

SMALL BUSINESS

Lean approach pays off for organization couple



Photo by Kate Melton

Formerly in the 35mm slide business, Reenie Feingold owns, with her husband Stan, Store Smart in Brighton.

Feingolds help firms be efficient and also have health-related product

By NICOLE SHELDON

Reenie and Stan Feingold hoped that their small business could withstand the test of time, but when rapidly advancing technology forced them out of the 35mm slide duplication business, they switched gears and launched Store Smart in 2007.

Located at 180 Metro Park in Brighton, Store Smart is a certified woman-owned business offering a plethora of products to help companies and individuals stay organized. From the Bookmark Plus that holds pens, notes and marks that spot you left off in your book to pockets that hold USB devices, the Feingolds have come up with innovative storage methods or, as they term it, “no tech for the high tech.”

The couple is based in Rochester, but the majority of their business comes from elsewhere. Store Smart’s client list includes General Motors, Coca-Cola and Apple, to name a few.

“I want people to help us be proud of what we’re doing because all of the money that we bring in, we’re basically bringing in from out of state, out of the country and into Rochester,” says Reenie Feingold.

“We’re not redividing money in Rochester, we’re bringing industry here.”

The Feingolds have adopted a lean management system, a strategy that many automotive companies and hospitals use. Lean management is an ongoing process focused on the continuous improvement of an organization. It is a long-term approach that emphasizes small, frequent tweaks to improve a company’s quality and efficiency.

Store Smart has its own line of lean products—such as white boards—specifically designed for companies that imple-

ment the lean approach.

“We actually use all of our own products here, and we build our products through lean management and lean manufacturing,” says Reenie. “It’s very interesting because people feel part of the process, rather than feeling outside of what’s going on. They can see what’s going up and what’s coming down, and the process seems to work.”

In addition to Store Smart’s lean manufacturing system, the vial of life is another product that Reenie designed nearly a decade ago. Originally, the vial of life involved an empty pill bottle with import-

ant medical information written on a piece of paper inside of the vial. Then the Feingolds recognized that this was not the most efficient method.

Today, the vial of life consists of a clear folder with a medical form inside for EMTs or those responding to an emergency to see clearly. The medical form includes conditions a person has, medications a person takes, doctor’s information and allergies. Customers are advised to place the vial of life on their refrigerator so that it is in a visible spot should there be a medical emergency.

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“It’s very exciting to know that you’re on the cutting edge,” says Reenie. “I had a man tell me he has epilepsy and he keeps the vial of life on his work bench. He said before that, people would freak out when he had a seizure. Now they know what to do and all of his medical information is there.”

The Feingolds have almost half a century’s worth of experience as small business owners. In 1971, the couple began their 35mm slide duplication company, Visual Horizons. Both Rochester Institute of Technology graduates—Reenie with degrees in design and communica-

tions and Stan in photography and communications—the two struggled to find well-paying jobs.

“All of our friends were getting good jobs at Kodak and Xerox and getting new cars and mortgages, and our prospects were very slim,” says Stan. “But we were willing to work hard and we found this little niche about slide-making, which was needed at the time. I didn’t think it would be that popular in Rochester because of Kodak and all of that, but we found that if we gave really good service we could succeed.”

Excellent service has remained a priority for the Feingolds with Store Smart. The Feingolds maintain the mentality that if you take care of your customer, your customer will take care of you.

Over the past 50 years, the Feingolds have learned through trial and error what it takes to own a successful small business. One of their chief pieces of advice to aspiring entrepreneurs is to make every effort to avoid drowning in debt.

“Work hard, but keep your day job,” says Stan. “Too many entrepreneurs get overwhelmed in debt and it crushes them.”

“Be prepared to work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It doesn’t stop,” adds Reenie. “Watch your pennies and dollars will come.”

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