

**PREMIER
OFFICE SYSTEMS**

Your Trusted Technology Experts

TECHNOLOGY / DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT / CONSULTING SERVICES

XEROX® is a trademark of XEROX CORPORATION



Platinum
Authorized Sales Agent

Phone: 702-737-4601
www.premierofficesystems.com

LAS VEGAS
BUSINESS PRESS

sponsored by



We're here for you.

Monday, December 14, 2009

Home | News | Opinion | Classifieds | Search | Contact Us

Buy show tickets
online for:

- Headliners
- Shows
- Comedy
- Magic Acts
- Sporting Events
- and more...



News

News Update

Business Wire

Press Releases

Economy

Business Life

Opinion

Legal Center

Classifieds

Executive Calendar

Networking Calendar

Subscribe

Archives

Get on the list

Contact Us

Links

Media Kit

Home

ROCKING THE RECESSION

Savvy local business owners are expanding and profiting during the downturn

By VALERIE MILLER

The rain is coming down in sheets, and weather prognosticators are forecasting snow, but people are still lining up outside the little frozen custard store tucked away behind an AM-PM mini mart, just off Las Vegas Boulevard.

Luv-It Frozen Custard owner Greg Tiedemann diligently mixes custard shakes and dispenses frozen custard cups to those die-hards waiting outside in the rain. In spite of temperatures dipping into the mid-40s by the late afternoon, the customers don't let up long enough for the owner to sit for an interview with a reporter.

Tiedemann and his wife, Sharon, have owned the store since the late 1990s, purchasing it from his grandmother, co-founder Dorothy Woods. Luv-It opened in the same spot, at 505 E. Oakey Blvd., in 1973, by Dorothy and husband, Richard. Their grandson Greg has found a recession-proof formula to keep it successful: Leave it alone.

"If it's not broke, why fix it?" he says as he makes an eggnog custard cone. "People take over family businesses and they try to change the whole concept. I tweaked this, but I didn't change the concept."

Luv-It stays so busy that fretting over the local economy is a luxury Greg can't afford.

And the recession? "I haven't had time to think about it," he says as he takes orders.

A slew of "best of" awards, and media mentions such as on CBS' "Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson" have helped to draw



BILL HUGHES | LAS VEGAS BUSINESS PRESS

Stevenson Brooks of Sandler Training leads a training session at the Hard Rock Cafe. Brooks teaches sales and views the recession as a selling point.

Marketplace

Search Classifieds:

Search

**Strong.
Secure.**

Committed
to Southern
Nevada.



We're here
for you.

Call us:

702.248.4200



Member
FDIC

SPONSORED LINKS

Data Recovery Service

Looking To Restore Your Lost Data? We Have What You're Looking For!

700% Gains - Penny Stocks

Subscribe for Free to the Best Penny Stock Newsletter in the World!

Free Penny Stock Alerts

Join our free newsletter and get stock alerts that gain up to 3550%!

PennyStocks Soaring 600%

Sign up for FREE email alerts on stocks that jump 600% and more!

3.69% APR - Refinance Now

Refi & Save with DPR®! No SSN Req. As Featured on CNNMoney &...

Penny Stock Jumping 2000%

Sign up to the #1 PennyStock Newsletter Online For Free Today

[Buy a link here](#)

international customers and a cult following for Luv-It. But some other local companies are also thriving amid Las Vegas' worst economy since the 1930s.

RIDING THE RECESSION WAVE

Some of those companies performing the best in the downturn have found a way to capitalize on the recession. One of those squeezing lemons and mixing lemonade is Las Vegas Fast Wrap owner Garth Harris. He went from economic victim to successful franchisee in just 10 months.

Harris' last company, Line-X of Las Vegas, went out of business in April after the market for its spray-on truck bed liners vanished. But by then, he was already making the local Fast Wrap a winner.

Seeing the growing demand for protective wrapping for stalled housing and commercial developments, Harris invested \$40,000 to open the Fast Wrap Las Vegas franchise in February. He has already generated revenues of between \$130,000 to \$140,000, including at least \$40,000 to wrap portions of Boyd Gaming Corp.'s stalled Echelon resort earlier this year.

Boyd halted construction of the \$4.8 billion project



BILL HUGHES | LAS VEGAS BUSINESS PRESS

Greg Tiedemann, owner of Luv-it Frozen Custard, makes a frozen chocolate treat. Tiedemann says he's been so busy, he hasn't had time to think about the recession.



MIKE STOTTS | LAS VEGAS BUSINESS PRESS

Restaurant franchisee Tina Yancey holds 10-week-old Sophia close as she rolls dough to make bread at the Great Harvest Bread Co. Profits rose by \$8,000 this year.



MIKE STOTTS | LAS VEGAS BUSINESS PRESS

Colleen Aiken talks with customers at Colleen's Classic Consignment at 3071 N. Rainbow Blvd. in Las Vegas. She has

in August 2008. Many lost work and revenue as a result of the decision to mothball Echelon, but it ultimately meant big business for Harris' Fast Wrap.

"If Echelon hadn't shut down, I wouldn't have wrapped it," he said. "The recession has actually helped us."

Fast Wrap didn't cover all of the ill-timed megaresort, but enough to make it worth Harris' time. That, combined with other major projects such as one for energy company Calpine Corp. and for the city of Henderson, has allowed Fast Wrap to add employees at a time when others are laying people off.

"I am going to hire two more people tomorrow," Harris said in a Nov. 30 interview.

And Fast Wrap incorporates a recession-friendly business model, but not recession-dependent. When the economy improves, his customer base will simply change. He'll wrap luxury items, such as boats.

Departing residents, and those losing their homes to foreclosure, call on Fast Wrap to wrap and protect valuable furniture.

"I have a contract with a local storage facility to wrap furniture being put in storage," he explained.

Stevenson Brooks is looking at the recession as a selling point for his 3-year-old franchise because that's what he teaches -- sales. The owner of the local Sandler Training franchise said the harsh economy has changed the way potential customers view his services.

"The recession helped my business," Brooks said. "Three years ago, I had to sell to people who said, 'I have more sales than I can handle.' Now, they need to maximize their sales and profit."

A \$60,000 initial investment to buy the local Sandler Training franchise has proved to be a good idea. Clients such as the Blue Man Group, the Hard Rock Cafe and Allegiant Air are using Brooks to motivate and train their sales staffs.

Profits are up by \$30,000 from last year, with the biggest gain coming in the second half of 2009. Brooks received a Biz E Award from the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce in September.

opened two new stores since the recession began.



BILL HUGHES | LAS VEGAS BUSINESS PRESS

Anna Siefert is operations manager for the Nevada Microenterprise Initiative. She sees growth in auto-repair and handyman services.

BANK OF NEVADA

Strong. Secure.
Committed to Southern Nevada.

We're here for you.

Call us:
702.248.4200

Member FDIC

Brooks sees himself as a motivator for salespeople who might have been more like "order takers" in boom times.

"Now, it's my job to take seasoned salespeople and teach them to become salespeople," Brooks said. "They are used to people calling and saying, 'I want to buy something.'"

MAXIMIZING REVENUES

Stretching every dollar has become a key survival tactic for local companies and consumers. Businesses offering to assist in increasing revenue have found the welcome mat. Jay Schwartz's Web designing and viral marketing venture IdeaWork, like Brooks' Sandler Training, has found renewed respect during the recession.

"I think the recession has actually helped us because what we do brings in revenue at a lower cost. Why spend \$7,000 to \$10,000 for billboards when you can get a marketing campaign from us for less, and reach more people?" Schwartz said.

IdeaWork has done well during the downturn. Schwartz is still compiling 2009 numbers, but said revenue was up by \$100,000 from 2007 to 2008. Economists officially put the start of the recession as December 2007.

The 5-year-old IdeaWork has offices in Las Vegas and Santa Barbara, Calif., but about 70 percent of the business is generated in Southern Nevada. Major clients include Station Casinos, MGM Mirage, Harrah's Entertainment and the Hard Rock Cafe.

Some clients dropped IdeaWork's services because of economic hardship, but Schwartz said those were smaller companies. Even that loss of business turned into a positive.

"We were operating at capacity, and some of those clients were lower billables, and maybe having them contract opened the door for bigger ones," Schwartz said.

IdeaWork has 10 employees between locations in Southern Nevada and Southern California. Schwartz sees business as good enough to probably add a few more employees in Las Vegas early in 2010.

"We have expanded our region to Northern Nevada," he said. "Last year was a record year."

Sometimes maximizing revenues can equate to recouping some of the potential losses. Local furniture store operator Colleen Aiken saw an upswing in good consignment furniture at the beginning of the recession as homeowners shed pricey furniture when facing foreclosure.

Many turn to Aiken's three valley Colleen's Classic Consignment stores, two of which she opened since the recession began. Her 40,000-square-foot Henderson store opened in August 2008. She purchased the old 16,000-square-foot Ethan Allen location on South Rainbow Boulevard in September.

"I am one of those people who is crazy enough to open stores in a recession," Aiken said with a laugh. She's been in business for nearly 15 years.

A look around the two stores on north and south Rainbow gives the impression of a new, high-end furniture store, and some of the furnishings are close to new. Aiken gets "a huge amount" of World Market Center samples, such as Aico and FX. She may get them for as much as 50 percent off and pass much of the savings on to her customers.

"I do well in a good economy and succeed or sustain in a bad economy, because (people) don't have \$10,000 for an Ethan Allen bedroom set, but they can get it for \$4,000 from me."

Business just keeps on coming. The wave of foreclosure-driven consignments has abated. But now homebuilders are closing out developments and looking to make whatever they can off their model homes' furnishings.

Combined store sales have risen from \$600,000 to as much as \$800,000 a month. Aiken hired 12 more employees this year and 20 additional workers in 2008.

"I am still growing in a bad economy," she said.

SURVIVOR STORIES

A recession doesn't punish all businesses, but most of them are hit. U.S. Small Business Administration Nevada District Director John Scott said certain types of companies are in demand right now. Among them: security firms, guard-service suppliers and residential short sellers.

Handymen and auto-repair services are added to that list by Nevada MicroEnterprise Initiative Operations Manager Anna Siefert.

"People know if they can't sell their homes, they will live in them for the next five years and want to fix it up," she said.

The Great Harvest Bread Co. at 10180 W. Tropicana Ave. had neither a recession-friendly product like a Fast Wrap or the fame of Luv-It. However, husband and wife franchisees Tina and Kevin Yancey did almost the impossible: The couple increased profits by about \$8,000 this year.

That's no small feat considering a slew of their shopping center's tenants fled, including potential boon for foot traffic Starbucks next door. Revenues dropped sharply as a result. The Yanceys responded by comparison shopping for products, cutting thousands off their vendor bills. They cut labor expenses without laying anyone off. The couple started working more efficiently.

"Hi Ruth! Hi Sergio!" Tina Yancey calls out and waves to regular customers as she bakes, all the while carrying around her infant daughter Sophia.

"I try to know everybody by name," she said. "It is important."

Contact reporter Valerie Miller at vmiller@lvbusinesspress.com or 702-387-5286.