STRATA DEALER SERIES · CASE STUDY

Big Bend Restaurant Supply: Manufacturer Access From the First Month.

How a brand-new dealer in Tallahassee joined the group in its first month, and what about 20 years of membership has meant for the business.

Tallahassee, Florida

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1.0

The dealer

At a Glance.

DEALER
Big Bend Restaurant Supply, Tallahassee, Florida

FAMILY BUSINESS
John Carpenter, founder, and his son, Bill Carpenter

IN BUSINESS
About 20 years, starting in a 1,000-square-foot building

TODAY
About 20 employees and about 30,000 square feet of showroom and warehouse space

MARKET
K-12 school districts (now the biggest book of business), restaurants, hotels, healthcare, and chains, across North Florida and the Southeast

SERVICES
New and used equipment, smallwares, and janitorial supplies, plus in-house CAD design, specification, and budgetary quotes

JOINED THE GROUP
In its first month in business

The Challenge.

Big Bend Restaurant Supply began as a supply house for John Carpenter's own restaurants, stocking what other supply houses would only order in, and other restaurant owners started buying from it too. That meant buying from a lot of manufacturers from the start, as a brand-new dealer with no history with any of them.

In those first few weeks, while John was still working out where to order from, a Tallahassee rep who carried about 10 lines of commercial restaurant equipment told him what that would cost. If Big Bend opened individual accounts right off the bat, it wasn't going to get a very good discount, "because they have no history with you."

Why They Joined.

"He said, you really need to join a buying group to be competitive," John says. Within that first month, John contacted the group, someone came out to visit, and Big Bend joined.

Margin was the first reason, John agrees. About 20 years later, membership means more to the business than that.

> "You think you know a little bit about this business because you've owned restaurants for 20 years, but you're just scratching the surface."
>
> JOHN CARPENTER, FOUNDER, BIG BEND RESTAURANT SUPPLY

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The results

What Membership Changed.

The access goes past margin. Big Bend attends the group's conferences, "where you sit down with all the manufacturers," and it has served on group councils. For a dealer that once had no history with any manufacturer, that's a long way from opening accounts one at a time.

The bigger change was how much there was to learn. "You think you know a little bit about this business because you've owned restaurants for 20 years, but you're just scratching the surface," John says.

John has also watched the group's offer grow. "The rebates have increased and programs have increased, which is always a good thing," he says.

> "We see them working hard for the members."
>
> JOHN CARPENTER, FOUNDER, BIG BEND RESTAURANT SUPPLY

Advice for a Dealer Like Them.

John's first month is the clearest advice in this story. He joined before Big Bend had any purchasing history with manufacturers, rather than wait to build one. And he has kept sending his people to training. "At the beginning it was us, of course," he says, "but we always send people to the educational training seminars to learn about the new products."

What's Next.

Bill Carpenter, John's son, joined Big Bend three years ago to carry on the family business. "We have a good team, a great foundation," Bill says. As for the group, John says, "We're looking forward to the future with them."

Whether you're opening a dealership or have run one for years, talk with the Strata team about what membership could open up for you.

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