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DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

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Hello, do-it-yourselfers

Handy with tools? Then Club Workshop is for you

Denver Business Journal - by [Greg Avery](#)

Stephen Garran tinkers.

The former Accenture information technology consultant used to pack circuit boards and a soldering iron on his many business trips in order to build things in his hotel room at night.

Back home, the mechanically inclined native of Australia worked on cars he collected to restore, usually an Italian-made Maserati.

Working on the engine of a 1967 Maserati Quattroporte helped inspire the creation of **Club Workshop**, the Denver business that Garran launched Sept. 5.

He had to make a hard-to-find part for the Maserati, and the difficulty of trying to find a place where he could do it gave him the business idea.

“If it was that hard for me to find a place for my project, it’s that hard for a lot of people like me,” Garran said.

Burned out from the travel of IT consulting, Garran started working on a business plan for a place to give tinkerers, builders and other do-it-yourselfers a workshop with sophisticated tools.

He left Accenture a year before opening Club Workshop. Starting his own company drew upon the business-process expertise he gained in his consulting work, and satiated a lifelong desire to be an entrepreneur.

“I always knew I would open a business,” he said. “It was always a matter of ‘what do I want to do?’”

Club Workshop, at 999 Vallejo St. just northeast of I-25 and Eighth Street, is designed to operate like a health club. Members can buy a 30-day punchcard for \$300 or buy one-day access for \$40.

Garran’s company has five employees, three of whom are part time. His wife, Laura Garran, also pitches in during her spare time.

The club tries to cover a range of do-it-yourself genres.

Different rooms in the 16,000-square-foot building house tools and resources for woodworking, metalwork, welding, automotive repair, sewing and embroidery, printing and lamination for signs, computer-aided design and even a rapid prototyping machine that builds functional plastic mock-ups of things people seek to build.

Garran said he assembled between \$200,000 and \$300,000 of his own money and from family members to start the business. He rented an industrial building close to major highways and stocked it with tools auctioned by manufacturers and other businesses.

He also sought to put Club Workshop near downtown’s concentration of condo dwellers who may have home-improvement and car projects, but no space to do the work.



Kathleen Lavine | Business Journal

Stephen Garran, owner and founder of Club Workshop, works on a drill press. The facility offers space and tools for people to work on projects such as carpentry or on their cars.

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The club has attracted a handful of full-time members so far.

One of them is Wayne Boyd, a retired Denver machine shop worker who lives in a condo but still has lots of do-it-yourself projects. He ran across Club Workshop on the Craigslist website for Denver while browsing for used tools to buy.

Boyd bought a monthly membership. He's changed his car oil there, replaced the wheel bearings in his Oldsmobile, started rebuilding a Toyota MR2 he wants to restore and has taken welding lessons.

"I really hope this succeeds," Boyd said. "It's going to be a great thing for me — I'm retired and it gives me something to do."

Regardless of the space they may have, only the wealthiest of hobbyists could afford Club Workshop's collection of metal machining tools, lathes, drill presses, saws, welders, cutting torches, an auto lift, sheet metal bender, tire balancer and a metal-curving English wheel.

Club Workshop requires members to take training courses to operate most of its machines before allowing them to use the power tools.

In his travels, Garran ran across a San Francisco Bay-area workshop that operated on a similar model. But it caters mainly to technology inventors.

Woodworking shops often hold classes for would-be carpenters, and hardware stores teach various skills.

But Garran knows of no real competition for Club Workshop that offers similar open access to tools, basic supplies and space to work on projects ranging from simple carpentry to rebuilding a car or creating a robot from scratch.

He's focused on proving his business plan for Club Workshop in Denver, Garran said.

But opening locations in cities across the country is a long-term goal.

"If it ends up just being Denver, and I make a decent living at it, there's a lot worse things than that," Garran said.

At a glance

Club Workshop LLC

Founder: Stephen Garran

Employees: Five

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