



BLINK TEES: XXL SIZE ACHIEVEMENT

Clothes make the man. It's a statement that Jeff Staten and Steve Long, co-founders of Hoffman Estates screen printers Blink Tees, have embraced in their business. "Blink Tees doesn't just print custom t-shirts. We put your logo or idea on anything," say the founders. Their desire to grow their business and make an impact in the community drove them to apply for Next Level Northwest's (NLNW) Business Accelerator Program.

T-ING UP FOR GROWTH

Jeff and Steve had a good understanding of what it would take to get their company to the next level. In the last three years, Blink Tees moved from a hobby operating out of a home attic to an established business in the Hoffman Estates community. Questions about how to plan and attain business growth while managing the workload they already had became a mounting concern for the duo. When Kevin Kramer, CECD, Director of Economic Development for Hoffman Estates, introduced Jeff and Steve to NLNW's free business accelerator, the co-founders immediately saw the program as a great way to help them take Blink Tees even further. The entrepreneurs organized a pitch for Blink Tees and presented it to NLNW's panel of judges with the aim of being awarded one of the program's 90-day business coaching engagements.

CONNECTING WITH A LOCAL EXPERT

Having an idea of what concerns they currently had in their business, the co-founders pitched to NLNW with an open mind and a willingness to seek guidance and communicate. This proved to be a determining factor in the pitch panel's decision to award Blink Tees a spot in the 12-week program.

Sybil Ege, a professional business coach and the CEO and Co-Founder at The Business of Food, was hand-selected to work with Jeff and Steve to further identify the company's strengths and opportunities for growth. With Blink Tees's business evaluation in hand, Sybil was able to give her initial assessments before she even stepped foot through the company's front door. Jeff and Steve promptly began implementing her advice and the newly formed trio were ready to work before the accelerator program had officially begun.

TWO JOBS
CREATED

70% PROJECTED
REVENUE
GROWTH

AFTER COMPLETING PROGRAM

You need to be **WILLING TO CHANGE** to be able to grow. If you're thinking about applying to Next Level Northwest—**GO FOR IT.**

Steve Long, Co-founder of Blink Tees

FASHIONABLE RESULTS

For the next 90 days, Jeff, Steve, and Sybil worked as a tightly knit unit. Sybil helped the Blink Tees co-founders implement new efficiencies for financing and strategy as well as lent her expertise in streamlining their current operations and readying them for larger business planning. She also aided in the creation of Blink Tees's core values—a defined set of standards outlining the ethics and character of Blink Tees which Jeff and Steve display proudly in their shop on what they refer to as their "Sybil Wall"—and which proved remarkably helpful when it came to hiring employees and figuring out which vendors and customers they wanted to work with.

By the end of the company's tenure in NLNW's accelerator program, Blink Tees had created 2 new jobs, expanded its facility, and projected of year-over-year revenue growth of 70%. With the added efficiencies to their company, Jeff and Steve were also able to cut their average workload nearly in half, having each gone from working 70-80 hours a week down to 40-50 hours per week. When asked what advice they would give to other businesses looking to enter the NLNW Business Accelerator Program, Steve replied: "Go for it. But don't just go for it, actually commit to doing it. Walk into it with a sense of openness and be willing to try new things because there's a reason your business isn't working. You need to be willing to change to be able to grow. If you're thinking about applying to Next Level Northwest—go for it."

ABOUT NEXT LEVEL NORTHWEST

Next Level Northwest is a not-for-profit business accelerator program that supports existing local businesses. The program was founded by five Northwest Chicagoland municipalities—Elk Grove Village, Hanover Park, Hoffman Estates, Rolling Meadows, and Schaumburg—as a public-private partnership to support regional and local businesses through collaborative and innovative initiatives to help grow local economies. To learn more about Next Level Northwest or to submit an application for your company to join the next class of companies in the business accelerator program, visit www.nextlevelnorthwest.org.

THE PATH TO SUCCESS STARTS HERE



To get started, visit NextLevelNorthwest.org and/or contact your local Economic Development Director for more information.

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