

# A Family Business

## SDP Client Spotlight: Grocery Outlet (Orange, CA)

Founded in 1946 by Jim Read as a discount military surplus store, Grocery Outlet has now grown to be the nation's largest extreme value grocery retailer, where shoppers can find brand-name groceries and farm fresh produce for up to 40-70% off conventional retail prices. Today, the third generation of the Read family continues to run the business, with over 280 independently operated stores across the country.

Most of these stores are independently operated by locally-based families, and for this month's Client Spotlight, we sat down with one such family: owner-operator couple Josh and Britney Harsh of Grocery Outlet #274 in Orange, CA.

### Growing Grocery Outlet

Josh and Britney met at Le Cordon Bleu in Oregon, where they both attended culinary school. After four years of experience working his way through the departments of his local Grocery Outlet store, Josh was inspired to open a store of his own. Together, he and Britney applied and were accepted by the Grocery Outlet screening committee to begin their in-store training to become owner-operators.

Even before the location was available, Josh and Britney made the decision that they would either stay in Oregon or move specifically to Orange, CA. Britney explained, "I grew up in Orange, so we figured if we're going to get a store down there it might as well be Orange because I know the area."

Because Grocery Outlet employs a unique business model very different than traditional grocery retailers, this was good reasoning. With Grocery Outlet, independent "owner-operators" make most of the inventory decisions for their store, whereas under conventional models, the corporate office makes most stocking decisions. With Grocery Outlet, owner-operators can analyze the needs of their shoppers to *make decisions that are right for their market*.

### When Dreams Become Reality

About two months after completing their training, the lease for the Orange property was signed. Britney remembered, "It was a hot store – everybody wanted it – it was in a prime location and everyone thought it was going to do really well. There were other operators who put in for it as well, but they chose us... And a lot of times they say the first store you apply for you don't get, so *we got very lucky*."

Although the first six months were tough, Josh and Britney soon realized the full scope of support they had from the Grocery Outlet family. The couple proudly notes that two of their best friends are the couple they trained with. Additionally, all the Grocery Outlet operators interact through an online forum where they can ask questions and see how other stores handle different challenges. Josh continued:

*"It truly is kind of a family... When we do our twice a year get-together, there's great-grandpa and grandpa and dad and son – that's what everybody calls them because everybody's connected."*

Perhaps the best part about owning a Grocery Outlet is that it allows the couple to stay close to home with their two daughters. By setting their own hours, Britney can drop the kids off at school at 8 am and pick them up at 5 pm. Their eldest daughter even has her own Grocery Outlet t-shirt!

## Why SDP?

According to Britney, the biggest challenge in running the store has definitely been staffing. Not only do the two train all their own employees who often are unfamiliar with the Grocery Outlet model and industry, but the Orange location is also one of a small percentage of stores that serves a dual-function as a training store for future operators. While it isn't always easy to work in a constant state of hiring and training, one thing that has provided an extra value is SDP's tax credit service, which has delivered Josh and Britney over \$26,000 in Work Opportunity Tax Credits (WOTC) so far!

Additionally, Britney recounted her experience with their prior payroll company, noting that, "Whenever we had an issue with [them], it was like pulling teeth. I'd call, then email, then email again... With SDP, *I call and someone always answers the phone, and it's usually handled right then and there.*"

Josh continued, "We had a billion things to worry about, and that's why we were paying them, but we were still having to worry... If I could boil it down to two things I love about SDP it would be *affordability and ease.*" As a matter of fact, when Josh and Britney made the switch to SDP from their prior big-name payroll company, we were able to save them more than 50% of what they had been paying previously!

And in the spirit of saving, we would like to offer our readers a \$3 coupon when you sign up for Grocery Outlet's e-mail list! Not only will you get \$3 off your next visit, but you'll also receive additional offers and coupons to your email! Simply click the link below and select "Orange" as your store.

## New E-Mail sign ups

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- New WOW! Item Alerts
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