



GREG SMITH
DOING BUSINESS

Surround yourself with a good team

Every successful business owner and entrepreneur should have a good team of people surrounding them to provide valuable insight. By good, I don't mean the group should be simply composed of people who are like-minded and think your business concept is great. Naysayers can bring a unique perspective and cause you to think about things you may not have considered.

Bring together people with different backgrounds, skill sets, and ages. This can drive important conversations to make certain all of the issues, potential barriers, challenges, and opportunities are on the table.

But where do you find such people willing to spend time providing valuable input?

Start with an existing or likely customer. What interests them about your product or service? Or, in the case of a startup, why would they be willing to spend money with you? How much are they willing to pay and why would they choose you over a competitor? In what ways could your business improve or adjust to better serve them? A change in hours, product selection? Do you provide quality customer service?

Bring in an accounting or bookkeeping professional. Yes, you may very well have to pay for their time, but let's face it, it all boils down to whether your business is, or can be, profitable.

Find an experienced, savvy business owner to be on your team. Learn about best practices and pitfalls common to any entrepreneur.

Speak with your local high school FFA and Future Business Leaders of America student advisers. Contact career centers at colleges or universities in your community. These students may be able to serve as interns benefitting your company in a variety of ways. This may include the development or expansion of social media and digital marketing, for example. Perhaps they could do valuable market research. Simply having their unique perspective could help you grow your business clientele.

Find the most creative thinker you can. Let them brainstorm and come up with "crazy" ideas that just might evolve into your next best revenue stream.

In the case of an existing business, bring your top employee(s) to the table. Allow them to speak freely about problems they see that might be negatively impacting your bottom line. Welcome suggestions, input, and insight.

Receive feedback from the director of your Chamber of Commerce about your business. How might you expand the reach of your company through your marketing efforts? Are you taking advantage of every opportunity afforded to you with your membership?

Solicit the assistance of ad representatives from your local newspaper and radio station. While social media and digital marketing have their place, newspaper and radio advertising remains extremely relevant in Eastern Oregon and may be the very best way to reach a particular segment of your desired customer base. Learn how to write effective and creative press releases.

Familiarize yourself with and take advantage of the services offered by organizations such as Small Business Development Centers, SCORE, SBA, and other business resource centers. Most often, these services are offered at no charge and are staffed with highly trained business professionals.

These are just some of the ideas that may help you develop your concept or existing business into a thriving enterprise. You may have to grow a thick skin, but welcome ideas and expand your horizons. This is what successful entrepreneurs do.

Greg Smith is the director of the Eastern Oregon University Small Business Development Center in LaGrande.



An evening at the movies

The Lodge at Hot Lake Springs expands services to offer second-run film showings

The Lodge at Hot Lake Springs/Contributed Photo

The renovated movie theater at the Lodge at Hot Lake Springs now offers second-run movie showings to the public in the evenings on Thursdays through Sundays. The lodge owners have expanded public availability to Hot Lake through the movie theater, Thermal Pub and Eatery and day-use hot spring soaking.

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

L A GRANDE — Moviegoers now have a new local spot to catch a flick.

The Lodge at Hot Lake Springs recently opened up public access to its fully functional, 60-seat movie theater for second-run showings. The movie theater, in addition to other added amenities, is part of efforts to utilize the space for public use and create a community hot spot.

"People wanted that day-use access and we want this to be a place where people can come and hang out," owner Michael Rysavy said.

Michael and Tamarah Rysavy purchased the Lodge at Hot Lake Springs in 2020 and reopened the hotel after renovation work in February of 2021. Since then, extensive work has gone into the continued revamp of the facilities to create a destination for locals and travelers alike.

After opening the hotel to overnight guests in early 2021, this past December marked the beginning of a more pub-

lic-based approach. Around that point in the year, the owners opened the hot spring soaking area for day use, Thermal Pub and Eatery for alcoholic beverages and food options and a second-run theater for movie showings. As work continues, the owners plan to have multiple pubs, conference space, a fully operational restaurant, concert availability, spa and added soaking space.

"To do anything here before you had to be a guest," Rysavy said. "As soon as we got the movie theater and pub done, we were also able to open up the soaking for day use. It all really happened in December and that's when anyone could come onto the property at that point."

The movie theater at the Lodge at Hot Lake seats 60 guests in a vintage-style wooden seat theater setting — movies are aired in the evenings on Thursdays through Sundays. Rysavy purchased the rights to

30 second-run films, ranging from classics like "Die Hard" to cult favorites like "Napoleon Dynamite."

"For us to get the movie theater done was just a matter of bringing in the equipment and getting the licensing done," he said.

Licensing is the key to showing the films, with the owners currently in the process of purchasing the rights to 30 more films. This would allow the movie theater at Hot Lake to cycle through its movies on a rotation lasting roughly 90 days.

The current setup includes a 13-foot screen and high-quality sound system for an authentic movie-viewing experience. The previous owners of Hot Lake operated the theater, but the space was only for guests and included a much more basic screen and sound setup.

"I think that while we were just open for hotel guests, there were a number of people that voiced their displeasure with that and wanted it to be open to the public," Rysavy said.

The owners have not over-pushed advertising of the movie theater, but some nights have seen large turnout. On the first night of publicly available

movies, about 45 guests showed up for the screening.

Moving forward, Rysavy stated that the theater could be a key element in creating a popular hangout spot at Hot Lake. He noted that the combination of day-use soaking, food and beverage amenities and the movie theater add up to a quality location for a day trip.

"I don't think people are coming out because of the movie that's playing, it's more like coming down to drink a beer, have a snack, watch a movie and have a fun time," Rysavy said. "It doesn't necessarily rely on what the movie is. We haven't really seen a correlation between what we're playing and how many people show up."

As the Lodge at Hot Lake Springs owners continue upping the services offered at the facilities, publicly available opportunities remain an emphasis. The owners hope to include several pubs, two restaurants, concert space, and other opportunities to create a community center in years to come.

"You can make a whole afternoon around it," Rysavy said. "Go for a soak, soon have dinner, see a movie, grab a drink and make a whole day out of it."

Oregon outpacing national increases in health care costs, new study shows

Personal spending for health care rose by 34% from 2013 to 2019 in Oregon

By ALEX HASENSTAB
Oregon Public Broadcasting

SALEM — Oregon health care costs are growing faster than the national average — and are outpacing average wage increases in the state.

That's according to the first annual report from the Oregon Health Authority's Sustainable Health Care Cost Growth Target Program. The reports are aimed at analyzing the costs of health care in Oregon, and finding ways to keep those costs under control.

Director of OHA's Health Policy and Analytics Division Jeremy

Vandehey says out-of-pocket costs and rising insurance premiums are jeopardizing the financial stability of people in Oregon.

Oregon's personal spending for health care rose by 34% from 2013 to 2019, outpacing national averages, the study found.

"What we see is a troubling trend that health care costs continue to grow faster than what we see nationally and continue to eat up a larger and larger share of families' budgets," Vandehey said.

The data from the survey started a year before the pandemic began.

"We know that there's some significant workforce challenges in the health care system as a result of the pandemic, and nobody quite knows exactly how that's going



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A Life Flight Network helicopter lands at Grande Ronde Hospital on Wednesday, Jan. 26, 2022.

to impact the prices of health care services," Vandehey said.

However, the study found that in 2019, nearly a quarter of the average Oregon family's spending was going toward health care costs. The study included both

employee and employer contributions when factoring insurance costs into the overall cost of health care.

The study found the effects of these increasing costs on families can be devastating, and in many cases, leads Orego-

nians to put off seeking care. "If people can't access preventive care, if they can't get the care they need to stay healthy and out of the hospital, that impacts the overall health," Vandehey said.

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