

Ask SCORE for Business Advice

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Back to the Basics by Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt

Some trend spotters call it *Credit Crunch Couture*. Others refer to it by the simpler term of *Back to the Basics*. It is a broad trend where many businesses are finding success. As consumers are fraught with economic concerns, there is a tendency to return to the simpler pleasures of life. There is a passion for do-it-yourself projects, gardening, and inexpensive hobbies.

One of those hobbies is bird watching, and one of the businesses benefiting from this trend is For the Birds, 1040 N. Broadway, De Pere. Owned by Barbara and Gerry Brebner, this unique business resembles a bird habitat. It is a place where people go to enjoy the environment and talk birds.

Barbara explained their success. "I have always had a customer base with an appreciation for nature, and people have long enjoyed seeing beautiful, colorful birds in their yards. What I notice now is that more and more young people are taking this to heart. Grandpa used to be the one who filled the bird feeders, now it is a 33-year-old father of two and mom gardens and tops off the feeders, too!"

Consumers also enjoy the environmental aspects of the business. Brebner says that a person needs only to look at her building to see that she cares about the environment and nature. "Our prairie restoration and native plantings showcase our desire to teach and share experience," she continued.

In starting the business, one of Brebner's goals was to be a moral and responsible business and give back to the community. She recently assisted a SCORE client who was having problems with packaging and distribution, and was able to help solve his problems and hopefully contribute to his success. She is always willing to share her expertise by giving public presentations and helping other businesses.

"Business ethics are more important to me than anything," Brebner noted. "We only put out trash once every few months and recycle every tidbit possible. We share our research and knowledge freely, because no matter what happens, in the end, our experience and knowledge are what separates us from the competition."

It is this attitude, along with consumer trends, that gets customers excited about birds. While the Brebners have other businesses including Production Support Services, a film and video crew and management company; Footage House, a stock footage company; Door County Chocolate, and Postcard Chocolates, For the Birds is a realized passion for Barbara. She comes from a family of entrepreneurs and constantly brainstorms with her sister and friends for new ideas. She says that she is always looking to grow and expand, reinvent and create. For now, Brebner feels like she is in a perfect place.

"Abbey bells ring in the distance, and birds (including our eleven years of oriole generations) are feeding outside the windows," Brebner said. "This is where I hoped to be ten years ago."

If you'd like to learn more about business trends, contact the Green Bay Chapter of SCORE. Visit www.greenbayscore.org or call Cindy Gokey at 920-496-8930 for information.

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