



Case Study Accelerating Growth by Learning from Others

Mike Sullivan is the owner of Local Business Magazine, a direct mail magazine focusing on information and advice for homeowners in Clayton, Garner and Greater Cleveland. But an entrepreneur doesn't always have a business background. Mike was aware that there were a lot of things he didn't know about the process of being in business.

"Before starting my business I had worked for several years in the golf industry where I'd been the business manager at several golf clubs, and in high school I ran my own landscaping business. So while I wasn't a total novice I knew there were things that I didn't know about being in business for myself."

Mike met Bill Davis, of Team Nimbus North Carolina, at a BNI meeting. He first attended a Team Nimbus one-day "Rainmaker" seminar and what he learned that day helped to decide that working with Team Nimbus could assist him in avoiding costly errors.

"At the Rainmaker seminar I learned about the concept of the hedgehog: how to focus on just one area in my business and become known as an expert in it," he says. He decided that instead of attempting to attract a wide variety of businesses to advertise in his magazine he would, instead, start to focus only on the home industry.

After the Rainmaker seminar Mike went on to join a Nimbus Mastermind group, a small group of business people from a variety of industries who meet monthly with Bill to focus on "working on their business, not in their business."

The Nimbus Mastermind group has helped Mike further develop his business and increase his customer base in both direct and indirect ways. One very direct result of his work with Team Nimbus is a new business partner. A member of his Nimbus Mastermind group introduced him to Mark Wells, who decided to become a partner in the business.

"He saw that there was a need for this service and that Local Business Magazine was filling that need," says Mike. Mark is in the mortgage business, and realized immediately how the magazine could help him as well as other business owners in the home services market.

In 2006 the housing market hit a downturn, but that hasn't hurt Mike's sales. "Some of my advertisers, such as a vinyl siding company, want to advertise with us because they know that with the housing market down many people will choose to stay in their homes and remodel," he explains.

Other advertisers, such as a local realtor, understand that when the marketplace is down advertising becomes even more important. "She tells me she has seen other realtors' businesses fall off and she is determined it won't happen to her," adds Mike.

Mike's magazine has done so well that he is now considering expansion. "We want to start a second magazine in a different section of the greater Raleigh area. We are looking to expand to two or three magazines and we are also considering franchising," he says. Once again, he is working with Bill and his Nimbus Mastermind group to consider all of the possibilities as he moves ahead with his plans.

"The Nimbus Mastermind group is a great place for me to weigh all of my options and decide the best method for going forward," he says.

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