster an Entrepreneurial mindset amongst adults and youths. If we learned anything from our first year of engagement through our 'COCI Entrepreneurship Presentations' initiative was that there is a very apparent gap in knowledge and awareness as it pertains to business practices here on the island. Students, particularly those in Business Sectors, are educated on topics such as legal entities, business structures, management, and taxation. However, the school curriculum as is does not correlate said topics to a St. Maarten context. In our experience, students learn more about business structures and processes from The Netherlands, American, British, and or Canadian countries than in the Dutch Caribbean. Although the gist of the information remains the same, St. Maarten's specific business modus operandi remains unique. Therefore, we consider the correlation between local business processes and the educational business curriculum on the island a standard that cannot be ignored.

In our experience, those very students tend to become entrepreneurs at some point in their adulthood. As an adult, their need for knowledge and awareness becomes then very apparent when engaging the Chamber or other business entities. For this very reason, we are adamant about nurturing and providing the information at a younger age. Moreover, we are well aware that although our yearly presentations are impactful they are not a sustainable solution to combat such a great matter. Therefore, we plan to investigate sustainable alternatives that will create and stimulate a more solid foundation.

The invitation letter was presented to schools in July 2021.

## COCI Entrepreneurship Presentations 2022

### *The Chamber's High School Entrepreneurial Initiative*

*On Wednesday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the Chamber engaged 10 secondary institutions and 1 advanced vocational institution and, the University of St. Martin to continue our "COCI Entrepreneurship Presentations" initiative.*

***Our letters to each institution were as follows:***

Dear Sir/Madam,

Firstly, we would like to express a heartfelt thank you for your collaboration during the 4 months (March – June 2021) in which the Chamber was able to provide 10 secondary education institutions with our "Entrepreneurship Presentation". With this initiative, we would have reached over 350 students in pre-exam and exam classes. The student turnout and involvement thus far exceeded our expectations.

The Chamber considers this particular initiative of engaging our students and exposing them to the entrepreneurial culture, as a very important component towards the achievement of a more resilient and sustainable economic future for the country of St. Maarten.



Given the above mentioned, the St. Maarten Chamber of Commerce & Industry (COCI) would hereby like to inform you as to our intent engagement for the upcoming schoolyear 2021 – 2022. We are also trusting for your further facilitation and collaboration on the same. We intend to continue our Entrepreneurship Presentations for this coming school year. Our proposal is as follows:

**The invitation letter was presented to schools in July 2021.**

**Entrepreneurship Presentations 2021 – 2022**

We will be dedicating 6 months to 12 schools. Scheduling is a bit of a task, but we hope that by reaching out to you all months in advance we can come together and create a schedule that suits everyone.

We propose the following;

- We will start the six months from September to March (there will be no presentations in December due to the Christmas/New Year Holiday)
- There will be two presentations a month, one presentation per school.
- Your school may select a month that best suits your schedule. However, bear in mind scheduling will be done on a first-come-first-served basis. Therefore, if you would prefer to have your students hear the presentation in September, for instance, you will need to respond ASAP to reserve one of the two spots in September for your school.
- Lastly, we are aware that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, one presentation may be challenging to schedule with students in a single classroom. Therefore, we are suggesting.
  1. Plan the presentation in during a recess period, outside/ in a gym hall, where safe social distancing can be practiced.
  2. Select the pre-and or exam class(es) you think would benefit most from our presentation (i.e. business/economics, science, tradesmanship classes, for instance).
  3. Or opt to have the presentation digitally via a scheduled Zoom meeting.

For ease of scheduling, we would greatly appreciate a response to your proposed scheduling by the end of July 2021.

We thank you once again and look forward to your favorable response.

Yours Sincerely,

Jude Houston  
Executive Director

Jennifer Carty  
President of the Board of Directors - COCI

Our **COCI Entrepreneurship Presentations** commenced in September 2021 and ended in February 2022. The presentation was prepared by COCI's BDO and was presented to twelve (12) institutions. Presentations were conducted in person and some instances via virtual means given the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Institutions that have received our presentations can be found in **table 1**.

**Table 1:** *COCI Entrepreneurship presentations school year 2021 – 2022*

No.	Institution	Class	Date	In person or Via ZOOM	Students
1	University of St. Martin (USM)	Business Sector	September 17 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	in person	8
2	National Institute for Professional Advancement (NIPA)	Business Sector	September 29 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	in person	15
3	Mac High School	4 <sup>th</sup> Formers	October 13 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	in person	54
4	Academy	5 <sup>th</sup> Formers	October 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	ZOOM	68
5	Sundial High School	4 <sup>th</sup> Formers	November 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	in person	38
6	MPC	VWO	November 26 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	in person	20
7	LU High School	Grade 11 & 12	January 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	in person	30
8	Caribbean International Academy (CIA)	4 <sup>th</sup> Formers	January 28 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	in person	10
9	St. Maarten Academy PSVE	3 <sup>rd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Formers	February 4 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	ZOOM	88
10	St. Dominic High School	3 <sup>rd</sup> Formers	February 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	in person	50
11	Charlotte Brookson Academy	4 <sup>th</sup> Formers	February 15 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	in person	19
12	Vocational High School	4 <sup>th</sup> Formers	February 23 <sup>rd</sup> , 2022	in person	18
A total of 418 students received our presentation!					

# ***Highlights***



**Figure 1:** COCI Entrepreneurship Presentation to USM on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021 in person





**Figure 2:** COCI Entrepreneurship Presentation to NIPA on September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021.



**Figure 3:** COCI Entrepreneurship Presentation to MAC High on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021





**Figure 4:** COCI Entrepreneurship Presentation to Sundial on November 5th, 2021.



**Figure 5:** COCI Entrepreneurship Presentation to LU on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

**Figure 6 a-e:** COCI Entrepreneurship presentation at St. Academy via ZOOM on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021



**Figure 7:** COCI Entrepreneurship presentation at CIA High School on January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022



**Figure 8:** COCI Entrepreneurship presentation at Academy PSVE School via ZOOM on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

Mr.McQuilkin home

**Figure 9:** COCI Entrepreneurship presentation at St. Dominic High School on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022.







**Figure 10:** COCI Entrepreneurship presentation at Charlotte Brookson Academy on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022.



**Figure 11:** COCI Entrepreneurship presentation at St. Maarten Vocational Training on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022.

## Closing Remarks

This being our second year of engagement, we can gladly say that our initiative has gained positive traction. Schools are very accepting and accommodating of our presentations. For the school year 2021 – 2022, we surpassed our last year's engagement of 372 students to 418!

Student, Teacher, and Principal feedback have been positive and continuous invitations have been extended to us by many educational institutions. We are, as always, very grateful and appreciative of the work and collaborative efforts that go into accommodating and making our presentations a success. A simple **THANK YOU** does not suffice but we are truly thankful to every principal, coordinator, teacher, and assistant from each institution.

## Future Aspirations and Improvements

### 1. Establish Sustainable Educational Environments

Although our school engagements are well received and appreciated, we are cognizant that we are creating moments with each engagement. Although important, we have realized that 1 presentation in a given school year does not necessarily provide the lasting impactful change that we would want to see occur. Therefore, in our continuous plight toward the dissemination of business knowledge and awareness, we are now also seeking other means of sustainable education.

**Solutions:** Establish necessary dialogue with relevant stakeholders (e.g. Ministry of Education, school boards, principals, teachers, etc.) geared towards the possibility of incorporating literature from our presentations into the school curriculums.

This can be considered phase II of our initiative. We believe that by incorporating how business processes are done on the island, we would be fostering a proper and knowledgeable business etiquette that could have lasting positive effects in the long run. If students are taught from an adolescent age what the business process and climate on St. Maarten are like, we may be preventing unnecessary hurdles that tend to occur once they reach adulthood. Being equipped with vital information at that age can also be of use to the students that remain on the island due to personal circumstances or by choice. Therefore, if guided and furnished properly with information, those students can likely become young knowledgeable adult entrepreneurs. Moreover, the students that leave to further their education abroad would at least know what to do when they return home.

Secondly, as of April 2022, we have joined collaborative forces with the St. Maarten Jubilee Library to publish a book on Entrepreneurship. This collaboration will further help us provide a more tangible tool that adolescents can use and refer to when seeking knowledge on local business procedures.

## **2. Slight improvement in communication between Principle – Teacher(s) – Students**

Last year's improvement point was to establish a better line of communication between Principle, Teacher(s), and Students. Although some changes have occurred, this remains an ongoing improvement point. The reality is that because we are working with so many different institutions simultaneously, scheduling and communication take some navigating. This being the second year, the concept of our initiative is properly understood and supported by each institution which helps with familiarity and active effort. We improved our communication by providing the 2021 – 2022 schedule months in advance, as well as, constant telephone and email follow-ups.

## **3. In-person presentations are still more impactful than online**

COVID-19 is still ongoing, however, numbers are not as alarming as before. COVID protocols and guidelines are standardly adhered to during in-person engagements. Even though we also offer the option of ZOOM presentations, there is a clear difference in engagement from the students when the presentation is given in person. The fact remains, that having our BDO present at the school makes the presentation more palatable and engaging. Students feed off of in-person energy and are way more engaging.

Online presentations, however, are a challenge due to internet/ Wi-Fi connectivity obstacles at educational institutions. Delays in audio and visuals were experienced which affected the presentation negatively. That's beyond our control, but we hope as time progresses schools will be provided with the proper means to conduct visual learning.

**\* END OF DOCUMENT \***