

Spotlight on: Center Hardware

How SF Works Helped a Local Business Use Hiring Tax Credits to Weather the Recession

Center Hardware, a neighborhood hardware store and industry supplier, has been a San Francisco business since 1880. Despite their varied and loyal customer base, owners Keith Gentner and Steve Leary were concerned about how to keep their 20 employees *and* hire more local residents in a time of recession. Keith and his daughter, Jamie Gubman, the store manager, shared their experience working with SF Works and Corporate Tax Incentives (CTI) to access their hiring tax credits.



SF Works: What did you know about hiring tax credits previous to working with SF Works?

Jamie: We knew they existed, that we probably had employees involved, but we felt that it was possibly too convoluted to attempt. It came up on occasion in different meetings, but it's intimidating. It's something that you don't want to do yourself; you want to make sure it's done correctly. So I left it alone.

SF Works: Tell me about the process- how did you hear about SF Works and what was the result of our services?

Jamie: My dad was insisting that I talk to CTI, the accounting firm specializing in hiring tax credits, because he heard about them through SF Works and I was ignoring him because, well, my dad reads his spam mail. I finally got in touch with CTI, and they swooped in, were extremely communicative, and they did all the paperwork. Suddenly we got this paperwork in with about \$100,000 in credits! They worked with our accountant to access our retroactive credits and got us this huge infusion of money that was like finding cash in the street. We're lucky that we're still busy, but we *are* in a financial downturn and to have that extra cash was extremely wonderful. It was significant amount of money.

SF Works: How did these tax credits help you retain employees and hire?

Jamie: We have very little turnover, we're very fortunate that we provide benefits that help us retain employees.

Keith: But with the benefits from the tax credits we were able to hire *new* people and hopefully we'll keep using CTI every year. If that's what it takes to put people to work, then it's a good thing to keep doing.



SF Works: What are challenges of having a business in San Francisco?

Jamie: There are also always challenges to making the public aware that we are here. We haven't done a good job of that.

Keith: Being in this business has provided a decent living and all of my employees have full medical and dental. I'm happy we have been able to provide that, but I am worried about how long that'll last... It's cold out there and I'm not talking about the weather.

**SF Works: What are the great things about having a business in San Francisco?
What do you enjoy about being in the hardware business?**

Keith: I grew up in the hardware business, my family owned a neighborhood shop in Ocean View. The hardware business is an interesting business, there's something different every day. I enjoy the product, and I enjoy using the product myself when I need to fix things.

Jamie: I love that we have anyone from the Fairmont Hotel to some kid going to Burning Man for the first time needing help with his art project. We get parents, business people, property owners, and city workers. We have an incredible, vibrant customer base. We really get to see the whole community because stuff breaks for everyone. We don't care if you want one hammer or a thousand hammers. We just really like talking with our customers.