

James & Associates of the Northwest, LLC

Collection Agency

Ritzville, Washington

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When Paul McNally moved from Boston to Pendleton Oregon, the change from an urban to a rural environment took some adjustment. He thought he would never live anywhere more rural than Pendleton. Then he met his future wife. She lived in the small town of Ritzville in Eastern Washington, and had worked in the school system for 19 years. As they made plans for a life together, they realized that while her career was firmly rooted in Washington, Paul's options were more flexible. As the owner of his own business, Paul felt he could create a second location in Ritzville, without negatively impacting his customer base. He made the move to Ritzville, and that's where Paul's experience as a rural entrepreneur really began.

Paul says, "I couldn't have done it without the Internet." His company, James & Associates of the Northwest, LLC, a collection agency, is still headquartered in Pendleton and is managed by his assistant. Paul's office in Ritzville functions as a branch office. The transition from a single-location business to a small network required creativity and effort to get the technology just right. Paul says, "It took some time. I purchased a server and I had to get my ISP in Ritzville working with the ISP in Pendleton. Once that was established, it was great." The Ritzville office is supported by a wireless system, while the Pendleton site uses DSL, a challenge that could have been daunting without the guidance of technology experts. Paul relies on one local computer technician in each of his two locations. He says, "I think these days it's just as important to establish a relationship with a computer expert as with an accountant or an attorney. I budget a certain amount of money each year for technology, so I can stay in the game."

James & Associates has customers all over Eastern Oregon and a growing number in the Ritzville area. To keep all that activity running smoothly, Paul and his assistant stay in daily phone and email contact. Paul thinks their new way of communicating may actually have improved their collaborative process. As he puts it, "This way we're more focused on getting the job done. We're not interrupting each other in the middle of work. When she has time, she'll email me, and I do the same." Paul is also happy that his business evolution has been an easy transition for his customers. In fact, because so much customer contact at James & Associates is enabled by technology, Paul believes some of his clients aren't aware that they are talking to him in Ritzville. He also believes that sharing his customers concerns about security has made the transition easier. He says, "More and more people are concerned about privacy of information and identity fraud. That's a priority for me. I distributed a newsletter to let all my clients know what I'm doing to enhance security."

Paul's company is growing at the pace he prefers and he understands that a smaller, rural community can increase business opportunity as well as improve quality of life. He sums it up this way, "Getting involved in the community is just as important as developing your business. I like my company being small. Being small and being able to help my two communities is what I'm looking for now."

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