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February 2024 · Business Report

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From the Publishers:

As the end of February approaches and our second issue of the year rolls out, we cannot help but stop and think about how important it is to support all the amazing small businesses in our community. For us, Buying Local is not just the name of a podcast but a call to action. It's about prioritizing locally-owned businesses for the goods and services we need before moving to a big box store or online platform. For example, making a trip to Ace Hardware instead of their behemoth international competitor; going to farmers markets and buying directly from local farms; enjoying a pint from one of the many award-winning local breweries. The list is practically endless.

Buying Local is a mindset. When any need or purchasing trigger arises, we look to our neighbors in Warren, Washington, and Saratoga County to see if they offer what we need. Do we pay a little more? Possibly. Is it something of an inconvenience? Sometimes. But are we enriching the lives of our friends, family, and neighbors? Absolutely. Are we keeping hard earned resources in our community and increasing the chance that those resources will come back around to us when it is our turn? 1000% yes. Will these sometimes small and sometimes large efforts help make the world at large a better place? You can bet your bottom dollar on it.

We hope to see you around town.



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The Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce (ARCC) is a 100% membership funded organization with the mission of supporting our business community through advocacy, education, connection and collaboration. The ARCC offers numerous benefits intended to help businesses grow and thrive, including resources in the following areas: business and professional development, money savings, marketing and promotion, ribbon cuttings, and sponsorships.

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Meet The Panelists



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Co-Founder
Colman Media



Michael Luntta
Manager of Development &
Automation Services,
ADNET Technologies



Michael Nelson
Co-Founder & Partner
Five Towers Media



Noah Van Zandt
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Information Technology Services

ARCC Hosts Panel Discussion on ALTERNATIVE HIRING OPTIONS



Pictured left (left to right): Chris Thomas, Tricia Rogers, Michelle Treffi, Tim McNutt Esq., & Dr. Richard Leach

Photos Courtesy of the Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce



by **Amanda Blanton**,
ARCC Vice President,
Marketing & Communications

On Thursday, January 25, 2024 the Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce hosted a panel discussion featuring four speakers, sharing their expertise on alternative hiring options. Communities across our region have been experiencing hiring shortages, and challenges retaining employees. This panel shared stories and experiences on the hiring of individuals with criminal records, Veterans, immigrants, and individuals with disabilities.

“We are so grateful to have professionals available to speak to our business community on the hiring of these populations,” said ARCC President & CEO Tricia Rogers. “This is just the beginning of the conversation, and we are thrilled that many businesses in this region came to the event to learn about their hiring options.”

The panelists dispelled many misconceptions that have been presented about hiring these populations, as well as shared some resources and programs.

One of these programs, called the Department of Defense SkillBridge Program, has been successfully implemented by one of the panelists. Sergeant Major Christopher Thomas (U.S. Marine Corps, Retired), founder of Elite 9 Veteran Talent Acquisition Services, has been working with a few

local businesses on opportunities for service members to gain valuable civilian work experience through specific industry training, apprenticeships, or internships. Service members receive real-world job experiences, while still maintaining their military compensation and benefits. The employer in turn gains a valuable employee that may turn into full-time employment.

“How do we move from a handshake and thank you for your service, to providing mutually beneficial opportunities for the success of our communities, and the hundreds of thousands of transitioning service members from the military every year? I truly believe the answer lies within the Skillbridge Program, but we must first build awareness to gain the desired traction,” said Thomas.

The panel also featured Tim McNutt, Esq., the Director of the Criminal Justice and Employment Initiative Center for Applied Research on Work, at the IRL School Cornell University. Mr. McNutt spoke of common misperceptions on hiring someone with a criminal background.

“Workers with criminal records often perform better on the job, stay longer, and have fewer incidents at the workplace, but misperceptions can keep employers from hiring this largely untapped talent pool. Individualized assessments with a focus on skills for the job can help overcome hiring hurdles and create a triple win: organizations hire the workers they need, people with criminal records get jobs, and society benefits through reduced recidivism,” said McNutt.

In addition Dr. Richard Leach, a retired physician and co-founder of the Adirondack Welcome Circle, spoke on his experience welcoming refugees into our community, and helping them secure employment. His personal stories shined a light on families looking to make a better life for themselves in our country, and how the Adirondack Welcome Circle has helped.

To round out the panel, the ARCC invited Michelle Treffi, Director of Employment Programs, Community Work & Independence (CWI) who provided some excellent information on programs that CWI can offer employers.

“I think far too often people hear the word disability and automatically think of what limitations/barriers an individual may have, rather than the skills that they have worked hard to develop. Hiring disabled individuals can help a business round out their talent needs while creating a culture of diversity and inclusion, and further strengthening community ties,” said Treffi.

Some of these programs offer all the support that the employee and employer may need to ensure success.

“There are programs in place, such as Community, Work and Independence, Inc.’s Competitive Edge, which is a full-service employment program that matches individuals with jobs that are compatible with their skills, abilities, and preferences. Staff assists individuals with career exploration, job exploration, and the application and interviewing process. Following a job placement, Competitive Edge offers job coaching, employment counseling, soft-skills training and support, a safe forum for workplace concerns, and guidance to manage employment benefits. Competitive Edge works to ensure satisfaction for both the individual and the employer with each job placement. Group employment options are also available through contracted work opportunities.”

The ARCC is committed to continuing these conversations and finding a way to bridge the gap between employers and job seeking populations. Stay tuned to the ARCC website for any updates or announcement of future discussions, www.adirondackchamber.org.



ABOUT THE ARCC

Founded in 1914, the Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce (ARCC) is a membership organization representing businesses in New York State’s Washington, Warren, Essex, and Northern Saratoga Counties. The ARCC is a 501c6 not-for-profit corporation, governed by volunteer Board of Directors, and does not receive any funding from local, county or state governments. Our mission is to support our business community through advocacy, education, connection, and collaboration.



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The Top 4 Sales Efficiency Challenges & Solutions



by Alan VanTassel
of Velocity Sales

The challenge of sales is that sales is, well, *challenging!* And when it comes to sales efficiency, four challenges seem particularly common. We often see small to mid-size businesses struggling in the areas of **Sales Process Complexity, Sales Technology, Data and Analytics, and Sales Rep Training.**

Let's dive into each category to evaluate the problems – and solutions – associated with each.

Sales Process Complexity

Common Problems:

- Reduced efficiency and wasted effort due to sales reps spending too much time on administrative tasks.
- Longer sales cycles which can tie up resources and delay deal closings. Sometimes, this results from multiple decision-makers being required to sign off on the deal, but it too often results from inefficiencies in the seller's organization.
- Higher costs due to the extended sales cycles and the number of steps involved in the process.
- Customer frustration which can impact the seller/buyer relationship in the short- and long-term.

Solutions to Consider:

- Analyze the sales process to determine areas where the process can be streamlined or automated with AI.
- Create a sales playbook to ensure all sales team members truly understand the sales process.
- Hold the team accountable for understanding and following the documented process. If non-compliance is too common, it could indicate the process needs more fine-tuning.
- Use technology to identify and generate leads and use your Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software to identify recurring issues and bottlenecks.
- Listen to your customers; if they are frustrated with certain aspects of their buying experience, this should provide clues on how to improve your sales process.

Sales Technology

Common Problems:

- Too many tools and lack of coordination between technology platforms – including systems, software, and applications – can cause confusion and inefficiency for sales team members.
- Integration issues and lack of alignment can lead to data silos, repetitive and time-consuming input, overall inefficiencies, and conflicting output.
- Poor training that leaves sales reps underqualified to use sales technology effectively and efficiently.
- Utilizing technology platforms that the sales team does not buy into – they do not understand or see the value it provides, and therefore do not use it.

Solutions to Consider:

- Choose integrated or compatible technology systems to avoid compatibility problems.
- Provide thorough training to empower sales team members.
- Invest in a comprehensive (but not overly complex) CRM system.
- Implement a sales engagement platform to help automate repetitive tasks such as sending emails and scheduling meetings.
- Use sales analytics tools to help track performance and identify areas for improvement.
- Get feedback from your sales team members; as the frontline technology users, they probably have great ideas for enhancements.

Lack of Data & Analytics

Common Problems:

- Siloed data systems.
- Poor data collection practices, which can include not capturing key data in a CRM with each customer or prospect interaction.
- Poor data quality due to unreliable data sources, inaccurate data entry, duplicate data, or incomplete data.
- Lack of data analytics tools, often due to a lack of budget or a poor understanding of the importance of the tools and how to confidently use them.

Solutions to Consider:

- Improve data collection, whether it be from a purchased list or gathered during the course of business operations; strive for meaningful comprehensiveness that will support future reporting and forecasting.
- Centralize data in a well-aligned CRM system.
- Use meaningful data in the CRM to perform general sales analytics, forecasting, and process improvements.
- Use a consultant skilled in sales analysis to identify trends, patterns, and opportunities for process improvement.

Sales Rep Training

Common Problems:

- Poor sales rep performance due to non-existent, poor, or improper sales training on processes, tools, and resources.
- High sales team turnover, which results from poor performance or dissatisfaction with upfront management support and professional development.
- Customer dissatisfaction due to poorly trained sales representatives.
- Poor sales training content that may be irrelevant, ineffective, or outdated.
- Lack of practice opportunities during and after sales training.

Solutions to Consider:

- Commit to frequent sales training and prioritize its importance even if it impacts available selling time in the short term.
- Implement sales training programs aligned to big-picture and specific sales performance needs.
- Listen to sales rep feedback to improve training methods and focus.
- Provide opportunities to practice what has been learned; use simulated and real-world opportunities, including roleplay.

The Bottom Line

Identifying sales efficiency challenges is the first step toward implementing meaningful solutions. One easy way to identify your company's unique problem areas is to take my free Sales Agility Assessment. It's a quick and easy way to zero in on the challenges facing your sales organization. Once you have a better understanding of your specific sales challenges, I will work with you on focused solutions to help you overcome your most troubling sales efficiency challenges.



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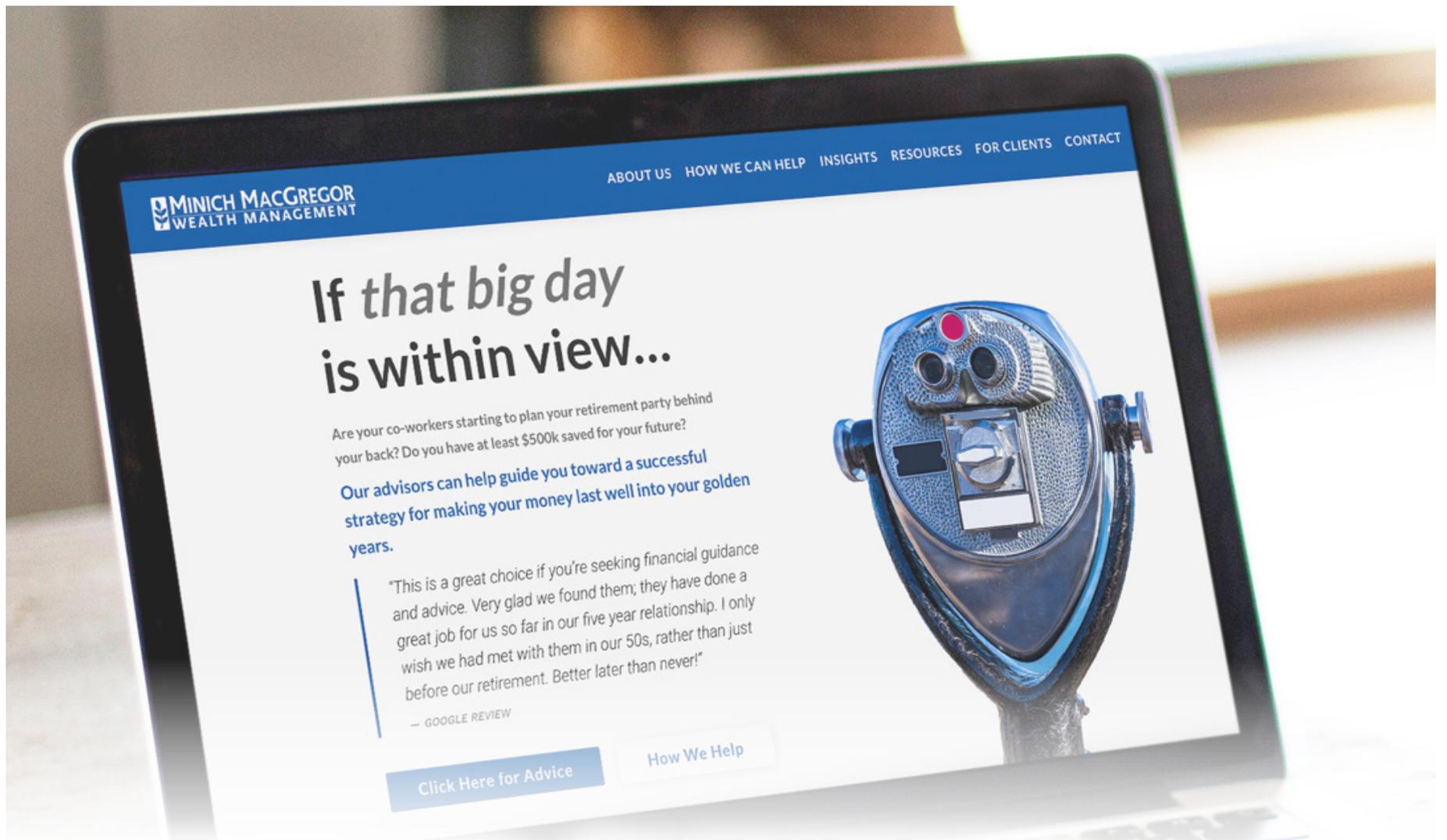
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WEBSITE MUST HAVES

by **Kelsey Sherman, Jr. Partner & Creative Director at Five Towers Media**

In today's digital age, having a website is not just a luxury. It is a necessity for businesses and organizations. We are at the point where just having a website isn't enough – your website needs to attract and retain visitors. When establishing a strong online presence, there are key elements that can significantly impact your website's effectiveness in turning prospects into clients. In this blog post, we'll explore must-haves that will make your website user-friendly, engaging, and reflective of your brand.

A Clear & Concise Home Page: Your Digital Welcome Mat

Your homepage serves as the virtual doorstep to your business. It is the first impression that visitors will have of your website and your business, so it's essential to make it count. It should be visually appealing, with a clean design and easy-to-read font. Most importantly, it must convey your brand's message and purpose. Use eye-catching images, brief yet powerful text, and a clear call-to-action to encourage visitors to explore further.

Navigation: Guiding the Digital Journey

The first stop on our website must-have tour is navigation. Imagine navigating a city without street signs – confusing, right? Similarly, a clear and intuitive navigation menu is crucial for your website.

It's like a roadmap, helping visitors easily find what they're looking for. Label each menu item thoughtfully, and ensure the navigation bar is visible on every page.

Responsive Design: Your Website, Anywhere, Anytime

In our world of various devices, your website needs to be optimized for mobile devices. This means that your site should be responsive, adapting to screens big and small. A responsive website ensures that whether someone is on a computer, tablet, or phone, your site is easily accessible, looks good, and works well. This is critical, given that more than half of all web traffic now comes from mobile devices.

Fast Loading Times: The Need For Speed

In a world where time is precious, a fast-loading website is a game-changer. Most visitors are unlikely to wait more than a few seconds for a page to load, so your website should be optimized for speed. This includes optimizing images, reducing the number of plugins you use, and ensuring that your hosting provider is up to the task of handling your website's traffic.

Engaging Content: Tell Your Story Efficiently

Your website's content is the heart and soul of your website, and the backbone of your online presence. From a catchy homepage message to informative blog posts, ensure your content is compelling, clear, and well-written. Break up text with descriptive headings and subheadings, use visuals to illustrate your points, and make sure your content is easy to read and skim without sacrificing SEO value. While it is unlikely that visitors will read every word of your site, search engines like Google will.

Contact Information: Building Trust Through Accessibility

If your website's purpose is to attract new customers or clients, make sure visitors can easily get in touch with you. Include a prominent contact form on your website, your phone number, email address, and physical address. This builds trust and assures visitors that you are a legitimate and accessible business.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Finally, it's essential to ensure that your website is optimized for search engines like Google. This means using relevant keywords throughout your content, optimizing your images, and ensuring that your website is easily crawlable by search engine bots. Investing in SEO ensures that your website is visible to potential customers who are actively searching for businesses like yours.



In Conclusion

Incorporating these website must-haves is like laying a solid foundation for a successful online presence. Navigation, responsive design, a clear home page, fast loading times, engaging content, accessible contact information, and effective search engine optimization collectively create a website that not only attracts but retains visitors. So, whether you're building a website from scratch or giving your current one a makeover, remember these essentials to truly enhance your online presence. If you have any questions, please reach out to the team at Five Towers Media.

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Yes, You Need a Podcast



by **Michael Nelson**
of *Five Towers Media*

A quick Google search will give you more stats and information than you probably want to know about who is listening to podcasts, their age, gender, income levels, education, the list goes on and on.

A very interesting stat is the number of people who pay attention to ads on podcasts, and the percentage of listeners that buy a product because of a podcast. I myself have purchased a few products over the last few years... *because I heard about them on podcasts.*

To see some of the stats I am referencing, just scan the QR code to hop over to a website I found with just a quick google search:



Many of these stats paint a picture of the potential to increase sales, product placement, brand awareness, targeted demographics, consumer education, and more.

Despite all these benefits to podcasting, I am met with a fair amount of push back from clients when I recommend they add a podcast to their marketing mix. For the record, I am advising all (yes, **ALL**) of our clients to add podcasts to their content mix. The resistance I typically get is that they are worried they will not be engaging, no one wants to hear their voice, their product or service is just not that interesting, they would have no idea what to talk about, etc.

The funny part is that *none of those things matter*. The #1 reason you should do a podcast is not because you are engaging or funny, nor because you have an amazing voice. To be fair, it has little to do with your actual product or service. It's not about building an audience, going viral, or being the next Joe Rogan.

The number one reason you should be doing a podcast is because you need content for your marketing & communications efforts. Most of you are probably struggling to come up with ideas on what that content should be. You are probably sitting around week after week frustrated because you continue posting the same old stuff, and getting little from it.

What you need is a way to educate your audience on who you are as a brand. You need content that helps tell the story your clients and customers can consume. You need a way to create content that can be used across multiple channels like social media, email campaigns, and your website. You **NEED** this and at the same time, you are probably hoping to do this without breaking the bank.

Podcasts are the solution. You can easily and affordably record what you need for a podcast using platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Google Chat. This can be uploaded to YouTube, clipped out for social media, used as a vlog which can be turned into a blog as well.

All of this can be included in your newsletter and posted to your website. The ability to use one simple piece of content to create many pieces of content is staggering.

The great sage, and sometimes scary visionary, Gary V explains this in his 2016 blog called, Content on Content:



Long story short, all of your content marketing needs can be amplified by starting with just a simple podcast that took you 10 to 20 minutes a week (or month) to record. It is a simple and easy way to create content that will be meaningful to your clients and prospects.

That is why you need a podcast. Of course there will be questions. You will want to know what it should be about, how long, is it a monologue or interview style.

If you are looking for help answering these questions, and the many others that I am sure are bouncing around your brain, give us a call. Our team loves coming up with podcasts to help support our clients marketing and communications efforts.

-M



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Dancing Grain

SAVE THE FARM — SAVE THE BEER.



by Jordan Dunn



Photos courtesy
of Dancing Grain.

“Not only does Dancing Grain produce top notch beer that’s great in taste, it’s good for the environment too.”

Looking out over the verdant, rolling acreage at Dancing Grain Farm Brewery, owner Rachel McDermott sees opportunity. More specifically, she sees 6,500 square feet of opportunity. That’s because after just two short years of operation, Dancing Grain is already in a position to expand.

Leased for the first time by McDermott’s father and uncle back in the 1980’s, the land in Moreau, NY that Dancing Grain now calls home was originally just 230 acres. Its original focus was on producing corn, soybeans, hay and straw.

Several decades later, spanning a period in which the property would experience a full tornado and decreasing land bases, the family fully purchased the farmland and the remaining pieces of the original farmstead. Immediately upon doing so, McDermott and her team set to work on outlining a new, and sustainable vision for the future.

*DGFB Motto:
More out of Less*

A capital region native, McDermott grew up in the farming industry with her father, Jim, and uncle, Bob, at her side teaching her the ropes. Although she left the area to attend college at Cornell University, followed by a short stint in the corporate world, McDermott knew that home was where she belonged and eventually returned to help run the family farm back in 2016.

“When it came to looking to the future, the biggest question at the time for us was, ‘How do we make more with less?’”

Referencing a world with shrinking farmland, an economy with higher production prices, and a society that is always looking to the newest and latest, McDermott and her family were determined to find a way to capitalize on the operation they already had established.

The final solution? Craft beer with ingredients cultivated through vertical integration and regenerative farming.

Visions Become Reality

“There are a lot of options in craft beer,” said McDermott. “And a lot of them are very great. What sets us apart however is that we not only craft our own brews, we produce the main ingredients used to make them.” According to their website, DGFB is proud to highlight that over 90% of their ingredients are sourced from their own fields, a statistic not often seen when it comes to craft brews. We had McDermott elaborate a bit further on how this can be done.

“When we originally sat down to think about how to expand our operation, we knew we wanted to enter a sphere that complimented what we already had established,” said McDermott.

She continued on to explain how, “at the time, we saw how up and coming the craft brew sector was

and noted that the main ingredients that are needed, grains like malting barley, distillers’ rye, and corn, fit in easily into the rotation of cash crops that our pre-existing farm was already built around.”

McDermott elaborated on how, “our team was really excited about this because not only did this mean we could grow many of the ingredients needed right on our own land, but the ingredients themselves would actually benefit what we already had going. For example, grains help to restore some natural compounds in the earth, like nitrogen, that some of our other products, like soybeans, take out.”

In the end, McDermott acknowledged that “we know that all industries cost something to the land, but with what we were envisioning, we saw how we could institute not just clean farming practices when producing, but truly integrate regenerative farming techniques as well to help minimize the negative impact we may leave behind,” said McDermott.

With a holistic concept secured, and a full 308 acres under their control, the DGFB team began to upgrade the farm by investing in 115,000 feet of tile drainage to increase soil health, fertility, and lengthen the growing season.

Dually, McDermott also worked directly with local and regional brewers and distillers to create a specialty grains program designed to enhance the quality and usability of malting barley, distillers’ rye, and corn.



Finally, after several research trials conducted between 2017 and 2021, the team was able to move to the next stage of their vision, a brewhouse and taproom.

Dancing Grain Today

In line with their more with less motto, when it came time to develop a structure that would house the next part of their project, the DGFB team thought “why don’t we utilize the land and buildings we already own” said McDermott, referencing the dilapidated farmstead structures they inherited when they purchased the entirety of the farm.

Though in a tough shape at the start, by hiring a local company to refurbish and renovate one of the barns, the team was able to breathe new life into the space.

Today, Dancing Grain is home to a three and a half barrel brewhouse which, in a completely intentional move, also houses their farm style taproom.

“When you walk into the taproom you can completely see into the brewhouse. That’s on purpose. We wanted everything to be completely transparent to the customer,” said McDermott.

She continued on to explain how “while we want our customers to enjoy their favorite brews, we also want them to understand that everything that we pour into those glasses is just one part of the story. The bigger picture: that of sustainable ingredients, of which are sourced through regenerative farming practices, which were developed with intention, and so on and so forth; is all really in an effort to ensure that the products we make here do not take more from the land than they give back to it in some way.”

Officially opened in 2022, the current space is open year round and boasts 14 specially cultivated brews. Throughout the year one can also find a number of specialty events and themed nights to enjoy with family and friends.

Always Looking Forward

Never ones to stop moving forward, the Dancing Grain family has big plans in 2024 to expand their offerings to the community. McDermott is about to begin a refurbishment project on a second building on the property.

To be opened as a secondary space, focused on community events and gatherings, the barn renovation will be a gorgeous 6,500 square-foot space that will allow Dancing Grain to host events all year round, without requiring them to close their main taproom off to the public.

“We see this space as becoming a true part of the community in the years to come. From fundraisers, to weddings, to just an everyday open air picnic space for families. We hope this place transforms into something that community life breathes through in every aspect.”

Connect with Dancing Grain

“We want you to ask about our story!” said McDermott, encouraging anyone who’s interested in learning more to connect with the team or visit the taproom in Moreau. For those interested in connecting with or visiting Dancing Grain, please visit their website at www.dancinggrain.com today. 🌿

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MR. ELECTRIC of Queensbury



Photos provided.

by Amanda Graves

Many entrepreneurs set out knowing exactly what goals they wish to accomplish. But for Air Force veteran Sean Dion, this was not originally the case. “The business wasn’t really my plan. I planned on retiring working for people,” he said. However, his plan changed for the better when he and his wife decided to take a leap of faith and become the franchise business owners for Mr. Electric of Queensbury.

Mr. Electric is a well-known franchise with over two-hundred locations worldwide, providing electrical installation and repair services to its customers. Sean opened Mr. Electric of Queensbury in 2017 and, since that day, his hard-work and commitment to serving his community has led to immense success for the business.

Sean’s entrepreneurial career began when he was only 16 years old selling newspapers in his community. By saving the money he made, it allowed him the opportunity to obtain an associates degree at Vermont Technical College. “I had one uncle, who was also a Vietnam veteran in the Army, that went to a technical trade school and got a degree in electronics and instrumentation and I just followed his lead to go to school and learn engineering. I didn’t really have a good idea on what I wanted to do so I thought I’d give it a try,” he said.

It was also during this time that Sean met 14 year old Jeanne, who shared his entrepreneurial spirit and was selling newspapers herself. The two shared an adjoining route and, as they spent more time together, their relationship grew. After four years of dating, the two were married.

In addition to his business drive, Sean had a strong desire to serve his country. He came from a long line of military involvement —his parents, grandparents, and uncles all served— and Sean wanted to carry on the legacy.

“Two months after my 17th birthday, I enlisted in the Vermont Army National Guard as a mechanic for generators,” he said. “It was an in the blood type desire to serve my country like my family had.”

In 1991, the Vermont Army National Guard was activated and Sean served in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia where he supported three air traffic control platoons. A year later, Sean transferred to the National Guard and worked as an electrician.

During this time, he traveled within a civil engineering squadron and did peacetime humanitarian aid. In addition to Saudi Arabia, Sean traveled to several different places throughout his military career including: Qatar, Israel, Panama, North Macedonia, Iraq, and many different places within Europe.

While in the National Guard, Sean was employed by the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM). During this time, he participated in a cohort program between IBM and Marist. After six years of hard-work, which included writing a 30+ page research paper on dialogue connection while stationed in Baghdad, Sean obtained his bachelor’s degree in Business/Technology Management.

“I have a spirit to win.

I don’t take no for an answer, I’m very stubborn, very motivated, very focused, *but not just that.*

It’s recruiting good talent and retaining good talent. Instead of focusing on making money, focus on the customer and focus on taking care of your employees.

— Sean Dion 

After a little over ten years working for IBM, Sean left and started a career at Global Foundries. It was during this time that he received a solicitation on LinkedIn for an opportunity with Mr. Electric. “I thought to myself, I’ve always worked for somebody but then again always had the entrepreneurial spirit with my wife,” he said. The two traveled to Mr. Electric corporate headquarters in Waco, Texas for an interview, and were eventually offered the position.

After thinking everything over, Sean and Jeanne decided to accept and began building their business. Jeanne, having a background in real estate, took on the office end of the business while Sean focused on the technician aspect. The two made a great team and within just a few months, they were expanding faster than they had planned. “Within eight months of opening we had three vans on the road,” said Sean.

During this period, Sean was still working full time at Global Foundries and was struggling to manage both jobs. He decided to ask his director to go part-time. However, that same week Sean found out that he was getting laid off. This gave him the opportunity to put all his effort into his business and really invest in what he was passionate about.

“There was a true need for what we’re being commissioned to do and taking that we build a culture where we’re contributing to the community,” he said. Jeanne and Sean’s hard work paid off because within only three years, Mr. Queensbury made it to Top Gun, an award given to the top franchise owners, ranking number 22 out of more than two-hundred locations.

When asked how he achieved so much success in such a short amount of time, Sean explained, “[I have] a spirit to win. I don’t take no for an answer, I’m very stubborn, very motivated, very focused, but not just that. It’s recruiting good talent and retaining good talent. Instead of focusing on making money, focus on the customer and focus on taking care of your employees.”

Outside of work, Sean and Jeanne have extended their commitment to the community within their own household by becoming foster parents for several years. At one point the two were caring for seven kids under the age of seven, while also housing and caring for a World War II veteran they befriended at church. “They actually didn’t call us a foster home, they called us a group home for a period of time,” said Sean. The two also share two children of their own, Aaron and Meghann. Both of their biological children carried on the legacy of serving their country, and Aaron is currently still serving to this day.

In terms of their business, Sean and Jeanne have big plans for the future. Their goal is to expand into Lake Placid and Saranac Lake. Additionally, they are working on opening an office in Plattsburg that would extend their borders all the way to Canada. “We’re already starting to get work up there without even advertising,” said Sean. *It’s clear that their success is far from over.*

For more information visit their website at mrelectric.com/queensbury



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Core Values *Keep the Right People* FROM WALKING OUT



by Wendy Waldron

You do ***not*** want your best people walking out on you.

That is true of any business at any time – but it is especially true in today’s labor market. You don’t want your good people resigning because it might be extremely hard to replace them. If you are in the unfortunate position of losing some of your best employees, it may be worthwhile to take a look at how well you as a company are living out your core values in two key areas: hiring and providing feedback.

First, ***hiring***.

Qualified candidates are scarce right now for many positions. When you have an opening, you might get panicked or impatient as weeks pass without finding a candidate who has the necessary skills and experience for the job and who aligns with your core values. It is easy to rationalize that “somebody is better than nobody” and hire a candidate with the right resume even though they don’t appear to conform to the company’s core values.

The outcome is usually not a happy one. The person may be hardworking and productive, but if they don’t live out your core values, they are going to butt heads with your best employees – the ones who do great work and demonstrate your core values.

This leads us to the second area: ***providing feedback***.

If you have a new or existing employee who is not living out your company’s core values, you need to give them redirecting feedback. That is, you should clearly identify the unwelcome behavior and its ramifications, and specify what needs to change and how. Many leaders shy away from providing feedback out of fear that it will upset the person and cause them to resign, leaving a hole to be filled. However, if you don’t speak out, you are tacitly condoning the behavior and giving the lie to your core values.

Once again, this isn’t going to upset the employee who doesn’t buy in to your core values ... it is going to upset your best employees who really do value your core values. Given enough friction and frustration from fellow workers who don’t live out the business’s core values and who are not being held accountable for that failure, your best employees might decide to take their talents to a company that practices what it preaches.

So, before you hire someone who does not align with your core values ... before you decide to tolerate behaviors that don’t match up with your core values ... ask yourself: do you really want to risk having good people walk out on you? You know you don’t want that. Stick with your core values and your best people will stick with you. ■



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REMINDER:

New York State Pass Through ENTITY TAX ELECTION DUE 3/15/24



by **Brian Stidd, CPA, CVA**

It has been a few years now, April 2021, since New York State introduced the **Pass Through Entity Tax (PTET)** election option for small business owners. This was an innovative tax regime, and it continues to provide a great tax benefit for many individuals who are owners in pass through entities. PTET offers a unique opportunity for pass-through entities to mitigate the impact of the federal SALT (State and Local Tax) deduction cap. Understanding the intricacies of PTET is crucial for business owners looking to maximize tax efficiency and compliance. This article provides an overview of PTET, its purpose, implications, and key considerations for businesses operating in New York State.

The objective of PTET is to help mitigate the impact of the federal SALT deduction cap, which limits the amount of state and local taxes that individuals can deduct on their federal tax returns. PTET allows qualifying pass-through entities (S Corporations and Partnerships with at least one owner subject to NYS tax) to pay the state taxes at the entity level. This decreases the taxable income flowing to the individual, essentially giving them a deduction for state taxes that they would most likely not get due to the SALT deduction cap.

As a simplified example, an entity with \$300,000 in NYS taxable PTET income would pay \$20,550 in NYS PTET. This would reduce the income from the business being reported by the owners from \$300,000 to \$279,450.

This saves the owners anywhere from approximately \$4,000 to \$7,000 in taxes, depending on their tax brackets. This tax savings most likely would be lost due to the SALT limitation if the full \$300,000 in income flowed through to the owners. The \$20,550 in taxes paid by the entity, then flow through as a credit on the owners New York State tax return so that there is no double taxation, and the savings from the deduction are true tax savings.

To qualify for PTET, a pass-through entity must be subject to New York State's income tax, and have at least one individual owner or member subject to New York State personal income tax. The entity must elect into PTET each year by March 15, for that tax year. This election is done on the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance website at, www.tax.ny.gov/bus/ptet/. PTET is calculated based on the entity's New York source income and is paid at a rate ranging from 6.85% to 10.9%, depending on the entity's taxable income. However, there are certain deductions and adjustments available to reduce the tax liability. For instance, eligible entities can deduct taxes paid to other states, as well as certain business expenses and credits, when calculating their PTE tax liability.

The SALT deduction cap is set to expire in 2025 if nothing changes. At that point it will be questionable whether the PTET election will yield a benefit to business owners. At that point, it will depend on the Standard Deduction amounts and Alternative Minimum Tax.

Therefore, it could still be used as a tax savings strategy and will need to be looked at on an annual basis.

Pass-through entities electing PTET must comply with all applicable reporting requirements, and deadlines set forth by the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance. Maintaining accurate records and fulfilling tax obligations in a timely manner is essential to avoid penalties or audits. The mechanics of, not only calculating, but reporting NYS addbacks and credits correctly will require the guidance of a qualified tax professional. There can be administrative costs to this and so owners should review those administrative costs versus the benefit. PTET paid by the entity also creates implications for cash flow for the entity, as well as implications for allocations between partners and S Corporation shareholders. All of these items should be discussed with your tax professional.

In conclusion, if this is something you think you could benefit from, make sure you talk to your tax preparer soon. To benefit from this for the 2024 tax year you will need to make the election by March 15, 2024. This is an annual election therefore, each year you can determine if you want to make the election. Once you do make this election the entity is required to make quarterly estimates. ■





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SCAN TO LISTEN

EPISODE 47

Ownership vs. Management - Dimitri's Story

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster interview Dimitri Skrinik, the Project Manager at MODS National! Dimitri's had an exciting journey, between emigrating from Moldova, leveraging internships into running his own blue collar business... And then leaving it to manage construction projects using shipping containers! Why did he choose Project Management over business ownership? What have his experiences taught him? Hear the answers, his story, and more here, in this episode!



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPISODE 46

Advocating for the Trades - AGC NYS

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster interview Brendan Manning, the Vice President of Education & Environment at AGC New York! The AGC (Associated General Contractors) specializes in discovering and solving the problems caused by federal and state legislation that pertain to the trades, and informing and working with local tradespeople based on that information. Whether it's by focusing on the legal side, directly training local business owners, or partnering with local organizations, the AGC is a fantastic Blue Collar advocate!



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPISODE 45

Revolutionizing Workforce Development with BoomNation

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster interview Brent Flavin and David Johnson, co-founder & CEO, and Sales VP respectively of BoomNation! Finding workers and finding work - that's the biggest challenge the trades are facing. BoomNation breaks through the drawbacks of job boards, combining effective professional services with a fun and personal user experience. If you breathe Blue and want to work Blue, BoomNation is your solution!



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPISODE 44

Fabricating the Future

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster interview Terrence Musto and Robert Manasier - the creator of Fabbro Industries, and the business mentor that helped him do it! From a humble start building custom bikes to running his own professional fabrication shop, Terrence's business is a stunning example of the kind of value a business mentor like Robert can provide. Want to learn how to take that idea of yours to the next level? Listen to this episode to get a few clues!



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPISODE 43

Breaking the Blue Collar Stigma with Curtis Lumber

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster interview Doug Ford and Pam Stott, two employees of Curtis Lumber who specialize in workforce development! It's all anyone can talk about now: "Where are all the young workers?" "What will happen to the trades in ten years?" If Doug and Pam have anything to say about it, things will only get better - they're dedicated to educating people across the state about their options, and the wonderful truths about Blue Collar work - it's not "a backup job", it's skilled, profitable, fulfilling, and essential!

LISTEN ON



BUYING LOCAL



Saratoga, Warren, and Washington County have no shortage of fantastic goods and services to offer! In this podcast, our host Mike Nelson will clue you in on the amazing gems hidden in your very own community!



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPISODE 51

Leave Your Company & Start Your Own: The Five Towers Story

In this episode, our host Mike Nelson interviews Brad Colacino, his partner at – and co-owner of – Five Towers Media! Brad had a stable, cushy job at a big white collar company, but he decided to leave it all behind to start his own business! Has he achieved the success he sought? What does he love about his current company? Find out the answers in this special first episode of our second season!



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPISODE 50

Improving the Community with The Town Tinker

In this episode, our host Mike Nelson interviews Scott Lufkin, Argyle native and star of The Town Tinker! The Town Tinker is all about taking on cool projects, but not just for himself – whether it’s restoring tombstones and church bells, clearing sidewalks, or crowdsourcing a new town skating rink, Scott is community-first, making his native Argyle a better place for everyone.



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPISODE 49

Building Better Culture with Tom Schin

In this episode, our host Mike Nelson interviews Tom Schin, the man behind the important consulting business of Build Better Culture! Every organization thinks they have a great workplace culture – but not all of them actually do! Tom knows the secrets to employee satisfaction and retention... But you might be surprised by how inherent they are!



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPISODE 48

Riding the Rails of Progress with Stimler Advantage

In this episode, our host Mike Nelson interviews Neal Stimler, the President of Stimler Advantage! Technology development has accelerated by leaps and bounds in recent years, and keeping up with it can be an overwhelming task... But Stimler Advantage has all the know-how to catch you and your business up with the times – making your processes efficient, and keeping your strategy tightly focused!



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPISODE 47

The Two Key Words – Experience, and Teamwork

In this episode, our host Mike Nelson interviews Kris Brunelle, owner and CEO of White Glove Janitorial Service! He may be the executive at the helm, but Kris still does cleaning, team-building and managing along with his salesmanship duties. The key words to his success? Experience, and Teamwork! How have these things helped his small startup thrive this past year? You’ll have to listen to this episode to find out!

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