

Ask SCORE for Business Advice

**“Ask SCORE” Column in Green Bay Press Gazette
Sat., Aug. 1, 2009 by Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt**

“Necessary” Businesses Thrive

After writing about the success of the Wine Cellar a few weeks ago, I received a letter from a former auto supplies store employee. He said he wasn't surprised that liquor sales were good. He wrote, “Alcohol, tobacco and getting your auto fixed are the highest priority in many people's lives.” In his experience, he discovered that people would “lie, cheat, and steal” to get their auto working.

His point is that people continue to buy things that are important to them. In the past few months, this column has featured businesses that are doing well in the down economy. Almost all have products or services that customers consider necessary.

Lew Hinnendael, owner of three Cellular Systems stores, said that he knew of people who lived in their cars and considered a cell phone to be their lifeline. People might reduce services, but they'll do almost anything to hang on to their phone.

Dorothy Lindenbeck, owner of Dorothy's Custom Sewing and Alterations, reported that many of her customers were having clothing repaired or altered rather than buying new. She provides a necessary service.

So does CTI, a concrete refurbishing business owned by Kathy and Tom Conard. Instead of a costly new installation, the Conards use the latest industry trends to help customers save money by refurbishing rather than replacing.

Tim Long of SRC Technologies, an IT infrastructure services company, was part of a new company start-up that has succeeded by meeting a growing trend. As companies look for cost-savings, many are finding that they can cut expenses by outsourcing functions that are outside of their primary business focus.

Amy Eliason, co-owner of TimePlus Payroll Services, has also had success by offering payroll and other business office functions as an outsourcer. For many companies looking to minimize their office staffs, TimePlus serves a need.

Then, there is the desire to live a greener lifestyle. Andrea Martin, owner of A. Design Studio and a self-proclaimed environmentalist, started recycling billboards and turning them into reusable bags. Her bags have been a great success because people feel good about helping the environment.

Barbara and Gerry Brebner, owners of For the Birds, have profited from those seeking comfort in the basics. Just the environmental awareness has grown, others seek the simple pleasures of nature. Birds provide a welcome refuge in the stressful economic times.

Finally, OWLogistics, owned by Dave Olson and Mike Wagner, proved that a business can be successful if it adapts to the market and provides quality and savings to customers.

These businesses show that it is possible to do well in bad times. Some of the success may be due to the luck of being in an industry that is considered necessary, but often times, it is due to capitalizing on business trends and being the best at what you do.

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.

Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt is co-owner of [DB Commercial Real Estate](#) in Green Bay and Assistant District Director for SCORE, Wisconsin.