



SUCCESS STORY

Portland District Office

John Clark, President **The Stamp-Connection**

John Clark started his career working in the fast food industry where he quickly rose to management level. During this time, he became experienced in dealing with the same problems that a small business owner encounters such as, dealing with employees, customer satisfaction and many of the bookkeeping and payroll experiences that are necessary in running a successful business.

He decided to return to school and study accounting and business management at a trade school in downtown Portland. He received a degree in 2 years and moved from the food service industry into an entry level accounting position at Pope and Talbot in downtown through a temp agency. From there he went to work for Deloitte & Touche through another temp agency. During his accounting assignments, Clark decided that he really did not want to be in the corporate world for the rest of his life. It was at this crossroads that he had an opportunity to go to work for Rose City Stamp in Portland. He set-up their typesetting program on the computer. This was a diversion from his education, but it proved to be a good move for him. After working for Rose City for several years, Pioneer Printing in Vancouver offered him a job running their stamp department. He accepted the challenge and went to work for the second company making rubber stamps.

After four years of working for Pioneer Printing and running into road blocks at every turn when he tried to expand the department, Clark decided that he could do it better on my own. He set up a web page from his home, bought a small stamp making machine and started putting the pieces together for his business. He also wrote a business plan and shopped it around at the local banks. Finally he received a loan for \$18,000 from a small bank in Vancouver and was on my way to turning Stamp-Connection into the successful business it is today.

Clark also took advantage of **SBA's partner, the Small business Development Center at Mt. Hood Community College**. He took the small business management track level one to improve business operations. Clark states that he enjoyed his one-on-one sessions with his counselor and mentor, Mr. Sherk. Since enrolling in Sherk's course, Clark wrote a marketing plan, secured a loan from a bank, developed a way to track and analyze his financial situation of his company, learned key selling techniques, developed new ways to market his business and grew as an entrepreneur.

According to Clark, "I am proof that **SBA's SBDC programs work.**"

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