



SUCCESS STORY #712: **READY, AIM, BUSINESS**

Small Business Development Center hosted by Ventura College

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Lock & Load Gunsmithing

1507 E. Chestnut Ave.

Lompoc, CA 93436

(805) 735-1500

www.guncraftsman.com



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Los Angeles Regional Network



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BEFORE:

A native of Lompoc, Jeffrey L. Brewton served in the Navy, then worked as an aircraft mechanic until an on-the-job injury ended that career. Through the California Department of Rehabilitation, Brewton retrained as a gunsmith at Lassen Community College. In 2006, Brewton moved back to Lompoc to start a gunsmithing shop, and turned to Ventura College SBDC consultant Timothy Harrington for help.

BEST ADVICE:

To receive startup funds from the state, Brewton had to follow a specific format for his business plan. "I educated Jeff on what [the state was] looking for and how to find the information," says Harrington. Writing the plan took three months, but "Jeff's case manager told him it was one of the best their office had received," Harrington recalls.

Harrington also helped Brewton meet city planning and building department requirements. "I spoke to two of the planning commission members [about] variances he would need," Harrington says. "I reviewed Jeff's letters to the Lompoc Chief of Police that were required by the planning department in support of his business and verification that Jeff possessed or had applied for all of the necessary licenses from the state and [from] federal agencies." To get a Federal Firearms License, Brewton first had to lease a location. Harrington helped him find one and work with landlords to keep rent to a minimum.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- **Focus and refocus.** "I had so much on my plate," says Brewton. "The biggest thing Tim did for me was to point me in the right direction and get me refocused."
- **Delegate.** "The biggest thing I've had to learn is that I don't know it all," Brewton says. "There was a period where I thought I could handle all the construction myself, and I really got bogged down. Tim told me to get out of my own way!"
- **Find supporters.** Meeting zoning requirements took nearly two years. During this process, "Tim was in my corner [even when] there was no progress," says Brewton. "I could vent to him when I had no one else to vent to."
- **Old-fashioned advertising pays off.** "The only place I've advertised is the phone book. Don't let anyone tell you advertising in the phone book doesn't work," laughs Brewton. Customers were calling and dropping by the store long before it was open. He also puts business cards out at local shops and posts them on community bulletin boards: "Word-of-mouth has been huge."

AFTER:

Nine weeks after opening, Brewton says, "The phone rings off the hook!" He has so many repair jobs, he works nights to keep up with demand.

Brewton's next goal is to hire a bookkeeper—something Harrington recommended. And as his business grows, Brewton will continue meeting with Harrington.

"Tim has always steered me in the right direction," says Brewton. "I feel very blessed!"