



## CLIENT STORIES

### MENDOCINO COAST OFFICE

760 B Stewart St, Fort Bragg, CA 95437  
PHONE (707) 964-7571 • FAX (707) 964-7576

### MENDOCINO INLAND OFFICE

631 S. Orchard, Ukiah, CA 95482  
PHONE (707) 467-5931 • FAX (707) 467-5930

### GLENN COUNTY OFFICE

420 W Walker St., Orland, CA 95963  
PHONE (530) 990-5801



## The Inside Scoop on Nancy, the Ice Cream Lady

As she wiped the mint-chip off her son's chin, Nancy surprised herself by asking her friend, "Wouldn't it be great to own Cowlick's?"

Nancy knew what it was like to run a food business; she and her husband Bill own two busy Subways, and she'd never considered having a third. So what was it about Cowlick's that started her dreaming?

Cowlick's made amazing ice cream, so as a 'foodie' with a passion for creativity in the kitchen, that was appealing. And she liked that Cowlick's put smiles on kids' faces. With a fun-loving two-year old, an outing to Cowlick's was a treat her family enjoyed. Finally

## West Company Client Stories – Cowlicks Ice Cream

Nancy realized that what she really liked was also the secret to their success – they served the ice cream with a big ol’ side of fun.

“What a sweet way to make a living!” She was smitten; Nancy decided then and there *she* wanted to be the next ice cream lady. She let the owners know if they ever thought about selling, she wanted them to call her first.

Fast forward 18 months and Nancy gets her call. “You asked us to call if we ever considered selling Cowlick’s – are you still interested?”

It only took 3 months until Nancy was living her dream - she’d become the ice cream lady! As soon as she’d learned to make their special flavors, she started inventing her own. She likes using local ingredients, so she switched to a dairy base that came from happy Sonoma County cows. Then she added flavors like Wild Huckleberry ice cream, and sundaes topped with organic Olallieberries that are harvested locally.

Nancy’s quick to admit that Cowlick’s can be a lot of work, and she doesn’t deny she can get pretty tired - especially now that she has *two* little guys at home. Even so, she says she can’t imagine a better life. Customers tell her every day, “This is the best ice cream I’ve ever had!” And she loves knowing her business is important to the community she grew up in. But what really keeps her going? She laughs, “It’s the big smiles on those sticky little faces!”

### **West Company Sidebar**

It only took a year of being ‘the ice cream lady’ before Nancy started looking for ways to increase profits. She was committed to keeping her product’s superior quality, so she started looking for other ways to reduce costs; preferably ones that would also position her to grow the wholesale business.

She called West Company for help deciding what to do. She became a Small Business Development Client and meet with two counselors. One was a numbers person who helped her decide how much time and money she wanted to invest in her expansion. The other counselor helped her design a marketing program targeting wholesale accounts.

The Bennett’s decided to purchase a walk-in cooler/freezer and a refrigerated trailer. The new equipment would allow her to buy directly from the dairy’s dealer, reducing her main ingredient cost by almost 30%. That worked so well, she started picking-up other ingredients; her profit continued to grow as she skipped more middlemen.

Additional storage, and the ability to deliver out of the area, allowed her to market to businesses as far away as San Francisco. She identified potential customers along the pick-up route. She developed effective sales collateral that helped her land an account in Ukiah, and opened a door in Santa Rosa. The new business required hiring a third ice cream maker and a production assistant.

## West Company Client Stories – Cowlicks Ice Cream

Nancy knows she's fortunate to be growing her business in these challenging times. She says working with West Company allowed her to move on her ideas with confidence. With their help she's positioned for growth, so look out Ben and Jerry.

*West Company/Mendocino SBDC/Women's Business Center have offices in Fort Bragg (760B Stewart Street, 964-7571) and Ukiah (631 S. Orchard Street, 462-5931) and a web page at [www.westcompany.org](http://www.westcompany.org).*



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Development Center  
Mendocino