

Creativity and Lean Manufacturing



Photo by Jim Craven | www.jimcravenphoto.com

GRANTS PASS, OR - What do dragonflies, pool balls, ferns, cave paintings and koi have in common? You can find them adorning the numerous, varied sinks in the Marzi Sink Factory's Grants Pass, Oregon, showroom. And in high-end luxury homes throughout the world, including those of Clint Eastwood, Prince and Meryl Streep to name just a few.

Started as a pottery studio in Carmel Valley, California, in 1959 by Duane Marzi's parents, Marzi Sinks today is a small manufacturer that produces around 2,000 custom sinks a year. Now president of the company, Duane, and his wife, Belinda Marzi, moved the company to Grants Pass in 2005 to escape the unfriendly and costly California business climate.

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by Chris Cook

Duane and Belinda Marzi, owners of Marzi Sink Factory, relocated their business from Carmel, California to Grants Pass, Oregon.

"The thing that I find to be most amazing about Southern Oregon—our Southern Oregon Edge—is that they don't forget about you here. It would be easy for someone small like us to get lost because we're small. Why would anyone care? But we don't get lost. After nine years, the support that we continue to get is remarkable."

- Belinda Marzi, Owner
Marzi Sink Company

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Marzi was looking to expand its facility and ran into stumbling block after stumbling block along the way. One example is arcane water regulations that would make for a very inefficient manufacturing process (i.e., an artist having to walk clear across the factory floor to get water for her paint brush because additional sinks could not be added). This, on top of the high cost of living and the long commutes for their employees, prompted Duane and Belinda to consider relocating the business.



Marzi Sink Factory

One day, Belinda was talking on the phone with a friend who—along with her husband—had moved their family manufacturing business from Sonoma, California, to Grants Pass. She raved about Southern Oregon, living on the beautiful Rogue River, watching the otters at play while barbecuing and enjoying wonderful Southern Oregon wines, and the ease of doing business there. While Belinda and Duane had been considering Arizona and Nevada as possible places to relocate, this phone call prompted a weekend visit to Southern Oregon. In two short days, the Marzis had purchased a riverfront home on the Rogue and secured an agreement with a land developer for a new manufacturing facility right next door to their friends' facility!

"As a fairly small business, we were surprised and delighted at the local support network that helped us move our business and build a new manufacturing facility here in Southern Oregon. The City of Grants Pass was very helpful, as were the local banks, and with an equipment loan from Southern Oregon Regional Economic Development, Inc. (SORED), and a grant from Worksource Oregon working in conjunction with Oregon Manufacturing Extension Partnership (OMEP), we were able to build a new facility incorporating lean manufacturing practices," Belinda recalls.

A "barn-raising" analogy describes it best. The whole community—local, regional and state—come together to help a business relocate in Southern Oregon and to be successful. "The thing that I find to be most amazing about Southern Oregon—our Southern Oregon Edge—is that they don't forget about you here. It would be easy for someone small like us to get lost because we're small. Why would anyone care? But we don't get lost," Belinda marvels. "After nine years, the support that we continue to get is remarkable."



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