



Success Story

PRESS OFFICE

Release Date: August 28, 2007

Release Number: PR AL 07-16

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Electronics Business Overcomes Many Hardships Sight & Sound Success Story

When Vernon Cobb started Cobb Electronics, now known as Sight & Sound, in 1976 he had no idea the twists and turns that he would experience over the next 30 years. From thefts in the early 1990s, to the closure of Fort McClellan, a nearby Army base located only a few miles down the road from his business, in the late 1990s to a fire in 2003 that destroyed much of his inventory and significantly damaged his building, fate opens doors that others might say were closed. In facing these challenges Vernon explains that he has not only learned to appreciate a resolve to succeed in business, but also understands that the support and encouragement from his family has been a big part of his success.

Coming from a rural background, Vernon learned early that success at any level is a function of hard work. Given his love for electronics he pursued training and education in that industry and holds a full time job at Anniston Army Depot as an electrician and electronics mechanic. The sacrifices that his family is making around these obligations are a continuing source of strength. By providing the motivation necessary for balancing entrepreneurship with full time employment, Vernon admits his family is crucial to any decision that he makes.

In expanding his business from a small electronics store into a complete line of audiovisual products that he sells commercially and to government entities, Vernon acknowledges that an evolution within the industry is occurring where increasing demands exist for greater and greater uses of technology. His training in electronics provides him with the technical expertise for understanding interrelationships between

audiovisual components, but local business resources have been useful in strategic planning. Over the last few years information available from Jacksonville State University Small Business Development Center (JSU SBDC) has been his strongest resource.

In meeting on several occasions with consultants of JSU SBDC, Vernon was introduced to business resources available and links to partner agencies and other resources at the local, state, and federal levels. He appreciates the training offered to the small business community as a continuing means of support when one does not know where to turn. Information pertaining to access to capital and other borrowing strategies has allowed Vernon to incorporate the availability of various sources of capital into strategic planning decisions.

Learning more about procurement opportunities and bidding has allowed him to continually evolve his product line, pricing structure, and customer service orientation in meeting changes needs in not only the community, but also state and regional levels. While contracting is a change of pace from retail selling to the public, finding a niche for his products is a challenge that he relishes.

In summary, Vernon is the first to admit that running a business is not for the faint of heart. Everyday challenges in addressing personnel and customer service issues seem small when faced with the loss of a military base and constantly changing technology that quickly renders inventory obsolete. Although family has been the biggest source of inspiration for Vernon, others may not have that strong social bond. The availability of local business resources, such as JSU SBDC, alleviates some of the stress of planning and decision making that anyone in business will face. According to Vernon, if the next 30 years present as many challenges as the last 30 years, he welcomes all resources in meeting the demands of entrepreneurship.

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