

Expion360's green energy

POWER PACKED



Dean Guernsey/Bulletin file

Chris Finlaw processes lithium batteries at Expion360 in Redmond on July 14.

How a camping trip led to one of Central Oregon's biggest companies

BY MICHAEL KOHN • The Bulletin

It's said that necessity is the mother of invention. That old catchphrase couldn't be nearer to the truth for John Yozamp. Yozamp is the founder of Expion360 Inc., a publicly held lithium battery company based in Redmond. Prior to Expion360, he co-founded solar panel producer Zamp Solar, one of Bend's most exciting tech companies.

But before all that success there was a restless night at Little Lava Lake. Thirteen years ago, Yozamp, at the time a sales and marketing manager, was on a summertime RV camping trip with his wife at the lake. After setting up camp and having an evening meal, he switched on his CPAP machine, a device that treats sleep apnea. Sleep apnea is a disorder that occurs when a person starts and stops breathing while sleeping. If left untreated, sleep apnea can result in high blood pressure and heart trouble, and is even fatal, so a machine is used to help regulate airflow through the nasal passage. Unsurprisingly, Yozamp took the machine everywhere he went. But lack of electricity at Little Lava Lake was expected, so Yozamp brought along a Honda generator to power the device. You can almost guess what happened next. "At 2 a.m. a fellow camper came over and knocked on my door. He asked if I could power down my generator. I explained it was for the sleep apnea machine," said Yozamp. "The next day I told my wife I have to have a different solution for powering the machine." A search for quieter power options led Yozamp to the solar panel market. The unit Yozamp bought was good, but it seemed overpriced and didn't offer much in the way of customer service.



See Yozamp / C2

Lithium battery producer Expion360 plans an expansion in Redmond.

COLUMN

Work-ready means more than earning a degree

BY KATY BROOKS

Bend Chamber of Commerce

My twins are off to college, which brought this topic to the forefront for me along with so many other parents hoping their children not only get great training or education this coming year, but also get what they need to be prepared for their careers. As the CEO of the Bend Chamber, I also care a lot about whether those coming out of the trades and higher education are ready to go to work.

I spoken with many employers who are saying that there are essentials missing in many new job candidates — namely soft skills. Adaptable interpersonal and social skills, specifically. Educators are also homing in on how to prepare students for careers that include interacting with others. Employers want their employees not only to know how to do the job, but how to work with others. They want employees to be productive, creative and consistent to prosper

INSIDE BUSINESS

By Katy Brooks



in a dynamic marketplace. But they can't achieve this if employees lack the skills to work together and with their customers and partners. The 2022 State of Oregon Talent Assessment Report showed that "30% of industries said their employees weren't fully proficient due to

specific occupational skills, interpersonal skills or work experience." A great example of what this looks like on the ground is within the tech industry. Many tech employers are weighing higher education credentials against what they need in baseline proficiency and the ability of employees to learn, adapt and change at the pace of their industry. Many other industries are balancing the need to find employees who have strong

interpersonal skills and social adaptability. Employers in retail and other service industries are completely reliant on employees who have well-developed soft skills. Matt Ertle, owner and strategic partner at PrideStaff, an employment placement company in Bend, believes it is critical to understand the business perspective of what can help prepare students for success. "Employers see first-hand how the education experi-

ence and the work experience match up", he says. He recently shared what he believes are the fundamental basics of whether a person is employable, and how individuals can outperform their peers in the workforce. Ertle's list may seem very basic, but in today's workplace, the value of these skills has grown significantly in over the past decade or so. And no matter what industry a person enters, these skills matter. See **Work-ready** / C2