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Twincities BUSINESS

SMALL BUSINESS SUCCESS STORIES

THE TRAVAILS OF TENACIOUS
DR. TARA WATSON



PLUS THE
TALES OF 9
OTHER LEADERS

Including Chuck & Don's Pet Food Outlet

Watson operates her own chiropractic practice, provides in-home health care, and is opening an Anytime Fitness center.



Business Communications

MYTH vs. REALITY

Bill Popp
Chair and President
POPP Communications



Myth: It's easy to identify when a cyber criminal has accessed your databases and records.

Reality: Cyber criminals are able to enter your company's databases, steal or manipulate information, and delete the evidence if you do not have an up-to-date firewall.

For example, in 2011, a cyber criminal entered the customer database of a highly regarded company. The cyber criminal found, contacted, and offered the same products at a lower cost to one of the company's high-value customers. The cyber criminal then entered and manipulated the sales database of the company by placing an order. The company made and sent the products to the customer. The cyber criminal entered the company's sales database, accounting records, and shipping records and deleted all evidence that the order had ever occurred. The cyber criminal billed the customer for the products.

The company paid for the supplies, production, and distribution, but the cyber criminal received all of the compensation. The company had a firewall; unfortunately, it was an early-generation firewall.

With 73,000 new forms of malware entering the Internet each day, it is necessary to make sure your company is protected with a firewall that can adapt. The next-generation Internet Gateway Firewall Appliance with the Comprehensive Gateway Security Suite available from POPP updates daily to guard against emerging threats.

For network security and all business communication services, please consider POPP Communications.

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POPP
COMMUNICATIONS

Green Acres

With a new name and a slew of renovations, a historic Eden Prairie barn looks to become the place to be.

When Steve Schussler purchased Eden Prairie's Goodrich-Ramus barn in 2010, the creative force behind Rainforest Café, Galaxy Drive In, and Disney World's T-Rex and Yak & Yeti restaurants planned to turn it into a storage facility.

The barn was slated to be replaced with a drainage pond, but it was the city's oldest (built in 1942), which sparked community efforts to save it. After outbidding himself twice in a sealed-bid county auction, Schussler paid \$82,000 for it.

Recalling a parade of cows he'd seen in Chicago, the playful Schussler posted 17 life-size fiberglass cows in front of the barn along Pioneer Trail, because, he says, "Wouldn't it be cool to just make people laugh and smile every day on their way to work?"

The support Schussler received was overwhelming, he says, and prompted him to open the property to the people by making it an event center draped in his trademark romanticism and sentimentality. He built a white split-rail fence, turned the silo into a wine cellar, hung crystal chandeliers, and put in some 15 antique jukeboxes. "This whole barn is built around romance," he says, and the



jukeboxes from the 1930s and '40s "represent that era of dancing and fancy-free living."

Schussler has invested more than \$1 million in the property to date, and projects annual revenues of more than \$1 million. The 6,400-square-foot space has a capacity of 299, which has prompted calls from wedding and event planners. "We want to try to make money, but not gouge anybody," he says.

Schussler hopes to open for business in the spring. For now, the cows are the main attraction. "Some people have to drink coffee in the morning," says Schussler, "and some people have to get their dose of the cows." —Megan Wiley



Digital Product = Analog Behavior?

StoryCub's videos try to break into a crowded kids' programming marketplace.

Reading to your kids is an age-old activity, the only business built into it being books and blankies. But Dave Swerdlick, the man behind Fridley-based StoryCub, has seen immediate success producing videos that read to other people's kids. StoryCub is a video series featuring people reading storybooks out loud. It spent four days atop iTunes' "Kids and Family" podcasts in September with the book *All About Poop*, and stories are currently viewed in more than 200 countries.

StoryCub, launched last May, features real people who introduce themselves prior to reading, with their voices narrating the story's pictures. Different from an e-book, the video

contains no text and is not interactive. Swerdlick sees it as a "call to action" to emphasize to parents the importance of one-on-one reading and to get kids excited about a particular title.

Swerdlick works with publishers and authors to obtain the rights to create the videos. The videos cover a variety of books, from "forgotten" titles published years ago to popular new stories to authors that have not gone through a major publisher. "There are a lot of individual authors that are going the route the music industry went," he explains, "and they want to self-publish." In November, StoryCub released its first book featuring sign language for hearing-impaired kids. A StoryCub

app was recently released for most major platforms.

Swerdlick, who has a background in music promotion, runs StoryCub with the help of a few outside editors and marketing via social media. Despite its small staff, it competes with videos from big names such as *Sesame Street*, Nick Jr., and PBS' Sprout.

Currently, StoryCub is self-funded, although Swerdlick is actively looking for investors. (He has depended on word of mouth for marketing.) Swerdlick says he has not settled on a revenue model, but is exploring video ads and licensing deals with tablet manufacturers, particularly tablets geared to kids. —Kenzie Zimmer