

He helps new businesses get off to a quick start

Menasha company offers total-package planning for startups

By Wendy Ruenzel

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Murray Hurlburt and Jennifer Potocnik wanted to live the American dream. They wanted to own their own business.

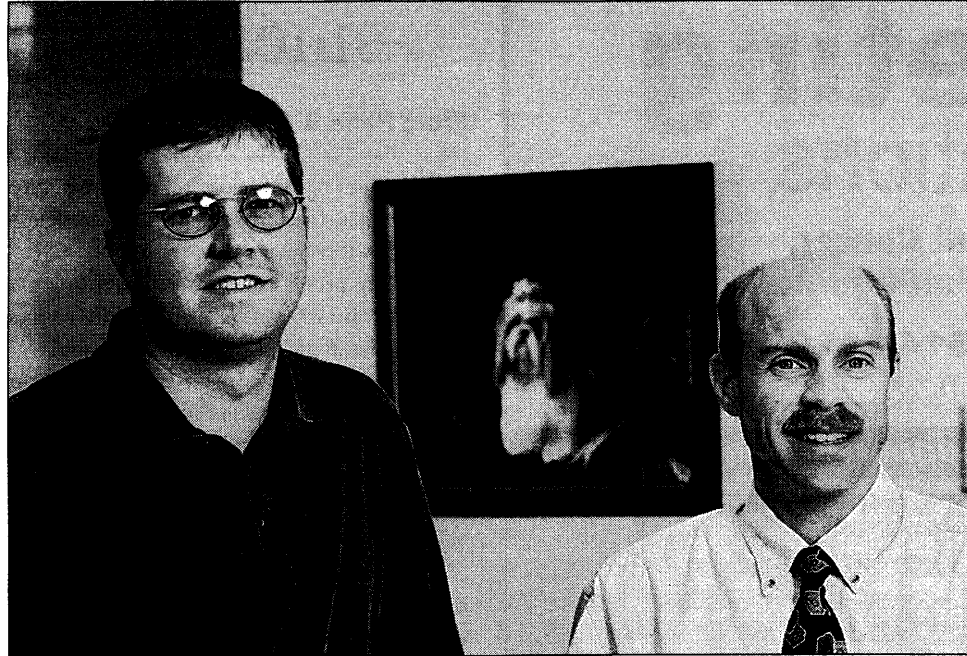
They turned locally to Kent Nelson of Quickstart, Inc. in Menasha for help.

"You can have someone come in from the outside and say 'here's Sherwood, here are the numbers, here's what we think,' but it was important for me to have someone local who knows the area," Hurlburt said. "You wouldn't get the same feel from another company. You wouldn't get someone who knows the area."

Hurlburt said Nelson put together a feasibility study, and off of that, "he was able to determine our likelihood of success," Hurlburt said. From that, Sherwood Animal Hospital was born. The clinic opened March 29 and is quickly taking on patients.

Quickstart is a six-year-old business planning and consulting company that was started after Nelson filled an untapped niche in the Fox Valley. He discovered that few companies helped startup businesses with a total-package business plan.

"There is definitely a need for it," Nelson said.



Kent Nelson of Quickstart, left, and Dr. Murray Hurlburt of the Sherwood Animal Hospital in Sherwood are shown at the hospital. Nelson helped Hurlburt and Dr. Jennifer Potocnik start the business.. The Business News photo by J.A. Robb

"There are other consultants out there, but they help with the business plan only. You are on your own with the financing."

That is, potential owners of businesses were on their own financially until Nelson's company came along.

Nelson, whose background is in accounting,

has developed relationships with many area financial institutions and can help potential owners determine which bank or credit union is right for their start-up company. He leads them through the process including pitching the business to the financial institution.

Sometimes potential owners try to do the

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— Kent Nelson,
owner of Quickstart, Inc.

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work themselves, but if they don't understand the financials, it could get complicated, Nelson said.

"Most businesses won't do their own corporate tax return," he said. "Same rings true for a start-up business. They should have a professional do a business plan so they are sure it's a good idea before they do it at all.

"Figuring out the cash flow with a company is difficult," he said. "The goal is to make the cash projections reasonable. What the typical sales are and what the revenues will generate based on the region, demographics, and background."

Business owners still need to do their homework, he said. They need to know not only the

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Start/Company helped 24 businesses start up last year

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demographics of the region, but their credit score and financials. They need to have a 10 percent to 30 percent down payment ready.

"Many people come in and want to start a business with a 100 percent loan, but in the business world — that doesn't usually happen," he said.

"I don't take on people I can't get loans for. Everyone I've worked with that decided to continue with the process, I've gotten loans for."

Last year, Nelson helped 24 businesses either startup, refinance, or open a second location. This year, Nelson's on track to double his clientele.

Since he's started Quickstart, he said only two businesses he has helped have closed their doors and both of those were for extenuating circumstances.

"There are factors outside of the business plan that come into play," Nelson said. "The plans are realistic. Some of the people starting a business shouldn't be in business."

Nelson said that, considering about 75 percent of startups go out of business within the first two years, he feels he's doing pretty well.

Nelson can help any type of start-up business including retail, service, or manufacturing, he said, but his clientele has been more small retail and service-oriented companies. Nelson hasn't seen too many manufacturing companies starting business in this area.

He said he's helped companies secure loans from \$20,000 to \$1.2 million. Typically, small business startups don't need more than \$2 million to start and many need much less.

Sherwood Animal Hospital is a typical type of

company that he helps, Nelson said.

Hurlburt and Potocnik met with Nelson last summer. Within two months of their meeting and about 65 hours of Nelson's time, Hurlburt and Potocnik had a business plan. In under a year, their clinic was in business.

"They were determined to open," Nelson said. "Since there wasn't a small animal veterinarian clinic serving dogs, cats, and other household pets, it was a good fit."

Demographically, the Sherwood area is one of the fastest growing communities with young families, he said. Young families are the households typically known to own pets. Nelson estimated about 1,800 dogs and 1,600 cats in that geographical area would need veterinary assistance. Nelson estimated about 26 percent of those households would need to be served by Sherwood Animal Hospital in order for the business to continue profitably.

Within the business plan, "we really need to break down all the costs of the business," he said. "We need to try to prove that the sales outweigh the costs."

For Nelson, he's living his own American dream.

"I felt I was destined to do this," Nelson said. "I enjoy helping people start their own business. I love the freedom and flexibility of your own company. If you own your own business, you are working twice as much as someone else but the satisfaction is you have control over your own destiny. I love helping everyone else chase their dreams. They are doing something they want to do and it's great seeing that in people's eyes. I want to help them get there."

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Kent Nelson of Quickstart, left, and Dr. Murray Hurlburt of the Sherwood Animal Hospital in Sherwood are shown at the hospital. Nelson's Menasha business, Quickstart, Inc., helped Hurlburt and Dr. Jennifer Potocnik start the business.

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