



Fueling our clients' success

Empire Baking Company





“We’re relationship people. If you can’t trust the people, you can’t trust the process.”

With Bank of Texas, Empire Baking Company found not just a financial services provider—but also an ally to help them grow.

When Robert and Meaders Ozarow, the owners of Dallas-based Empire Baking Company, found out that their landlord was planning on selling their building in 2016, they knew that moving wasn’t a viable option. Weighing more than 20,000 pounds each, Empire’s ovens were too large to move easily. Plus, moving to a new location could disrupt the client and vendor relationships they had forged over the previous nearly 15 years.

So, they decided to buy the building and become their own landlord. However, in order to do so they needed a loan and a financial services provider they could rely on to work with them and meet their needs.

“When you’re a small business, it takes a banker who will understand your character, to see growth,” Meaders said.

Meet Empire Baking Company

FOUNDED: 1992

OWNERS: Robert and Meaders Ozarow. This husband-and-wife duo left successful careers—he as an investment banker and she in high-end furniture sales—to pursue their dream of bringing European-style artisan bread to the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

“That kind of bread was not available in Texas at the time, although it was being done on both coasts,” Meaders recalled.

HOW THEY MADE THEIR MARK: Although they also create made-from-scratch pastries, Empire Baking Co. is best known for the naturally leavened bread they bake. Today, around 80% of their business is wholesale to places like fine-dining restaurants and hotels. The remaining 20% is retail through their two storefronts: their original location in Inwood Village (5450 W. Lovers Ln. #132) and a newer location in East Dallas (5614 E University Blvd.).





A BANKER WHO GIVES SOLUTIONS

Unhappy with the customer service at their old financial services provider, the Ozarows went by mutual referral to Bank of Texas, where they found the relationship-focused (rather than transaction-focused) financial services provider they were looking for.

Aware of Empire Baking's short deadline for purchasing the building, the Bank of Texas commercial banking team immediately got to work. Since the husband and wife had never purchased a commercial building before, Bank of Texas worked hard to support them each step of the way, even having a credit officer meet them at the bakery as opposed to in the bank.

The result: Bank of Texas was able to help the Ozarows secure a SBA (Small Business Association) loan in an astounding 41 days, from start to close. During that time, Bank of Texas provided Empire Baking Company with information explaining the terms of the loan and walked them through the entire process, so they completely understood it.

These efforts led to a relationship based on trust that continues today. "We're relationship people. If you can't trust the people, you can't trust the process," Meaders said.

3 things you need to know about SBA Loans

- 1** The SBA partners with SBA-approved private lenders such as Bank of Texas to provide loans to businesses that want access to the longer repayment terms and lower down payment options available through SBA loan programs.
- 2** There are multiple types of SBA loans. For instance, SBA 7(a) loans, which are the SBA's primary lending program, are ideal for buying a business or refinancing debt. Meanwhile, SBA 504 loans are ideal for purchasing and renovating commercial real estate.
- 3** Bank of Texas provides competitive interest rates on our SBA loans that are comparative to non-SBA loans of the same size. More importantly, we have the ability to fix the interest rate for a period of time, giving business owners the certainty in monthly payments so they can better manage their cash flow.



“It’s a real team game, which helps us be a more vibrant business.”

Meaders Ozarow
Founder and owner of Empire Baking Company



A PARTNER FOR ENTREPRENEURS

Today, Bank of Texas provides Empire Baking Company with not only the loan, but also Treasury, 401(k) and payroll services. However, what matters most to the Ozarows is having Bank of Texas by their side to respond to their ideas as their business grows.

“We’re entrepreneurial. We come out with ideas that we want to pursue, and the Bank of Texas team lets us know very realistically if we should pursue them,” Meaders said. “It’s a real team game, which helps us be a more vibrant business.”

Shared values:
Determination and
dedication to getting
the job done right

When Bank of Texas was striving to get Empire Baking Company's SBA loan completed in a little over a month, commercial banking team members worked late and on weekends to get the job done.

Similarly, baking and delivering naturally leavened bread is a 24-7 business. Since natural bread has a short shelf life of two-to-three days, Empire Baking delivers the bread to its wholesale customers themselves—on the very same day that it's baked. That way, the customers get the maximum shelf life from the bread. In order to make this possible, there's usually someone in the bakery working day and night.

Bank of Texas has been there for Empire Baking Company during challenging times as well, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic. As soon as the pandemic started, the Ozarows called Bank of Texas and asked what they should do. Not only did team members provide advice, they also helped Empire Baking Company secure PPP loans as soon as they became available.

And when the commercial banking team can't provide solutions itself, team members connect the Ozarows with people and companies that can. For instance, the commercial banking team introduced them to a payroll automation company and referred them to a Bank of Texas mortgage banker when they wanted to refinance their home mortgage.

Throughout these interactions, one of the things that's impressed the Ozarows the most is "just how friendly and helpful Bank of Texas has been about everything." It's no wonder that, when asked which three words she would use to describe the bank, Meaders responded with: "Solutions-orientated, knowledgeable and partners."

Meanwhile, Bank of Texas and the Ozarows have a solid banking relationship that's not built on transactions alone. "With your doctor, banker, tax accountant and lawyer, you want a relationship of trust, not just a business transaction," Meaders explained. "Trust feels like a friendship."



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