

EXPANDING A SMALL-BUSINESS OPERATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ABOUT SOUTHSIDE PLANTS. Southside Plants, owned by Meg Renninger, is a small company based in Fort Worth, Texas, that manufactures innovative houseplant technologies for use with plant propagation. Since 2018, Southside plants has grown its global sales significantly to become a million-dollar business by aggressive e-commerce marketing on Amazon to both wholesalers as well as to the general public.

THE CHALLENGE. Southside Plants experienced a tremendous increase in sales and growth, more than Meg's home-based operation could handle. The operation needed to be scaled-up and to secure an additional manufacturer or a toll manufacturer. (Toll processing, or toll manufacturing, is a process in which a company provides raw materials or semi-finished goods to a third-party company.)

Furthermore, due to the supply chain disruption that was caused during the COVID-19 pandemic, Southside Plants needed assistance in finding domestic suppliers for its raw materials. Meg wanted to utilize domestic suppliers and toll manufacturers instead of reaching out to foreign companies. This would allow Meg to focus on making new and innovative products while leaving the day-to-day manufacturing to a toll manufacturer.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Meg contacted TMAC, part of the MEP National Network™, for assistance in supplier matching. With TMAC's expertise in batch specialty chemicals manufacturing they were quickly able to quickly sketch out a solution to scale-up the production of Southside Plant's products. TMAC broke down the recipe that Meg was using in her kitchen and came up with a way to replicate her process steps in industrial-size equipment such as jacketed batch-reactors and mixers instead of kitchen utensils. With these specifications, TMAC was able to find an interested toll manufacturer with the appropriate equipment and production capabilities.

TMAC then utilized MEP Connect, a web-based collaboration and information-sharing tool developed by NIST, to look for suitable toll manufacturers. This led to a collaborative effort between TMAC and Phil Plyler, manager of client services at the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, the MEP center in Arkansas. This connection resulted in the identification of a toll manufacturer in Arkansas. Meg visited the toll manufacturer's facility in Arkansas and she was very pleased with their large-scale equipment and facilities. Since they are in the United States and are also willing to not only manufacture the material but also package it, this gives her the advantage of keeping her product manufacturing local and is less likely to be affected by global events (e.g. her current supply of packaging material got delayed because of the problem in the Suez Canal where a large container ship got stuck in the channel and prevented other ships from passing).

"We are very excited to have Dr. Palanki and Dr. Ramachandran from TMAC-Southeast at Lamar University work on this project. The team leverages its industrial experience with the latest in academic research to help us become more profitable."

-Meg Renninger, Owner & Founder

RESULTS



Increased manufacturing capability 2-3 times



200-300% increase in sales



Supplier matched in the US

CONTACT US



202 E. Border Street
Suite #323
Arlington, TX 76010



(800)625-4876



www.tmac.org

