

Tony Audette – Audette Motorcycle Company, LLC

**Client of the Connecticut SBDC
SBDC Advisor: Mary Kay Della Camera**

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What does your business do?

I am the proud owner of Audette Motorcycle Company, LLC having proudly served my country as a medium and heavy machine gunner in the U.S, Marine Corps, in Aghanistan. I utilized my industrial design skills along with my mechanical engineering degree to start a custom-made premium luxury motorcycle manufacturing company. We design, engineer and manufacture performance motorcycles for the collector and enthusiast, using the best in modern materials and technologies. We have designed our proprietary frames and suspension components to be powered by a highly modified, Indian Motorcycle sourced, v-twin engine. Our motorcycles offer the best in quality, performance and handling, while ensuring 100% American craftsmanship. We came to be from the constant pursuit of perfection, driven by hard work and our determination to never compromise.

What inspired you to start your business?

Whenever I set out to do something, I always want it to be the very best, or I won't do it at all. After working at some of the "best" companies in the industries I would become bored or disenchanted in what I was doing, because we would be so held back for various reasons: budget, marketing, bureaucracy etc.... I never wanted to be an entrepreneur; it was never a goal of mine. My goal was to design and engineer the very best products that I could. It was after years working for other people that I realized if I wanted to make something that truly had no compromises in the design that I would have to step away from the norm and pursue it on my own. I started my own motorcycle company because I wanted to build motorcycles that were not constrained by any agenda to save pennies by selling compromised designs or design something to be sold at a price point. There is nothing wrong with this of course but I would see little things that could totally change the performance of a part but not be able to implement it for various reasons. For me, the engineering required for motorcycles just clicks, it is something with which I am obsessed. I couldn't imagine doing anything else now.

Before coming to the SBDC, what were your primary challenges and/or needs?

As an engineer having worked in the firearms manufacturing, aviation and motorcycle industries I was very familiar and confident in the technical side of operating a business. However, I was clueless as to how to effectively run the "front-end" of the business. I had no formal training in business administration, accounting, legal, marketing or advertising. I did some online research, to at least know what I should be looking for or the questions I should be asking. Honestly, knowing that I was lacking in these areas was the main concern I had when deciding if the time was right for me to start my own business.

How has the services/counseling you've received helped you overcome your challenges?

The help that I have received from Mary Kay at the SBDC has been truly priceless. If it wasn't for her help and guidance I would not be as far along in my business as I am now; not to mention the amount of time, money and resources I would have exhausted trying to figure it out on my own. With Mary Kay's help I was able to attend a training course to help learn and refine the skills that I was lacking and hesitant with. She



continuously assists me with administrative work as it pertains to the DRS to help assure that it is done correctly. In addition to the knowledge that she has, the network which she has helped me connect. I have found a graphic designer, lawyer, accountant and other entrepreneurs who are willing to assist someone trying to navigate their own way through the startup process.

What 2-3 things have you learned or changed since working with the CTSBDC?

- 1) It is okay to not know something but keep asking about it. The right resource is available for you.
- 2) I have learned how to organize my administrative work. What documents/ forms mean what, how to use them and how they benefit me.

How is your business doing now? What does your future look like?

The business is doing great. We are looking to turn profitable within our first year of business. With this we will be able to expand our R&D to develop and introduce new products for our customers for aftermarket parts and fully refine the design of our own motorcycles.

What would you say to other small business owners thinking of working with the SBDC?

Do it, call an advisor, take an hour to see how it can benefit you. Even if you don't need their help now, you may in the future if a new law gets passed and you need help to interpret it or you need to look for a service but don't know where to start.