

Central Iowa Business Man Laid Off – Makes Comeback with Our Town America



When some people experience job loss, they fall apart and lose hope. Others see their setback as an opportunity.

When Tim McGrath lost his job as an executive at a specialty retail store, he was understandably shocked and thrown for a loop. But he didn't give up and assume that his life was about to get worse. He slowly but surely took a path that eventually led him to become the franchise owner of Our Town America of Central Iowa.

Here's how it happened

It was 2016 when McGrath was laid off – after working at a retail company for about 26 years. He supervised stores in the field for about a dozen years as both a district and regional sales manager, overseeing about 200 stores. From there, he became the vice president of distribution running a distribution center for another

12 years and then spent about two years doing real estate work for the company. McGrath was extremely experienced and at the top of his game when he lost his job.

What was originally a family company, grew and went public. After a series of acquisitions, the company fell on hard times due to a challenging retail environment and fierce competition from online shopping. Eventually a consulting company was brought in to “transform” the company and when that happens, people lose jobs.

No hard feelings, though. “I have nothing bad to say about them. They’re a great company,” he says.

Here’s how **retailers can battle tech with tech**.

Anyway, McGrath wasn’t sure what his next move should be.

Franchising?

McGrath thought he might want to be his own boss.

It seemed like the right time. He and his wife, LeAnn, were empty nesters. Their daughter Lyndsey was settling into a career in health care and lived in town with her three daughters. Their son, Nick, was teaching a couple hours away in Cedar Rapids, and their other son, Tim, Jr., was just finishing up college at the time. It felt like a good time to take a risk.



Central Iowa Franchisee, Tim McGrath, and wife LeAnn

He kicked around the concept of buying an existing business or a franchise for

about three months, looking into businesses he might buy. Tim and LeAnn considered a hardware store or maybe a franchise that sold birdseed. But then during a conversation with a business broker, he learned about Our Town America.

“I liked the idea. I thought it was pretty cool,” McGrath says. He liked that the franchise cost investment was low. He appreciated that he could work out of his house and keep his overhead low. He also wouldn’t have to hire a staff, as he would selling rakes and hammers or birdhouses and birdbaths. He talked to numerous Our Town America franchisees and kept hearing the same refrain over and over: “It’s the best decision I ever made” and “The support and training are very good.”

McGrath couldn’t help but like what he was hearing.

“I knew I might work just as much as I had been, or even more, but I’d be controlling when I worked and what I did. I got very excited by the idea,” McGrath says.

But, instead, he took a job overseeing six assisted-living communities.

Wait, what? How did this possibility come into play?

Turning to Our Town America

“Neither LeAnn nor I had ever been in a position where we weren’t getting a check every Friday, and having our 401(k) funded and getting health insurance,” McGrath says. In the end, the leap was just too big for us to wrap our heads around.

So when this other job opened up, overseeing assisted-living communities, McGrath took it. For whatever reason – perhaps because the entrepreneurial bug had bitten him hard — he just couldn’t get comfortable in his new role. After six months of frustration, we rallied around the idea of buying an Our Town America franchise.

A year and a half later, things have gone pretty much as McGrath expected.

He isn’t a millionaire... yet, but every month is better than the last, and he and LeAnn are feeling much better about this leap of faith Tim took.

“I had a good first year, and if I have an equally good or better second year, I’ll be

in a pretty good position,” McGrath says. “This is a residual sales business. It builds on itself very nicely and allows you to be rewarded for your hard work.”

He also likes being able to use his wealth of previous work experience at Our Town America. Having run business units for years and needing to show a return on investment to his employer, McGrath finds it very easy to show an ROI to his clients.

“I can sit in front of a prospective sponsor and *show* them the return on their money,” McGrath says. “I can calculate it. That was always important to me going in. I wasn’t just selling people for the sake of selling. I really am helping them grow their business, and we can actually prove that through our calculations.”

Advice for future Our Town America franchisees

The most challenging thing for me is getting to the decision maker, McGrath says.

“You often are talking to a general manager, a gate keeper who is instructed to not give out the business owner’s contact information. So you end up making presentations to folks who are not able to make a decision, and they then have to explain our program to their boss. It’s an ineffective way to sell as you lose much of the emotion and sense of urgency in the back and forth. That said, I know a lot of franchise owners who are much better than I am at getting to the decision makers. I’m not sure I’ll ever master that, but I will continue learning for them.”

He says that working for himself can also be a challenge, one he relishes, but still...

“I had never worked from home without a set schedule; it can be challenging if you’re in a slump. It’s easy to find a thousand things at your desk you “have to” do, , but you just have to get yourself out of that mindset, get out of the house and get focused on work,” McGrath says.

He also says that potential franchisees need to be honest with themselves about their ability and comfort level with cold calling and canvassing your community for prospects. “Corporate has an Appointment Setting team available to all franchisees, and they do a great job of getting you appointments, but it isn’t enough to make a living on,” McGrath says. “Their appointments will help you supplement your living, but if you aren’t knocking on doors every day talking to strangers and trying to book your own appointments, you won’t survive.”

But, “If you do have the determination and preservation to knock on those doors and make calls, you can be very successful at this, even if you’re not good at selling,” he says.

McGrath has no regrets. He loves the flexibility in his job, and the fact that if he wants to, say, take off work for a few hours to go sledding with his granddaughters, he can do that. And he prizes the control that he finally has with his career.

“If I’m unhappy about my circumstances, there’s one way I fix that – I work harder and see more people. There’s something very satisfying about knowing that, ‘Hey, if I want a raise today, I can do that.’ And when you see that happening after a really good week or two of sales, that’s very motivating.”

Do you want to realize your own business ownership dreams, like Tim McGrath? Does the Our Town America franchise opportunity sound like it could be for you? If so, learn more at <https://www.ourtownamerica.com/franchise-us/>.