

**Ask SCORE for Business Advice**

**Doing something you enjoy with someone you love!**

By Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt

“What could be better than doing something you enjoy with someone you love?” So asks Kelly Bain-Vrba when talking about being in business with her father, Jeff Bain. As she celebrates Father’s Day this Sunday, she’ll be honoring a dad who is also her business partner.

About eight months ago, Bain and his daughter started a gourmet popcorn business named “The Rural Squirrel.” I met Bain at a SCORE counseling session where he was putting together a business plan and wanted advice. The father and daughter team had started their business and wanted to make sure they were going in the right direction. They had individual strengths and wanted to maximize those abilities.

“My daughter is very creative and a hard worker. She’s also a good problem solver,” Bain said. “I’m good at the meet and greet, direct contact sales, and number crunching.” His daughter agrees and adds, “I am a planner. I like to know how things are going to go. How are we going to get from point A to point B? Dad sometimes prefers to just try things and see where it takes us.”

Bain-Vrba recommends outlining each person’s responsibilities so that there are no surprises later. She says that you should talk openly, but not all the time. “You shouldn’t be planning next week’s work at your nephew’s 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday party,” she advised.

They reserve most of their business talk for the two days a week that they work together. Since Bain also works with his wife on her screening printing and embroidery business and at Bellin Hospital, he has about 25 hours a week to devote to this business. Bain-Vrba is the mother of four daughters, ages 8, 10, 14, and 16, and also has limited time. When they’re together they brainstorm and bounce new ideas off each other. If they disagree, they ask other family members for an objective opinion. They might be wondering what products to test next.

The additional input comes in handy when selecting flavors. They currently feature nine flavors of popcorn ranging from the more common caramel and cheddar to unique flavors like Caribbean and hot jalapeno. They have been working on perfecting a strawberry cheesecake flavor. To keep the product interesting, they plan on adding and rotating

flavors on a regular basis. Bain-Vrba would like to see the product line expand to include a variety of healthy snacks. Increasing the customer base is another challenge.

Bain is the salesman and he has worked on getting the product sold at convenience stores. The popcorn has proved to be popular and the number of outlets selling it continues to grow due to customer demand. This is an area they will need to devote more time to as the business grows.

With the mutual respect they exhibit, it is likely that they will be able to take the business to the next level. They have big plans including fundraising products and national sales via the internet. In the meantime, they focus on learning the business and growing at a controlled level. Bain has two other children in addition to grandchildren and would love to have them involved in the business if it could support them. In the interim, he will settle for working with a daughter who thinks the world of him.

She says, “My dad is a sweet guy. He’s hardworking, loving, open minded, trustworthy, loyal, witty, compassionate...I couldn’t ask for a better dad!”

Questions about “The Rural Squirrel” can be directed to [ruralsquirrel@new.rr.com](mailto:ruralsquirrel@new.rr.com). Business concerns can be directed to the Green Bay Chapter of SCORE. Visit [www.greenbayscore.org](http://www.greenbayscore.org) or call Cindy Gokey at 920-496-8930 for information on counseling, resources and upcoming workshops.

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