

Case study: West Tennessee Ornamental Door

Since Jim Hoffa bought West Tennessee Ornamental Door in 2001, he has grown the company, which manufactures custom security storm doors, from \$1 million to \$3 million in annual revenue. In 2014 Hoffa entered the Memphis-Shelby County Economic Gardening Program where he worked with the National Strategic Research Team (NSRT) to explore new strategies to continue the company's growth trajectory.

One of Hoffa's biggest takeaways was discovering a new product line that could grow West Tennessee Ornamental Door's annual revenue by more than 30 percent.

After looking at Hoffa's current customer list, broken down by market segments, the NSRT suggested parallel markets that Hoffa could target, such as architectural, automotive, appliance and office furniture. In addition, the NSRT identified the size of each market, past growth and projected future growth. When Hoffa saw the research, one niche really piqued his interest: interactive kiosks for consumer self-service applications.

Granted, there are no doors involved with kiosks, but they require the same manufacturing processes as security storm doors — steel cutting, bending, welding and powder coating. What's more, West Tennessee Ornamental Door has already made a few interactive kiosks for local churches to help with check-in for daycare programs. "After seeing the research, I realized that kiosks was truly a market we could go after," Hoffa says. "Besides having the capabilities to pursue it, there isn't as much competition as something like curtain-wall construction."



Jim Hoffa of West Tennessee Ornamental Door

Another area the NSRT assisted with was helping Hoffa recognize that his core strategy was custom manufacturing. Due to its ability to purchase supplies at economies of scale, West Tennessee Ornamental Door currently buys and sells parts to customers who might be manufacturing on a small scale. "I always thought I should sell and make a margin on anything I have in my building," Hoffa explains. "Yet the NSRT helped me realize there's a point in time where you need to focus on core strengths." Because the distribution activity bumps up business during slower seasonal periods, Hoffa isn't ready to discard it yet; however, he is working on a plan to increase new manufactured products and decrease the reliance on the parts business in the slow winter months.

The NSRT also analyzed Hoffa's website and compared it to competitors' sites. "They showed me where we were — and what we need to do to get in front of more customers," Hoffa says. For example, the researchers recommended key words to raise West Tennessee Ornamental Door's visibility in search

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engine rankings, along with online watering holes where Hoffa could target potential new customers. In response, Hoffa is doing a major overhaul of his website and starting to leverage social media, including Facebook Pinterest, YouTube and LinkedIn. “Economic Gardening helped me solidify social media in my sales strategy — and convince me to spend the time on it,” he says.

“We got a vast amount of information from Economic Gardening, and yet it didn’t take a lot of my time,” Hoffa says. “The researchers were like an extension of my staff. They did all the numbers crunching and analysis, and then provided me with information that gave me a high-level view so I could decide what we needed to implement.”

“As a business owner, it’s easy to criticize the government and grumble about all the taxes we pay,” he adds. “Yet this program made me feel better. Because the city of Memphis decided to invest in an Economic Gardening program, I’m getting something back that will make us a stronger company.”

Within a few months of its Economic Gardening engagement, West Tennessee Ornamental Door had already added two new manufacturing jobs. Hoffa estimates that getting into kiosk manufacturing could generate \$1.5 million in additional annual revenue, which would translate into at least 10 new jobs within a couple of years.

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