



Buggies Unlimited Uses Technology to Adapt Globally, Meeting Market-Driven Demands for Golf Gear

Nicholasville, Ky. — Adopting change and being willing to leap out of the box are two key components to the recent success of Nicholasville-based Buggies Unlimited, the premier supplier of golf cart accessories in the world, according to President Bart Mahan.

From humble beginnings in 1997, Buggies Unlimited has become the source for virtually every imaginable accessory and upgrade kit for golf carts. Now offering thousands of items at its Web site or via its printed catalog, nearly 60 percent of the items the company sells are for after-market adaptations to the “buggies” that are really non-golf related.

For instance, Mahan explains, those in the horse industry like to use electric golf carts for running errands and accessing fields because they are reliable and quiet, not alarming the Thoroughbreds. So, while he sells items associated with golf, such as ball holders, bag holders, special windshield kits and repair parts, Buggies Unlimited also stocks gun racks, cargo boxes, camouflage kits and even fans and air-conditioning kits.

“It’s been the willingness to think outside the box that has not only helped the company grow, but actually survive,” says Mahan. “Only a couple of years ago, the business had nearly bottomed as a strictly retail operation. We were down to five employees and trying to figure out what we could do to survive,” Mahan recalls.

At that point, he analyzed the market for golf carts in the United States and began to formulate a vision of offering a complete array of accessories and parts instead of just selling the carts themselves. Armed with an idea to market new products on the Web, Mahan contacted Lexington-based Voltaic Commerce to work with him to establish a company that now thrives almost exclusively as an e-commerce entity.

“I was spending a couple thousand dollars a week with those guys,” he says, “but it was worth every penny.”

Now Buggies Unlimited spends nearly \$50,000 per month for hits on sales-lead generators such as Google.com, Yahoo.com and pop up ads, as a lead commercial item for nearly 800 different golfing categories. The company sells to virtually every country on the globe and has heavy year-round sales on the both U.S. coasts and in the Sunbelt. In addition, Buggies Unlimited is expanding its customer base by contracting with more golf courses worldwide to supply them with parts and accessories.

“And when golfing season hits around April,” says Mahan, “it’s all we can do to keep up with demand.”

In 2003, Buggies Unlimited, generated more than \$6 million in revenues. The company, has 20,000 regular customers who buy items on the company's Web site, with about 75 new customers a day and ships more than 300 orders daily. Its facilities include a packaging area for filling orders, a telemarketing center for company's sales staff and a distribution center for the thousands of accessories the company sells -- from gold rims to heaters to storage covers.

With a new headquarters and industrial center, Mahan dreams of turning the headquarters into a tourist attraction for golf cart enthusiasts, much like the Pennsylvania headquarters of Cabela's, which sells gear to hunters.

Emphasized Mahan, “I didn't do this on my own. I have to give credit to a lot of people, to the people who work here. They helped raise this business.”

About KY 120:

In the fast-pace world of technology-driven business, it should be recognized that best practices can be studied and emulated. As a part of the [connectkentucky](#) initiative, CITE is profiling business initiatives in each of Kentucky’s 120 counties to identify lessons learned on the path toward successful and sustainable innovation.

Name: Buggies Unlimited

Internet:
www.buggiesunlimited.com

Products/Services:
Golf Cart Gear and Accessories

Location:
Nicholasville/Jessamine County

Leadership:
Bart Mahan, President

Employees: 20

Founded: 1997

Reach: International

Innovative Insight:
“Innovation is the key to our success. We were willing to be creative, think about the possibilities and define a market that was not being well-served. That has put us on the map.”

Advice for Growing Companies:
“Don't be afraid to hire consultants who know what they're doing and to invest in proposed improvements that strategically build your business.”

Way Internet Has Made You More Competitive :
“Buggies Unlimited spends nearly \$50,000 per month, for hits on sales-lead generators such as Google.com and Yahoo.com and pops up. Google is my lead salesman.”

Ways to Continue to Attract Best Workers:
“Pay all their benefits.”