



Osprey CEO: 'Scrappiness' key

Tom Barney addresses business, government leaders at meeting

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Osprey Packs' decision to move its distribution center and 18 employees from Cortez to Ogden, Utah, last year caught many off guard, but as CEO Tom Barney explained to Montezuma County business and government leaders on April 29, it was a strategic decision that allowed it further invest the business' growth overall and in its Cortez headquarters.

"Southwest Colorado is simply not a distribution hub for the U.S. We needed interstates, airports, FedEx," said Barney at the annual Montezuma County Economic Development Association meeting.

The change positioned Osprey's domestic fulfillment near the national rail network, which allowed the company to better fill shipments to its retailers in more environmentally friendly way. It also places distribution in a transportation hub while focusing most other company functions in Colorado.

"Osprey will save \$450,000 in transportation costs by using rail. ...That pays for a lot of things," said Barney.

One of those things is an updated headquarters in Cortez.

Now that distribution has moved, the company is spending \$2.5 million to revamp its offices at the Cortez Industrial Park and will have hired 22 new employees in sales, marketing, administration and information technology by the end of the year.

"Do what you can here and maybe do the other things elsewhere; be willing to experiment with contractors from around the country," said Barney. "Be as scrappy in every way possible. ... That's what it takes to make it work in a rural environment."

Barney also touched on the importance of promoting the unique Southwest Colorado lifestyle to aid in recruiting quality employees for positions. He said that for Osprey, the screening process involves more than just ensuring a candidate's professional background matches up with the company needs. It also entails ensuring that the employee is comfortable with some of the sacrifices that come with living in a beautiful but remote part of the county.

"We hire very carefully to make sure they really want to live here; we've been doing that and our retention rate is really high," said Barney.

Barney suggested other area businesses as well as local government entities really "tap into that cool Colorado experience" when promoting the area to people considering relocation.

"A lot of people that don't stick around are people not willing to put up with things like transportation hassles; having to go to Durango to fly; we all know there is so much more here. You have to convince folks of that."

