



## Southeast ISBDC Client Highlight

July 21, 2014

Client Highlight - Olde Iron Paint, LLC.

Chris Gill owns Olde Iron Paint, LLC. ([website](#)), a business that takes great pride in providing customers with authentic paint colors, custom matched through research of un-restored examples of original engines and equipment.

Before becoming an entrepreneur, Chris worked for a company for 38 years. He decided he wanted to follow his dreams and create a business of his own. He has had an interest in antique stationary engines for years and wanted a flexible job to spend more time with his family. Working with paint previously, Chris knew that paint for automobiles was not durable and required very expensive paint and spray painting equipment. Chris determined that if he could offer his products in low cost, easy to use aerosol cans, he could make a cost effective, historically accurate and durable finish available to customers. Because of this and his dream to start a business of his own, Chris began the process of forming Olde Iron Paint, LLC.

Chris, who considers himself a person of detail, and a bit of a perfectionist, enjoys doing the research to find un-restored, surviving examples of engines and equipment. He uses these to determine the final standard, which he will put into production. Today his company offers over 110 historically authentic finish colors for restorers of antique stationary, single cylinder gas engines (also referred to as hit and miss engines), vintage garden tractors, and small engines



and equipment from manufactures.

He takes much pleasure in meeting and working with new people every day. In fact, his favorite part of owning his business is getting to be around and talking to interesting people. Chris says that he learns new things all the time and frequently finds himself talking with customers about engines, history, mechanics, restoration techniques and other topics that interest them. Chris, being a hobbyist himself, owns four antique "hit and miss engines".

It was difficult for Chris to come up with something that he enjoys least about his business, but he answered with: getting up super early for the farm shows where he demonstrates his products and services. Chris says that this is a small price to pay, and he loves going to antique engine shows and antique farm equipment shows to get more business and meet new people.

The biggest challenge that Chris overcame was getting around the fear of failure. Chris had never owned his own business and had a steady paycheck for 38 years. Starting something new on his own was scary at first. Chris did overcome his fears and knew that he had to believe in himself and his knowledge in order for his business to be successful and the best it could be.

Chris began the planning process for his business in December 2013. During this time, Chris read books and did research about starting his small business and his industry. After finishing up the legal aspects and liabilities of the business, he

opened Olde Iron Paint in April 2014.



Since opening his business, Chris has experienced growth. Chris didn't sell anything at his first show, but now sells more and more at each show, with sales rising steadily. In addition, Chris and his business will soon be published in a national publication, Gas Engine Magazine, which has about 120,000 viewers.

When asked what contributions Chris and his business have made to the community, he replied with, "My Company allows younger generations to see what actual engines looked like back in the day. People get to learn the way things were done in the past. I strive to teach customers the authentic color of an engine, which portrays it more accurately."

Chris, a client of the Southeast ISBDC since January 2014, says that the Southeast ISBDC has been very helpful for him and his business. He says that his Business Advisor, Laura DeDomenic, has given him a lot of confidence in himself and good advice. He appreciates that Laura doesn't sugar coat things, and encourages him to work hard.

Laura says of Chris and his business, "Chris Gill and Olde Iron Paint fulfill a niche in a specialized industry, Antique Engines. Chris identified a need, paint matching original manufacturer colors for antique engines, used his industry knowledge and did the research to successfully launch his product, Olde Iron Paint."