

Green Drop Garage

1417 SE 9th Avenue
greendropgarage.com
Owner: Farhad Ghafarzade



What is your business?

Green Drop Garage offers eco-friendly car maintenance and repair. We do all aspects – oil change all the way to engine overhaul. We also have car repair classes in the evenings to teach people how to fix basic things. We provide a vegetable oil conversion service. We have events here sometimes, including fundraisers for community nonprofits.

Are you growing?

We are currently growing further into our space and looking to expand to a second location within the year. Sales have increased 25 percent year-on-year, and we have added three full-time jobs. We're also purchasing this building, so that's a big step.

What are one or two key regional factors that you believe have led to your growth?

I think Portland is cosmopolitan enough to try new things. It's also small enough to where the cost of entry into something like this was palatable for someone like me. I don't think I could have started this out in San Francisco or New York with the budget I had. Portland is at that crossroads where it's affordable enough to start a new venture and try something new and also has consumers that appreciate what you do and validate it by buying your service.

What was the most important thing you learned from the Small Business Development Center?

I learned a lot from Jackie Babicky, such as what you focus on for business strength and managing my business by numbers. When I started talking to her we were in pretty deep negative equity overall in the business. And by the time I had finished working with Jackie we hit positive equity.

What was the biggest challenge you overcame during this program?

When you start up a business, it's a bunch of energy, like an explosion, and that moves you forward. At first you think you can go anywhere and do anything, but then as time goes by you start to narrow down your menu of services, what you can and can't do, what your rules are for operating the business. It's like when you start a car when it's cold, it's running really ragged until it warms up then you can lean off the gas and it runs more efficiently.

What are you doing differently as a result of what you learned?

I've always trusted people to do their job. But I delegate better; I can give guidance on what I would like from them and they deliver. Another thing I learned along the way was managing by measurable metrics, not how I feel or how they feel. Find the best people for the job and watch them do something that you couldn't do, and you get to lead them and they get to produce more than you could.