

FIREFIGHTERS OF NORTHEAST WISCONSIN

Less stress and better sleep at night

After working with Guident Business Solutions for roughly three months now, Action Painting & Carpet Care owners Ruben and June Contreras said they're enjoying a decreased level of stress in their lives. Many of the operations and financial management issues they've been facing are being worked upon, and June said she can see a tangible difference in the daily operations of the business.



CONTRERAS

June, who does the bookkeeping for the Appleton-based business, said she's found a great source of relief in spending time once a week with Schelly Somenske, an accounting consultant with Guident.

"Schelly has gotten control of our cash flow to enable us to make better financial decisions and to frankly sleep better," June Contreras said. "There have been numerous procedures put in place designed to help me to separate our business lives from our personal lives, which is no easy task for a stay-at-home mother of three active kids and a small business to run out of the house."

Another daunting task for the Contreras couple was to set up an operating budget, a task they took on early in their work with Gary Vaughan, owner and president of Guident Business Solutions. June said this particular exercise was the most eye opening for both her husband and herself, because they never before saw the

financial picture of their business in such a black & white manner.

"It made things become more realistic, and helps with every decision we will make going forward," June said.

As for Ruben on the operations side of Action Painting, he and Vaughan have been working to implement various tools to "corporatize" the company, which has included a cash flow budget, a job costing sheet, and an employee scheduling form. In the coming months, Ruben and Vaughan will be working to establish job descriptions and an employee manual.

Along with these operating improvements, June said she and her husband, Ruben, have discovered that just simply having two experienced professionals available to bounce ideas off has already proven to be a huge advantage for their business.

"We know that both Gary and Schelly are invested in our business and are helping to take us to the next level," June said. "We are able to access Gary directly and know that he is in our shoes as a fellow entrepreneur.

He understands every struggle that we are presented with both from the business and personal standpoint."

In the August 2011 issue of *New North B2B* magazine, we'll update the work Green Bay-based IT Connex owners Brian O'Shaughnessy and Kevin Scholz are conducting with Steve Van Remortel and SM Advisors.



VAUGHAN

Methodology

New North B2B kicked off its inaugural Firefighters of Northeast Wisconsin initiative in April 2011, 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 businesses: IT Connex of Green Bay, an IT contractor for small to mid-sized companies throughout the region, and Action Painting & Carpet Care of Appleton.

Through the generous help of Steve Van Remortel of SM Advisors in Green Bay and Gary Vaughan of Guident Business Solutions in Appleton, the two dedicated-to-improve businesses are receiving four to 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 of B2B leading up to September 2011. In between issues, additional updates will be provided online at our blog newnorthb2b.wordpress.com.

Guident Business Solutions LLC
www.guidentbusinesssolutions.com

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SM Advisors
www.smadvisors.com