

## 1 NETWORKING BESTBETS

### Chamber & Eggs

Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce

Where: 3 Independent Drive

When: Aug. 3, 8 a.m.

Information: New member breakfast

Contact: Tammy Jones, 366-6600, ext. 7618

### Basic Concepts and Data Collection

Small Business Center & SCORE

Where: Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce,

3 Independent Drive

When: Aug. 3, 5:30 to 8:45 p.m.

Cost: \$99 for four-part series, \$30 each

Information: Discover startup fundamentals for small-business success

Contact: Shirley Moore, 366-6618 or shirley.moore@myjaxchamber.com

### Tax Facts

Small Business Development Center

at the University of North Florida

Where: UNF University Center, 12000 Alumni Drive

When: Aug. 3, 6 to 9 p.m.

Cost: \$40 in advance,

\$50 day of workshop

Information: Learn the tax implications of your business structure, what is and is not deductible, electronic filing, payroll taxes and more. Workshop is

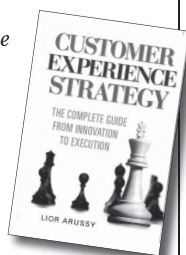
co-sponsored by the Internal Revenue Service.

Contact: 620-2476 or www.sbdc.unf.edu

## EDITOR'S BOOKSHELF

"Customer Experience Strategy: The Complete Guide From Innovation to Execution" by Lior Arussy provides a strategic and operational framework for organizations and individuals who are committed to deploying customer experience. The book was gleaned from years of designing and implementing customer experience strategies at organizations worldwide.

"Customer Experience Strategy" is published by 4i, a Strativity Group Media Company, and is available on Amazon.com for about for \$31 neu.



# Wendy's owner starts over as island getaway owner

## Hill built resort using all recycled materials

BY DOLLY PENLAND  
CORRESPONDENT

Reusing antique and historic materials from soon-to-be-demolished buildings not only lends a certain amount of style to a structure, but it can allow building owners to do quite a bit more on a smaller budget. That's one of the secrets to Andy Hill's success.

"I do a lot of salvaging and I have taken down a dozen buildings," said Hill, owner of Private Islands of Georgia. "We get all the material and then build and work with that."

For example, Hill's office was renovated mainly with materials reclaimed from an 1880 hotel, including 120,000 antique bricks, heart pine beams, doors, transoms and rosettes; old boat fixtures were retooled into lights.

Private Islands of Georgia comprises 2,000 acres on eight coastal barrier islands about an hour's drive north of Jacksonville. Hill's first purchase in 1998, was a tract that included Eagle Island. He expanded his holdings in 2000, buying the Mayhall Island tract.

"It was a good real estate investment," Hill said. "At that time, the islands were inexpensive; you could buy them for [half the cost of] mainland waterfront. I saw the value and what could happen."

His company also owns two vacation rental properties in Darien, Ga., the High Tide Cottage and the Coastal Marine Lodge, which was originally built in 1875. "The Coastal Marine Lodge was condemned by the city. But that's what I do, find something old and bring it back," Hill said. "In there, I have taken old things and brought them back to life. From building lamps to an old Spanish anchor I found in the marsh from the 1800s. I sanded it



The front of the Eagle Island Lodge, which owner Andy Hill built using recycled and salvaged materials.

and made a chandelier. Just fun stuff to keep the coastal maxitime theme."

It took Hill two years to build Eagle Island Lodge, which sits on 10 secluded acres and is accessible only by boat. "I took more than 370 boat trips over two years to get all the material there to build the lodge. It's built 100 percent with recycled material from the attic to the flagstone floor — even the outdoor kitchen, the oyster steamer and the low country boil cooker. I took a big fryer from a Holiday Inn on Jekyll Island, and an old prep table out of a restaurant. Every piece of equipment has been recycled."

Mayhall Lodge is still being renovated. Madison, Ga., architect Tripp Alsbrooks worked with Hill on his properties and helped on some of the construction material reclamation trips. "He just has a great eye for good quality items, old items that can be used in a new manner," Alsbrooks said. "And his communication skills are beyond most people's you'll ever meet."

Hill learned the value of good communication and customer service skills in the ninth grade working in his father's Wendy's franchise. He opened his own Wendy's franchise in 1984.

But Hill says his passion is to be on the water; so in 1986, he came to Jacksonville to get his captain's license.

"I got that to be able to work on the water," he said. "I fished on the Wendy's Hydra-Sports Fishing Team for eight years and we fished competitively in the Southeastern Kingfish Association."

Hill owned 10 Wendy's restaurants in Florida and Georgia, including one in the Orange Park Mall. He sold that location and five others in 2000. Now, he is selling West Bay Foods, which operates his last four Wendy's in Florida.

"The franchise business just isn't what it was," Hill said. "Our gross profit used to be at 36 percent. Now we are at 42 percent, but rising food costs, labor costs and the increase in competition has made our margins less. [Also] 50 percent of my business is on credit cards. My credit card fees are \$25,000 a year. That used to be my capital for a new roof or to reinvest in the business. But I always treated the hamburger business as a real estate in-



A spiral stairwell is featured in the Eagle Island Lodge's den.

## PRIVATE ISLANDS OF GEORGIA

<b>Owner:</b> Andy Hill
<b>Address:</b> 202 Marina Drive, St. Simons Island, Ga., 31522
<b>Phone number:</b> (912) 222-0801
<b>Website:</b> www.privateislandsofgeorgia.com
<b>Year founded:</b> 2000
<b>No. of employees:</b> Four full-time
<b>Revenue for most recent year:</b> Private Islands \$100,000; West Bay Foods \$4.3 million

vestment. When I sold the business, I leased the land and the building. It's much easier to get a check than to work 60 hours a week."

About 30 percent of the Private Island's clients come from Jacksonville, another 30 percent from Atlanta and the rest from around the country. "I pay a lot of attention to Jacksonville to grow my business," Hill said. "Without Jacksonville, my business wouldn't be where it is today."

Jacksonville resident Chris Leeper recently vacationed at Eagle Island. "It was a great weekend," he said. "We had three families go. We kayaked around the river. We rented a pontoon boat and took that to another island for the day and we were the only people on the beach, which was great. It was just a very relaxing family weekend."

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## TAKEAWAYS

**Biggest challenge:** Slowing down. We all work hard so that we can take time off. The richest people are the ones who have the most time. My wife and I are trying to plan our next 20 years to meet our personal goals so that they doesn't involve work, but time together.

**Business philosophy:** Don't manage by exception. If you start managing by exceptions, you won't know what to do because you don't know what you have allowed and what you haven't.

**Advice to fellow business owners:** Your friends are not at work. You have a job to do when you are at work. As a manager or boss, you can't manage friends. You manage employees and everyone is replaceable. Don't be afraid to let someone go if he isn't doing the job. The change will bring good results.