



## Case Study of A New Business: Arizona Zipline Adventures Completed for Copper Corridor Economic Development Coalition and Arizona Office of Tourism June 2016

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This report aims to present a case study on opening a new business. In January 2016, Arizona Zipline Adventures opened in Oracle, Arizona, a community in the Copper Corridor region. The Copper Corridor is an area of central Arizona that is made up of 11 mining and former mining communities. Reductions in the mining industry have made the Copper Corridor ripe for economic diversification and revitalization. Arizona Zipline Adventures hosted their opening day on Friday, January 29, 2016. On Saturday, January 30, interviews were conducted with guests as they completed the zipline adventure. An interview was conducted with Emily Goff, one of four managing partners of Arizona Zipline Adventures, to gather insight into opening a new business. Observations made at the event also enhanced the insights drawn about small business development.

Arizona Zipline Adventures is on the site of what was once a working cattle ranch and is now southern Arizona's longest zip line span. Other zip lines and competitors were thoroughly researched to ensure AZA had a unique product and selling position. At Arizona Zipline Adventures speeds increase as visitors progress through the five zip lines that make up the two-hour zip line experience. Team building and group outings, gold panning, hiking trails, a general store with business branded gear such as the popular t-shirt, and sandwiches and snacks are all available. A porch, which has been deemed

### Key Ingredients to Opening a New Business:

- **Organization**
- **Passion**
- **Business Plan**

Peppersauce Station, provides a gathering spot for visitors to enjoy the breathtaking views and socialize.

The development of Arizona Zipline Adventures has been a work of dedication, passion and community development. The managing partners are dedicated to strengthening the community and sharing their love of the land. Partnering with local eatery Oracle Patio Café to provide food at Peppersauce Station, is one example of how they are supporting other small businesses and helping to create an authentic destination experience to attract visitors.

**Advice:** Ask lots of questions! Those in the industry are helpful – be comfortable reaching out.

Marketing of the business started two years prior to opening. Billboards along highways have been the only form of paid advertising used. Other marketing efforts have included social media, e-newsletter, word of mouth, and news outlets that have approached them.

Observation and interviews were conducted on Saturday, January 30, 2016 at the new business. While Friday was a busier day, the managing partners decided to make Saturday a soft opening in order to ease into business and ensure they were fully ready for a full opening. During the soft opening, the first and fifth zip lines were running, giving visitors a 30-minute zip line experience. Eleven people were interviewed after their zip line adventure. Of those interviewed, the age of guests ranged from teens to 70s. The majority of participants came in pairs and were either locals from Oracle or from nearby Tucson. Visitors had heard about the opening through Facebook, news (TV and print) coverage, friends, knowing the owners, and word of mouth. Most respondents indicated the fifth line of the experience was their favorite and everyone said they would return to do it again when all the lines are running. When asked reasons for planning their next visit, socializing and bonding with groups of friends and family were largely mentioned.

Words used by visitors to describe the zip line experience:

**“exhilarating”**  
**“surprisingly enjoyable”**  
**“scary”**  
**“worth it”**  
**“fun”**  
**“outstanding”**  
**“frightening”**  
**“awesome”**

Observation and casual conversation revealed local interest in this new venture. Locals came out to see what this new business had to offer and gage their own interest in returning. Visitors from outside the Oracle/Tucson area came while visiting local friends and family. While many came to zip line, others came to watch and take in the atmosphere.

**Success =**  
Staff has grown from 8 to 30 people in five months

Only five months into opening, Arizona Zipline Adventures had grown from a staff of eight to thirty. During the soft opening, managing partner Emily Goff sat down for an interview about advice on opening a new business and marketing strategies, results of which are reflected throughout this report.

Arizona Zipline Adventures is one new business that has shown to be a success and is adding hope to revitalization efforts in the Copper Corridor. Ms. Goff commented on what the Copper Corridor can do to further develop tourism. She pointed to appealing to a wider demographic and varying interests, including hunters and hikers on the nearby Arizona Trail. Also, showcasing the unique attributes of the area is recommended, including visiting the nearby caves and Oracle State Park. This new business has provided a quality template for others looking to put their passion and love of community to work in a new venture.

