

U.S. Small Business Administration
Interview with CakeLove Founder, Warren Brown

Ron Johnson: Spring is in the air and our natural environment continues to demonstrate its endurance, resiliency, and ability to survive under the harshest of circumstances. For some small business owners, the current economic climate has them wishing for warmer days and dreaming of ways to demonstrate their resiliency while greening their bottom line and the environment. Hello, I'm Ron Johnson with the U.S. Small Business Administration, Your Small Business Resource.

Global warming and the protection of our natural resources are valid concerns, as is the survivability of our country's economic engine, the small business community. Can a small business be profitable and have an environmental conscience? Well, the answer is yes. And with us today is Warren Brown, owner of CakeLove and SBA's 2006 Washington D.C. Area Small Business Person of the Year. We'll learn from Warren how going environmentally green has saved him some green. Welcome, Warren. Good to have you on the program.

Warren Brown: Thank you, Ron. How are you?

Ron Johnson: First, can you tell us about CakeLove and what led you to want to operate an environmentally safe business?

Warren Brown: Sure. Well, CakeLove is a bakery, a retail bakery that sells cakes and cupcakes and other small treats that are all sweet. We bake from scratch, on site, which means that we've got a lot of equipment on site, and that means we've got, like, gigantic food mixers and a lot of refrigeration, lights, and things like that. And I just believe that every business owner and every citizen that's -- every person that's walking the face of the earth, really, has got a duty to the earth to make sure that we're trying to preserve it because it's rapidly disappearing or just changing -- it's not really disappearing, but I guess changing right before our eyes and if we don't act together, then the earth is going to become inhospitable for future generations.

Ron Johnson: I'm sure changes had to take place in your business. What sort of business practices and technologies have been implemented?

Warren Brown: We've kind of tried to implement, as much as we can, reduce, reuse, or recycle anything that we're doing at the bakery or in the offices or in transit. Something as simple as just using the second side of an 8-1/2 x 11 paper in the copy machine, that's something we didn't do before, like, before this year, and it just makes you feel a little bit better when you see both sides being used. Now, whenever I go some place and there's paper and the back side is clean, I

bring it home. I actually do and it's funny that I really buy a lot less paper because of that. There's so much stuff that comes in the mail too. I use that as well.

Ron Johnson: Warren, these changes don't seem very huge. What sort of savings or other benefits have you experienced?

Warren Brown: Reducing our kilowatts at the bakery is probably where we're making the most substantial impact. We're unplugging our refrigeration at night. As much as we can, we'll clean out our fridges, like our worktop fridges that we use for production of the cakes and cupcakes. We consolidate anything that needs to be refrigerated into one refrigeration unit, like a walk-in usually, and then at night, we just unplug as many units as we can and I've shaved off 20, 30, 40 percent of my electric bill, depending on what bakery it is. To me, that's amazing, hundreds of dollars of savings, and I just wish I had done these years ago because I could have but I just didn't think of it. But if I had, I mean, I'd be sitting on a mountain of \$40,000, probably, in cash. So reducing the amount of kilowatts is a big, big step and those kilowatts in these bakeries, kind of on top of it, they are wind power generated source of electricity so we're cutting back on power, which is a good thing, but we're also cutting back on power that's generated by wind, which is even, I think, one of the best ways in order to -- best ways to harness energy.

Ron Johnson: Warren, can you help us understand the level of effort and planning it takes to operate an environmentally friendly company while ensuring that it is also cost effective?

Warren Brown: We're doing a lot more with our website. We have a shopping cart on our website now. We have our full menu on our website. People can buy directly online from our website at cakelove.com and what that allows us to do is print less menus so it's less paper and it's less ink, actually, that's going on to the paper so we're, like, using less things that are contributing to, I don't know, just production of chemicals that are used for making the inks, so I think that's a good thing. It's unfortunate because I'm not using my printer as much but we just -- we don't need the menus as much and to me, one of the things that I can't stand is when you go into business and you get lots of flyers that don't have a lot of utility or you look at it and you only use it once or twice. I want people to see the website. It's easier for me to manage the listing of the product in the website and it just seems to be a little bit more hip and modern too.

Ron Johnson: Well, our thanks to Warren Brown, owner of CakeLove, for sharing how a small business owner can make a difference by implementing green business practices and realize real economic savings for their effort. SBA's Loan Guarantee Programs can help ease the way small business owners go green.

To learn more about these and other SBA programs and services, go to www.sba.gov. You will find on the SBA website a variety of podcasts to help you start, grow, and succeed in business. So until next time, I'm Ron Johnson with the Small Business Administration, Your Small Business Resource.

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