

CAMARILLO BUSINESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY: VALENTINO'S TAKE-N-BAKE PIZZA



A Rising Entrepreneur

At 23 years old, Jason Gray followed his entrepreneurial spirit and opened a new location of Valentino's Take-n-Bake Pizza in Camarillo. Gray knew how to make pizzas, but needed help with the business's back end. With support from the city of Camarillo, he turned to the Economic Development Collaborative-Ventura County for a loan to buy out his partners. He also received help from the SBDC to learn how to manage his business more efficiently.

FROM SCRATCH

Having worked seven years in the Ventura location of Valentino's Take-n-Bake Pizza, Gray had learned the business from scratch. So when he decided to start his own business, he partnered with Ventura store owners Tori and Tom Dann. The plan was for Gray to manage the day-to-day operations of the Camarillo store, while slowly buying out the Danns' share. Confident the take-and-bake concept hadn't yet hit its stride, Gray wanted to take on full ownership of the restaurant sooner rather than later and put his business talent to the test.

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RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

The business wasn't quite ready for a bank loan, so EDC-VC was able to provide the \$37,000 loan Gray needed to become sole owner of Valentino's, which also offers made-to-order sandwiches and salads.

As part of the process, Gray worked with an SBDC advisor to ensure the business was performing at optimal levels. This meant he had more time to focus on marketing and advertising.

"The SBDC showed me a lot of tricks and time-saving methods with QuickBooks. They also helped me clean up my accounts and implement more efficient reporting to get the information needed to analyze how my business is doing," said Gray.

A WINNING COMBINATION

Thanks to the help he received from EDC-VC, Gray has increased sales by nearly 15% in less than a year, with an increase in profits of nearly 30%. In addition, he has given his existing employees more hours and hired three additional employees.

"The services provided by the EDC-VC have helped me really understand the importance of keeping the margins in line in order for the business to be successful," said Gray. "Since working with the EDC-VC, I am now confidently positioned to grow my business to the next level. I took a risk and it was the best thing I ever did."



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