Jason Nitschke
Regional Director
Rich Gannon
Rural Business Advisor
Tyler Menzales
Business Advisor

GROW Great Falls MONTANA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Great Falls Regional SBDC

Action Plumbing Plus Inc.

Great Falls, MT



"We finally have positive equity in our business. We have grown at a manageable rate and have put in place processes to keep growing from here. The monthly meetings held us accountable for making the changes to our business."
Kayla Weiss, *Business Manager*

In 2003, with the general sense that a Master Plumber had to own their own business, Steve Hix bought Action Plumbing Plus in his hometown of Great Falls, Montana. Steve, a disabled veteran who served in the U.S. Marine Corps, Army Reserves, Navy Reserves, and Montana Air National Guard, struggled through owning and running his plumbing firm until his daughter, Kayla Weiss, came on board as a business manager in 2018. Great Falls Development Authority's (GFDA) Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) assisted Steve through the verification process with the Veteran's Administration to get his company verified as a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) in 2017. The PTAC then suggested Action Plumbing Plus meet with Jason Nitschke, Great Falls SBDC Regional Director, also hosted out of GFDA.

Great Falls SBDC Regional Director Jason Nitschke initially conducted a historical financial analysis that highlighted significant fluctuation in the company's financial performance. Their initial goal was to improve cash flow and profitability, better understand their finances, develop a plan for the future, and relocate from a rented space to company-owned property. Unfortunately, the financial statements were in a position that borrowing money was not an option. In 27 meetings covering over 21 hours of counseling assistance and participation in a January 2019 Profit Mastery workshop, the company was able to address cash position, liquidity, operational efficiency, and profitability.

By the end of 2018, Kayla transitioned from volunteer to employee, leading her to be named business manager. Throughout 2019, Action Plumbing began utilizing the Work Opportunity Tax Credit program to help grow the staff from five to 12. Steve and Kayla created the company's employee retention policy which now includes health insurance paid at 100 percent, bonuses, and paid time off.

By December 2019, the company had become financially solvent and was able to secure funding to purchase a building, contribute 25 percent equity to the purchase, and self-fund all building renovations. Between 2017 and year-end 2019, the company's gross profit increased by 147 percent, net profit has increased by 150 percent, wages paid have increased by 36 percent, and the company will start 2020 in a new building they own.