

Business Is Booming

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Church Magazines

Thanks to what he learned in self-reliance classes, when one door closed on Teddy Reyes, another soon opened.

It's 4:00 a.m. in Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic, and Teddy Reyes is already up and working. He has a lot to do today to maintain his booming business. He begins slicing tomatoes and bread. Then he makes his special sauce.

By 6:00 a.m., two employees arrive to help him, and preparations speed up. By 8:00 a.m., they have made 300 sandwiches, wrapped individually in plastic wrap and loaded in bags. Six more employees show up, and the whole crew goes out to sell.

By 9:00 a.m., all but a few sandwiches—three or four that Teddy saved to feed his team—have been sold.

Business is good for Teddy. But things haven't always been easy. In fact, for the past five years, he hasn't been able to find steady work in his chosen profession as a lawyer.

So how did Teddy make the switch from counseling clients to selling sandwiches? It took a lot of hard work, of course, but it also took a careful application of principles he learned in classes offered through the Church's Self-Reliance Services initiative.



Losing His Job

Five years ago, life for Teddy looked amazing. He had a good job as a lawyer, he had recently gotten married, and he had baptized his wife. “But we had some challenges,” he says, “and I lost my job.”

For the next four years Teddy struggled to find work. “There was a lot of work I could do, but no one wanted to pay me. I tried starting different jobs on my own, but that didn’t work.”

His wife, Stephany, had a good job, but her salary alone couldn’t cover the bills. Soon the couple had a child. They were elated, but their finances grew tighter. They lost their house, had to sell their car, and used up all their savings. Eventually they had to move into a small house owned by Stephany’s mother.

But Teddy didn’t give up. Soon an unexpected opportunity presented itself.

The Power of Self-Reliance

After years of struggling, Teddy knew it was time for a change.

“I decided to take the Church’s self-reliance courses,” he says. “I had heard about them but always thought they weren’t for me. I thought they were just about doing things on your own. The classes were marvelous.”

First, Teddy joined a Personal Finances group. Then he joined a Starting and Growing My Business

group. Group classes helped Teddy with his business knowledge but also helped him develop spiritually.

“I decided to do everything they taught,” he says, “and my finances changed immediately. I started paying a full tithe, praying daily, studying the scriptures, and exercising faith. And things changed—I started to save money and to keep the Sabbath day holy. Every principle blessed me.”

In his Starting and Growing My Business group, Teddy learned how to identify a potential product that might benefit customers where he lives. As he evaluated what people were looking for, the inspiration started to flow. In his area, people liked fresh sandwiches, but they also liked to have them made to order—and delivered.

“Many restaurants have a special sauce that makes their food stand out,” Teddy says. “So I developed my own sandwich special sauce!”

Growing His Business

On the day he launched his business, Teddy made 30 sandwiches.

“Thirty minutes later, I was back home,” he says. “My wife became concerned when she found me on the couch. She asked me what I was doing home already—wasn’t I supposed to be selling sandwiches? I had already sold all of them!”

Over the next few weeks, Teddy contacted local businesses and schools. Many were eager to buy his sandwiches, and his business began growing. He learned quickly how to take care of fresh vegetables so that they last. He also knows exactly how long his special sauce will keep. He orders and picks up bread each evening. He buys discounted vegetables on Saturdays, which cost less but will still be good on Monday.

Soon he was receiving orders for specific types of sandwiches, and even large numbers for special occasions. He needed help, so he began hiring employees.

By creating positive relationships with local schools and businesses, Teddy created an active, consistent clientele. Within four months, he had eight employees and was selling 300 sandwiches a day, five days a week. His sales team was so efficient that they sold every sandwich even during the summer when the schools were closed. Now Teddy is ready to expand again.

Because he took the self-reliance classes, he was inspired to come up with the idea of the sandwich business. “Because of this guidance from the Church and the blessings I have received,” he says, “I have a very strong testimony of the Church and Jesus Christ.” ■