



Ask SCORE for Business Advice

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Adaptation Key to Success

Dave Olson and Mike Wagner came to SCORE a few years ago with a well-researched business plan. As engineers, Olson and Wagner are analytical people who left no stone unturned in planning their business. They detailed their product, market, and services, and their direction was set. At least, that’s what they thought. After opening, they almost immediately found that direction changing.

In a bad economy or in any economy, the ability to adapt is one that sets apart the successful businesses from their competition. And, OWLogistics, the business started by Olson and Wagner about two years ago, is definitely a success. Their sales are projected to double this year.

“It hasn’t quite worked out the way our business plan was written,” Olson explained. “Our first model was based on a high volume projects. We revised our strategy to include different areas that we thought we would evolve into over time.”

The business occupies 30,000 sq. ft. on the east side of Green Bay and provides packaging services including bagging, assembly, and fulfillment operations. The number of employees depends on the projects at hand, and OWLogistics uses a combination of full-time employees and temporary help. Using temps helps them to better control labor costs. This control is part of the company philosophy and has been a vital part of their business plan.

“In this tough economy, a lot of companies are being forced to get lean and we started with lean manufacturing principles,” Olson noted. “We also invested in the right equipment and the right people, and have a very quality focused mentality.”

Having worked together at several companies, Olson and Wagner saw a need for this type of business and felt they could do it a better way that customers would value more. When they use temps, they walk them through very specific procedures and provide well-designed processes to deliver high quality, cost-effective results. In the process, they’ve developed a diversified client base that includes smaller and larger companies. The business has grown through networking and referrals and a solid partnership.

Olson said, “Mike and I met at James River where we both started our engineering careers. Our partnership works because, at the core of who we are, our values align very well.”

While Olson’s primary role is administrative, Wagner’s is in operations. Between them, they respect each other’s opinions and yield to whomever has greater expertise in the area discussed. They take a flexible approach to the direction of the business. While they didn’t anticipate the recession, they attribute their success to their detailed planning, adaptation, and their faith.

Olson concluded, “In July 2007, we didn’t foresee this happening with the economy, but we had done our research. At a point, we just had to put our words into action. We are humbled and grateful that it has worked every step of the way.”

If you’d like to learn more about starting a business, 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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