

A Dynamic Duo Fort Edward Agway/True Value

Owners – Chuck & Valerie Weingart
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Success Magazine: How does being a family owned and operated store affect your business?

Chuck: We feel it makes things easier. All decisions are made right here, not in a corporate office out of town. Since our business is weather related, we can promptly respond to customer needs. A few years back there was a power outage in the middle of winter. We were able to respond quickly by getting in an emergency shipment of heaters, propane tanks, batteries, etc... plus we stayed open longer to help people out.

SM: Why have you devoted your time to Fort Edward Agway/True Value?

Chuck: This is our passion. As with any owner/operator you must devote your time and energy to what you believe in. Especially when your business has been growing rapidly like ours. We always tell people who are starting out on their own, make sure you are doing something that you love, because you will have to be there through the good and bad times.

SM: What makes your store stand apart from other Agways or True Values in the area?

Valerie: What makes us unique is that we are an Agway and a True Value store under one roof. This allows us to have a broader range of inventory that can cater to everyone—the home-owner, avid gardener, landscaper, farmer, horse owner, pet owner, and other area businesses.

SM: When did you become interested in this industry?

Chuck: I grew up on a dairy in suburban Connecticut. When I graduated from business school in New York, I had never thought of Agway as a career, but they approached me because of my background in farming. I worked for them for ten years all over New York State. In 1998 Agway was in the process of selling off their store owned facilities. I had managed the one in Fort Edward, and I knew the potential that existed there. We approached them about buying the location and ten years later...here we are.



SM: Valerie, what did you do prior to this venture, and how have your experiences paved the way for your success?

Valerie: Prior to owning our business, I was a teacher. I think having the organizational skills to become a teacher and learning to adapt to different situations quickly helped make this transition easier for me. I have worked in retail before as well, so I knew how to cater to customers to meet their needs. I had the basics and the knowledge. Working as a team with Chuck has helped both of us grow into successful business people.

SM: Why is customer service so important in your business?

Chuck: We have extremely loyal customers who depend on us. The store is very diversified, meaning we have:

- Retail store – encompassing lawn and garden, hardware, and pet products.
- Service repair shop for power equipment – we are the repair center for all the equipment sold at the big box chains, plus we fix their store owned units too.
- On farm deliver service. The marketplace has changed in this area to become increasingly horse farms. Our service encompasses Schuylerville to Brant Lake, delivering feed and animal bedding to local farms.
- A full scale nursery – including plants, trees, shrubs, and bulk mulch. We were the first store in the area to offer bulk mulch to the general public. From day one it has been a huge success.

SM: What makes you a step above other garden stores?

Chuck: Two things: quality employees and quality products. We have a year-round staff of seventeen full and part-time employees. Most of them have been with us for a long time. Without them, the store wouldn't function. Plus, customers tend to do business with someone they know. They are not afraid to ask our employees questions and we always offer solutions to their problems. Secondly, with the Agway and True Value names guiding us, we can offer many top of the line products that customers can only purchase here.

SM: What personal characteristic is most responsible for your success with Agway/True Value?

Chuck: I enjoy working with people and helping them discover solutions to their problems.

Valerie: I enjoy providing the best customer service possible. We are happy people who love our jobs and this is reflected to our employees and our customers.

SM: What are each of your roles within the company and how do they play out on a daily basis?

Chuck: Since we have so many facets to our business, I try and oversee each one. Plus, I address any issues that come up on a daily basis. On top of that, Val and I work as a team to get projects initiated and completed. We also make sure to stay on top of the financial portion of our business (ie bill paying, receivable collecting, tax prep, etc).

SM: What motivates you on a daily basis?

Chuck: When you enjoy what you do, getting motivated is easy. Very rarely do I feel obligated to come here.

Valerie: This is our livelihood. It is our life. Every day is different. Without the attention we give it, this would not be as successful. Chuck and I are both goal oriented people and aggressive in doing the best job we can. Each day we leave the store knowing we did our best. Tomorrow there will be new agendas and we will face things head on with a smile, because we wouldn't have it any other way.