

FORMING IDEAS

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Brenco Industries began publishing Forming Ideas in 2007. It is intended to educate, entertain and inform through our own observations and experiences. Brenco was created in 1983 as a quality provider of metal cutting, forming and fabricating solutions.



Lessons Learned on the Mountain

I made what you might call a career change last winter. Well, maybe not a career change in the truest sense, let's call it, I don't know, a new endeavour? I like to ski. My ski hill is Big White, outside of Kelowna. It is one of the largest in Canada at over 7300 acres (just under 12 square miles). That's a lot of terrain and it can take a few days to learn your way around the 105 km of marked runs. Somebody, years ago, had the brilliant idea of putting people on the mountain to assist lost and confused skiers. They called them Snow Hosts and their job was to provide skiers with guided mountain tours and on slope assistance.

The idea of becoming a Snow Host intrigued me. I checked into the requirements: A reasonable skiing ability, knowledge of the mountain, a two year commitment and a desire to help people. That all sounded pretty good, so I applied. And then waited. And waited.

A year later (This all took place in COVID time), I had my first phone interview. It was an easy conversation. Could I commit? Could I ski? How well did I know the mountain? And, why did I want to do this? After answering those questions, I was asked when could I get to the mountain for an in person interview. This proved to be a challenge. The storm that raged through BC in November 2021 had taken out all the roads leading out of Vancouver. I couldn't get to the mountain until at least one of them reopened. It wasn't until Christmas Day that we loaded the car and drove over a long and damaged highway.



The ski season by then had been running for a month already. The Snow Host Captain was anxious to interview me so that they could fill the team roster. Once we arrived, I scrambled to work in a couple ski days before my interview knowing that it would include a ski ability test. The call came and a meeting time was set for the next day. I was nervous! And for what? A job that I didn't need? In fact, a job that didn't pay a penny? This was just a two day a week volunteer gig.

Next day and I'm meeting with two Snow Hosts. We talk on the chairlift. The same questions asked, the same answers given. Can I commit? How well do I know the mountain?

Continued on the back page....

BIZ BUZZ



INFLATION

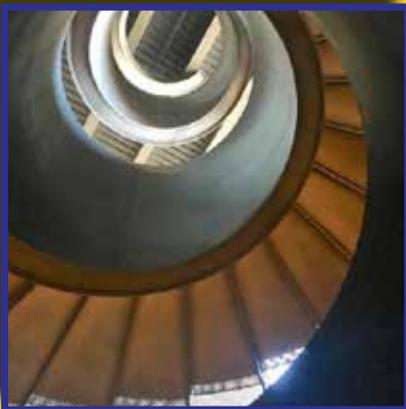


Last summer, Forming Ideas reported that we were entering an era of economic frustration. Not since the early 1990's had our economy experienced high inflation. The Bank of Canada along with the US Federal Reserve both proclaimed it as 'transitory'.

It is now obvious that they were either wishfully thinking or protecting their respective Governments' fiscal policies. Enormous amounts of money had been printed and distributed throughout the COVID pandemic which ultimately reduced the value of the currencies. This, along with supply constraints, caused the price of just about everything to rise dramatically.

With the pin on that grenade successfully pulled and employees feeling the pinch, the need to keep up with rising prices is now upon us. As wages increase, so does the cost of products and services which in turn creates the demand for higher wages. Without government intervention, wages and prices can spiral out of control.

The first weapon governments use to battle inflation is the raising of interest rates. This slows the demand for borrowed money which has the positive effect of bringing housing prices under control but also inhibits business investment. The fear now is that we will enter a period of stagflation which is when interest rates and prices continue to rise as the economy tanks, creating unemployment, unaffordability and high interest mortgages on homes worth less than the required financing.



Tsawwassen Mills Mall
Tsawwassen, BC

Martin's Lane Winery
Kelowna, BC



BRENCO ABOUT TOWN



'Eagle Calling'
Surrey, BC

'Spirit of the Sacred Mountains'
North Vancouver, BC



History Mystery



Opening in 1946, the Hollywood Furniture Manufacturing Company was located at 1701 West 3rd in Vancouver. In the mid 1950s, a showroom was located at 209 - 119 West Pender Street.

Hollywood specialized in simple, modern furniture that represented the more casual west coast lifestyle. It was inexpensive and had mass appeal. Hollywood made a lot of the furniture for the show homes at the PNE. They ceased operations in 1961.

The top photo highlights the welding area with a single stick welder (SMAW) beneath a ventilation hood. Bundles of tubing lie uncut on the floor along side cut, polished and formed tubing ready for welding.

In the second photo we can identify a mechanized tube bender. Right of that is a tube polisher and set in the back corner is what appears to be a pneumatic press.

In the bottom photo, the final assembly is taking place on a wooden floor (probably the upper floor). In all three photos, lighting appears to come from large windows. Only one incandescent light fixture can be seen in the top photo and bare bulbs in the bottom photo. The lighting conditions during winter must have been horrible.

A federal government report compiled in 1950 reported that Hollywood was one of 178 furniture manufacturers in British Columbia. The industry, which included furniture, cabinetry and mattress production employed 2099 people (mostly men) at an average wage/salary of \$2100 a year.

Production across Canada was almost exclusively for domestic use.



Lessons Learned continued...

Why do I want this position? Then we ski and dang these guys are good! Self doubt sets in. Am I really good enough for this? What do they expect? A couple more runs and I'm actually having fun until the final test: A mogul run. I don't do the bumps often, in fact, I tend to avoid them. Standing at the top of the run, I figure this is the make it or break it moment. I make my way through the bumps, following one of the Snow Hosts. The other takes up position behind me to evaluate. That's been the drill on every run. I make my way down as quickly and with as much finesse as I can muster. Bump after bump after bump. Reaching the bottom (fortunately without falling), I pull up beside my evaluator. Laughing and without hesitation told him that I had been completely out of control. I knew at that moment that being honest could cost me the job but in all fairness, if that was a deal breaker, better to let them know now.

What turned out to be the real deal breaker came near the end of the meeting. At this point, I had a pretty good idea that I was being accepted for the job. The deal breaker, they told me, was that if a prospect asked what perks came with the job, the interview terminated right then and there. They didn't want people that were in it for selfish reasons. The idea of perks hadn't even crossed my mind. This was, after all, a volunteer role. The job was mine, they said, and I was fitted for my uniform and told to report for my first shift at 9 am on New Years Day.

I was very happy that I had been selected for the role of Snow Host. It was a ton of fun helping people from all over enjoy their mountain experience. The team was terrific and perfectly aligned with members that, beyond anything else, wanted to help others.

I hadn't interviewed for anything in over forty years. I'd forgotten what it is like to be scrutinized, evaluated and deemed worthy for a job. In a well conducted interview the right applicant is selected for the job which is not the same as the best applicant. Here are a few take aways from my experience:

Interviewer

- Start with a phone interview. It saves time and is more comfortable for the prospect. Face to face in an unfamiliar environment is stressful.
- Make the prospect feel comfortable. You'll get clearer and more honest answers.
- Keep it conversational. The word interview breaks down to 'inter' and 'view' meaning the exchange of information between two parties.
- Don't oversell the position. Be clear about the role and future opportunities.
- Require the prospect to perform a test to evaluate their skill level.
- Most importantly, understand their motives. If it's mostly for the perks or salary, you may not want them. Make sure they want the job for the right reasons, whatever your reasons may be.

Prospect

- Be honest. If you fake your way into the job, it's probably going to be a rough ride.
- Ask questions. Make sure this is an organization you want to belong to.
- Do your homework. Learn as much as you can about the organization and the job you are seeking before you even apply.
- Only once there is an agreement, ask about compensation and benefits. Don't let this get in the way of what could be a great career with plenty of opportunities.

About the author

Steve Heim is past President of Brenco Industries.

He now serves as the company's business advisor.

Brenco Industry's

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