



Dog Days at Work

Small kennel and dog training operation looking to improve financial fitness to grow to the next level

*by Sean Fitzgerald,
New North B2B publisher*

Doug and Sue Beaupre have operated their dog breeding and hunting dog-training business from their home in the middle of an Omro residential neighborhood for 11 years, yet they've never been able to take the next step into expanding their operation.

Such an expansion means more space out in the country where the couple could provide kenneling, onsite field training, grooming and the ability to handle more dogs at once than the eight they're raising now. They've been extremely successful in what they've accomplished as a small, part-time operation, but the Beaupres don't have a formal business or financial plan to solicit the financing they require to make their business dreams come true.

They've enlisted the assistance of *New North B2B's* Firefighters program, where we pair northeast Wisconsin's leading small business consultants with business owners who are often spending time putting out the fires in their enterprise as opposed to focusing on growing to the next level. Through this program, the Beaupres will begin working with Gary Vaughan, owner of Appleton-based Guident Business Solutions, on getting their finances in order so that they can make a plausible case to a lender for the financing they need to take that next step.

Over the next five months, the Beaupres will receive guided assistance from Vaughan at no cost. In exchange, they'll share the metamorphosis of their business with B2B readers, explaining what they've learned, what they implemented into their operations, and ultimately the path they're on to achieve their goals.

B2B will provide a brief progress report of the Beaupre's work with Vaughan in each edition of the magazine leading up to the end of the initiative in December, when we'll provide a capstone article on the refinements Beaupre Gun Dogs makes to its operations and financial management.

A work in progress

Beaupre Gun Dogs started in 2007 after Doug and Sue took a dog-training course with renowned hunting dog trainer Rick Smith. Both were passionate about their canine companions and had dabbled in breeding for some time.

Since that time, the couple has bred 78 Brittanies that have gone to loving owners from Montana to Pennsylvania. The couple's home currently supports eight kennels with training grounds in their small backyard, but in order to do pheasant retrieval training with the dogs, the Beaupres travel 25 minutes to an acquaintance's farm. More space outside of the city would be welcome, Doug Beaupre explained.

"We keep talking about the 'someday' factor – someday we're going to have a place out in the country where we can host seminars and cook for people," Doug said.

The Beaupres aren't hurting for demand of their services. They're regularly asked to help new dog owners train their puppies some of the more basic skills of sitting, staying and coming when called. That doesn't even take into account the requests they receive to provide hunting training for more mature dogs. But they respectfully decline most of these requests.

Similarly, opportunities to provide short-term dog boarding or

grooming services are turned away because Beaupre Kennels has neither the space or the time between Doug and Sue to accept every willing customer.

Lastly, the couple dreams about getting into the 'rescue' business to care for, foster and rehabilitate abandoned and neglected dogs. But all of these opportunities to grow operations depend first and foremost on having the appropriate space.

"We haven't opened the floodgates to the public, yet, because we can't," Doug explained, with Sue adding that they've done absolutely no advertising to date – and can't imagine what the demand would be if they actively promoted themselves.

The Beaupres have identified an existing kennel business in Waushara County they'd like to purchase, which includes 40 acres of land and nearly 20 kennels, but they're not quite able to fetch the financing for the \$360,000 acquisition price. The Beaupres acknowledge they need a better understanding of their own business's financial metrics before they head out seeking a loan to help them accomplish their dream.

Calling in the ace

Gary Vaughan, a veteran entrepreneur himself, has amassed a portfolio of dozens of small business clients across northeast Wisconsin who he's worked with over the years to improve their financial outlook by building owner equity in their company. He also teaches finance in Concordia University's MBA program, as well as teaching economics and entrepreneurship at Lawrence University's undergraduate program in Appleton.

Vaughan shared his perspective that any business's financial documents – primarily its profit and loss statements, balance sheet and cash flow statements – serve as a roadmap to chart its future financial goals.

Fortunately for Doug and Sue Beaupre, they have 11 years of operational performance to compare current data against. But

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Vaughan launched Guident in 2009 after spending his entire career teaching – both in the classroom and in business. Having previously spent many years as a business owner himself, Vaughan realized many business owners lacked fundamental skills such as understanding financials, human resource practices and management skills, as examples. His firm's proprietary Guident 360 Assessment Program enables business owners to holistically address their business needs.

Vaughan has professional experience in a variety of industries, including retail, petroleum, manufacturing and academics. He is a senior adjunct instructor in the MBA program at Concordia University of Wisconsin, and a lecturer in economics and entrepreneurship at Lawrence University in Appleton.

COMPANY: Beaupre Gun Dogs
OWNERS: Doug and Sue Beaupre
LOCATION: Omro
FOUNDED: 2007

WHAT IS DOES: Personalized hunting dog training, stud services and whelping assistance. The couple has bred 78 Brittanies which have been adopted by loving owners from Montana to Pennsylvania.

WEB: beaupregundogs.com

the company has never really put together a definitive annual budget, and Vaughan expects that to be one of the first tasks in his work with the Beaupres.

"We use the budget as a benchmark to gauge financial performance," Vaughan said.

Vaughan also wants to ensure the financial data the Beaupres have used for their bookkeeping is the most accurate and up-to-date information possible. Vaughan indicated he's seen other businesses not accurately record financial data, ultimately generating profit and loss statements and balance sheets that don't accurately illustrate the financial performance of the company.

"A really good business decision based on poor financials is going to give us less than desirable results," Vaughan said.

Vaughan assigned reading the book *Financial Intelligence for Entrepreneurs*, an easy-to-read guide providing business owners without any financial background a base-level understanding of the language around business finance and why it's important.

"Getting the financial acumen up to snuff will help elevate the conversation with your lenders," Vaughan explained, indicating that's really the case for any entrepreneur.

On their way

The Beaupres are excited for the opportunity to work with Vaughan, and found they've learned a substantial amount in just their first encounter. They've never incorporated the business, so that's one of the first orders of business, Doug said.

They'd also like to get back to working with golden retrievers in addition to Brittanies, a breed they'd trained in the past but are simply too large for the current setting of the business.

The couple recognizes the ability to increase capacity comes with more work. Sue has already been working fulltime for the business the past two years, while Doug works in the business on the side when he's not busy with his day job at a Fox Valley automotive dealership. The Beaupres said they'd likely hire a groomer and a dog sitter/nanny if they expand operations.

Ultimately, though, the couple said there's so much demand for the multi-faceted services an expanded kennel and training facility could serve. They just need the space – and they'll be working on trying to acquire it over the next five months.

"I have a feeling this thing is just going to take off," Doug Beaupre said. ■