



Luminary: Dennis Swanson in Lamps Plus' Chatsworth store.

LIGHT BULB MOMENT

How one retailer worked with the internet and prospered

By HELEN FLOERSH Staff Reporter

Lamps Plus Inc. plans to open a new store in Austin, Texas later this summer. While it's the Chatsworth specialty retailer's first opening in nearly a decade, it comes at a time when most chains are shrinking before the growing strength of online competitors.

But working with the internet rather

than against it has been a major contributor to the company's success. It has installed internet kiosks in its stores and incentivized salespeople to use them. In practice, shoppers often visit the store, see available items and then buy the exact model and color they want through the website.

More than half of its sales take place on LampsPlus.com, where it offers roughly 65,000 lighting and home decor items from

both external vendors and its own product lines.

"I noticed that if you buy an outdoor light, you buy a family – a post light, front door light, side lights – but you could never carry an entire family in a store," Chief Executive Dennis Swanson explained. "So I thought, if you put the internet in a store, they can find it there."

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PHOTO BY DAVID SPRAGUE

Video Links Keyes to Car Buyers

AUTOMOTIVE: Program logs 30 percent conversion rate.

By CAROL LAWRENCE Staff Reporter

Despite the ubiquity of ecommerce, people still have to buy their new automobiles from dealerships – and they still distrust salespeople.

Keyes Automotive Group Inc. in Van Nuys understands that, so the company has begun offering car shoppers live and interactive video

tours of their desired vehicles through the dealerships' websites in hopes of building trust and converting shoppers into buyers.

The service is implemented at Keyes' 15 dealerships throughout the Valley and Valencia, and it takes the trend of pre-purchase online research a step further.

Larry West has put the new software-based tool through four months of testing as general manager of Keyes Honda in Van Nuys, where

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PHOTO BY DAVID SPRAGUE

Sold: Keyes Honda's Estrella, West.

Firm Delivers Bed in a Box

MANUFACTURING: Mattresses beat stiff online competition.

By MARK R. MADLER Staff Reporter

Rick Swartzburg wants to get you into bed.

Preferably a bed with a mattress or pillow made by his company, Relief-Mart Inc. in Agoura Hills.

The company is one of the top sellers in the sleep business through ecommerce giant Amazon.com Inc. And it has become a pioneer of custom-made pillows

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Swartzburg

Fix for Bedsores

MEDICAL DEVICE: Lift prevents pain for patients, caregivers.

By STEPHANIE HENKEL Staff Reporter

Margarita Clement came to the United States from Aruba to pursue a career in nursing. However, once she started working at a local hospital, paralysis in her left hand that had developed during childhood prevented her from lifting and turning patients properly. Then after her American mentor and father figure fell ill, she was faced with a similar problem in caring for him.

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PROFILE



LOFTY: Frank Miller is the new executive director at Hollywood Burbank Airport. His first assignment: Build a terminal while not disrupting passengers. He talks with the Business Journal about why he feels motivated by big construction projects.

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Hospital Building Boom Providence Tarzana, right, leads pack of health-related projects.

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Medical Device: Boemba Addresses Bedsore Issue

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So she developed a product to better move patients and protect caregivers. Now, she is launching a company, **BuddyGuard Corp.** of Sherwood Forest, to bring her invention to the masses.

The Boemba, as she calls it, is a lift sling to move wheelchair-bound and bedridden patients. It differentiates itself from other slings on the market by helping to minimize bedsores and provide a safer way of transferring patients. The product incorporates a nanotechnology fabric that offers anti-microbial, anti-bacterial and moisture-resistant properties, providing added comfort, dryness and sanitary conditions. It comes with a pouch on the inside of the leg to hide a catheter as well as a log that attaches to the sling to record when a patient has been turned.

Bedsore problem

Pressure ulcers, also known as bedsores, are "wounds caused by unrelieved pressure on the skin," according to the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** of Atlanta. The government agency states that pressure ulcers remain a big problem in nursing homes with 2 to 28 percent of nursing home residents suffering from the injury.

To prevent bedsores, an immobile patient must be turned constantly, which can be difficult for nurses due to the weight of the patient.

Larona Taylor, a safe patient handling program manager for Westwood-based **UCLA Health**, said to minimize instances of pressure ulcers, it's important to inspect and monitor the patient's skin, keep the skin dry and use air mattresses to distribute the weight.

"It's a balancing act between making sure the patient has proper care, and the staff is at low risk for injury," she added.

Clement developed Boemba specifically to prevent bedsores.

"It (pressure ulcers) is an \$11 billion industry, and it all can be prevented," she said. "The device is a win-win for caregivers and patients."

She launched BuddyGuard in 2014. During the first couple of years, she searched for the perfect material to make the device, worked on **U.S. Food and Drug Administration** approval

and ensured coverage by Medicare, Medi-Cal and most major insurance carriers.

To get FDA approval, Clement decided not to hire a lawyer. She went to her local library, researched the patent process and funded the endeavor herself. Initially, Clement spent \$50,000 of her own money on getting the patent and starting the company, which has grown to an investment of \$200,000.

Medicare and insurance approval for reimbursement was a separate process altogether that differed by payer type, meaning each insurance company and government entity had different hoops to jump through. But insurance reimbursement is key to a product's success and adoption rate, thus the company made sure to secure an 80-to-20 split, where the insurer pays 80 percent and the patient 20.

In the product development process, the Boemba went through five generations before reaching a final design. It is currently manufactured in Los Angeles. BuddyGuard markets the device to nursing homes, home health care providers and hospice caregivers. The company believes if the facilities are aware of the Boemba's benefits, they will request the doctor's prescription on a resident's behalf, knowing it will help the patient and care team. After the prescription is obtained, the device is assembled – as they are custom-fitted – packaged and delivered to the care facility.

Now, the company's focus is scaling the product, which will incorporate an education and awareness component. BuddyGuard is getting the word out via networking and attending health care events, like the recent HealthX expo organized by **Valley Economic and Development Corp.** in Sherman Oaks. In addition, it is looking to increase its number of distributors and salespeople to support marketing efforts. The company is currently in talks with distributors in major coastal cities and hopes to work its way into the central part of the country as demand increases.

The Boemba looks like a pair of shorts with a back brace attached to it. It has handles in different places to move the patient, while keeping the patient's hands free. Because the device is custom-fitted, it has a separate chest and thigh piece that won't slip or irritate the skin.

Once patients are bedridden, care providers often turn to lifts and slings with pulleys



PHOTO BY THOMAS WASPER

Custom-Fit: Margarita Clement shows how Boemba's handles help caregiver.

to move patients in and out of bed. Yet, **Rob Fuller**, a partner at L.A.-based law firm **Nelson Hardiman** and former hospital chief operating officer, said some of these devices have created more opportunities to develop bedsores.

"A study came out in 2015 and found out what any nurse could have told them," he explained. "When using a sling or lift with straps, the actual tension on the strap isn't spread across the area of the strap. The two edges of the strap are where all the pressure goes. It's like picking up a patient by a couple of wires instead of a big strap."

The Boemba avoids this problem by not implementing straps that touch the patient's skin. The device covers the majority of the patient's body with the two custom-fit pieces, starting from the calves all the way to the upper back. Its padding and material allow for more even distribution of the weight as to not cause pressure and abrasion, which causes the sores.

Clement is also working on a design for diabetic shoes using nanotechnology fabric which, she said, will be BuddyGuard's next commercialized product. But currently, the Boemba and its mission – to protect patients and caregivers – remains her top priority.

Family invention

Clement came to the United States in 1970 and enrolled in nursing school at **Los Angeles Valley College** in Valley Glen in 1973. She developed Erb's palsy as a child and knew it would limit her nursing abilities. At Valley College, she began sketching ideas for how to move patients in spite of her disability. She then went on to receive her nursing degree from **California State University – Los Angeles** and began working in health care. She later earned a master's degree in alcohol and drug counseling at **Loyola Marymount University** in Los Angeles and a Ph.D. in psychology from **California Graduate Institute** in Los Angeles.

During her time at Loyola, a board member took Clement under his wing and became her mentor and father figure. As he grew older, he fell ill, but Clement stepped in to care for him.

"When my American father became ill, he asked for two things," she explained. "He said, 'I do not want bad bed ulcers, nor do I want you to put me in a home.'"

While caring for her father who was having trouble walking, Clement decided to sew handles on a pair of Bermuda shorts, so she could help support his weight while walking. When her father became wheelchair-bound, Clement added a layer of cushion to his Bermuda shorts by sewing foam into them. This protected him from the wheelchair's unbreathable surface, which can also cause pressure ulcers.

"One thing he liked about the device is that his hands were free," Clement said. "In the morning, we walked him but he would get the paper. He loved that independence."

From that experience, Clement developed the Boemba, which works very similarly to the Bermuda shorts her father wore. She implemented the shorts' design, padding and handles to create her commercialized product.

"The device provided Papa with safety, dignity and care," Clement said. "He never fell or developed bed sores under my care (using the device)."

Advertising Feature

Business on the Move

Hirings, Awards, Promotions and Special Accomplishments in local business

CONSTRUCTION

Local General Contractor Garners New Construction Projects After Achieving National Recognition

AMG & Associates, Inc., Santa Clarita based public works general contractor, continues building a strong presence in California communities with recently awarded construction projects after achieving national recognition.

SANTA CLARITA, California, May 15, 2017

Public works general contractor AMG & Associates (AMG), headquartered in Santa Clarita, was recently awarded three new construction projects in California, totaling over \$34M, after being recognized on Inc. 5000's 2016 Fastest Growing Private Companies in America. Recently garnering new projects for Moreno Valley Unified School District, the Department of the Army, and City of Buena Park, AMG is adding to its resume of 200+ completed projects, which includes owners such as NASA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and El Camino College District.

With company president Albert M. Giacomazzi at the helm, projects such as the aforementioned, along with a combined 75 years of public works experience from the management team, are what has led to AMG's recognition. A 134% three-year average growth earned AMG the #2635 spot on Inc. 5000's 2016 list, which was the company's seventh time to be on the list out of the last eight years. AMG was also included in ENRCalifornia's (Engineering News-Record's) 2016 Top Contractors of California as #77 out of 100, and listed by the Los Angeles Business Journal of 2016 as #84 of the top 100 Fastest Growing Private Companies.

AMG will partner with the Moreno Valley Unified School District for the construction of a \$14M athletic complex for Canyon Springs High School in Moreno Valley. Construction will include a new athletic stadium, three new service buildings, new track and field, athletic fields,



and tennis courts.

The Department of the Army recently awarded AMG with the \$10.2M project, Renovation and Repair of Dock 5 at Beale Air Force Base (AFB). The project is scheduled for a one year duration, consisting of the construction of two interior structures with repair shops, conference rooms, and administrative offices, along with the renovation of existing aircraft hangar B1076, Dock 5, which will support the maintenance and repair of the KC-135 aircraft at Beale AFB.

The City of Buena Park is expeditiously moving forward with the \$9.4M new construction of Fire Station No. 61 after awarding the project to AMG in the early part of April. The groundbreaking ceremony occurred in Buena Park Tuesday, May 2, with construction beginning immediately thereafter. The new 18,000 SF fire station will consist of a three-lane apparatus bay, dormitory, training room, and

administrative offices.

To learn more about AMG, visit: www.amgassociatesinc.com.

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