



The Pelican

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Gene Wesley, General Manager, Community Futures Lac La Biche

BUY LOCAL OR BYE LOCAL?

Readers of The Pelican may have figured out that we feature local businesses and topics and highlight successes and solutions- so the return to Phase 1 COVID restrictions is a severe blow. Is there any lemonade here for business owners or customers? Can local businesses possibly weather this? This is my challenge for this month's article.

"You can accept the death sentence, or you can change the rules," is what Graham Sherman said in an interview (see page 4) during the recent Power Up Alberta Virtual Event. In short, after overcoming unimaginable obstacles when he was finally getting



ahead, COVID effectively shut him down and threatened everything. After an understandable mental slump, he remembered that in every negative, there is a positive and asked himself: Whose Killing it?

He canvassed the area around his Brewery, and just about 1km away, he found that Spud.ca was going out of their minds trying to keep up with orders. They needed everything he had: 8,000 ft² of warehouse space, cooler space and lots of staff. Their problem and his problems saved both businesses. But what about rural and small businesses? We must focus on what we have going for us. Advantages for rural entrepreneurs and small businesses (see Page 3 Partners Corner) 1. We know our customers because they are our neigh-

bours, so instead of focus groups and experts, we have only to spend some time and listen to them and draw out the gold. What are their problems and concerns - can

I solve them? What do they need or want? What could I change to make it more convenient for them?

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LEE'S BURGER BARON BUILDS BRAND AND BUSINESS



Lee Thom, co-owner of Lee's Burger Baron on Main Street doesn't pretend to be a business expert, but he knows a thing or two about making connections with the community and customer appreciation.

March 6th was the one year anniversary for restaurant ownership for Lee and his wife and business partner Lisa. They've learned a lot in a short period of time. On the business side of things, Lee is quick to point out that when they bought the business he had little knowledge or things like setting up GST or CRA accounts, or with anything on the accounting side of things. He was also surprised about the number of suppliers he would need to work with in order to keep the restaurant in operation. Lee is proud of his wife Lisa who is gradually taking over the accounting side of the business, and also grateful for his kitchen staff who have maintained the menu established by the previous owner.

To compensate for being new business owners, Lee and Lisa focused on working hard, doing things right, and providing the best possible customer service. With this in mind, along with an energetic pick-up and delivery model, even with pandemic restrictions, Lee's Burger Baron continued to do well.

Lee is a firm believer in giving back to his customers and started the ball rolling by offering monthly draws for cash and prizes. "Being able to give back is one of the best things about owning your own business", says Thom. With hundreds

of connections on social media and partnerships with other businesses, Lee's Burger Baron strategically positions itself to share it's success with everyone in the community, and Lee is always looking for new ways to give back. "It's important that Lee's Burger Baron be a welcoming place to everyone in the community, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, says Thom, touting his "Bannock Burger Fridays" as a hit with everyone.

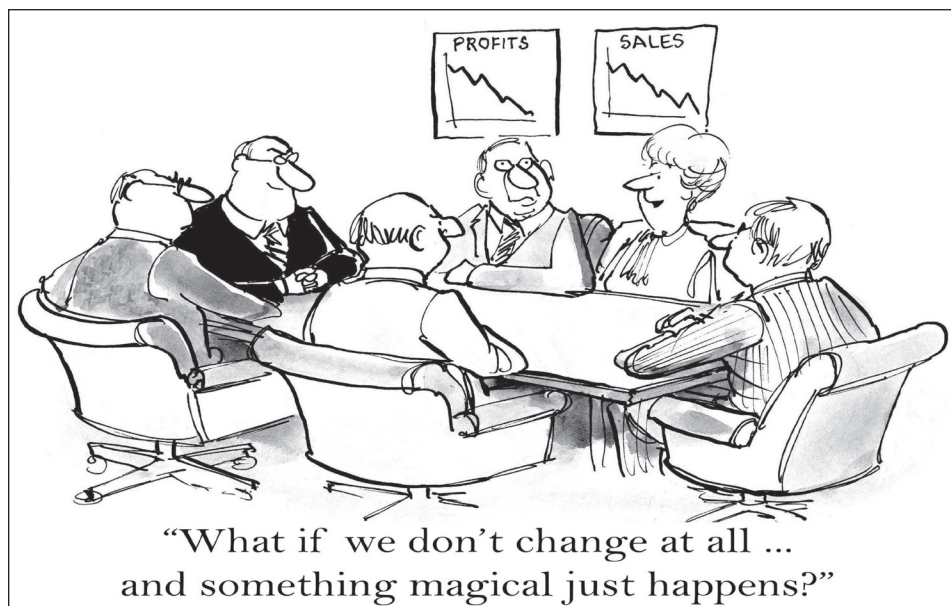
Whether it's the sign over the doors that includes the front end of a vintage car, Thom points out that the restaurant owes a good deal of its success to public relations. Lee works hard to ensure the restaurant is noticeable and has a special appeal to the community. He summarizes these efforts by saying, "you have to brand it to build it". ■



Want to know how small businesses are succeeding during the Pandemic?

Check out ATB's *Five rural Alberta entrepreneurs share their COVID-19 small business lessons*.

Copy and paste this address into your browser:
<https://bit.ly/327mWDZ> ■





The BusinessLink recently posted an article on their website offering 3 advantages for rural entrepreneurs and rural small businesses. Pointing out that because rural businesses are closer to their customers they are better suited to understand their community and flexible enough to ensure that customer needs are met. Here is what they say:

1. You can access your customers directly. In a small community you know your customers and who they are. This makes it easier to cater to their specific needs
2. Your business can deliver specialized services. As a rural business owner you are right there, in-person to offer customized services to your customers
3. Rural business can be more flexible. It's easier to make changes when you are closer to the action and small enough to make decisions on the fly.

Make sure that you consider the strengths at your disposal as a rural small business owner. Leveraging these concepts will be the key to success. When you keep these things in mind, it will be easier to both innovate your business operations to better serve more customers and increase sales.

To learn more about the BusinessLink or to read the article in full, go to: <https://bit.ly/3mCJyFW> ■



alberta food marketplace

The Northeastern Alberta Food Market-ers Association (NAFMA) and Northeast Alberta Community Futures offices with funding from Western Economic Diversification have begun the process of creating an online Food Marketplace so that all food producers and retailers can sell their products online with the lowest possible barriers.

This project will provide each vendor with their own online store, along with aggregating all products into a larger marketplace. The website will handle all e-commercial transactions and manage product shipping and delivery.

Sell Your Products Online

Showcase your products to thousands of buyers. Create a business profile, manage your own product pages, including pricing and shipping details. Promote and sell your products without the need to set up your own website and e-commerce system.

We offer full training, full support and a world-class shopping experience for your

customers.

Sign-up Today!

Vendors are now able to sign up and begin the on-boarding process. Shortly, we will begin advertising the web site for consumer. To find out more, or to become a vendor visit:

<https://www.albertafoodmarketplace.com/vendor-register/> ■

Gene's Column (cont. from page 1)

2. When Walmart opens in a small town, the saying is that the businesses that survive have specialty goods or expertise. I needed to fix my toilet some time ago, and admittedly I researched the part I needed online, then I went to see Tony at Marczaks. True to small-town service, he took me directly to what I needed, but as I walked to the counter, he stopped me and handed me another part saying, "you'll need this too, otherwise, it will leak." Buying a part at any price online would not have worked well for me. I needed that advice too.

R&D: Rip-off and Duplicate examples that are working.

Some business in rural towns have adapted and are thriving. I've heard of restaurants in neighbouring communities that shifted to preparing and delivering family meals and/or offering take-out are doing better than they were pre-covid. In urban areas, I swear some restaurants have shifted all sales to Skip the Dishes etc., and they are literally too busy for inside service. Can we create a delivery model here? Independent grocers seem to have met that challenge with massive success by online shopping and grocery delivery to your car. What would it take for other businesses to copy that in some way? Times have changed, and businesses can survive and perhaps thrive, but they will need to adapt. Customers must be patient and choose local whenever possible for local businesses to succeed. The fact is that we are neighbours and we need each other. ■

Didja KNOW?

74%

In 2017, Alberta small businesses (1-99 employees) were responsible for more than 74% of all private sector employment in the province.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey; and ISED calculations.

FREE BEER FOR LIFE

Graham Sherman could be best known as the small Calgary brewery owner that offered “beer-for-life” to investors willing to risk \$5,000 in his fledgling business, but his story is so much more. Those who attended this year’s virtual Power Up Alberta conference on March 23rd, learned that this scheme was just a small part of the hard road to success for the Tool Shed Brewing Company.



While Graham’s story is both unique and riveting, the qualities he displayed in turning his business into an Alberta success story are not unlike the qualities that all successful new entrepreneurs must have - passion, willingness to take risks, perseverance, and a sense of the big picture, and above all - optimism

A passion for your business

Graham’s love for making beer started as a hobby in, you guessed it, his backyard tool shed. When this recreation became an obsession, and he started to become recognized by friends and family as a guy who made great homemade beer, he decided to take the next step - and it was a big one.

Willingness to take a risk

Soon his love for making beer meant more to him than his well-paying communications job and he jumped off the deep end, making his hobby a full-time vocation. While government regulations that limited instantaneous success, Graham continually looked for ways to make things work. For a while he even made his beer in BC and imported it to be sold in Alberta in order to circumvent regulations.

A sense of the big picture

Well before Tool Shed became a success, Graham Sherman was aware of government policies that limited the capacity of small brewers in Alberta. He was also aware that craft brewers made the best beer in the world and that many of the best beer makers in the world used barley from Alberta. Coupled with the ammunition that every dollar invested in the industry brought back a return of \$1.12, Graham soon assembled the ammunition needed to help convince the government to change policy enabling the framework for Alberta’s burgeoning craft beer industry. It would also allow Tool Shed to become one of the largest independent brewing operations in the province.

Perseverance, optimism, and belief in community

While those involved in the craft beer industry required years of patience, public relations skills and ingenuity to stick-handle through red-tape and regulations to get their industry off the ground, it hasn’t been the only hurdle



that needed to be jumped. Like all small businesses, the pandemic has been a game-changer. Restaurants and bars that closed or were limited to take out no longer needed to buy beer - and the impact on Tool Shed and all craft brewers has been devastating. Yet Graham and Tool Shed continue to make the most of the cards that are dealt to them. Offering a place for start-up brewers to make their

beer and an empty warehouse that has been transitioned into a facility to assemble food hampers for those in need.

And it is this sense of community that fuels a different take on “beer for life” and continues to feed Graham Sherman’s passion and road to success. ■

5 Consumer Trends from the BBB

The BBB suggests that businesses that thrived during 2020 were the ones that were quickly able to adapt and change with the restrictions of the pandemic and the evolving needs of their customers. Given that, they offer 5 consumer trends that all businesses should consider in 2021:

1. A focus on health and safety
2. Develop social consciousness
3. Personalized communications with clients
4. Support the At-Home experience.
5. Demonstrated Value

To read more about these trends or to find out more about the Better Business Bureau visit: <https://bit.ly/3uHN4Sa> ■



Telephone contact: 780-623-2662

E-mail: manager@cfllb.com

www.cfllb.com