

Small Business Development Center at UCF Benchmark Glass & Mirror



SBDC at UCF gives Benchmark Glass Clear View to Success

The decision to start a business was an easy one for Tom Bird, an experienced installer of shower glass, decorative glass, sliding doors and mirrors. Finding customers proved more challenging.



Benchmark Glass & Mirror's Tom Bird

By the time Bird visited the Small Business Development Center at the University of Central Florida's office in Palm Coast last May, he was feeling discouraged about the future of his business, Benchmark Glass. "Nothing seemed to be working in finding customers, so I thought it couldn't hurt to seek another point of view," Bird said.

"Tom was questioning his own commitment to his business and was having difficulty finding customers, and by the end of our session, Tom seemed overwhelmed at the tasks at hand," said Joe Roy, area manager of both the SBDC at UCF and the Palm Coast Business Assistance Center (BAC), of their first meeting.

Benchmark Glass' problem was not one of growth, but rather one of survival. That day, Roy outlined the steps Bird needed to take. Six weeks later, Bird returned to the SBDC at UCF with more information. Benchmark Glass was having some difficulty understanding job costing, selling strategies and value for service. It was clear Bird was offering a quality product and service, Roy said; hence, "there was a good foundation on which to build this business."

By early July 2012, Bird returned again to the SBDC at UCF, now fully committed to building his business by providing quality products and service at affordable pricing. Bird began to understand how his costs affected his selling price. Rather than raise prices, Bird found ways to reduce his costs while increasing his productivity – allowing him to keep his selling price very competitive.

Working with the SBDC at UCF, Bird created a sales strategy to increase his success rate of quotes provided to customers. Now better equipped to understand his costs, Bird increased his customer quote success rate from 3 per 10 quotes to 6 per 10 quotes – a 100-percent increase.

Benchmark Glass has added one part-time position and is on track to grow sales revenues by 50 percent compared to 2011. Since meeting with the SBDC at UCF, Benchmark Glass has developed a business plan including a marketing and sales strategy.

"I'm now better equipped to grow my business," said Bird. "I'm far more focused on my costs and my customers than at any time in my business. I can't believe how much working with the SBDC at UCF has changed my outlook on daily operations."

Benchmark Glass represents both the challenges and opportunities of our small business community, said Roy. "Tom has turned a corner and is now growing a competitive business providing exceptional quality products and service. You can see his passion in his eyes and it's translating into a great customer experience at very competitive pricing," he said.

If you have a question about your business, stop by the SBDC at UCF and meet with Roy. Like Benchmark Glass, your "Journey to Business Excellence" begins at the Palm Coast BAC and the SBDC at UCF.

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Helping Businesses Start, Grow and Succeed