

Double J Manufacturing & Repairs Inc.

Jamestown SBDC

Fourteen years after starting their business, Jeff Enzminger and James Owen see continued success with their manufacturing operation. Jeff and James started Double J Manufacturing and Repair Inc. in 2002 in rural Stutsman County, naming it after both partners. They met working together as mechanics at the Gackle Co-op Oil Company and decided to start the business. Jeff, a ND native, was born and raised 12 miles from the shop, and James moved to North Dakota from California to be near his wife's family. Together they capitalized on an opportunity to meet the need for custom built corrals and panels.

In the spring of 2013, the demand for their products had grown. They were looking for funding to expand, including the purchase of land and construction of a shop. Their banker referred them to the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) in Jamestown. Their SBDC business advisor provided assistance with preparing a business plan, creating financial projections, identifying sources of capital, and loan packaging.

The SBDC assistance helped them obtain the financing they needed to expand. Today, Double J manufactures 13 products with a focus on freestanding corrals and windbreak panels. Other products include feed bunks, bale feeders and custom built products. They are selling through dealers with 27 dealers in multiple states including Idaho, Montana, Minnesota, South Dakota and Texas.

Creativity and a safe, quality product are keys to their success. "I'm good at imagining what people want," Jeff said, adding they can custom build most anything a client envisions. "We are making high quality products. The strongest on the market. And they are very cattle safe," he added, mentioning sharp edges could result in injuries to animals. Their creativity and focus on addressing customers' needs continues. Their next step is expanding into buffalo and elk corral panels, which need to be eight-foot tall and strong. Double J built the new corral system

utilized for the live buffalo herd at the National Buffalo Museum in Jamestown.

As for challenges, Jeff said the biggest challenge continues to be what it was when he came to the SBDC in 2013 for assistance: Finding good employees to meet the demand for the product. "We can't produce enough product without good help. It is hard to keep good young people in a community that doesn't offer much for them," Jeff said. Double J Manufacturing and Repair employs 16 full time and 5 part time people. Many commute daily from Jamestown, a 36-minute drive.

When asked his advice for other entrepreneurs, Jeff's tips include: a good banker, a good bookkeeper, good employees, and tenacity.

"It's very hard to start a business," Jeff said. "Cash flow can be tough. You need to live with it day and night. We backed things with the buffalo (we raise) and the farm. You will struggle with bills and paying for materials. It is important to have a good relationship with your banker." And he cautioned, "Don't let salesmen talk you into equipment purchases you can't cash flow."

