

S.A.M.D.A. BUSINESS Success STORY



The Story

THE CO-OP THAT COULD

BUSINESS NAME:

Sedalia Co-op

BUSINESS OWNER:

Ed Thornton

BUSINESS LOCATION:

Sedalia, Special Area No.3

BUSINESS SECTOR:

Grocery



Ed Thornton

Ed Thornton spent five years commuting the busy streets of Calgary and Edmonton. To say his lifestyle has changed would be an understatement...but the manager of the Sedalia Co-op says there's no time to be bored.

"It's a co-op store, community members own shares in it and I'm hired to manage it, so it's locally owned. Everything from groceries to hardware to some clothing, lumber, posts, cultivator shovels, oil... so a general country store."

Sale week is especially busy. The Co-op has a Fall and a Spring sale, which spills over into the community hall, and draws people from across the region.

"We have to save up shipments for about six weeks for the spring and fall sales."

The Sedalia Co-op started in 1942, and the building itself still boasts the original tin ceiling. Rows of account books behind the till also speak of days gone by. Although the store maintains a connection with its past, it still has to compete in the present market.

"People travel, they price shop so we don't just compete with Oyen, we compete with Costco and Medicine Hat."

Thornton says the store is competitively priced, especially on big-ticket items. But, the cost of freight prevents the sale of some things.

"Freight is our biggest expense, it adds a lot, so it keeps us from selling anything that's heavy and inexpensive, shingles, barb wire, stuff like that...we can't."

Thornton took over as manager from his father, who was in the position for 20 years.

"When I took over, Dad said he'd be surprised if it would last 5-10 years, but our sales have increased every year."

In 2008, the Sedalia Coop rang up an impressive \$900,000 in sales. Thornton has his sites set on the million-dollar mark next. He says the loyalty of local customers is key to the Co-op's success.

"Those that support us support us very well. We have no sports, no banking [in Sedalia], but we have people that will go banking, go to Oyen, and they'll stop on their way home to buy groceries, which is quite nice."

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