



# BUSINESS UPDATE

CENTER FOR RURAL AFFAIRS | LYONS, NE | POPULATION 851 | SUMMER 2015

## CUSTOM SPORTS HITS HOMERUN WITH QUALITY SERVICE AND PRODUCTS

BY GENE RAHN, REAP SENIOR LOAN SPECIALIST, GENE@CFRA.ORG

**G**rowth is the name of the game for Greg and Kristi Parr. They started Custom Sports in the small rural community of Neligh, Nebraska, in 2004 and have been hitting homeruns ever since. Aptly named, Custom Sports provides custom T-shirt and other sports apparel. The business offers custom embroidery in addition to screen printing.

By 2011, business was booming. Greg and Kristi decided to relocate to Battle Creek, Nebraska, where a larger building was available. The Center for Rural Affairs' Rural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP) was able to assist with this relocation through a REAP loan.

In less than a year, Custom Sports had outgrown their new location. Our REAP program was on hand again, and this time the move was to Norfolk, a shopping hub for northeast Nebraska. The new building was situated right next door to the USPS office and warehouse, which made it much easier to ship products.

One factor of Custom Sports' quick growth was a 3-year contract they won with the Nebraska Schools Activities Association (NSAA). They signed on to provide T-shirts and other sports apparel for high school state championships. This meant sending a lot of gear through the mail.

In early 2014 the Parr's and Custom Sports were rewarded for their excellent work and quality products by a 5-year contract extension from the Nebraska School

Activities Association. In addition, they provide T-shirts and sports apparel for individual schools and other sporting events.

Sales range from 1,000 to 4,000 T-shirts for each state event. Other products provided for the events

lines make it much easier to produce T-shirts and other apparel on short notice once teams have qualified for tournaments.

Custom Sports continues to seek additional product lines for sales, growth, and diversification.



Greg Parr stands in his Norfolk shop. He and wife Kristi, owners of Custom Sports, have outgrown two locations with their custom t-shirt and apparel business. Two REAP loans helped finance the moves to larger facilities. Custom Sports has nine employees, who stay extremely busy at tournament time!

include T-shirts with long sleeves, caps, sweats, and more. Events include girls and boys basketball, baseball, wrestling, girls and boys cross country, football, girls and boys golf, speech, play production, girls and boys soccer, volleyball, softball, swimming and diving.

And sales have continued to climb. In fact, the Parrs built a 24 X 50 foot addition to their building to make room for another screen printing machine and dryer, doubling the capacity to produce screen print products. The double

These include marketing and sales of uniforms, shirts, caps, and apparel for commercial and industrial businesses.

### Custom Sports

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HISPANIC BUSINESS CENTER

# DO YOUR HOMEWORK TO AVOID COSTLY FINES AND HEADACHES

BY JUAN E. SANDOVAL, REAP HISPANIC BUSINESS CENTER DIRECTOR, JUANS@CFRA.ORG

**T**here is no secret about the difference between opening a business in many Latin America countries and opening a business in the United States. Latinos decide to become micro-entrepreneurs in their own countries because of the lack of jobs. They need to provide for themselves and their families and move to what is known as the informal or grey economy.

The informal economy under any governing system is diverse and includes small-scale, occasional members (often street vendors and garbage recyclers). It also encompasses larger, regular enterprises (including transit systems such as those in Lima, Peru). Garment workers who operate from their homes are another example.

Statistics on the informal economy are unreliable by virtue of the subject. Yet they provide a tentative picture of its relevance. For example, informal employment makes up 48 percent of non-agricultural employment in North Africa, 51 percent in Latin America, 65 percent in Asia, and 72 percent in sub-Saharan Africa.

**AS YOU PLAN TO OPEN A BUSINESS, START CONVERSATIONS EARLY WITH LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL AGENCIES. RESEARCH YOUR INDUSTRY ONLINE AND TALK TO ORGANIZATIONS LIKE REAP WHO CAN PROVIDE ASSISTANCE.**

This sector of the economy is neither taxed, nor monitored by any form of government. In the United States, many industries are regulated. These include construction, restaurants and grocery stores, monetary service businesses (cashing checks and wire transfers), daycares, hair salons and others. They also require varying licenses and permits from government organizations at the Federal and State level.

As you plan to open a business, I encourage you to start conversations with local, state, and federal agencies. Research your industry online and talk to organizations like REAP who can provide assistance. Being proactive will avoid expensive fines, business shutdowns, or multiple headaches.

We're here to help! In the last quarter, the REAP Hispanic Business Center assisted

708 individuals; 124 people were trained; and eight loans totaling \$124,500 went to Latino business owners. Contact me, Juan Sandoval, at [juans@cfra.org](mailto:juans@cfra.org) to learn more.



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REAP and the Women's Business Center and the Hispanic Business Center are programs of the Center for Rural Affairs. The Center for Rural Affairs is a private, non-profit organization.



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## CREDIT CARDS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4.

there an early termination agreement? Be aware of what you're committing to.

Evaluate point-of-sale solutions. Are they true processors or an equipment sales company? Will you be locked into a long-term lease that is unfavorable? Do they have an upgrade policy as time changes?

Ensure specific payment acceptance meet your business needs. How soon will your deposits get

to your account? Do they provide security and fraud assistance? Do they have the products that you specifically need for your business?

Guest author Pat Kavan is a Senior Sales Executive with TSYS, the largest Credit Card Processor/Issuer in the world. He has over 16 years in the industry and is a member of GROW Nebraska. You can reach Pat at 402.309.0167 or [pkavan@tsys.com](mailto:pkavan@tsys.com).



The REAP WBC will be out and about offering training to address the needs of our small businesses. Please let me know the topics you need help with. Email me, Monica Braun, at [monicab@cfra.org](mailto:monicab@cfra.org).

## WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER

# HITTING THE ROAD WITH A MARKETING MASTER

BY MONICA BRAUN, REAP WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER DIRECTOR, [MONICAB@CFRA.ORG](mailto:MONICAB@CFRA.ORG)

**A**sk a set of small business owners what training they need most, and the overwhelming answer will be, "I need more help with marketing!" At least that's what we discovered in our last Small Business Needs Assessment survey of REAP members, lenders, partners, and other businesses.

The REAP Women's Business Center took to the road to address that request. We held a series of seminars with Dave Buchholz of David & Associates fame. Dave owns a Nebraska-based marketing communications firm and serves regional, national and international clients in retail, professional services, agriculture, agribusiness, biofuels, manufacturing,

tourism and economic development.

We were fortunate to pair with local economic development agencies and chambers for these sessions. The Women's Business Center hosted "How to SQUEEZE More Out of Your Marketing" sessions in Broken Bow, Valentine, Plattsmouth, Beatrice, Seward, and McCook.

Participants discussed basic marketing principles that have a bottom-line impact. Dave shared how to establish a distinct identity for your business. He shared three ways to build your business, and how to compete on VALUE, NOT PRICE. Finally, Dave had participants consider how you can best connect with your customer (Hint:

it may not be the way big businesses do!).

Here's what participants had to say about the sessions. Excellent content and delivery! Great Pointers – I will use many ideas of the tips and suggestions. Great Information! Great ideas that we can use. Highly recommend this!

Keep your eye on the REAP Women's Business Center calendar to find out when the next sessions take place. You can find it at [cfra.org/reap/events](http://cfra.org/reap/events). And be sure to check out the flyer enclosed with the Update to learn more about our online training options. They'd make a perfect summer activity.



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Summer 2015



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## IS YOUR BUSINESS READY FOR CHANGES IN CREDIT CARD PROCESSING?

BY PAT KAVAN, SENIOR SALES EXECUTIVE, TSYS, PKAVAN@TSYS.COM



**C**hange is underway in the credit card industry. NFC (near field communication: ApplePay, Google Wallet, etc.) and smart card implementation is happening now. It's important to be ready for the future of payments.

A dizzying array of payment processors offer all kinds of pricing and options. Here's advice on how to choose the correct set up for your business.

Find a provider with a proven track record and a stellar reputation. How long have they been

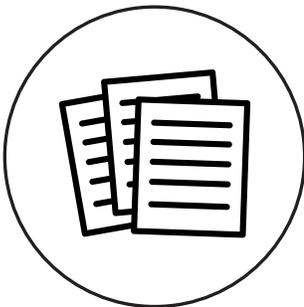
in business? Are they financially stable?

Check customer service and technical support options. Do they offer training? What are their hours? Are they reliable?

Compare fees assessed and associated rates. Obtain a list of all possible fees. Be wary of processors who offer significantly lower rates since they usually have hidden fees.

Review a sample processing contract. What is the term and is

—See **CREDIT CARDS** on page 2.



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### Effective Selling

Learn the secret to converting a potential customer into a long-term asset. Find out how to lay the groundwork for repeat business and your future success.

### Understanding the Human Resources Function

Learn to handle basic human resource functions to ensure the best possible results.

### Employment Law Fundamentals

Learn the basics of employment law so you can legally hire, evaluate, and manage employees.