

Current Events - Entrepreneurship

Directions: Read the following article. Answer the questions that follow in a reflection written essay style. Your reflection must be at least one page, size 12 font, times new roman, normal margins and spacing. (30 pts.)

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SD Teen opens mobile shower for grimy ND oil workers

James MacPherson, Associated Press

September 4, 2012

ALEXANDER, N.D. (AP) — It took little more than a day for 18-year-old Evan Jensen to smell opportunity in North Dakota's booming oil patch.

The recent high school graduate got a whiff of himself and his 21-year-old brother, Justin. The two had been sleeping in a pickup while looking for work in the oil fields of western North Dakota.

"We smelled," he said. "Bad."

Thousands of workers have descended on the region to seek their fortune in the oil fields, and housing construction and growth of brick-and-mortar businesses haven't kept up. The closest shower to Jensen was at a truck stop some 60 miles away. It was expensive, filthy and the wait was several hours long.

That's when the idea for a mobile shower hit him harder than the reek of his own B.O.

"There are a lot of necessities that aren't available out here," Jensen said. "Like a place to take a shower and brush your teeth."

An armada of food trucks and other roving enterprises was already catering to oilfield workers. The teen believed others also would value a hot shower nearly as much as a hot meal.

He pitched the idea to his parents back at their farm near Lake Preston in eastern South Dakota. His father and other relatives helped him convert a 53-foot semitrailer into a five-stall shower center with an office and laundry facilities.

A 6,000-gallon semi tanker alongside the trailer provides fresh water and collects the greywater.

Jensen paid for the renovation with \$15,000 he earned in the past two years trapping muskrats, whose fur is sent to China to be fashioned into coats, slippers and earmuffs. Each pelt fetches about \$10.

"That's a pile of muskrats," Jensen said after the construction was done.

The mobile venture, called Better Showers, rolled into an RV campground in the heart of the oil patch in June. A shower costs \$10, with a half-price discount for residents of the RV park where the business is located. Towels and washcloths are \$1 extra. The water pressure is strong, the soap is free and there is no time limit.

The business is parked along U.S. Highway 85, the busiest two-lane highway in western North Dakota, where about 100 trucks pass by every 10 minutes. The showers are open from 4 p.m. to 11 p.m., the time when most people are getting off work.

At least two dozen people stop daily, and Jensen said most are repeat customers. They come from around the globe, and he knows most of them only by nicknames, such as "Cowboy" and "Mondo."

"It's been a very educational adventure," said Jensen, whose hometown has fewer than 600 people.

Jensen said he earned several thousand dollars this summer from the showers. He recently advertised the business on Craigslist at \$95,000 and hopes to use the proceeds to pay for four years of tuition at McNally Smith College of Music in St. Paul, Minn.

The talented guitarist, percussionist and music writer begins classes this month.

McNally Smith President Harry Chalmiers said Jensen's entrepreneurial spirit will serve him well in the music industry, another tough business.

"You've got to be prepared to think outside the box and be creative and innovative," Chalmiers said. "That's always been true for musicians and in the economy today, it's true for more and more people."

Hayley Matthews, 47, moved to North Dakota from Montana a few weeks ago to start a business cleaning homes, apartments and campers for oilfield workers. Matthews said she was showering at a motel in the area, but the water there "smelled like a cat box."

Jensen's shower facility has been a godsend, she said.

"It's just wonderful to take a nice shower and still feel like a girl out here in the oil patch," Matthews said.

Jensen said he's seen customers come in grimy and grouchy and leave clean and cordial.

He passes the time between clients cleaning the facility, playing guitar and writing letters thanking friends and relatives for graduation gifts. And he contemplates other businesses.

"I brainstorm and think of what's in demand here," Jensen said. "I've got a bunch of ideas. All it takes is guts, really."

Questions:

- What was the motivation behind this entrepreneurship endeavor?
- What are the disadvantages of this business?
- What are the advantages of this business?
- Do you think this business is one that will last for years to come? Why or why not?
- Would you be willing to buy this business? Why or why not?
- What types of additional options do you see Jensen being able to add to his business?
- What would you change about this business if you were a customer?
- What would you change about this business if you were the owner?
- How does the location of the shower trailer affect its business?
- Does this business have the opportunity to expand? Why or why not?