



Ask SCORE for Business Advice

Pick a Business You Love

By Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt

Recently, a couple visited SCORE to talk about starting a new business. They were planning a service business and wanted to learn how to write a business plan.

“Why do you like this type of business?” I asked. Their response was a surprise. They said they weren’t certain because they’d never done it. Our advice was to get a job in the field first. We thought they should make sure they enjoyed the work, and proceed only if it was a business they felt passionate about.

Mike Stone was co-counselor that day. A SCORE volunteer, Stone is owner of The Stone Group, a global sales and marketing company. Stone has contagious enthusiasm and is a prime example of someone who loves what he does.

“Starting a business should be more than a mathematical career choice,” Stone said. “It takes enormous energy to make the business successful. So, it is important to choose an industry that interests you. It’s a lot like getting married. You better make sure that you are picking the right one, because you are going to be with it morning, noon, and night for a long time.”

Stone’s choice of a business was a continuum from goals he had as a teenager. He wanted to create jobs for United States manufacturers, and started studying languages as a child. He studied overseas with the goal of putting that skill to use in business. Today, his business is both the U.S. market and a considerable amount of export business.

“My business focuses on food products and capital machinery. Both of these industries excite me right to the center of my being,” Stone said. “I wake up early every morning excited like a kid going to Disneyland. I work late like a kid at the all-night cinema with friends – not wanting to sleep and miss something cool.”

Merely having a discussion with Stone is inspirational. He talks about the sights, tastes, smells, and textures of his business with such enthusiasm that you understand what it’s like to really love what you do. He is happy to share advice, and in addition to SCORE, is president of the Brown County Inventors and Entrepreneurs Club.

“I am active in the groups because I really want to help local businesses succeed,” Stone explained. “It is very exciting to see someone come in with a new idea and run with it.”

Stone sees opportunities everywhere, and believes that success comes with seeing past the risks. He recommends doing the necessary planning and research, but is quick to note that “worriers” don’t make good entrepreneurs. Having the financial means to proceed is also vital.

Stone explained, “Have enough money to make your business successful. If you only have half the ingredients to make a cake, you have just enough ingredients to make a mess. You need enough capital to bring the business to fruition and success.”

Finally, Stone recommends adding passion, because without passion, there is no fuel to run the business.

If you’d like further information, 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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