

# Commerce Rainmakers 2007

## LIGHTING THE WAY

### Innovator of the Year

### Buzz Thielemann

Owner

RHT Energy Solutions

If you think the only thing that energy efficiency and economic Development have in common is that both start with the letter “e,” Buzz Thielemann will probably tell you that you’re looking at things in the wrong light.

For Thielemann, energy efficiency and economic development are one and the same, at least when it comes to coaxing new businesses and companies to Oregon.

He was involved, for instance, in a state effort to entice a California business called Amy’s Kitchen to move from California to Oregon. While the state highlighted tax incentives and quality of life, Thielemann focused on selling the company on Oregon’s commitment to saving energy. He dangled products such as energy-efficient oven fans in front of the company, but instead of touting how the fans could help reduce electric bills, he focused on how they would help Amy’s Kitchen boost its productivity. That innovative approach, Thielemann says, played a Big part in the company’s decision to move to Southern Oregon.

“Companies have the opportunity to be more productive and efficient. They just don’t know what (that opportunity) is,” he says.

Lucky for companies like Amy’s Kitchen, Thielemann does. In fact, he’s made it his business.

The early part of his professional life, Thielemann worked as a general sales manager for Pacific Power & Light. He left that company and Started RHT Energy Solutions, a Medford-based Energy engineering company, in 1999 after he was asked to help a school district figure out how to cut its energy costs. The annual savings Thielemann managed to shave: \$18,000.

Word soon began to spread and before he knew it, Thielemann was helping for-profit companies figure out how to cut their energy costs. Along the way, he learned that the approach for convincing businesses to switch to energy efficient products was to show not how the change could reduce electric bills, but how they could help increase productivity.

He’s put the lesson to good use as a current independent contractor for Energy Trust of Oregon. With his efforts, the nonprofit group has been able to expand its efforts statewide to help companies connect with energy efficient products and programs, including tax incentives and rebates.

“If you tell a company, ‘I can increase your productivity by 3 (percent) or 4 percent,’ you’re the king,” Thielemann says. “That really catches their attention.”

