

BUSINESS GROWTH COLLABORATIVE PROGRAM PUTS CONCORD AWNING & CANVAS ON PATH TO SUCCESS

ABOUT CONCORD AWNING & CANVAS INC. Concord Awning & Canvas, located in Bow, New Hampshire, opened for business in 1919. In 2010 the business was up for sale and was purchased by local entrepreneurs, Denise and Peter Sandberg. Concord Awning & Canvas is housed in a 6,000 square foot facility with 9 employees and looking to expand to 12 in the future. "Almost everything we offer is made at our facility," said Denise Sandberg, President and Owner of Concord Awning & Canvas. "We stitch, fabricate, weld and paint everything ourselves. The only products we sell that are not made completely by us are our retractable awnings and drop-down motorized screens. Those come from trusted suppliers and are both made in the USA.

THE CHALLENGE. "When we purchased Concord Awning, we recognized it needed some upgrades. There were no standard operating procedures, no pricing tools, an antiquated computer system, a paper-based system to track sales, and the company's static website was not focused on bringing in new customers." said Peter Sandberg, Vice President and Owner of Concord Awning & Canvas.

"About 5 years into running the company our largest customer took their business in-house and hired 3 of our employees," said Denise Sandberg. "We realized from the start that having one disproportionately large customer was not a good long-term plan for our business. When that customer made their decision to leave, we knew we had to accelerate our existing plan of expanding more into commercial and industrial markets to balance out the seasonality of the awning portion of our business."

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Denise and Peter attended the NH MEP "5 Steps to Sustain Business Growth Executive Information Session." It was designed specifically for small and medium-sized manufacturers to accelerate and sustain business growth with cost-effective approaches for customer retention and expansion.

Concord Awning & Canvas attended the Business Growth Collaborative Program with 5 other companies. The program gave them the ability to identify the right markets to target, and how to obtain customers in those markets. They also learned how to set smart goals, hone their elevator pitch, create and send out e-Surveys, analyze website metrics, learn the importance of search engine optimization (SEO), create and send out e-Newsletters, develop sales forecasts, create sales and marketing action plans and more.

"We continue to use the fundamentals learned in the Business Growth Collaborative Program to be certain we are focused on the right customers and products. We look at profitability, long term relationships, and where we provide what others cannot which is expertise in design. My group still meets quarterly, facilitated by Eric Basta, NH MEP Project Manager, where we continue to check in, share new ideas, hold each other accountable and celebrate achievements. NH MEP's Business Growth Collaborative Program was a terrific investment of my time that continues to pay dividends, and I'd highly recommend it."

-Peter Sandberg, Vice President & Owner

RESULTS



\$175,000 in increased or retained sales



3 created or retained jobs



\$25,000 in new markets



\$20,000 in new investment



\$20,000 invested in marketing and cybersecurity

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