

Marketing to Outdoor Enthusiasts

Ogden's plan to become an "outdoor recreation capitol" is a big undertaking, but when I stop and think about it, the planning and development processes are no different than those small businesses everywhere should be working on.

Although Ogden City requires one humongous business plan, I predict that the processes of development and implementation are very similar.

Many businesses develop a business plan only for the banks and then promptly file them away, never to be seen again. However the plan gives a lot of direction. Starting and running a business without a plan is like trying to find your way through a maze wearing a blindfold. A plan isn't just something you do once. It should be reviewed and addressed frequently to make sure you have a method to achieve success in changing circumstances.

So what are these processes and how does someone develop a solid plan? The processes are analyzing, evaluating, developing, implementing and re-evaluating. The processes need to answer some very

important questions including what, who, where, how and how much? As a part of answering these questions, clear steps of action and assignment of responsibilities must be included.

Let's use Ogden City as an example, but as we go along, try to apply the processes to your own business.

The analyzing process helps you determine which opportunities may work for your business. An excellent first step is to analyze the assets. These are the things that you have going for you to make your endeavor successful. They may be tangible assets such as land, buildings, equipment or they could be intangible including skills, knowledge, and intellectual property. As Ogden City looked at its community and performed its analysis, it was able to identify magnificent mountains, local ski resorts, established trail systems, reservoirs and rivers, transportation infrastructure, community image, well-educated and healthy-lifestyle oriented population, and more. At the same time that you analyze what you have going

for you, it is important to identify what you don't have. Competitively, you will add a lot of challenges if you have to make, buy or broker all your assets instead of building upon assets you already possess. Ogden City may be the crossroads of the west for rail transportation, but does not have the waterways to support being a ship transportation hub. That sounds like a silly example, but many times I have people want to get into business because it sounds great; however they have no assets to bring to the endeavor.

The evaluation process should include surveying and research. These processes help to determine feasibility based on supply, demand and return. Far too many businesses are started based on gut feelings that are not well researched. In Ogden City's case, they not only need to perform surveying and research on how many individuals are willing to come to the Ogden area for recreation, but also on all those other things that make up the total infrastructure. Are there manufacturers that can provide high paying jobs, is there housing and lodging available to accommodate

both short term guests and permanent residents, will the education opportunities available be able to supply the proper work force, are the infrastructure elements of roadways, airports, sewage, and power adequate to support the demand, are the social issues of religion, welfare and health taken care of and does the current population support the vision for the community?

Do all these elements seem unnecessary for the average business to include in a plan? Absolutely not!

The development process has a couple elements.

One, the players must be identified. It takes the right people to make things happen and even the smallest businesses have to think about who these players should be. Some of these players may be employees; others may be resource providers, networking partners and government agencies. Ogden City has recruited a team of economic development professionals who understand the vision and have the skills to develop it. The Council members are vital in keeping the focus moving forward. The Chamber and Weber

State University are both actively involved as well as many other resources in the community and State.

Two, there must be systems developed for implementation. These systems include identifying a marketing strategy, developing policies and procedures, identifying operating requirements and determining funding needs and channels. Ogden City needs a marketing strategy that is world-wide. They need to be cognizant of regulations and proceed forward with policies and procedures that protect their assets as well as maintain the support of the businesses and residents of the community. They need to identify the day-to-day responsibilities that will maintain the vision once operations are in place. And they need to identify the resources for capital in order to move forward step by step. Many business start-ups struggle with obtaining capital, imagine the creative funding tactics that it takes to raze and rebuild such a large percentage of the city.

This completes the planning stage and the next process is implementation. If the previous steps have been well done, the

implementation goes much easier. However, re-evaluation, the last process, is always required. Times change, demands change and economies change. Maybe things just didn't work as anticipated. All of these changes require re-evaluation, re-development and re-implementation. Ogden City has definitely run into elements of their plan that have had obstacles. It doesn't mean failure, it means re-evaluate and develop new directions. Implement and re-evaluate over and over again. Remember, the venture that is not moving forward is moving backwards.

What worked for Ogden City 100 years ago is not what will work now and being an outdoor recreation capitol may not work 100 years in the future. What will not change is the need to work on that humongous business plan over and over again.

By Beverly King
Small Business Development
Center
Weber State University
801-626-7232
Bking1@weber.edu