

# PARTNER PERSPECTIVE

SPRING 2025

WWW.HCI.NET



Students from Mayfield High School toured the HCI corporate office.

## Community Connections

Students from local high schools recently had the opportunity to take an inside look at Heartland Capital Investments as part of the Community Connections program. This initiative, organized by the Mayfield-Graves County Chamber of Commerce, aims to introduce students to the businesses, industries, and career opportunities that fuel the local economy.

Business Development Director Tiffany Strong Hutchison led the students through an engaging and educational session about the world of Rent-to-Own. Hutchison explained the company's Rent-to-Own model, breaking down the costs and benefits to customers. To make the concepts relatable, she used examples tied to the students' everyday experiences in an agricultural community. Comparing the financial process to farming, she illustrated how essen-

tial components—like farmers, land, and equipment—must come together to produce results.

As part of the tour, students also visited several key departments, including inventory, contracting, accounting, and analytics. Each stop gave them a firsthand look at how various teams work together to drive business success. Whether exploring how inventory is tracked, learning about the importance of correct contracts, or hearing how data analytics shapes decision-making, the students were highly engaged and eager to learn more about the company's operations.

The tour was not just about learning how Rent-to-Own works or how Heartland operates; it was also a chance to highlight the importance of community involvement. Heartland strongly

Continued on next page

## LUMBER MARKET UPDATE

Market update provided by  
David Fowler, *Three Oaks Trading*

I really don't know where to start with all the uncertainty in the lumber market right now, and it is hard to call what to expect moving forward. Tariffs and duties have the potential to create a massive, market-altering surge in the cost of shipping Canadian lumber and panels to the U.S. market as we move through the second quarter. Most buyers here in the United States will be looking for some clarity in the U.S. & Canadian trade war.

As we move forward, we do know that the cost of material moving out of Canada will dictate the European and other offshore markets, so we have the potential of seeing prices on building products surge considerably over the next few months. The unknown of "on again, off again" tariffs is far more disruptive than if we have a policy set in stone.

Trading will be difficult over the next few months to say the least. Supply driven markets are always hard to make a prediction on as opposed to demand driven markets. We are still in a weak consumption market with interest rates still hanging around 7%. My thought is we will remain somewhat stagnant until rates fall somewhere around the low 5's.

So, to sum it up, the 2nd quarter will be a difficult trading market to say the least but hopefully we are able to get some clarity as we move toward the end of June. Still think we are heading in the right direction just going to have a few more bumps in the road before we get there.

believes that businesses thrive when they give back and build connections beyond the office walls, encouraging team members and partners alike to stay active in local initiatives.

“Being part of our community and giving back is vital,” Hutchison emphasized. “Opportunities like this tour allow us to share what we do while helping students understand how businesses can positively impact their hometowns.”

In addition to educational tours,

there are many ways businesses can contribute to and strengthen their communities. Sponsoring local community events and school events, volunteering, partnering with nonprofits, and buying local all have a positive impact on both the business and the community it thrives in.

For businesses, community involvement strengthens relationships, creates goodwill, and helps build a loyal customer base. For individuals, it fosters a sense of belonging, pride, and shared purpose. Communities

flourish when businesses, schools, and residents come together to support one another.

Heartland’s participation in Community Connections reflects the company’s broader commitment to supporting education, leadership, and economic growth in Mayfield and beyond. By investing time and resources into programs like these, Heartland aims to inspire the next generation to dream big and stay connected to their hometown roots.

---

## THRIVING IN THE PORTABLE BUILDING INDUSTRY AGAINST LARGER COMPETITORS

The portable building and shed industry has seen rapid growth in recent years, driven by increasing demand for backyard storage, home offices, and customizable structures during and after the pandemic. While this boom presented opportunities, the market is now returning to a normal level and smaller companies now face fierce competition from larger, established manufacturers. To thrive in this competitive landscape, smaller businesses must adopt innovative strategies, leverage their unique strengths, and differentiate themselves.

### 1. Focus on Niche Markets

One of the most effective ways for small and medium-sized businesses to compete is by carving out a niche. Larger companies tend to cast wide nets, offering a broad range of products and services. Smaller businesses can specialize in specific segments, such as high-end custom designs, eco-friendly materials, or unique architectural styles.

### 2. Emphasize Customer Relationships

Small businesses can offer a more personalized experience, fostering stronger relationships with customers. This can translate into repeat business, referrals, and customer loyalty. Focus on providing superior customer service at every step of the process—from initial consultation to post-installation follow-up. Offer on-site consultations to help customers choose the best shed or building, provide detailed product information, and ensure con-

sistent communication throughout the sales and delivery process.

### 3. Leverage Local Advantages

Large companies are often forced into a one-size-fits-all approach. Small companies can leverage their local knowledge, such as navigating zoning laws, recognizing weather patterns and their impact on building requirements, and picking up on regional preferences for custom options. Offering faster delivery and installation times within your immediate area is another key advantage.

### 4. Offer Flexible Payment Options

Customers who may not qualify for traditional financing options might be drawn to your company if you can offer more personalized payment plans. Rent-to-own options can be a game-changer in attracting customers who don’t have the cash to purchase outright but still want to invest in a portable building.

### 5. Maximize Online Presence and Digital Marketing

Smaller companies can compete effectively by optimizing their digital presence, using search engine optimization (SEO), targeted social media campaigns, and customer testimonials. A well-designed website that emphasizes customer satisfaction, offers virtual tours of products, and includes a blog with industry tips can draw in customers. Engage potential customers on social media by showcasing completed projects, running contests, and offering limited-time promotions.

### 6. Partner with Local Businesses

Large companies often overlook the value of local partnerships. By collaborating with local landscapers, contractors, or home improvement stores, small businesses can gain more visibility and offer complementary services that large competitors may not offer. Partner with local home and garden centers to display your products on their lots, allowing customers to see your sheds and buildings in person.

### 7. Showcase Unique Selling Points (USPs)

Clearly defining your unique selling points is key to standing out. Whether it’s a quicker installation time, superior customer service, or an emphasis on sustainability, smaller companies need to highlight what makes them different. Ensure your USPs are front and center on your website, social media platforms, and in any advertising materials.

### 8. Harness Reviews and Word-of-Mouth

Small companies can benefit from a community-driven approach, leveraging reviews and word-of-mouth marketing. Encourage satisfied customers to leave online reviews and share their experiences on social media. Offer incentives for customers who leave reviews, such as a discount on future purchases or free maintenance services. Word-of-mouth can be a powerful tool for building credibility and attracting new clients.