

If you're looking for new ways to add to your bottom line, take a look at the money-making ideas featured here and on the next page.

If you've found or heard about a new income-boosting idea, we'd like to hear about it. Send details to: FARM SHOW Magazine, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044 (ph 800 834-9665) or email us at: Editor@farmshow.com.



Since introducing his large vacuum-powered oil changer to FARM SHOW readers 11 years ago, Gary Sage has successfully moved it onto the market.

Oil Vac Idea Moved From Farm Shop To Global Sales

Getting a good idea is the easy part. Making it work is another thing. And getting it on the market and making money of it is the hardest of all. But that's what Gary Sage has managed to do with his "OIL VAC" machine that he first came up with in the 1980's. (First featured in FARM SHOW's Vol. 18, No. 2).

At the time, Sage had just moved to Texas from Iowa. He quickly grew tired of changing oil on his 17 irrigation pump engines that ran 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for five months straight.

His idea was to make a large vacuum-powered oil changer that would speed up the process. Today his machine is used in shops, factories, construction sites, and military bases around the world. It's also used to run mobile oil change businesses.

An air compressor is used to vacuum hot oil out of the oil pan as fast as 10 gpm and then pump fresh oil back in. Sage now markets 21 different machines with tanks ranging in size from 5 gal. to 250 gal. Trailers that hold more than 1,000 gal. can be custom ordered. Systems can be set up with separate tanks for used and new oil, multiple fluid tanks and even air-powered grease guns.

Prices vary by size and option. The Sage OIL VAC 30070 sells for \$1,299. It includes a trailer with a 60-gal tank, a vacuum hose and air compressor plus all the fittings needed.

Launching the business wasn't easy. Sage credits his son Aaron and son-in-law Phil for helping develop a well-structured business plan. He also credits a program funded by the U.S. Commerce Dept. called Incubator. It offers hands-on startup advice from people with business experience.

"Two men in the program locally helped us get started, even renting us a building at a lower lease rate that was stair stepped over three years," says Sage. "I strongly urge everyone to take advantage of the program."

Careful cost accounting is key. The company has all of its books on computer so they can track costs, wages, inventory and work orders. Financing is through a local bank, and so far the family has been able to retain 100 percent ownership.

Starting out, the world didn't exactly beat a path to Sage's door. When word got out, first neighbors and then others asked him to build an OIL VAC for them.

"I got my first patent on the OIL VAC in 1993 and started manufacturing them on the farm during winter months," recalls Sage. "We were written up in FARM SHOW about 11 years ago, and that helped get us started."

Once patents were in hand, after an expensive 3-year process, Sage started getting more serious about marketing. He began going to farm shows and soon was selling units in Kan., Colo., Texas and Okla. Within three years, he was turning down orders in order to get his fieldwork done. It was time to choose between full-time production and farming.

"In 2001, my wife and I made the very hard decision to quit farming and move the business to Amarillo," says Sage.

Making the shift to full-time production required a shift in thinking as well. Sage credits his son and son-in-law for thinking big picture, expanding the product line and developing a multiple-year business plan.

"We stuck to it no matter what our sales were at the time," says Sage. "It has proven to be a good road map to follow and has resulted in steady growth of the company."

Today, Sage is selling a lot of systems to the U.S. military. Ag sales have fallen from 90 percent of their business to 10 percent as business in other segments has taken off. All parts except the tanks are made at the factory, and quality control is very strict.

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Want to learn how to be a chainsaw artist? Consider attending the Wisconsin School of Chainsaw Carving, the only state-licensed "chainsaw artist" school in the U.S.

Chainsaw Art School Helps Launch Carving Businesses

If you've got an artistic bent and like chainsaws, you might consider going to the Wisconsin School of Chainsaw Carving, the only state-licensed "chainsaw artist" school in the U.S.

Doris Johnson, school administrator, says her husband, Brian, a chainsaw carver for 13 years, teaches unique scientific methods to achieve not only artistry in wood but also financial success.

Brian was also a taxidermist. He now owns and operates a taxidermy supply company (www.revolutiontaxidermysupply.com). Doris says it fits well with chainsaw artistry because taxidermy requires a lot of body sculpture.

The weeklong chainsaw classes are held every spring and fall on 11 acres in Hayward, Wis. There's a small indoor classroom while the outdoor carving facilities consist of six 10 by 10-ft. carving booths. Brian spends most of his time either teaching or assisting students with their projects.

"This is more of an aggressive art. You get in there and do the basic work and then spend time detailing," Doris says.

By the end of the week, students complete a standing bear and an eagle standing on rocks.

The three-year-old school accepts between three and four students for the course on a first come, first serve basis - after prospective students purchase and view two videos about safety and basic chainsaw cuts.

Students come with a variety of backgrounds. Some are already in the "wood" industry and want to expand their capabilities while others are farmers or people just fascinated by the artwork.

Doris says most graduates become self-employed or do it as a part-time business or hobby.

She says that while prices for pieces vary according to size and detail, they have some pieces that sell for \$350. One extremely detailed piece of a bear holding a salmon sells for \$4,500.

The course costs \$1,500 plus tools, equipment and room and board. Students can camp out or stay at a local hotel.

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They Import New Zealand Clothing

While visiting a friend in New Zealand, Dan Gunderson bought some durable wool work clothes.

He liked them so much, and they were so durable, that when he returned home to Cremona, Alberta he started thinking about selling the clothing to supplement his farm income. Yet it took a literal bolt of lightning for the idea to become reality.

Gunderson was struck by lightning while riding his horse and he couldn't do farm work for months.

Needing additional income, he and wife Jennifer tested their idea on family and friends. "The biggest thing they liked about the clothing was that you didn't need to multi-layer because they hold the warmth and break the wind so effectively," Dan says.

Because neither knew anything about importing, they took a business course.

"At first, we were going to try and clear our own packages until we realized how many different codes, permits and duty rates there are," Jennifer says, adding that they hired a broker to take care of permits each

time a shipment arrives in Canada.

"Since New Zealand is part of the Commonwealth countries, the duty we pay on products is anywhere from 10 to 20 percent," she says. "As we pay New Zealand dollars for the garments, that has to be converted to Canadian dollars."

After a shipment arrives at customs, it takes about five working days to receive it.

With a website and space at the Horse Store, a local store, they spend about four hours per day working on the business with the rest spent farming.

They sell work jackets, wool sweaters, coats and shirts from companies such as Norsewear, Circle M Brand Workwear, Norstech, and Swandri.

Prices range from \$159 (Can.) to \$300 (Can.).

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