

# Dripless, Inc.

## Heads And Hearts Combine To Form A Successful “Family” Business

By Jim Brumm

Every Tuesday during the winter the staff and owners of Dripless, Incorporated, get together in the small lunch room in their Santa Rosa office to share soup, ideas and jokes—and to connect.

The staff takes turns bringing lunch. This week it’s a Jamaican ginger soup, spicy, hearty and warm, prepared the night before by Deborah Snow, the company’s Marketing Director. As the bowls are passed around and they dig in, co-owner Dan Rumrill, the only male, sits surrounded by his co-workers as they share the week’s events and future plans.

His wife and co-owner, Valerie, along with the other women, tease Dan a lot and he smiles and accepts their good-natured ribbing. It feels



The staff of Dripless, Inc. L-R: Julie Joerger, Dan Rumrill, Deborah Snow, Patty Smith and Valerie Rumrill

as if we are sitting around a family dinner table, only with a family whose members actually like each other.

This weekly lunch personifies the attitude and energy of this small, dynamic company and underscores the reasons for their success.

None of the people in this room expected to find themselves part of a company that manufactures dripless caulking guns. Each came there by chance and fortune and each found a home among good people

who share a common goal: To provide the best product and service possible for their clients, and have a good time while they’re at it.

Dan comes from a background in finance, though he has always had an affinity for tools.

“My dad was extremely gifted mechanically,” he said. “He taught me about using tools.”

Dan was a teacher for ten years, then segued into a career as a Certified Financial Planner, working with a partner capitalizing small businesses.

“One day a painter came to us with a new invention,” he said, “a dripless caulking gun. We were just going to be investors, but we ended up running the company.” He laughed and shook his head at the memory. “I had to learn a lot of skill sets,” he said.

Eventually Dan and Valerie (who were married in 1974 and have 2 grown children) bought the inventor out and began their adventure with Dripless, Inc.. The original inventor has since passed on but, “It’s great because his widow still gets royalty checks,” said Valerie.

Their product is truly remarkable. Old-fashioned caulking guns always dripped because even after the worker stopped squeezing the handle of the gun, the caulking material was still compressed in the tube, and the residual pressure caused it to ooze out making a mess and wasting material every time.

The Dripless gun solves this problem, with an ingenious silicon washer and spring that absorbs the residual pressure and keeps the caulking material from leaking. It’s one of those beautiful, perfect inventions; it completely solves the problem and it’s so simple it makes you slap yourself on the forehead because you didn’t think of it.

Since taking the reins and forming Dripless, Inc., Dan and Valerie have worked tirelessly to establish brand recognition and their place in



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the marketplace. And their efforts have paid off. They realized that to succeed in this industry, which is inundated with large, corporate giants that have been in business for generations, they would have to not only rely on the strength of their product, but on forming good relationships as well. And this is where they shine.

Dan and Valerie personally attend up to fifteen trade shows a year, where they can meet their clients face-to-face.

"Nobody really promotes our products like we do," said Valerie. "At the trade shows our booth is different because the buyers see the same people year after year. We're kind of a mom and pop shop and people like that. We make that connection with our clients. We made a commitment to each other to do it together." She looked at Dan and smiled. "We go to dinner afterward. We're glued at the hip!"

"Valerie's done a fabulous job of taking over our national sales," said Dan. "We were too far from our customers, so we connected with them and it's made a huge difference."

But it's not just Dan and Valerie. The staff at Dripless is well known to the customers as well.

Julie Joerger, the office manager, is a familiar voice to all who do business with the company. Cheerful and friendly (like everyone at Dripless), she handles most of the incoming calls and coordinates things not only for the office, but for the sixty-plus sales reps around the country.

"Julie has been phenomenal," said Valerie. "Everyone loves her. Though they haven't met her in person, people ask about her at trade shows all the time."

Julie came to the company in 1998 to assist in entering orders and has risen to the position of "Logistics Diva."

"This is the nicest environment I've ever been in," she said. "I work with people who have integrity and who care. They're honest; honesty is our best policy – how we make the product, how we sell it." (At this the rest of the staff smile sheepishly, then laugh and say, awww, shucks! and pass the pot of soup around for seconds).

"Our work culture is about honesty and it starts right here," added Dan.

Patty Smith is the accounting guru at Dripless. She handles accounts receivable and payable and is a stickler for customer service. "I always make a point of calling back," she said. "We all have a specialty here, but we help each other out."

Patty also is the owner (though who owns who remains to be seen) of Coco, the official Dripless, Inc. office dog. A good-natured Jack Russell Terrier, Coco (who, they assure me is also dripless – "He better be!" grumbles Dan



The Tuesday Lunch Meeting At Dripless, Inc.

with a smile), greets customers with the same open friendliness the rest of the staff exhibits.

Deborah Snow, in addition to being the Marketing Director, is also the designated "class clown." Funny and irreverent (and a great cook, judging by today's fare), Deborah is the driving force behind Dripless, Inc.'s display advertising, store displays, website design and overall marketing efforts. She is also a successful artist and massage therapist.

Valerie looked around the table at the diverse group of people who have come together to be part of the Dripless team. "Julie and Patty and I all went to Bible study together," she mused. "I was Deborah's massage client. Patty actually likes numbers. Deborah has brought so many fresh ideas. We've found a great team. It's so great for Dan and me; when we leave we don't have to think about anything."

Since their inception, Dan and Valerie have expanded their line of caulking guns, with twelve models built around the same technology.

"We decided to get the next generation going," said Dan, "and came up with the Ergo/Tech line." Ergo/Tech features ergonomic handles designed by Dan which make using the guns easier and more convenient.

While the original patent has expired, Dripless, Inc., because of their reputation for integrity and customer service, is stronger than ever. Their work over the years to establish brand awareness has paid off. They trademarked their signature yellow color – if it's not yellow, it's not Dripless, (they are one of the only companies to have trademarked a color) and built a reputation for quality that has ensured customer loyalty.

"We made a decision early on to stay with high quality and not go for the lowest price," said Dan.

Dripless, Inc. also manufactures The Paint Dawg, a multi-liner system for paint buckets, with 24 disposable liners pre-packed to fit snugly inside each unit. The liners pull out one at a time, leaving a clean bucket that is ready for use. In addition, they offer a line of specialty paint spatulas, which, due to their unique design, can save as much as a gallon of material out of a 5-gallon bucket.

Are there more innovative products in the works? Dan shakes his head. "We were going to expand to other products, but basically we're a caulking gun company. I don't see that changing. Our first model is still the best seller."

Best seller indeed. Dripless, Inc. sells tens of thousands of dripless caulking guns every month all over the nation. With warehouses in California and Tennessee, they have even started to pick up international clients as far away as England, Australia, Germany, Ireland and Canada.

Lunch ends and everyone begins to gather their bowls to be washed, still laughing and smiling as they prepare to go back to work. Everyone compliments Deborah on her soup. They shake my hand and thank me for coming. Phones ring and people run to answer.

Finally, it's just me and Coco left in the lunchroom. She cocks her head at me like the RCA Victor dog, smiles and pees on the rug.

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