



BarnWiz

BarnWiz, an online directory for barns and trainers, was founded by Tori Sullivan to ease the frustration when making any change to the care and welfare of horses. Tori's passion for horses as well as her background in software led to the idea to create a dedicated online space to connect the equine industry. The business launched in 2018.

The Challenge

Ms. Sullivan initially sought out resources to help her understand all the considerations in starting a new business. She wanted to learn about early stages of finding a company to help build her site, identifying the core values of her company, and the tactical steps to build the business.

Working with the Loudoun SBDC

Ms. Sullivan's first stop at the Loudoun SBDC was a "Starting a Business Class" in 2014. There she found mentors at the SBDC, where she worked with the team to start to build her strategic and tactical business plan.

Tori also used the events and Meetups available through the Loudoun SBDC and Mason Enterprise Center- Loudoun. She attended Loudoun Tech Startups to connect with other technology professionals in the hopes of meeting developers to help with building her web site. She also attended and presented her business at 1 Million Cups to gain feedback and insight on her business idea. The 1 Million Cups program was particularly valuable as it gave Ms. Sullivan access to other entrepreneurs as well as valuable feedback sources as she built her business. She also was involved with the iCAP program the Lemonheads. According to Tori, "SBDC is the only innovation incubator in Loudoun so it's the best and only ecosystem to connect entrepreneurs in our county."

She found tremendous value working individually with the coaches at the SBDC, including Cort Maddox, who assisted on the technology end of developing her business. "It's a great system of advisors" she says, "They are all able to connect businesses with resources throughout the community."

The Results

Tori launched BarnWiz in 2018. Since that time, she has developed a loyal and consistent client base.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted her main source of customer acquisition- live horse shows. With vendors not permitted to attend these events, Tori has pivoted to online marketing, particularly paid advertising. During this time, she continues to touch base with the Loudoun SBDC regarding loan options and to update the SBDC on her business status.

Ms. Sullivan recommends the Loudoun SBDC for anyone considering starting a new business. "It's tough to start a new business and the Loudoun SBDC is tremendous resource," she continues. "You can get into iCAP, you can identify funding streams, you can work with coaches. The value is immeasurable."