

SARATOGA BUSINESS REPORT

Q1
2024

Multi-Generational: **BOXLEY'S SERVICES**

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Gansevoort Systems Integrator

RASP INC. HAS ELECTRONICS SUPPORT UNDER CONTROL

RASP Incorporated was established in 1995 and for over 28 years has focused on delivering industrial control projects in a timely manner while maintaining quality as a fully-insured systems integrator and industrial controls manufacturer.

WRITTEN BY **MIKE PIEKARSKI** | PHOTOS PROVIDED

When industrial controls and automation company RASP Inc. added a 6,000-square-foot facility to its complex over the summer, its Gansevoort footprint swelled to over 30,000 square feet. That's not bad considering that the company owner started the enterprise nearly three decades earlier on the landing just outside his front door as the only employee.

"It was me from day one," recalled owner and chief executive officer Ron Richards of the business – then called Protech – he created in 1995. "I was the designer, the programmer, and I built the panels. I was building control panels on my porch at my house."

In the succeeding 28 years, the enterprise has changed its name (to RASP), moved from its original location (in South Glens Falls), exponentially increased its

staff (to the current total of 35 employees), and, now, augmented its building complex.

The new facility "is a combination manufacturing site and offices," said Richards, who was born and raised in Corinth. The Saratoga County site – originally 22,000 square feet, supplemented four years ago by a 2,500-square-foot facility – simply was not sufficient to keep up with the demand for the company's



Because we're building for other companies, the products can go anywhere in the world.



services. "We ran out of office space," Richards said.

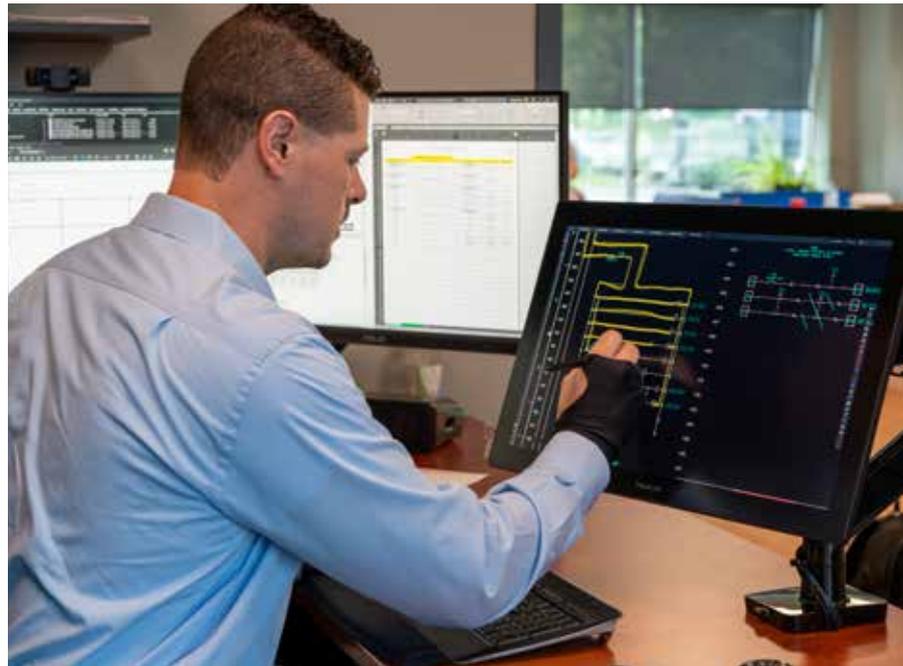
Richards, 56, describes his company as a kind of jack-of-all-trades in the electronics industry.

"We're what's called a systems integrator, which is just a fancy [term] for 'we do a lot,'" said Richards with a laugh in a recent telephone interview. "We're an electrical engineering firm, we're also programmers for industrial use, we're also a manufacturer, and we're also a service company."

The majority of the staff is composed of panel builders, though RASP currently employs 10 engineer-programmers who "design the control systems that we may or may not build," Richards said.

We consider ourselves a manufacturer's extension for other companies. They come to us. If their machine needs a new control panel, we [can] design it, build it, and program it.

— RONALD RICHARDS SR., OWNER & CEO



On its website, the company lists programming topics such as HMI (human-machine interface) proficiency. For HMIs, commonly known as touch screens, RASP can program, enhance, or customize graphics. One of the topics listed under the RASP website's "engineering" section is "motion and servo controls," which Richards said falls under the category of automation.

"It could be a simple motion like a conveyor, or it can be a complicated machine that's doing a lot of operations," Richards said. It's typical for one of RASP's clients to design a machine, then approach RASP with a fairly direct request: 'We need this thing to work.' As Richards explains, "We build the controls, not the machine itself."

RASP does not make a standalone product of its own. But it does just about everything else.

"We consider ourselves a manufacturer's extension for other companies," Richards said. "They come to us. If their machine needs a new control panel, we [can] design it, build it, and program it. It can be a chemical company or a manufacturer in water treatment, medical, power, machine builders – we get to see all kinds of different companies."



Growing up, Richards attended Corinth High School and studied electronics at BOCES in Saratoga. There, he volunteered for a summer job at Raloid Tool Co. in Mechanicville, where he learned how to make electrical control panels.

"That's how I got introduced to industrial controls," he said.

Later, after studying electronics at Fulton-Montgomery Community College and going back to work at Raloid (as well as serving a four-year stint in the U.S. Air Force), Richards struck out on his own - with RASP the result.

When the business was incorporated in 1995, Richards and his two original partners used the first letter of their last names plus the "P" in the word "products" to come up with RASP. His current business partner, Michael Close, joined the company in 1997.

Though RASP counts behemoths such as Rockwell international, General Electric, and Emerson Electric among its clients, most come from within a 50-mile radius of its Gansevoort complex. "But because we're building for other companies, the products can go anywhere in the world," Richards said. "I have an employee in Canada (and) we've done work in New Jersey, we've done work (for firms) in Chicago, California, Texas."

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and other economic uncertainties, many companies have struggled to stay in business over the past few years. Through nearly three decades, however, RASP has thus far weathered every financial storm.

"We're in a good position," Richards said, humbly. "When the economy is doing well, companies are spending money. When the economy is not doing so hot, many companies may downsize, and if they're downsizing, say, in their maintenance department, then they call on us. Or maybe they are manufacturers themselves, and they can't support as many engineers, they can call on us on an as-needed basis. So we tend to stay strong in both good and bad economies."

According to Richards, his primary goal is "keeping the people I have. It's just a great team. Everyone here - they are team players. They take pride in their work. They do whatever they have to do when asked," although, he adds, "I don't have to ask too often."

While he is happy with his company's niche in the electronics industry, Richards is not complacent.

"A lot of what we build is what we call one-offs, or low volume. We design and build [a product], and it goes on a machine, or it goes to a customer, and we never build that one again. In the new facility, I'm hoping to build more repeat business. We're trying to get the word out that we're looking to handle larger volumes [for a company that needs] to build dozens, or hundreds, or even thousands of something."

When it comes to electronics support, RASP, it would seem, has it all under control.

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WRITTEN BY MEGIN POTTER



When Chris Leuzinger left Western Canada for Taiwan, he didn't know his one-year contract to teach at a private school would turn into four of the best years of his life.

"I was having the time of my life, so why would I leave?" he said. "I figured out I loved teaching while I was doing it."



Chris has been on a voyage of discovery ever since. A proponent of education in all forms in 2014 he and his wife, Lauren, became co-pilots of Nourishing Minds Tutoring, a ship of scholars guided by a crew of professionally-trained educators—which has grown to as many as 21 during demand peaks—riding the waves of education.

IN A SEA OF POSSIBILITIES...

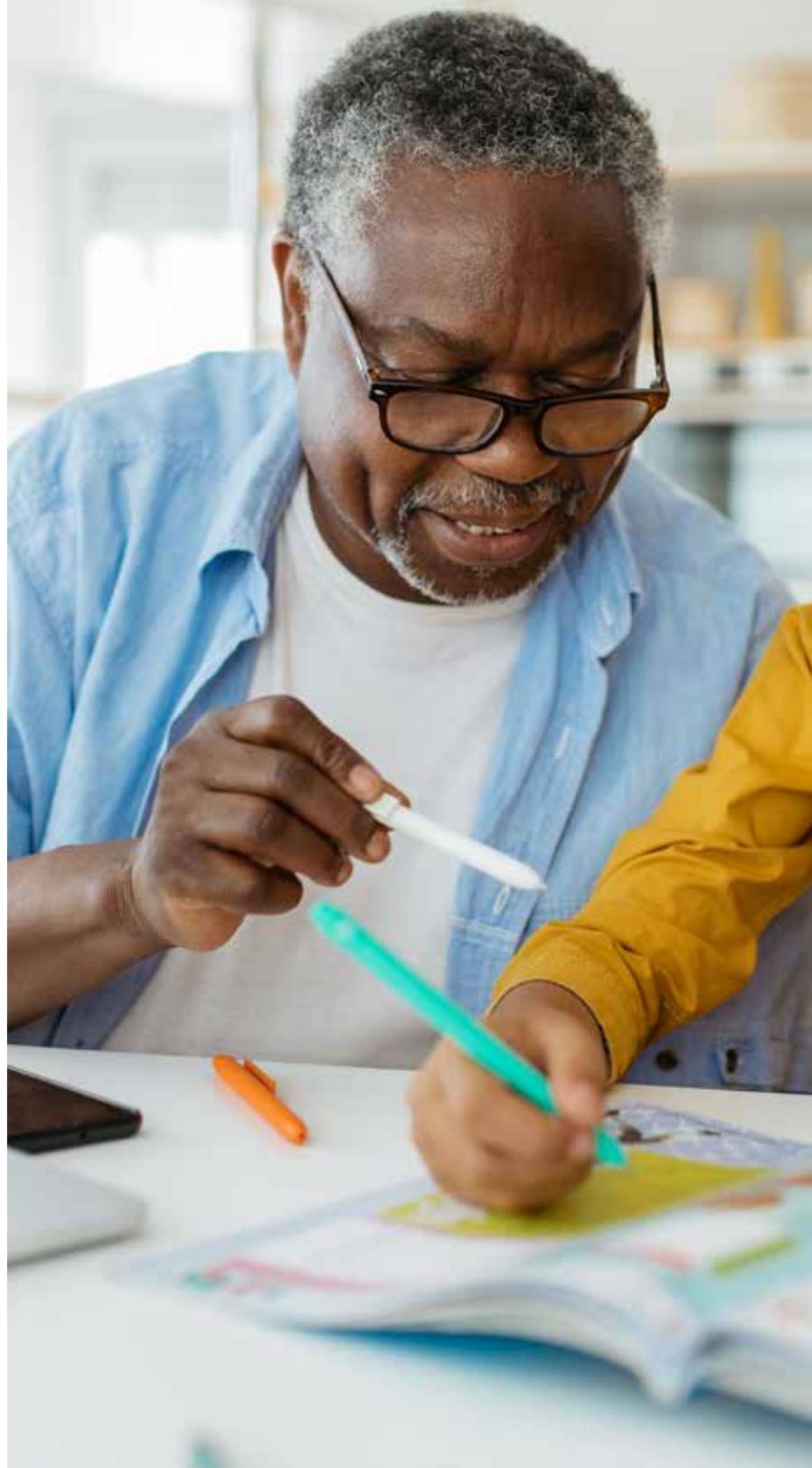
When Chris did leave the Far East, he took a fantastic four-month voyage through Africa, from Kenya to Johannesburg, South Africa. Following that journey, he spent a year in New Zealand earning his graduate degree in Primary Education. After graduation, he would fly back across the globe yet again to begin a six-year "stay" in London from 2009 to 2014.

While in London, he began teaching at a poorly-performing inner-city school in one of the worst areas of the city. When Chris arrived, his school ranked among the bottom 5% in the county; by the time he left, they had risen to among the top 10%.

"True magic can happen when you have higher expectations. Kids rise to the challenge," he said.

During his six years in the United Kingdom, he would transition from teaching into administrative positions. Working as an educational consultant, he helped build teaching standards, curriculum, and professional development training for other schools. While some of these schools were also in England, others were as far off as Spain, Norway, and Trinidad & Tobago. Chris would spend some time in each of these places as well, adding to his already impressive collection of stamps on his passport.





...A COMPASS ROSE

Now in 2014 and back in the US, Chris and Lauren decided to make their home in Lauren's native hometown of Saratoga Springs. The couple would then use their experience to navigate effectively through the challenge of starting Nourishing Minds Tutoring from scratch. They hit the streets and got the word out (through spots like Northshire Bookstore) then let their work speak for itself.

That we've grown to this point almost 100 percent from word-of-mouth tells me people are happy and satisfied with what we're doing - **We must be doing something right.**

– CHRIS LEUZINGER, CO-OWNER



Making education come alive through engaging real-world applications, kids are learning without realizing they're learning - and without having to sit at a desk all the time.

Now, Chris and Lauren (a Special Education teacher working on her second master's degree) have three children; Taylor, 9, Brady, 6, and Layla, 4. They have also had the experience of nurturing a student who was struggling through 3rd grade all the way to earning an academic scholarship to a prestigious university.

"When you choose to invest in tutoring you recognize that it is a long-term investment," said Chris, adding "But, I cannot guarantee grades. Learning doesn't work that way."

TAKING THE HELM

"Making education come alive through engaging real-world applications, kids are learning without realizing they're learning - and without having to sit at a desk all the time," said Chris.

Nourishing Minds Tutoring utilizes both formative and summative assessments to gauge student learning. Using summative (or standardized) forms of testing when beginning to work with a student, they arrive at a launch point. Formative assessments monitor progress, further gauging learning through work samples, essays, and teacher evaluations over time.

NAVIGATING ROUGH WATERS

New and varied approaches to education like these are becoming popular because, as technology helps inform our experience, research indicates traditional methods are failing children. Homeschooling is on the rise, and the online tutoring services market is expected to reach \$23.73 billion by 2030.¹

Whether students are failing to meet age-based expectations or are excelling beyond them, Nourishing Minds provides students with the individualized support and resources they need, while also contracting with school districts to help supplement home instruction.

CLIMBING THE RIGGING

Through creative, personalized approaches, Nourishing Minds tutors teach relevant standards-based curriculum in a way that students respond to.

Growing up petrified of math, Chris had the mentality that he just "wasn't good at it" and "couldn't do it." Then, Chris learned math

could be more than the flashcard memorization method he was taught as a child. Now, math is Chris' favorite subject to teach.

"Common core was crucified in the media but I sing its praises," he said. "When I was growing up, there was one way to do it and that was it. Common core teaches kids a variety of ways a lot of parents and teachers never learned themselves, and that helps so many kids."

FULL SPEED AHEAD

While the Capital District continues to experience a shortage in Occupational, Physical, Speech, Language, and Musical Therapists, Nourishing Minds Tutoring contracts to supplement education with school districts while also offering private and group tutoring, both in-home and online. They switched to an entirely virtual model during five months of the pandemic, but now exist as a hybrid.

"Homeschooling can be done in many, many ways, and you're pretty free to do what you want. It's a lot more doable and accessible than people think it is," said Chris. In New York State, homeschooling families are required to develop an Individual Home Instruction Plan (IHIP) adhering to the 100.10 Standards on Home Instruction.²

Socialization can be accomplished in a variety of ways today, too, Chris stresses. By participating in sports, extra-curriculars, volunteering, and getting a part-time job, children learn socialization skills while also building confidence - which is key.

"To me, success in one aspect of life translates to success in another," said Chris.

Living by example, Chris volunteers 2,000 hours per year as the Assistant Chief of the Wilton Fire Department, and serves on the board of the Cantina Fun Run.

"There's power in getting together as a community and helping. Find a way to get involved, something you care about, and make the world a better place," said Chris.

For more information, go to [NourishingMindsTutoring.com](https://www.nourishingminds.com). 

1. <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/online-tutoring-services-market-worth-100000126.html>

2. <https://nysed.gov/curriculum-instruction/10010-home-instruction>

MULTI-GENERATIONAL



Pictured Left: James "Jim" Boxley. Pictured Above from Left: Steven Boxley and Christian Boxley, photo by Lillian Buck.

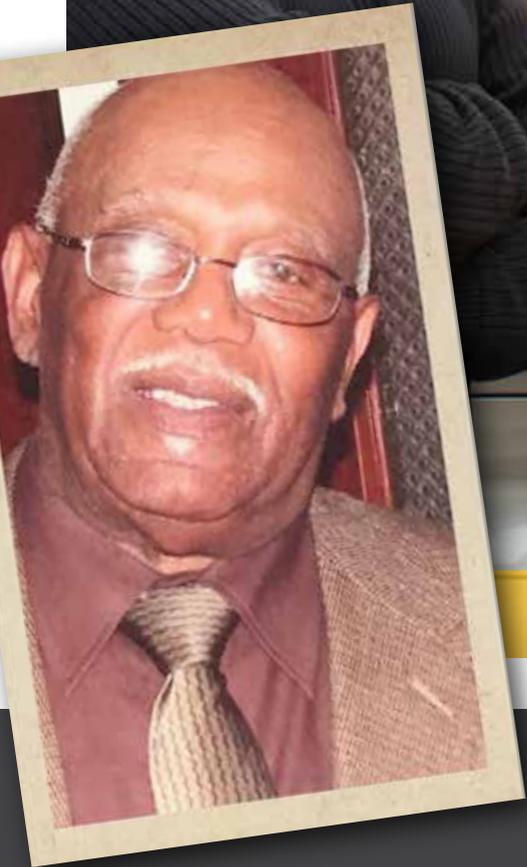


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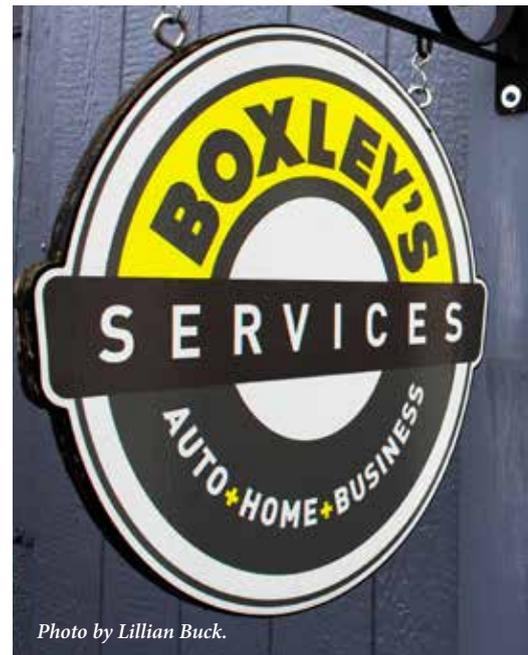


Photo by Lillian Buck.

BUILDING AN

Out-of-the-Box BUSINESS

WRITTEN BY **MEGIN POTTER** | PHOTOS PROVIDED UNLESS NOTED



As long as you're willing to **work hard**,
you can **get what you want**.

— **JIM BOXLEY**, FOUNDER, BOXLEY'S SERVICES



**Transcending the illusion
of societal constructs, a
minority-owned business
proves doing things
differently gets things done.**

In 1948, James "Jim" Boxley left behind the segregated rural southern county of Halifax, VA for a job manufacturing bricks in Coeymans, NY.

It was a rare opportunity for Jim, whose father had been a Pastor and sharecropper, that paid a generous salary of \$62/week. He labored there for 20 years but, because his crew worked so quickly, after toiling at the plant, Jim had enough time at the end of the day to care for cars (which he'd learned to do working at a gas station). And in the 1950's, Boxley's Polishing Service, located out of Marshall's Garage, was born.

"Work was no stranger to my dad from a very young age," said his son, Steven Boxley, current owner of Boxley's Services. "At the brick manufacturing plant, there were no forklifts. You were the forklift. You never went home early and if you felt fatigued, he'd

sweep his hand across your shoulder and say, 'Get that monkey off your back and get back to work.'"

"Being the fourth generation removed from a sharecropper seems like it was forever ago, but it really wasn't. Knowing that, and growing up in the family business, has instilled a sense of pride and self-confidence in me," added Steven's son, Christian Boxley.

**"When You Think Clean,
Think Boxley's"**

At just six years old, Steven, the youngest of his three siblings, became the "door jam" kid at Boxley's. Selected for the job because of his proximity to the ground, he filled cars' rusty door jams with compound, and chromed their large front bumpers.

"I wanted to show my dad how well a job I could do. For him to say, 'Great job!' was huge to me then," said Steven.



“As an African American man in a predominately Caucasian culture, my dad was well-known and respected. He was defined by his name, Boxley, and he taught me that whatever cards you were dealt, that was okay. Always persevere through hard work and focus on character.

– STEVEN BOXLEY, PRESIDENT, BOXLEY'S SERVICES



Christian Boxley, Vice President



Steven Boxley, President



By the time Steven was 15 years old, he understood the value of a good name.

“As an African American man in a predominately Caucasian culture, my dad was well-known and respected. He was defined by his name, Boxley, and he taught me that whatever cards you were dealt, that was OK. Always persevere through hard work and focus on character. He said to me, ‘As long as you’re willing to work hard, you can get what you want.’”

DIVERSIFY, DIVERSIFY, DIVERSIFY

Despite his tutelage, as a young adult Steven and Jim often butted heads in business. Jim complained that Steven was too “fussy” and that he practically “licked the cars to death.” Steven was ambitious and wanted to take Boxley’s to new heights. His R.C.S. High School yearbook quote read, “With a clean car, you’ll go far.”

But after graduation, Steven went to work as an extrusion tech in General Electric’s manufacturing facility. It was there he learned the importance of diversifying.

“No matter how good you are, you need to diversify,” said Steven.

Along with fellow GE co-worker

Kathleen Armour-Goes, Boxley’s expanded and evolved. “She’s even more meticulous than I am,” said Steven. With the company since 1993, Kathleen is now General Manager, and oversaw their 2001 incorporation, expansion into residential and commercial cleaning in 2005, and in 2006, the opening of a second location, at 68 Ballston Avenue in Saratoga Springs.

CLEANING A CITY WITH SPARK

In addition to his work, Steven Boxley was a fullback in the semi-professional Albany Metro Mallers football team for three years. In 1990, he met Michele McGraw at On the Rocks, a popular Albany nightclub.

The couple was married in 1997, and moved to Saratoga in 2001.

“Being from a small town, when we visited Saratoga’s downtown it felt like it just had that spark, and I was in awe. My biggest fear was being able to afford it,” said Steven.

Through an act of “divine intervention” after renting an apartment in what is now Park Place, the couple “hit the jackpot” with an affordable home on Saratoga’s West Side, built by Thomas J. Farone & Son that has since more than doubled in value.



Christian Boxley with grandfather Jim Boxley.



Members of the Boxley's team.

INDUSTRIOUS AND WILLING

In 2010, Boxley's began procuring janitorial supplies, then later added carpet cleaning, floor polishing, power washing, and landscaping to their list of services.

As a minority-owned business, Boxley's qualifies for grants that helped them add a security division and open a cafeteria. During the pandemic, they seamlessly integrated PPE protocol and electrostatic sprayers. At their peak, Boxley's grew to four locations and managed 50 employees. Because they have been assigned an Amazon agent, they can now find school supplies in bulk at discounted prices as well.

Progressive and diverse in their approach, their philosophy is simple; "It's always a 'yes' no matter what the ask is."

In 2003, Jim, now 94, retired from Boxley's Services. The business had changed from a needs-based service (where simonizing paint prevented oxidation) to a more cosmetic service. No longer were there vinyl ceilings to scrub, or white wall tires to shine. Acid-washing a fleet of cement trucks was replaced by auto dealership contracts, and then by customers wanting a glistening 7-step ceramic

coating, whose glassy appearance protects vehicles from UV rays while eliminating surface scratches for favorable CARFAX reports.

Jim would be shocked by the matte finishes popular today, said Steven. Even he was resistant to this latest ceramic coating technique at first, but when Christian finally convinced him to apply it to his own truck, he became a believer.

"Holy smokes! It was next level. Definitely, when it's done right, it's pretty cool," he said.

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

Christian began working at the family business when he was still in high school. He recruited his friends to be part of the culture there too.

"The 'Bossman' made sure I knew the value of things so it wasn't a party, but we had a good time," he said. "Because we're a small business, we don't have to answer to a board of directors and have great managers on-site, like Dan Grock, who's been with us more than 20 years."

"It's a great time playing the sandbox. We smile, have joy, and so much fun doing the job, it brightens things up," added Steven.

Now, back from graduating with a bachelor's degree in Business Management from Le Moyne College, he's modernizing the company with online scheduling, social media, and great employee benefits, without compromising the human touch they've become known for. Minnows compared to the kings of the industry, programs like the Car Wash Club, instituted last year, let the little guy swim with the sharks.

ANSWERING THE CALLING

In addition to starting a successful and reputable business, since 2020, Steven has been answering the Church's calling as well, serving as an Associate Minister of Albany's Macedonia Baptist Church and the United Church of Saratoga.

"My goal is to duplicate the works and make them accessible to all. It's a beautiful thing to be a candle, to light the way so someone else can go on and do the same," he said.

"At the end of the day, he's too much of a young buck to retire," added Christian. "Work is his hobby, and how he has fun. It's still his Disneyland."

For more information, visit boxleys.com. 🌐

EXPANDING MARKETS



Cerrone

PLUMBING & HEATING

Bringing Quality Service to Saratoga

“

I like to think we are laying the foundation for happy, healthy communities, and a great place to start is building relationships with local builders.

– JOE CERRONE, VICE PRESIDENT & CEO



WRITTEN BY MIKE PIEKARSKI | PHOTOS PROVIDED

If you have recently noticed a swarm of large white mechanized vehicles, with a distinctive blue and yellow logo emblazoned across them zipping along your neighborhood streets, don't panic. It's not an invading army, it's only the vans of Cerrone Plumbing, Heating & Air Conditioning answering service calls.

The longtime, upstate family-owned company recently announced it is expanding its heating and plumbing services into Saratoga Springs and its environs.

"I saw your van!" is a phone call I get daily," office manager Kassy McDonald stated in an email. "Over the last year and a half, I would estimate we have increased our Saratoga presence a great deal. We used to have only a handful of customers there, and now we have a couple of hundred, with more being added each day."



"We have always serviced (the Saratoga area), but we were typically just sprinkled throughout," said Joe Cerrone, company vice president and CEO, in a recent telephone interview. "Now we're looking to really expand our footprint down there."

Based out of Queensbury, a few miles off exit 19 on the Northway, the company's service area extends "a little bit past Bolton Landing" to the north, said Cerrone, who added that he wants to spread the word that it is heading south.

"I think since we are seen more in our northern communities, some might think that is as far as we reach," he said. "But we have been in and out of the Saratoga/Ballston Spa area for a few years. Now that we have a larger crew, we are making a greater impact on our customers in both directions."

With a staff of more than 30 installers and technicians, and a growing fleet of vans, Cerrone Plumbing and Heating is well-equipped to handle any plumbing or HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning) task—emergency or otherwise. In addition to servicing individual homeowners, "we work with a lot of contractors and builders; we do a lot of work for them," Cerrone said.

The company is well-versed in all plumbing and HVAC needs. In addition to performing major jobs, such as the installation of water heaters, furnaces, and heating and cooling units, the Cerrone enterprise has been repairing homeowners' leaking faucets and replacing faulty toilets for decades.

As for the ratio of service calls it performs, "If you break it (down) as far as contractor jobs that we're doing for builders and residential jobs, it's about 50-50 now," Cerrone said.

Anthony "Uncle Tony" Cerrone started the company—doing strictly plumbing jobs—out of his home in Lake George in 1987. From his one-man, one-van beginning, Tony Cerrone eventually took on a couple of employees, who handled furnace, and then AC, installation and servicing.

Joe, who was born the same year the company was founded, worked summers in the firm starting when he was a teenager. After high school, he earned an associate degree in heating and air conditioning at Hudson Valley Community College in Troy in 2006. He then worked for a few companies in Long Island before returning to the area and rejoining the family enterprise full time in 2012.

"I was the HVAC installer and service technician, and my dad would do plumbing service—it was mostly residential jobs," said Cerrone, who grew up on the border of Lake George and Queensbury. "As we got busier and hired more employees, I had an installation crew working under me, and then I did the service calls after that. Then we got a little busier, and I did the quotes and service, and then I had another service rep working under me."

We're looking to keep growing at a steady and efficient rate to provide the best customer service, and quality work that we can for our customers.

– JOE CERRONE

Joe and his dad, the company president, became partners in 2017, when Tony Cerrone began renting space in a 3,600-square-foot warehouse-style building on Everts Avenue in Queensbury.

The Cerrones later purchased the building and made it their home base. They completed a major site renovation in 2023, expanding its warehouse storage area and creating a more inviting office space.

"We put a great deal of time into our quality control and customer relations," McDonald stated. "We do the job right, and I can stand by that. In fact, Tony Cerrone says that to me weekly!"

According to Joe Cerrone, the company has a very loyal staff.

"We have a very low turnover of employees here. Once guys come on, they seem to stay. There's a lot of people (who) have been here five-plus years."

Since 2012, the company has doubled its staff every three years. And business is booming.

"We're looking to keep growing at a steady and efficient rate to provide the best customer service, and quality work that we can for our customers," Cerrone said. "I like to think we are laying the foundation for happy, healthy communities, and a great place to start is building relationships with local builders."

The company's website, cerroneplumbinghvac.com, provides a comprehensive overview of their services. For inquiries or appointments, individuals can reach them at (518) 798-6560. 

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BUSINESS FEATURE

CORNELL'S USED AUTO PARTS

Stands the Test of Time

WRITTEN BY AMANDA GRAVES



*Pictured at Left: Mike Colvett, General Manager,
Cornell's Used Auto Parts*



A

second generation family-owned business, Cornell's Used Auto Parts is dedicated to serving their employees, customers, and community. Cornell's was first established in 1972 by the mechanically inclined, Duane Cornell. After

studying mechanics and working for dealerships, he decided to venture off and make his own business. However, after becoming ill and unexpectedly dying at a young age, his son Casey stepped up to keep the business afloat. "I didn't want to see everything he worked for his whole life go away," explained Casey.

Cornell's has come a long way since their startup and they continue to grow every day. "In the beginning we didn't have the money. I would buy two cars a week now we buy 40 cars a week," said Casey. While there are many factors for their success, Casey and his team accredit their ability to adapt to modern times, and use technology to their advantage, to explain how they got to where they are today. Having a background in insurance, Casey was used to using modern technology programs and brought this to Cornell's when he took over the company. They have an impressive online presence and this allows them to expand their market. "[You] used to sell car parts to people who walked around your place, or knew about your place. Now we're selling parts all over the country," explained Mike Colvett, Cornell's General Manager.

In addition to their technological advancements, Cornell's makes sure they always provide their customers with excellent service in a timely manner. "We want to provide them with good products and good service," explained Casey. "You're getting the same part, same quality, for half the money than a dealer." They have access to over one million parts that are available for next day delivery. Every part they obtain





**In our industry,
there's not very many
around that are
family-owned and
operated, let alone
one that's been
around since the 70s.**

– MIKE COLVETT, GENERAL MANAGER

is cleaned, tested, and goes through an extensive quality control check. Cornell's is so confident in their process that they have a six month standard warranty on every part, and offer a variety of extended warranties. By ensuring they are providing quality parts, Cornell's has been able to stand the test of time. "There were places around us that were the big fish and they're gone or sold out," said Casey. Mike went on to elaborate about how "In our industry, there's not very many around that are family-owned and operated, let alone one that's been around since the 70s."

As for the future of Cornell's, they plan on continuing to grow and serve their community. "The sky's the limit," said Mike. "We sit down and we set goals in the beginning of the year. We keep track of them and it just seems to keep growing and growing." This year they will be hosting their second annual car show. The show originated when Mike had the idea to host one, expecting it to be a fun cookout for their employees. However, the show was a huge success and hundreds of people gathered for the event. This year, all proceeds from the show will go to the Double H Ranch, which provides specialized programs and support for children and their families dealing with life-threatening illnesses.

For more information about Cornell's visit their website at CornellsUsedAutoParts.com. 📍

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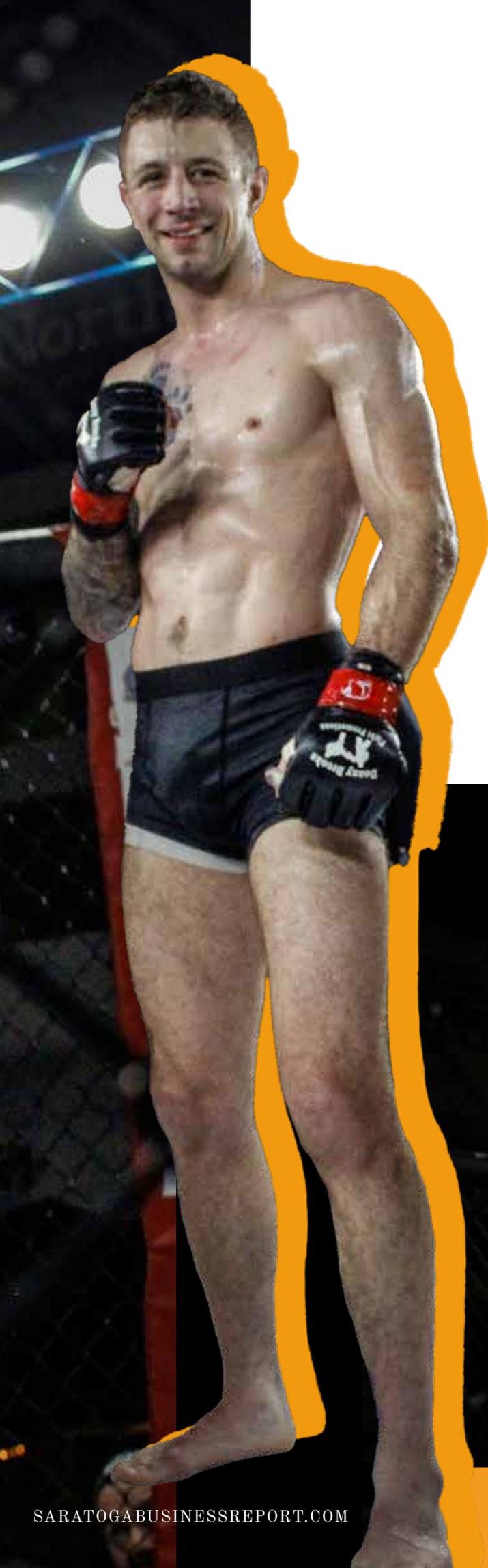


KNOCKOUT ENTREPRENEURSHIP SARATOGA'S OWN LAUNCHES FIGHT PROMOTION

WRITTEN BY TYLER MURRAY | PHOTOS COURTESY OF DONNYBROOKE FIGHT PROMOTIONS

DONALD WALTON HAS BEEN TRAINING IN MARTIAL ARTS SINCE HE WAS SEVEN YEARS OLD.

But it wasn't until he found Saratoga's Elite Academy of Martial Arts at 19 that he began to take his training seriously. On Friday, November 17th, over a decade later, Walton received his Brazilian Jiu Jitsu black belt from Alliance Jiu Jitsu instructor James Bruchac. "Jiu Jitsu helped bring out who I truly was and helped me become a better person. It gave me purpose and forced me to face myself and improve daily. I am not sure if I would be alive today if it weren't for this place and this martial art," Walton said in a statement after his belt ceremony. Now 32 years old, Walton has become an integral part of the academy's coaching staff.



If one walks into the Saratoga academy on any given night, Walton can be seen teaching striking and grappling classes to children, beginners and devoted martial artists alike. Walton also represents the gym as a professional MMA fighter (with a record of 1-0), a status he acquired earlier this year in February after his round two submission win over Jason LaPage in Barre, Vermont. "I really enjoy being a professional fighter, even though it hasn't quite sunk in yet," Walton told Saratoga Business Report. "There's a lot more opportunity at the pro level when it comes to opponents, plus you can finally start earning money on your fights, which is always nice."

Yet, Walton - a student turned teacher, turned professional - has bigger ambitions than just fighting for his own name. He is blending his love of fighting with his entrepreneurial spirit and starting his own fight promotion, based in his hometown - Saratoga Springs.

"My goal is to help the level of our community's martial arts and help give people avenues to be able to make it in this sport if they want to. I'm not doing this for me; I'm in this to help the community," Walton told SBR.

Coming in the new year, Walton has teamed up with a local venue to host a night of amateur fighting. But it won't just be a one-off event. Hopefully, for Walton it will be the first of many nights. Walton continued, "When I was looking into starting my own fight promotion, I reached out to good friends of mine in the fighting world, many of them are experts when it comes to the business side of things," Walton said. "All I know, really, is fighting, so I had to build a good team. The owner of DonnyBrooke Fight Promotions (a well known promotion for amateur and professional fighters in the Northeast, based out of Barre, Vermont, where Walton got his debut victory)



MY GOAL IS TO HELP THE LEVEL OF OUR COMMUNITY'S MARTIAL ARTS AND HELP GIVE PEOPLE AVENUES TO BE ABLE TO MAKE IT IN THIS SPORT IF THEY WANT TO. I'M NOT DOING THIS FOR ME; I'M IN THIS TO HELP THE COMMUNITY.

– DONALD WALTON





suggested I work under his name. They have a database of fighters, people reaching out for bouts and a well-established name, so it was a no-brainer for me," Walton said.

In essence, it's a franchise deal. Walton will work under the DonnyBrooke name and become the face of the promotion in New York, working closely with fighters throughout the region. The first event is slated for March of 2024, with a venue already established - the Saratoga City Center. "We thought it was the perfect venue for what we are trying to do. The space, the price, all of it. Plus it's right here in my hometown." The City Center has been receptive to MMA events before, having hosted Kaged Kombat roughly a decade ago, at a time where MMA wasn't nearly as popular. "I looked into a lot of venues, places were either overcharging for very little to nothing, or they just couldn't fit what I was looking for - in terms of the size of the cage, the seating for the crowd etc," Walton continued, "the City Center checked all of our boxes for a venue and I really want to keep our relationship with them for the future." DonnyBrooke's New York promotion will put on fights in a variety of disciplines, including mixed martial arts, muay thai, kickboxing and grappling. The fights will be at an amateur level to start, but Walton plans on eventually hosting professional bouts under his promotion. "I've found out that a lot of our local fighters are used to fighting only under one or two

promotions, because really, there aren't a lot of promotions near us. My goal is to have local fighters, be able to compete with fighters from all over the country, creating a fresh pool of talent." Undoubtedly, this will create a lot more opportunity for local fighters to be seen and work their way up the ranks from amateur to professional, just as Walton did. Plus, for local martial arts fans, it's a great way to support the local scene while enjoying fight nights right in Downtown Saratoga.

When asked where he sees DonnyBrooke Fight Promotions in the future, Walton told Saratoga Business Report, "I'm hoping, years from now, to have DonnyBrooke partnered for One Championship to be a feeder into a larger, international promotion." One Championship is a world-renowned fight promotion that began in 2011. The Singapore-based promotion works with smaller promoters all over the world to add to their ever-growing pool of fighters. They even pull from a New York City-based promotion, Warrior's Cup, which was established in 2006. "Warrior's Cup is an amazing promotion, but they had to start where we are now - at the beginning - and slowly build themselves, and that's what I want to do now, to build this promotion large enough to partner with One Championship," Walton said. For more information about DonnyBrooke Fight Promotions, or to buy tickets for upcoming events, check them out on Facebook or visit DonnyBrookeFightPromotions.com. 



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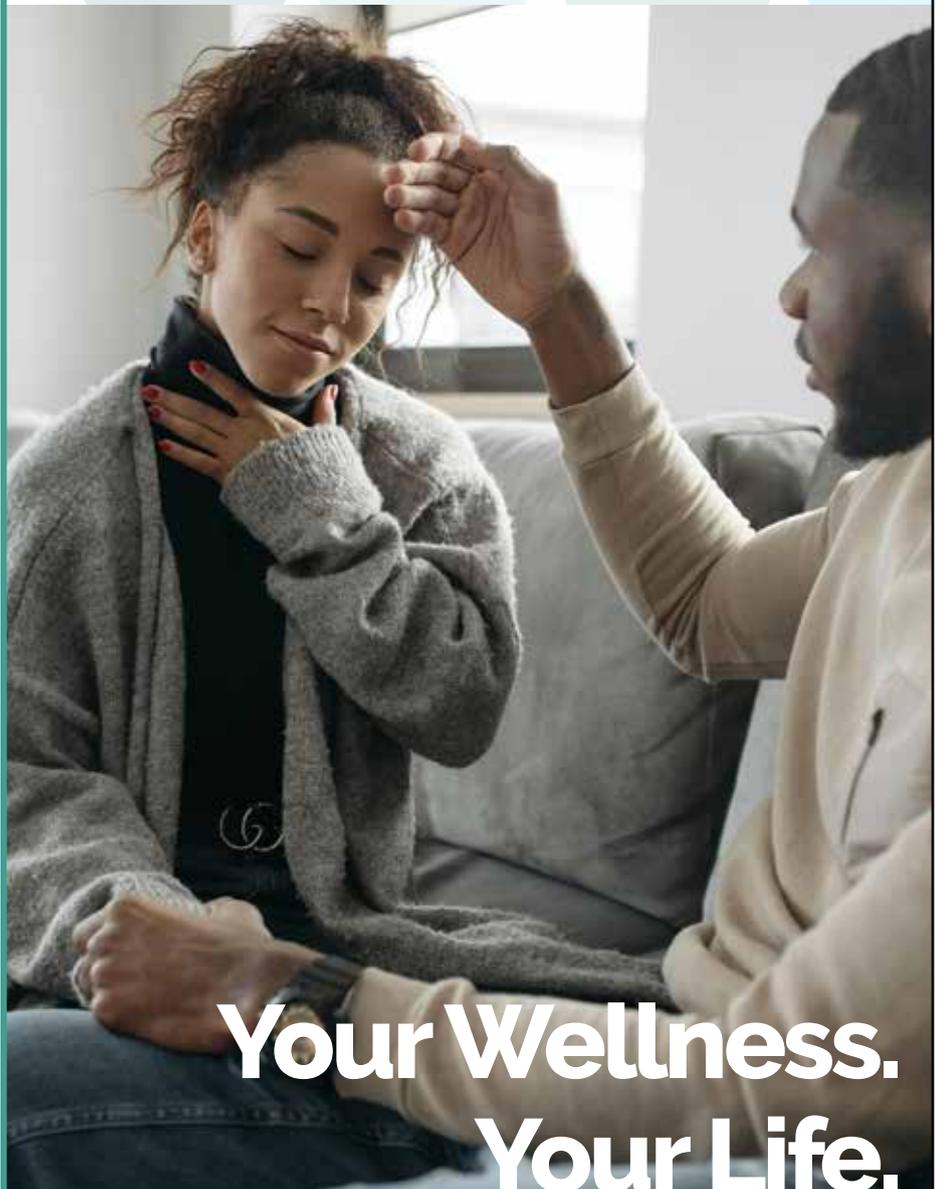
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A Journey of Service **MEET AUTUMN WRIGHT** **The Veteran Behind Seraphina Divine Beauty**



WRITTEN BY **AMANDA GRAVES** | PHOTOS PROVIDED

From driving military trucks in Iraq to creating the perfect wedding look, U.S. Marine Corps veteran Autumn Wright can do it all. After traveling all over the world, Autumn made the decision to move back home to New York and open her own salon, Seraphina Divine Beauty. Following years of hard-work, and building her business from the ground up, the salon has become extremely successful and is continuing to grow every day.

Located in Ballston Spa, New York, Seraphina Divine Beauty first opened its doors in 2015. They offer a wide range of beauty services including: waxing, makeup lessons and application, and a variety of different hair services. In addition to all the listed services, the salon specializes in weddings, an industry Autumn has worked in for many years. Whether someone needs a routine touch-up or an elegant style for their special day, Seraphina Divine Beauty provides it all.

After graduating from Ballston Spa High School in 2005, Autumn had intended to go to college. However, due to a lack of support she was unable to do so, and found herself homeless at only 18 years old. While sleeping in her car a recruiter stumbled across her and asked if she would be interested in joining the Marine Corps. Always up for a challenge, Autumn decided to enroll.



She went through 13 weeks of intense bootcamp. Initially, there were around 70 girls enrolled but by the end, only about 40 girls remained due to the harsh training conditions. However, Autumn made it through and even became an expert rifleman in the process. "It definitely taught me a lot about my capabilities," she explained. "Because a lot of times you think that you can't handle something, and then you can handle a lot more than you think when you're pushed beyond your means."

From bootcamp, Autumn first went into Marine Combat Training. Shortly after, she would go on to attend Military Occupational Specialties School and then Motor Transport School at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. At Fort Leonard Wood, Autumn finished at the top of her class and as a result, continued onto Logistics Vehicle Systems School. After completing all of her training, she traveled to her first duty station at Camp Pendleton, California. In August, 2006, thinking she was volunteering for a Marine expeditionary unit that would allow her to travel the world, she volunteered for deployment. However, her impressive skill-set led to her being sent to Iraq instead. "I thought I was going on a cruise ship around the world with the expedition unit and it turns out they needed me more in Iraq. So that fast tracked me over to the combat logistics battalion," said Autumn laughing.

In November 2006, she began her pre-deployment training, and then left for Iraq in February, 2007. Stationed in Al-Taqaddum, Autumn went on about 150 convoys, transporting supplies to many different cities. Some of the places she frequently drove through included: Blue Diamond, Ramadi, Al-Fallujah, and Al-Asad. Eventually, she was asked if she wanted to be a part of the Lioness program; which attached females to infantry units to do things men could not, such as search women. She agreed and remained part of this program until returning to the United States in 2007.

After four years of serving her country, Autumn left the Marine Corps in 2009. Once finished, she began traveling, going everywhere from Arizona to Tennessee. She got a government job at a construction site doing hazardous material removal and asbestos abatement in Oak Ridge, Tennessee; the largest of the Manhattan Project sites. However, this career was short-

lived and Autumn continued exploring the country.

Eventually, she landed in Fayetteville, Tennessee where she enjoyed being a stay at home mom to her newly-born son Raiden. Autumn spent her nights waitressing, where people began to notice her beautiful hairstyles and makeup. She began agreeing to work proms and weddings which inspired her to attend beauty school. She earned her degree from the Fayetteville College of Cosmetology Arts and Sciences, where she graduated as the student body president.

After working in Tennessee for a while, Autumn returned to New York due to her grandmother becoming sick. She decided to move back permanently to be closer to family. After applying to every salon in Saratoga, and being denied by them all, Autumn was able to get a job at Make Me Fab. Here, she began learning from anyone who would talk with her about what goes into a business. She acquired several new skills including: inventory, online scheduling, and more. Using this knowledge she opened Seraphina Divine beauty a year later.

The name derives from the Hebrew word seraphine, which means flaming. "I was thinking of what hair and makeup, what this career choice means to me and to me it means passion, and when I think of passion I think of flame," Autumn explained. She continued to think about marriage and the relationship of a man and woman, which led to her adding divine, which means heavenly. "Over a matter of a few hours of sitting there playing with feelings and words, it just kind of chose me."

Autumn brought a small clientele from Make Me Fab over to her new salon, but she still needed to do a lot of networking. Social media was not very common yet, so she went

about gaining clients through word of mouth. "If I had down time at the salon I was literally out on the street walking around, passing out business cards to anybody who would take one with 20% off written on the back," said Autumn. Her hard-work and determination allowed her to grow her clientele to what it is today, and she is continuing to grow. "Every year I made my business better in a different way and here I am. We're almost at 10 years now and it's come a long way."

While Autumn enjoys doing hair and makeup for any occasion, she loves when she gets hired for a wedding. "It's a little bit more intense of a feeling," she said. "It's the excitement, and the intensity of the emotion and the memory. Being a part of somebody's happiest moments, and I just love the vibe of the wedding day because it's such a happy day."

Autumn is not slowing down anytime soon, and has big plans for the future of Seraphina Divine Beauty. She wants to continue to grow her clientele, and expand on her makeup line that recently launched. Additionally, she wants her salon to be an enjoyable experience for all who walk through the door. "A lot of people say they feel relaxed and they can talk about stuff, and they feel like they can connect and that's the kind of vibe that I want," Autumn said. She continued to express how proud she is of seeing her hard-work pay off. "It's something I built. It's something that's functioning to support myself that I created and I love the people that I've cultivated in my world."

When not at the salon, Autumn has several different hobbies. She enjoys working out, music, and is a self-proclaimed foodie. She stays busy with her 12 year old son and pit lab shepherd mix rescue, Dale.

For more information about Seraphina Divine Beauty visit their website at seraphinadivinebeauty.com. 🌐

“

It's something I built...and I love the people that I've cultivated in my world.

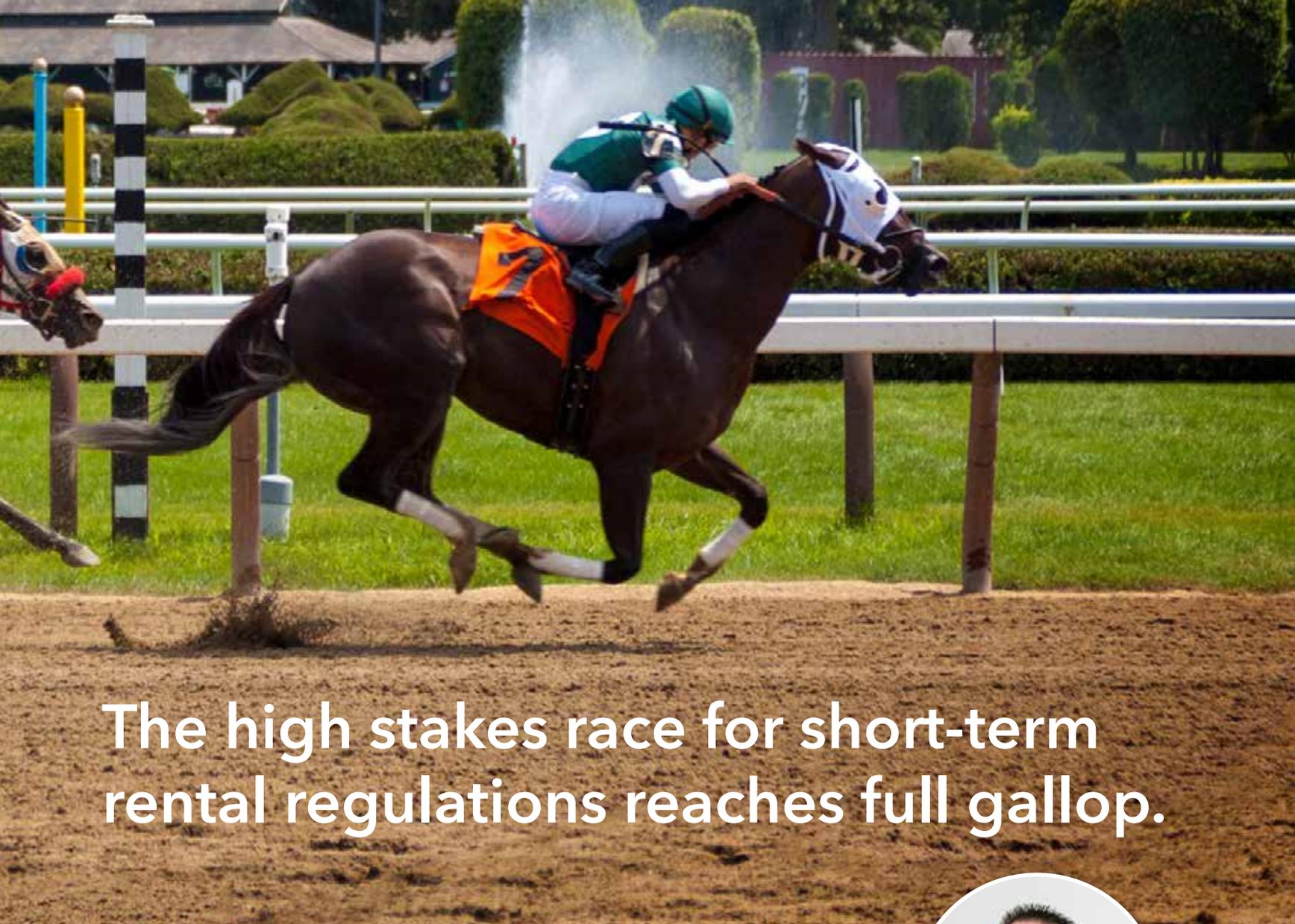


Airbnb BELMONT

WRITTEN BY MEGIN POTTER

The adrenaline-pumping anticipation surrounding the Belmont Stakes coming to the Saratoga Race Course fast-tracks a fierce debate over **the long-term consequences of short-term rentals.**





The high stakes race for short-term rental regulations reaches full gallop.

“ **All the hotels are booked up already.** Where else are these people going to stay?”

– **MIKE SCUOLA**, PEERLESS COMPANIES



Mike Sciuola, Founder, Peerless Co.



Short-term rental websites have revolutionized the way we travel and book accommodations. Now, they're the reason residents are at the edge of their seats in a nerve-racking race to institutionalize rental regulations.

Since October 2022, a series of standing-room only public forums, moderated by the city's Commissioner of Accounts, Dillon Moran, have been held to discuss the economic impact of short-term rentals in Saratoga.



Short-term rentals fill a gap in the hospitality industry, argue some, and the positive economic impact they generate can potentially extend to the renter, the host, co-host, city, and state.

Short-term rentals fill a gap in the hospitality industry, argue some, and the positive economic impact they generate can potentially extend to the renter, the host, co-host, city, and state.

“All the hotels are booked up already. Where else are these people going to stay?” asks Mike Scuola, founder of Peerless Companies, a real estate investment firm whose motto is “Build. Manage. Invest.”

STRs FIND THEIR STRIDE

The short-term rental (STR) market we know today has replaced the boarding house/lodger model that facilitated affordable housing in the 19th century. Its online platforms, including: AirBnB, VRBO, Expedia, HomeAway, and others, however, are used almost exclusively for booking vacations. Which puts traditional proprietors at a disadvantage, say hotel, motel, and bed-and-breakfast operators subject to regulations, city taxes, and county occupancy taxes for establishments with at least four units.

In Saratoga, an aggressive growth cycle has resulted in the number of STRs nearly doubling from where it was less than two years ago, with more than 950 listings within city limits, found software company Granicus in a cross-platform review.

Without strictly-enforced STR health, cleanliness, parking, and safety standards, property owners, renters, and first responders are left unprotected. One of the primary benefits of a traditional hotel (that many STRs lack) is a dedicated staff to check customers in, handle rowdy guests, clean their rooms, or provide them with room service.

Peerless Companies manages a variety of real estate investments including short-term and long-term rentals, working with an experienced group of third-party vendors and their in-house team, to serve as a local point of contact, said Scuola.

“We’re set-up for any issues that may occur. We perform credit and background checks, verifying a renter’s identity for long-term rentals, and for short-term, we screen a





guest as much as we can. The platform performs a pre-screening. We rely on reviews, make our own house rules, set, and enforce them (or else we'd become a party house). We keep up with home and property maintenance, so all as it should be."

"When a guest is in one of our homes, it's all about the experience. We provide guidebooks that focus on everything the area has to offer, guest baskets, a hotel-style turn-down, wrapped toilet seats, fresh shampoo. All that incurs costs."

A SHARE OF THE PURSE

Saratoga Springs has a longstanding tradition of being a host community. The summer horse racing tourist season boom triples the city's population - and its room rates. For the historic arrival of the 2024 Belmont Stakes Racing Festival in June (to allow for the uninterrupted construction of the new Belmont Park in Elmont, just outside New York City limits) those rates, in some cases, are jumping to more than four times their off-season price.

AirBnB, the biggest of the home sharing apps, allows hosts and co-hosts to earn an income while renters may still end up saving money, freeing up cash for them to spend at more local businesses. Many prefer the home rental experience (over the traditional hotel stay) leading them to return to the area when they otherwise might not. And other affordable options, including Coldbrook RV Park, just minutes from Saratoga, are filled with amenities for the whole family. In New York State, revenue from vacation rental properties (rented out for less than 90 consecutive days) is critical because it is subject to state, city, and local taxes.

But wagering on short-term rentals is not as lucrative an investment strategy as many

believe, cautions Scuola. There are website, processing, and other fees, resulting in high operating costs reducing the profit margin.

"Profits are not what people think. It's very costly on the operation side...Everybody thinks you're going to get rich off short-term rentals, but you're really not. You have to clean every two days and cut the lawn frequently, so whenever anyone's there, it looks pristine. You want that first impression to be what they expect it to be."

In April, Peerless Companies will be launching a new booking software on their website to provide a reduction in those fees to clients. As a STR co-host, they offer another layer of transparency to hosts, allowing them a look behind-the-scenes at communications, marketing, and property management.

TAKING THOSE ODDS

Preserving the majestic character of the city comes at a price. The economic opportunities the business community will soon experience from hosting the historic Belmont Stakes race, must be approached with an eye on how STRs affect housing accessibility and affordability in the long-term housing, and home ownership markets.

"There is a ton of affordable housing going up and the city as a whole is trying, but it's hard to do it in the footprint we have," said Scuola.

"Everybody is worried about keeping up with the Jones' but when construction costs are higher, it becomes too expensive to be able to afford to lower the rent without an infusion of money from federal tax credits like the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)."

Peerless Companies manages Coldbrook RV Park, affordable apartments, and single-family homes in Saratoga County.

They are mission-focused, he said, and Saratoga is a great little city with a great community, but when the government gets involved and puts regulations in place, costs become excessive.

To limit the negative impacts of a glut of rental properties remaining vacant most of the year in Saratoga's neighborhoods, regulations limiting STRs to only owner-occupied properties has been proposed. Under the proposed legislation, owners must reside in the property for at least 185 days/year and, as of July 1st, will have 60 days to register as a STR. They must pay a \$1,000 registration fee (across two years), and for the associated costs of fire inspections, insurance, etc. There would be a \$200 penalty per day for both booking services and hosts for not registering a unit.

"It's important for my clients that I get them prepared for what's to come, but in my opinion, it's going too fast," said Scuola. "There has to be taxation at some point on short-term rentals, but it's a matter of how you do it and what is required. The proposed legislation is too much and is being pushed too fast. They need to think about the effect and the ramifications to follow. They need to take time and look at other successful models in the state." 

For more information about Peerless Companies, their Saratoga Airbnbs, and the short-term rental opportunities at Coldbrook RV Park, please scan the QR code.



SPEED UP YOUR LONG SALES CYCLE with these 3 STRATEGIES



WRITTEN BY **HOPE RELLY-COBB**,
DIRECTOR OF CONTENT, SIX MARKETING

Managing long sales cycles is one of the problems we hear about the most as marketers.

Specifically at SIX, where we work with many B2B clients who have very technical products or services. New clients often come to us frustrated by how slow their sales process is.

But the sales cycle isn't a marketing problem, right? Traditionally speaking, no it's not. But any marketing professional could probably tell you about a time they ran an objectively great campaign that generated leads but no sales. And that's frustrating for everyone involved.

It's one of the reasons we decided, a long time ago, to expand our own services to include not only marketing but also sales and technology consulting. We've found that working with our clients to improve sales cycles helps them see more success in their marketing.

Let's explore three strategies we typically use to speed up our clients' sales cycles.

1 STREAMLINE YOUR SALES WITH THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY

There are many elements of the sales cycle that you can't control. Maybe the leads at your target companies must go through a lengthy buying process with multiple decision-makers and compliance. Perhaps you manufacture parts that must be included in design specifications long before your customer is ready to place an order. Or maybe your customers are just incredibly indecisive.

This might just be the way it is in your industry. And other than changing your industry (usually not a realistic option), there isn't much you can do about it.

But what you can change is your approach to outreach. Using the right technology to identify, communicate with, and keep track of leads can streamline your side of the sales process and shave off valuable time.



SIX MARKETING

marketing materials that speak to each buyer's needs.

What kinds of educational content you need will vary greatly depending on your product or service, industry, and buyers. Some examples include: service/product pages, spec sheets, helpful blogs, newsletters, informational guides, infographics, videos, FAQs, case studies, and testimonials. Content takes some time and effort to build out, but eventually you'll have a strong foundation of content to support your sales team.

3 SCALE UP & REFINE YOUR LEAD GENERATION

Once you have better processes in place, you can increase the volume of leads in your funnel and scale up your outreach. Streamlining your sales process and marketing content will allow you to communicate with and market to more leads at a time.

The best way to generate leads depends on your industry and where your target audience is best reached. You'll need to determine which channels (email, display ads, social media, etc.) are the most effective.

Account-based marketing (ABM) can be the best approach for companies with long sales cycles. ABM combines highly targeted and personalized outreach with advertising and other marketing support.

Using the right technology, you'll identify specific, high-value accounts that meet your ICP and send messaging to the right contacts at those companies, with content tailored directly to their needs. In addition to direct outreach, you'll also serve highly relevant ads to your prospects and provide them with personalized educational supporting content.

This lead generation approach focuses on spending your time and effort in the most effective way possible. It helps shorten your sales cycle by ensuring that the leads entering your sales pipeline are high quality and likely to convert into long-term customers.

Speed up your sales cycle

Long sales cycles are frustrating, and in many industries, they're unavoidable. But streamlining processes, creating educational content, and refining your lead generation can make a crucial difference in your sales cycle.

If you'd like to learn more about how to speed up your sales cycle, visit our website at [SIX.marketing](https://www.six.marketing) to schedule some time to discuss your company's unique needs with our VP of Business Development, Leah Parillo, or email leah@six.marketing directly.

You can make your outreach more effective by using intent data to generate more refined prospect lists. This will allow your team to focus on communicating with prospects who not only meet your ideal customer profile (ICP) but are also most likely to buy.

Technology can also help you automate outreach and follow-up, document and keep track of all leads and communication, and nurture any leads stuck in the pipeline. By cleaning up your processes with technology, you can speed up your side of the sales cycle to help compensate for time-consuming processes on the prospect's side.

2 SUPPORT YOUR PROSPECT'S DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

While you can't directly control how long your prospects take to complete their buying process, you can help speed up their buying process by ensuring they have all the information necessary to make a decision.

Understanding your customers and how they make buying decisions is important. Analyzing ICPs and personas helps us

understand: your audience, how they conduct research, what sources of information they trust the most, what kind of information they need to make a decision, and more. A detail-oriented person will need more in-depth content, while fast-paced decision makers might want high-level information that's clear and concise.

It depends on your target companies, but you may need to sell a buying committee on your products or services. Buying committees involve multiple stakeholders who might have very different personalities and priorities.

For example, if your buyer personas include both engineers and supply chain managers, it's important to realize that it might take different strategies to reach them. Engineers tend to be highly skeptical buyers and need detailed information and specifications to make an informed decision. Supply chain managers will likely be less concerned with the specs and more concerned with your ability to deliver products on time and on budget. It's essential to have

the FUNDAMENTAL ROLE *of income*

The Engine That Drives Your Lifestyle



WRITTEN BY
CONOR BOYD,
FOUNDER & MANAGING
PARTNER OF
THOROUGHbred ADVISORS

I have a question I ask all my clients, What is the engine that drives your lifestyle? Most of them eventually land on income. Of course health, family, faith, and many other things are important to our existence but the income we earn, in my estimate, is the thing that is the lynchpin for our lifestyle. Whether you are 2, 20, 65, or 90 years old, it is about income. Working or retired, it is about income. You may say, well there is that one person. Perhaps you have taken a vow of poverty and it is about someone else's income. Or perhaps you are a YouTube sensation, forging hatchets from iron ore, completely self-sufficient, living off the land. Either way, for most of us, income is paramount to the lives we live.

THE ILLUSION OF ASSETS OVER INCOME

An interesting thing I have observed is that society tends to be more enchanted by assets. To allow you to think for yourself about what is most important. Imagine this. Imagine that you won the lottery and I told you your ticket was worth \$100 million dollars! What feelings would you have? How would your

life change in the blink of an eye? How would you physically change before our eyes?

And then, just as quickly as I said you won \$100 million dollars, I followed up with the fine print of your massive win. "You my friend will receive your \$100 million in the form of \$1,000 annual payments for the next 100,000 years and upon your death, whatever you have not

enjoyed, you will leave for the next lucky winner!"

I am not saying any of us would turn down \$1,000/year but hopefully I am proving to you that it is not about assets, but rather the income that can be generated from those assets. We have a tremendous amount of clients in the Capital Region who have or will have NYS Pensions. For years now, I have smiled

Over many, many years of diligent saving, you have the opportunity to take a little bit of money and create a lot of money.

at how little these clients have appreciated the money that is required behind these pensions to guarantee payments for a lifetime. Ironically, I have also smiled at how much our clients overestimate the amount of income that their 401(k)s can generate based on the lump sum they have.

UNDERSTANDING COMPOUNDING INTEREST AND MORTALITY CREDITS

Two simple but profound distinctions every human should understand are the idea of compounding interest and the law of large numbers or in the context of income, mortality credits.

Investopedia defines compound interest as the interest on savings calculated on both the initial principal, and the accumulated interest from previous periods. As I often say, over many, many years of diligent saving, you have the opportunity to take a little bit of money and create a lot of money. In the context of compounding interest, the years you have and the interest you earn each year will determine the success of this strategy.

The law of large numbers, and in this case mortality credits, can have a significant impact on income. Simply put, across a very large group of people, actuarially, you can determine an average age of death. Some people will live beyond this average age, and some people unfortunately will die before this average age. Mortality credit is the idea that when you pool a percentage of your money together with thousands of other

people, the ones who pass earlier than expected can benefit the ones who live longer than expected. This can increase the amount of income available for each individual while they are living. Pensions, such as the ones provided to employees of NY State and other municipalities, leverage this actuarial science and mortality credit in providing these employees with a guaranteed income for life.

TOOLS AND CONTEXT IN FINANCIAL PLANNING

In my opinion, the financial industry is divided into two camps. Of course, there are firms like Thoroughbred Advisors who enjoy and see the value of each camp. The financial tools available in our industry primarily fall under two major umbrellas: investments and insurance. Those in the investment camp leverage the distinction of compounding interest, and work to solve the income challenge through building greater assets. The insurance camp often leverages the law of large numbers and mortality credits when solving the income challenge. In my opinion both are valuable, they are simply different tools.

We believe that tools are neither good nor bad until you put context around them. To give a simple example, in the context of a nail, hammers are amazing tools. In the context of a screw, hammers are not so amazing. With that said, I can definitely get a screw in with a hammer! At the end, however, what does the screw look like and what does the

material surrounding it look like?

THE CONTINUOUS IMPORTANCE OF INCOME

The context of our lives. The resources we have. These and other factors will impact the tools you will need to implement. And as a reminder, your lives are driven by income today, and so it will be for the years to come.

If you do not have a clear view of how you will maximize income now, and in the future, we would welcome a conversation.

The information provided herein is for general informational purposes only and should not be considered investment advice. Any strategies described may not be suitable for everyone. Readers are encouraged to evaluate all information in light of their own situation and seek the advice of an appropriate professional advisor.

About Thoroughbred Advisors

Thoroughbred Advisors is a leading financial firm dedicated to providing tailored, transparent, and authentic financial solutions for their clients. Established in 2014, the firm focuses on empowering individuals, families, and businesses in the Capital Region to achieve lasting financial success.

www.thoroughbredadvisors.com
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HARNESSING TRENDS IN

Outsourcing for a Stronger Bottom Line in 2024



WRITTEN BY ALAN VANTASSEL

In the wake of recent global shifts, it's evident that sales management has transformed, leaving leaders and their teams with a unique set of challenges and opportunities to shape the future of their sales organization in a positive direction.

The Evolving Landscape of Sales Management

To thrive in the rapidly changing sales landscape, managers need to understand emerging trends that could help them lead and grow more efficiently.

1. LISTEN BEFORE YOU ACT

While the customer has always been king, sales teams often prioritized taking action before listening to buyer feedback. Post-pandemic, it's crucial to shift this approach. Start by actively listening to your customers' wants and needs before crafting your sales strategy. Gather insights, conduct surveys, and truly understand your target audience to tailor your approach effectively.

2. FOSTER ENHANCED COLLABORATION

In addition to maintaining strong customer relationships, the future of sales management emphasizes the need for improved

internal collaboration within your organization and throughout the supply chain. Encourage open communication, teamwork, and knowledge sharing among your teams to ensure a streamlined, customer-focused approach.

3. CULTIVATE FLEXIBILITY IN SALES LEADERSHIP

To stay at the forefront of evolving sales trends, sales leaders must constantly adapt. To implement this, focus on being a quick learner, embracing technological advancements, and leading your team with purpose. Being open to change and ready to pivot your strategies when needed is the hallmark of a good leader.

Outsourced Sales Management: A Strategic Asset

Amid the rapid shifts following the pandemic, outsourcing sales management has emerged as a



valuable tool for businesses. It's not just a trend; it's a strategic choice that can significantly impact the future of sales management. Here's how outsourcing can benefit your business and boost your bottom line:

1. STAY AHEAD OF THE CURVE

Outsourcing to experienced professionals ensures your company doesn't lag behind in adopting new trends. Outsourced sales leaders stay up to date with customer sentiments, priorities, and sales trends, giving you a competitive edge. By tapping into their expertise, you can build a resilient sales model that better serves your customers and drives higher profits.

2. LEVERAGE SALES EXPERTISE

Seasoned sales experts provide invaluable insights, strategies, and a deep understanding of the sales landscape that can be out of reach for smaller companies. Outsourced sales professionals bring a wealth of experience and specialized knowledge to the table, enabling small businesses to access top-tier talent and industry insights they might not be able to afford full-time.

3. REDUCE OVERHEAD COSTS

Outsourcing can often be a cost-effective solution, especially for smaller businesses. You can scale your sales efforts up or down as needed, avoiding the burden of maintaining a full-time, in-house team during uncertain times.

The Bottom Line

Businesses can harness the power of outsourcing their sales function, a strategic move that can be especially beneficial when lacking the financial capacity for in-house leadership at the same level. By leveraging these experts, businesses can navigate complex sales challenges, stay competitive, and achieve revenue goals without the hefty costs of maintaining a full-time sales leadership team. As an experienced professional who understands the ever-changing sales trends, I can help your business stay ahead of the curve. Don't let the fast-paced sales world leave your business behind - contact me today and I will help you build a resilient sales model for tomorrow. 📞



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Meet the
Rest of
the Team!

Left: Carissa Conley
Right: Melinda Bucknam



A Strategic Approach to Finding a Business for Sale

Navigating the Path to Business Ownership



WRITTEN BY **MATTHEW WAGONER**

In the final edition of our four-part series on buying and selling a small business, we're looking at how to zero in on your perfect acquisition target. We're going to detail the multifaceted approach of identifying those potential targets, ensuring a comprehensive strategy that aligns with your vision, and both your personal and financial goals.

BEGINNING THE SEARCH

This phase in the acquisition journey involves identifying businesses that are on the market and "off market" or not listed for sale. The process is facilitated by various platforms and strategies, each with its unique advantages and challenges.

For on market businesses, online marketplaces such as BizBuySell.com and BusinessesForSale.com have bridged the gap between sellers and potential buyers in the business world. These digital platforms are equipped with advanced search functionalities, enabling users to meticulously sift through listings based on specific criteria like location, industry, and price range. Beyond mere listings, these websites often provide valuable resources and insights into the business buying process, including articles, tools for valuation, and tips for due diligence.

Of course, business brokers will also have listings and can be utilized to assist in the complex search process to make it a more manageable endeavor. Business brokers offer a personalized service, presenting a selection of businesses that closely match your criteria and investment goals. Their network often extends to off market listings that are not available to the public, providing potential buyers with access to unique opportunities that might otherwise be missed. Remember, a good broker not only helps in finding the right business but also assists in

navigating the negotiation and purchase process, leveraging their expertise to your advantage in what can be a competitive market landscape.

Direct approaches, such as cold calling and direct mailing, serve as targeted strategies for individuals with a precise understanding of the business sector they wish to enter. These tactics allow you to directly engage with business owners, uncovering off market sale opportunities that might not be listed on public platforms. While these methods demand more time and effort, they can also lead to direct negotiations with owners willing to sell their business, potentially reducing competition and facilitating more favorable terms.

Networking plays a crucial role in the business acquisition process, with local business associations, chambers of commerce, and industry-specific events acting as fertile grounds for building valuable connections. Engaging with business advisors, accountants, and attorneys is especially fruitful, as these professionals are often privy to early discussions about businesses considering a sale. Expanding your professional network can not only provide you with insider information, but also enhance your credibility in the business community, making you a preferred candidate for business owners looking to sell.

Subscribing to industry-specific publications is a strategic move for prospective buyers, offering updates on businesses for sale and insights into market trends. Auctions and liquidation sales, on the other hand, present unique opportunities to acquire businesses or their assets at a discount. These methods can be particularly advantageous for those looking to enter a market at a lower entry cost, provided they are prepared to put in the necessary legwork.

INITIAL SCREENING AND OUTREACH

At this phase in the process, the groundwork for a successful acquisition is laid, involving a meticulous review of potential businesses and the start of conversations with sellers or their intermediaries. This phase is not just procedural; it is the foundation upon which the rest of the acquisition process is built.

First, buyers should take a deep dive into the available data concerning the businesses. This isn't merely about skimming through financial statements or customer testimonials; it's about piecing together a comprehensive picture of the business's history, its standing among consumers, and its future trajectory.

After the initial research, but before reaching out to a seller or broker, the next step is drafting a set of pointed questions. These inquiries are designed to peel back the layers of the business, revealing the motivations behind the sale, the hurdles the business faces, its financial robustness, the tangible and intangible assets that come with the purchase, any key employees to the success of the business, and potential real estate associated with the business, among many other things. This preparatory step is not just about gathering information; it's about setting the stage for meaningful dialogue.

The manner of the initial contact—whether direct to the seller or through a broker—cannot be understated in its importance. It is here that the tone for all future interactions is established. Professionalism and a respect for confidentiality are not just courtesy; they are necessities, given the often-sensitive nature of business sales. This initial outreach is the first step in building a relationship based on trust and mutual respect. Good relations between a buyer and seller are critical to a smooth transaction, and both sides should keep that in mind, particularly during the initial vetting process.

Following the preparatory work and initial outreach, the conversation deepens through meetings and calls. These interactions are valuable opportunities to delve into the finer details of the business's operation, its challenges, and potential for growth. It's also a moment to discuss the sale's terms candidly, and to assess the seller's sincerity and commitment to the transaction.

In many cases, a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) becomes part of the process. This legal formality is more than just a procedural hurdle; it's a pledge of confidentiality that ensures the information shared remains between the parties involved. Signing an NDA marks a transition into more detailed discussions about the business, safeguarding the sensitive data that comes to light.

Throughout this process, vigilance is key. Any hesitation to disclose vital information, unexplained surges in financial performance, or undue haste to close the deal may be red flags identifying potential issues within the business or the sale process itself. Buyers should trust their instincts, ask questions, and verify information as they are making a life-altering decision rife with risk under the best of circumstances. Notably, most buyers will have help along the way from brokers, attorneys, and accountants, among others. They should work with experienced advisors and use that experience to their advantage as much as possible.

CONCLUSION

Finding the right business to purchase is an intricate blend of diligent research, strategic outreach, and keen intuition. By leveraging a variety of methods to identify potential opportunities, engaging in thorough initial screening, and conducting detailed outreach, prospective buyers can navigate the complex landscape of business acquisition with confidence. The journey to business ownership, like many of life's journeys, is paved with challenges. However, with the right approach, it can lead to rewarding opportunities and long-term success. The key to a seamless acquisition lies in understanding the market, knowing what questions to ask, and maintaining a clear vision of your entrepreneurial goals.

If you have questions about embarking on this journey yourself, our team at The Wagoner Firm, PLLC is always available to start that conversation. For more information, please visit thewagonerfirm.com.

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YES, *You Need a Podcast*



WRITTEN BY **MICHAEL NELSON**

A quick Google search will give you more stats and information than you probably want to know about who is listening to podcasts, their age, gender, income levels, education, the list goes on and on.

To see some of the stats I am referencing, just scan the QR code to hop over to a website I found with just a quick Google search.



A very interesting stat is the number of people who pay attention to ads on podcasts, and the percentage of listeners that buy a product because of a podcast. I myself have purchased a few products over the last few years...***because I heard about them on podcasts.***

Many of these stats paint a picture of the potential to increase sales, product placement, brand awareness, targeted demographics, consumer education, and more. Despite all these benefits to podcasting, I am met with a fair amount of push back from clients when I recommend they add a podcast to their marketing mix. For the record, I am advising all (yes ALL) of our clients to add podcasts to their content mix. The resistance I typically get is that they are worried they will not be



engaging, no one wants to hear their voice, their product or service is just not that interesting, they would have no idea what to talk about, etc.

The funny part is that **none of those things matter**. The #1 reason you should do a podcast is not because you are engaging or funny, nor because you have an amazing voice. To be fair, it has little to do with your actual product or service. It's not about building an audience, going viral, or being the next Joe Rogan.

THE NUMBER ONE REASON YOU SHOULD BE DOING A PODCAST IS BECAUSE YOU NEED CONTENT FOR YOUR MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS EFFORTS.

Most of you are probably struggling to come up with ideas on what that content should be. You are probably sitting around week after week frustrated because you continue posting the same old stuff, and getting little from it.

What you need is a way to educate your audience on who you are as a brand. You need content that helps tell the story your clients and customers can consume. You need a way to create content that can be used across multiple channels like social media, email campaigns, and your website. You **NEED** this and at the same time, you are probably hoping to do this without breaking the bank.

PODCASTS ARE THE SOLUTION.

You can easily and affordably record what you need for a podcast using platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Google Chat. This can be uploaded to YouTube, clipped out for social media, used as a vlog which can be turned into a blog as well. All of this can be included in your newsletter and posted to your website. The ability to use one simple piece of content to create many pieces of content is staggering. I am sure my team will give you a link or QR code somewhere near this paragraph.



The great sage, and sometimes scary visionary, Gary V explains this in his 2016 blog called, Content on Content on Content.

Long story short, all of your content marketing needs can be amplified by starting with just a simple podcast that took you 10 to 20 minutes a week (or month) to record. It is a simple and easy way to create content that will be meaningful to your clients and prospects.

That is why you need a podcast. Of course there will be questions. You will want to know what it should be about, how long, is it a monologue or interview style.

If you are looking for help answering these questions, and the many others that I am sure are bouncing around your brain, give us a call. Our team loves coming up with podcasts to help support our clients' marketing and communications efforts. 🎙️

-Michael

LISTEN ON



BUYING LOCAL



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SEASON 2: EPISODE 4

March to Victory - The Men Behind the Melee

In this episode, our host interviews Don Walton and Jay Ingleston, former fighters turned promoters at DonnyBrooke Fight Promotions! On March 30th, Vermont-based DonnyBrooke is bringing a premier MMA event - the March to Victory - to New York! How did they put together this event? What were their motivations behind the matchups? What brings them to New York this time around? Listen to find out!



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SEASON 2: EPISODE 3

The Real Estate Roundtable Reconvenes

In this episode, our host talks with local top real estate experts Dan Wade, Mark Pawlows, and Lori Danussi! It's been a few years since the COVID pandemic first affected the real estate market... What's recovered, what still has a ways to go, and what does that mean to prospective home-buyers and sellers? Listen to this episode for the answers to those questions, and many more!



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SEASON 2: EPISODE 2

Three Generations of Boxley Brilliance

In this episode, our host interviews Steven and Christian Boxley, the father-son Presidential team of Boxley's Services! For three generations, Boxley's has provided complete cleaning and detailing services to homes, businesses, and vehicles. Each generation has built upon the last; and Christian has plenty of new ideas to help Boxley's grow! Listen to this episode to hear their incredible story, plans for the future, and more!



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SEASON 2: EPISODE 1

Leave Your Company & Start Your Own

In this episode, our host Mike Nelson interviews Brad Colacino, his partner at - and co-owner of - Five Towers Media! Brad had a stable, cushy job at a big white collar company, but he decided to leave it all behind to start his own business! Has he achieved the success he sought? What does he love about his current company? Find out the answers in this special first episode of our second season!

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BLUE COLLAR STARTUP



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EPISODE 50

Hiring to Your Weaknesses... AND Strengths?

In this episode, our hosts interview Michael Turcotte, proprietor of Turn Cycle Solutions! Michael built and grew his New Hampshire-based business through hard work and hiring team members to cover his own weaknesses. He also hired people with similar strengths to his own. Why would he replace his own strengths with an employee, and how did this decision help his business grow? Listen to this episode, and you just might find out!



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EPISODE 49

The True Meaning of Leadership

The corporate world is full of bloated questions - "What's the difference between a mission and vision statement?" and "How do I empower my employees to become good leaders?" These questions seem jejune on the surface, but Dean has real, authentic answers to them that can help you, your team, and your business. Listen to this episode to find out how!



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EPISODE 48

From Scraping to Scaping

In this episode, our hosts interview Chris Manzela, co-owner of BradManz Landscaping! Chris has been working since he was only 14 years old, but he's progressed a long way since then - from \$3.75 an hour bussing tables to owning his own business and a massive football fan cave, Chris' steps forward have not been small! What's his secret? Listen to this episode, and you just might find out!



Scan to Listen

EPISODE 47

Ownership vs. Management - Dimitri's Story

In this episode, our hosts interview Dimitri Skrinik, Project Manager at MODS National! Dimitri shares his journey, from emigrating from Moldova, leveraging internships into running his own blue collar business... Then leaving it to manage construction projects using shipping containers! Why did he choose PM over business ownership? What have his experiences taught him? Hear his answers, his story, and more here!



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