



NEW BRUNSWICK

EZ4U DISPLAY SYSTEMS LTD.

BOB ATWIN and **MARG BOER** had worked together on several projects before they decided to become business partners. They appreciated each other's skills and understood each other's unique work habits. Realizing what each had to offer, Bob and Marg knew they had the makings of a successful business partnership.

Their primary concern was choosing the right business. They began with Progressive Planning Ltd., a consulting firm they founded in 1983. The company employs between 7 and 22 employees and provides educational training, social research and business consultation services. Progressive Planning provided Bob and Marg with important lessons in business management and entrepreneurship – lessons which were invaluable when they launched EZ4U Display Systems Ltd. in early 1989.

EZ4U is one of the few manufacturers of trade show display materials based in New Brunswick. This business manufactures, rents and sells high quality, Canadian-made display products, as well as specialized services for exhibit management, display installation and disassembly, shipping and storage. The company employs three to six people, depending on contracts.

"Starvation is the mother of invention," laughs Bob (who is currently Chief of the Kingsclear First Nation) as he recalls how the pair decided to become entrepreneurs. "We were both unemployed and needed something to do. We had worked together before and knew we would make a great team. So when we saw an opportunity, we jumped."

EZ4U turned out to be a nice addition to their first company, although not an inexpensive one. Start-up costs were about \$160,000, covering the purchase of machinery, raw materials



Barrett and Mackley

and training. After agreeing that there was potential for such a business, Bob and Marg successfully negotiated to represent an Ontario-based supplier. This company provided them with the necessary training while they researched and prepared their marketing plans and promotional strategies.

Both partners realized at the outset that

keeping an eye on market trends and making new contacts. However, they are confident knowing they have a high quality product at one of the most affordable prices in the market.

"I think one of the things that we both like about being entrepreneurs is knowing that if you work hard, your returns will be good," says Bob. Both

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business might tend to be somewhat seasonal. "There are only a certain number of trade shows each year," adds Marg. "Especially around here where the market is fairly small." They are trying to compensate by looking for new markets and are currently looking at the possibility of expanding into the United States as well as adding distributors in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Quebec.

Overcoming such an obstacle is no simple feat. The partners are constantly

he and Marg agree that success rarely happens by accident. It requires hard work, commitment, confidence, good people, sound planning and equity. "Be absolutely certain before you begin," cautions Marg. "Look at your product, your market, and your competition... and be sure to have a good line of credit!"

Bob and Marg have received support from ACOA, Industry Canada and the Canadian Council of Native Business.

Atwin & Boer

WHERE TO REACH BOB ATWIN AND MARG BOER

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