



The Craft of Basket Making Goes Online in Allen County

Name:
GH Productions, Inc.

Internet:
www.basketmakerscatalog.com

Products/Services:
Basket making and chair caning supplies

Location:
Scottsville/Allen County

Leadership:
Scott Gilbert, Vice President

Employees:
6 Employees

Founded: 1982

Reach: International

Way Internet Has Made You More Competitive: *“Our online shopping cart is generating about 40 percent of our sales.”*

Advice to Growing Companies: *“Buy the best development software you can and take time to learn how to use it, including taking night courses or going to seminars.”*

Ways to Continue to Attract the Best Workers: *“We try to provide a good work atmosphere and a very flexible schedule for our employees.”*

Most Valuable Lessons Learned in Growing Business: *“Many times you must do someone else’s job in order to get the results you want. Some companies may tell you A,B,C and they only do A, so you must follow up.”*

Scottsville, Kentucky – Rich in both heritage and tradition, artisans from around the world continue to practice the craft of basket making. Scott Gilbert, co-owner of GH Productions, Inc., and *The Basket Maker’s Catalog*, is proud to be doing his part to keep the tradition alive.

In operation for 26 years, Gilbert began GH Productions, Inc. in 1982 by making and selling white oak and honeysuckle baskets at local and regional craft shows, in addition to teaching basket workshops in and around Allen County. He found mentors of the trade in Ollie and Lestel Childress, husband and wife, and third and fifth-generation basket makers from Park City. Gilbert said he and his wife, Beth Hester, used to visit them at their home and sit in their front yard under a big apple tree making white oak baskets together. Gilbert said they became very close over the years, and when Ollie died, Beth was asked to speak at her funeral.

In 1986, Mike Sims became his partner, and together they once filled an order for 17,000 white oak basket handles used in a CoverGirl® cosmetics display – their largest order to date.

A year later, he began the mail order catalog business with his wife, in an effort to cater to folks like himself in need of the highest quality supplies for basket making and chair caning. Today, the catalog is supplemented with a website Gilbert estimates to draw 40 to 50 percent of the company’s overall sales.

“We got online in 1998 when the Internet was just becoming popular,” said Gilbert. To learn the basics, he enrolled in computer courses at Volunteer State Community College (VSCC) in Gallatin, TN and also took advantage of free tutorials he was able to find online. He maintains the website using Photoshop and Dreamweaver software, and an in-house database developed by Sims to handle all the orders and shipments. Gilbert said that on average they process 15 to 20 orders a day.

“We do some international shipping, but mostly our customer base is in the United States,” said Gilbert. That could easily change, however, since future investments by the company include using the Internet to market themselves more effectively. “We plan to do some paid advertising using Google,” he said.

Gilbert said that without high-speed Internet, his online business would not be possible. “It’s absolutely necessary for today’s business. We download the online orders, maintain the website, use online shipping software to ship packages...all this would be very difficult without a high speed connection,” he said.

In addition to his business, Gilbert is also an active member of the Mammoth Cave Basket Makers Guild, a group of like-minded individuals with a shared love for the age-old craft, initiated by Dr. James W. Middleton in Munfordville, Kentucky. Gilbert maintains the guild’s [website](#), where their goals are highlighted, some of which include: establishing a museum and archives of basket making in the area; encouraging research of the area’s basket making traditions; assisting basket makers in developing markets; and teaching the traditional skills through workshops. The members meet monthly the last Friday of each month at the Family Medical Center of Hart County in Munfordville.

Gilbert, along with his wife, continues to offer basket making workshops throughout the region “We offer workshops at our store in Scottsville, and we’ll occasionally travel up to an hour to teach a class,” he said.

