

SAY "CHEESE!" CREAMERY TURNS MILK INTO MONEY

ABOUT CALYROAD CREAMERY. CalyRoad Creamery, based in Sandy Springs, Georgia, is one of Georgia's first micro-creameries for artisan cheese, and was established in May 2009 by Robin Schick and her sister Cathy. The team became enthralled with the cheese making process after visiting creameries around the Southeast. Schick has continued to run the company for the past eleven years, and has a passion for making cheese. The creamery's cheeses are award-winning both locally and nationally, and are made with all natural goat's milk and grass-fed cow's milk sourced in Georgia.

THE CHALLENGE. Schick was struggling with updating the company's food safety plan and bringing it up to code with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). A business colleague recommended she join the Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership (GaMEP) at Georgia Tech's Food Safety Cohort, part of the MEP National Network™, taught by Wendy White, program manager for food safety and quality. This pilot program, which was fully funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NIST MEP), started in 2019 and brought together individuals from different food manufacturers in Atlanta, Georgia, who were responsible for food safety and governmental compliance, for in-depth training and guidance from experts.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. During the training Schick identified what she needed to do in her specific safety plan for the creamery. White pointed to FDA resources, including a "Safety Plan Builder", so that Schick could rewrite her own plan without hiring an outside person, thus saving her money. She was able to identify preventative points outlined by the regulations and post the printed plan in the creamery so that everyone could see step-by-step directions for troubleshooting issues. The cohort structure gave Schick the chance to network and make connections, resulting in more selling opportunities and supply chain resources.

Schick and White also discussed other needs for CalyRoad, including the need for marketing support. Schick was then introduced to Katie Takacs, industry marketing manager, to assist her in a redesign of the creamery's website and implementing an e-commerce solution, as well as a social media strategy. Takacs identified how to make the website more conducive to attract new customers and engage current clientele, as well as implementing a supporting 6-month social media and content strategy plan. By strategically planning the website launch around Thanksgiving 2019, they were able to capture the holiday sales rush. And in conjunction with adding e-commerce, a wholesale website section, tying products in with the events area, and adding a contact us form, the website traffic increased almost twofold. Takacs also created a marketing campaign, creating interactions and sales opportunities. These messages included promotions with specials, festive recipes, supporting small business initiatives, and ways to use the cheese products "outside of the norm" in creative ways.

"I loved working with the people at the GaMEP. They were always professional, resourceful, and willing to help my small company succeed."

-Robin Schick, Owner

RESULTS



Increased e-commerce sales from zero to more than **\$16,000**



Implemented a strategic marketing plan that has resulted in increased website traffic sales.



Gained a national account with reoccurring orders over a 2-month period that netted **\$5,000** in sales.



\$7,000 in new call-in orders for custom baskets and catered cheese boards due to the new website.



Connected with a global events company to provide over **100** cheese boards for a virtual event.

CONTACT US



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