

KEY FINDINGS AND RESULTS OF RESEARCH

KKCM Consulting conducted both primary and secondary research to support West Burlington Hydraulics in achieving its key objectives: optimizing inventory, strengthening local marketing strategies, and expanding business-to-business partnerships. The following findings synthesize insights from client interviews, expert discussions, and competitive research to highlight what matters most for WBH's continued growth and community presence.

Objective 1: Inventory Optimization

Key Findings/Summary

KKCM was immediately made aware of concerns regarding inventory management and store space. The client emphasized the need to sustain sales growth for key product lines. Our primary research was an in-depth client discussion analyzing sales performance by category. Secondary research focused on inventory optimization strategies, the potential effects of service disruptions, and seasonal fluctuations in product demand. In addition, we looked at ways to add inventory software into WBH.

Primary Research Analysis:

We conducted an in-depth interview with our client, who shared detailed inventory and sales data. Analyzing this information allowed us to gain a comprehensive view of WBH's current inventory management processes, identify inefficiencies, and uncover specific areas where optimization could drive measurable improvements in accuracy, turnover, and overall operational efficiency.

Secondary Research Analysis:

Our secondary research examined best practices and emerging technologies in inventory management. We found that implementing digital inventory systems can significantly improve tracking accuracy, reduce overstocking, and minimize lost sales due to stockouts. Research also emphasized the importance of integrating data analytics to forecast demand and adjust inventory levels according to seasonal trends. Additionally, studies highlighted how service disruptions such as supplier delays or shipping issues can have compounding effects on inventory flow and customer satisfaction if not properly managed.

Two software options, Skyware Inventory and Sortly, emerged as practical solutions for WBH. Both offer real-time tracking, easy-to-use interfaces, and reporting

tools that could help streamline operations and support WBH's goals of maintaining sales growth and improving space efficiency.

Together, these findings show that WBH's current manual tracking limits space efficiency and accuracy. Adopting a digital inventory system such as Skyware or Sortly would not only streamline daily operations but also provide real-time insights that help anticipate seasonal demand, reduce downtime, and sustain sales growth.

Objective 2: Local Marketing Strategy

Key Findings/Summary

KKCM Consulting took a deeper dive into West Burlington Hydraulics' current marketing strategy as this is an objective of our client to grow the customer base of the business. Our primary research consisted of an expert interview as well as research of West Burlington's top two competitors of their marketing presence and website management. Our secondary research consisted of analysing the current business costs on marketing and we are looking into how the client can integrate an appointment/form concept on their site to help streamline the process of custom hoses.

Primary Research Analysis

We conducted an expert interview panel with the Greater Burlington Partnership, featuring Amy O'Brien, President & CEO, and Melissa Jones, Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce. The purpose of this interview was to gain a deeper understanding of the local business landscape and the marketing challenges faced by Chamber members.

During the discussion, we learned that West Burlington Hydraulics is currently a Chamber member but not very active, and according to the Chamber, the business is not taking advantage of several free benefits available through membership. These include features such as the Friday Facts and newsletters distributed to a large network of local contacts and the Chamber's website Events Page.

We also learned about several networking and promotional opportunities, including Business After Hours, which is already sold out for 2026 but has openings available for 2027, and Coffee with the Chamber, a quarterly after-hours event where local business owners share their stories. Some openings for this event remain available in mid to late 2026 (8–9 PM sessions). Additionally, the Chamber offers free access to a PDF directory of members, which can be shared directly with clients to help foster new

partnerships and collaborations. Overall, this interview provided valuable insights into the resources and opportunities available within the Burlington and West Burlington business communities.

Secondary Research Analysis

We analyzed the current marketing costs and evaluated the potential website changes needed to transform it from a storefront into a business generator. The main focus is to keep the clients using his POS system for website management. This keeps this as a low cost change. After discussing with the client's current system, LightSpeed, they do offer an order form system on their sites.

During our outside research, we found that AMP, the client's current marketing company, offers website management services and can also implement an order form feature that allows customers to book appointments for customization or submit custom hose orders for same-day or next-day pickup. Looking at more external options for the client of website management companies that offer an order form feature those options are Square Space, Zoho, and Skyway Inventory.

Brozene Hydraulic Services is the prominent local competitor in the area. While online searches for hydraulics in the Burlington area also return national online retailers like VEVOR and Tractor Supply Company, a competitive analysis of local shops provides the most relevant insights for regional market understanding.

West Burlington Hydraulics has a modest but functional online presence with an active website offering product listings, service details, and an online shop. However, its SEO performance could improve through better structure, keyword targeting, and consolidation of duplicate domains. The business maintains listings on platforms like Yelp, Birdeye, and MapQuest, earning high average ratings but with limited review volume, and has a Facebook page with minimal engagement and infrequent posting.

Competitors such as Brozene Hydraulic Service demonstrate stronger visibility due to longer market presence, higher review counts, and greater social or web activity. To strengthen its competitive position, West Burlington Hydraulics should focus on consolidating its web presence, improving local SEO through detailed service pages and schema markup, increasing review volume via a structured feedback campaign, and posting regular, engaging social media content that showcases services and community involvement. These steps would enhance its visibility, credibility, and lead generation, helping it compete more effectively within the regional hydraulics market.

The research highlights a major opportunity for WBH to leverage free Chamber resources and low-cost website upgrades to improve visibility. By becoming an active Chamber participant and integrating an online order form through the existing POS or AMP system, WBH can strengthen brand recognition, simplify the hose-order process, and attract more consistent local traffic.

Objective 3: Business-to-Business Growth Opportunities

Key Findings/Summary

At KKCM, we began by identifying the businesses our client is not currently engaging with, uncovering new market opportunities for expansion. Our primary research involved an in-depth conversation with the client to better understand their current partnerships and goal and our interview with Greater Burlington Partnership. Building on that, our secondary research focused on creating a comprehensive contact list of potential companies, complete with relevant information to support future outreach.

Primary Research

Reflecting on our meeting with the Greater Burlington Partnership, it became clear that the Chamber of Commerce prioritizes active member engagement through a range of monthly and quarterly events designed to strengthen the local business community. These events, such as Business After Hours and Coffee with the Chamber, serve as key opportunities for networking, business promotion, and collaboration among members. The Chamber's mission is to create an interconnected business ecosystem where members can share resources, gain visibility, and support each other's growth. From a research standpoint, active participation in chamber-led activities has been shown to positively impact business performance. Studies on local business engagement suggest that involvement in networking events and community initiatives enhances credibility, improves referral potential, and increases overall brand awareness within the regional market. The Greater Burlington Chamber's programs align with these outcomes, offering structured avenues for relationship-building and market expansion.

Currently, West Burlington Hydraulics is a member but not actively utilizing these opportunities. This lack of engagement represents a gap in marketing and community outreach, especially considering the scale of the Greater Burlington Chamber which includes 100 businesses. This diverse network presents a strong market for potential partnerships, business-to-business sales, and local brand positioning. By becoming more involved in the Chamber's events and leveraging the available marketing channels, West

Burlington Hydraulics could significantly expand its visibility, strengthen local connections, and tap into a thriving network that offers substantial long-term business growth potential.

Secondary Research

As part of our ongoing effort to expand market presence and strengthen customer relationships, this plan outlines a two-part strategy focused on both existing and potential business partnerships for the West Burlington location. The first section targets four companies already conducting limited business with West Burlington, presenting opportunities to grow those accounts through personalized outreach and service enhancement. The second section introduces a proactive partnership development plan with twenty-five new clients, increasing brand visibility, and positioning West Burlington as a trusted, full-service provider.

Companies already doing limited business with:

- Cobo Manufacturing: Burlington, IA
- US Gypsum Plant Mediapolis, IA.
- Western Smokehouse: Burlington, IA.
- American Ordnance Ammunition Plant: Middletown, IA

For companies already doing business with or has limited business with already include promotional materials or a personalized note with their next order highlighting the full range of services offered by the West Burlington location. This is a strategic opportunity to deepen the relationship and increase sales by showcasing additional value they may not be aware of. Additionally, if delivery service is not currently part of their arrangement, proactively offer it as part of the partnership. Present it as a convenience upgrade that enhances their experience and streamlines their operations. This not only strengthens the partnership but also positions West Burlington as a more comprehensive and customer-focused solution.

New Partnership Opportunity Plan

For companies our client is interested in partnering with or expanding business relations, we developed a strategic outreach plan designed to increase brand visibility and drive new opportunities. This plan focuses on introducing the client's company in a professional, consistent, and memorable way through multiple channels of communication and promotion.

1. **Cold Calling:** Direct phone outreach will be used to establish first contact with potential business partners. The goal is to introduce the company, highlight key

services, and identify opportunities where our client's products or capabilities can provide value. Each call will be followed up with a personalized email or meeting request to strengthen the connection.

2. **In-Person Visits (Stopping In):** Face-to-face interaction remains one of the most effective ways to build relationships. By stopping in at the business locations, we create opportunities to meet decision-makers, drop off product information, and demonstrate reliability and professionalism. These visits will also help build brand familiarity and trust through direct engagement. During these visits, you can hand out business cards or the mail flyers.
3. **Mail and Promotional Flyers:** A targeted mailing campaign will be implemented to introduce the company's services to key businesses. Professionally designed flyers will highlight core offerings, recent success stories, and contact information, encouraging businesses to reach out for quotes or consultations. Mailing lists will be curated to ensure materials reach purchasing managers or operations directors who have decision-making authority.

WBH's untapped Chamber connections and inactive partnerships represent immediate growth potential. Engaging directly with local manufacturers and service companies through Chamber events, targeted outreach, and promotional materials can position WBH as the region's go-to partner for hydraulic repair and supply services.

Overall, our research reveals that operational efficiency, digital engagement, and community partnerships are the three strongest levers for growth. Each of these findings directly informs the strategic recommendations we will present in the next phase of our consulting project.

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*All sources used are from primary interviews and credible secondary research including company websites, industry tools, and the Greater Burlington Partnership.