

FIREFIIGHTERS OF NORTHEAST WISCONSIN

New North B2B kicked off its 3rd annual Firefighters of Northeast Wisconsin initiative in April 2013, aimed at assisting those northeast Wisconsin small business owners who feel as if they're constantly burning the candle at both ends, putting out fires, spinning their wheels, but intent on finding a way to improve.

We put out a call for nominations back in January. In the end, our staff selected two area businesses for this endeavor: Cake Anatomy LLC of Kaukauna and RentSmartRewards of Green Bay.

Through the generous help of Steve Van Remortel of Green Bay-based SM Advisors and Gary Vaughan of Guident Business Solutions in Appleton, the two dedicated-to-improve businesses are receiving five month's worth of consulting at no cost to help their owners work on the strategy of growing their business rather than regularly attending to problems.

B2B is providing a monthly update on the progress of their efforts in each issue leading up to a capstone article in the September 2013 issue of New North B2B magazine.

Guident Business Solutions LLC
www.guidentbusinesssolutions.com

On the Web

SM Advisors
www.smadvisors.com

Heading into August we're more than halfway through our 3rd annual Firefighters of Northeast Wisconsin program, where two of the region's leading small business strategists have donated nearly six months of expertise to help a pair of early-stage companies make that jump to the second level of development.

Owners of both businesses admit to learning quite a bit at this point, and both are making changes within their organization to better position their business for the growth each are planning.

For Green Bay-based RentSmartRewards and its owner, Jo Edwards, the challenges of growing the 2-year-old rental housing referral firm to attract more properties has been helped with the expertise of Steve Van Remortel from SM Advisors in Green Bay and his proprietary Stop Selling Vanilla Ice Cream process. The focus of the process – as well as Van Remortel's training presentation and book by the same name – is on competitive differentiation and effective talent management.



EDWARDS

Edwards has been working to develop new marketing material, and as a result of her conversations with Van Remortel, they've developed the new tag line "We're Different. We Match."



VAN REMORTELT

The clever use of opposing characteristics highlights the differentiating factor Edwards intends for RentSmartRewards – that it does a more thorough job than any other resource of matching a renter with a home they like and can afford.

"This is something Steve and I have been trying to hammer down," Edwards said. "Again, sets us apart."

As the sole employee of RentSmartRewards for much of the two years the company has been active, Edwards recently

added a business development associate, and she's looking to hire additional staff down the road. Edwards is also working to update the website and the database powering the site to produce better matches, as well as letting site visitors know the percent of a match that a property would be to the ideal property for a potential renter.

In our other Firefighters saga, Dawn Bybee of Kaukauna-based Cake Anatomy has been working alongside Gary Vaughan and his team from Guident Business Solutions of Appleton on the small bakery's strategic plan, both for the short term in the next 12 months, as well as longer 3-year strategy.

"There is a different way of thinking when you are an employee/manager and a business owner," Vaughan said. "Some small business owners may struggle with a dual role that includes both manager and owner. Putting our minds in a place where we begin to think strategically rather than operationally is important."

The plan, according to Vaughan, is ultimately to settle on a vision of where Bybee would like her business to be in the next three years.

"Once we know where we are going we can work backwards from that point to begin creating milestones for the business to accomplish in order to reach its strategic goals," Vaughan said. "Dawn and I are in the process of reviewing the strategic focus of her business, working on measureable goals, and establishing a realistic timeframe for the entire process."

It's a process Vaughan is recommending Bybee include her husband and daughter, since they're stakeholders in the success of the family business as well.



BYBEE



VAUGHAN

