

HOW I got started

Whether they started selling lemonade when they were eight years old or finally opened their first store at 62, entrepreneurs possess a drive to succeed, make money and be their own boss. Each week, we'll give you the inside look at how and why a local entrepreneur started his or her own business. Perhaps you will be next.

Harley and Aaron Magden

Co-founders
Window Nation



What is the business?: We sell windows to residential homeowners. Vinyl, wood, fiberglass — we carry any possible window. We don't make the windows, we have them custom made, and we sell doors and siding, too. We have good, better, best when it comes to all types of windows — that's our forte. We service Maryland, the Washington, D.C., area, Cleveland and most recently Charlotte (N.C.).

When was it founded?: June 2006

Who helped?: We're from Cleveland, and our family was in the windows business for 35 years. Back in 2004, my father sold the company we had in Cleveland. He sold out to an investment firm. We stayed on, but after awhile we decided to leave. We researched some markets and found that Baltimore was a great market for windows and siding. We basically started everything here from scratch.

How was it financed?: We financed it ourselves. We had money from working the previous five to 10 years. We basically took money from our savings.

Where did the idea come from?: Being that we always worked for our father, we knew we wanted to go into business on our own. We just didn't know what business to go in. Business and doing things on our own is kind of our forte. After six months, we had researched and settled upon this because we know what it takes. We took our father's core ideas and put our own spin on them.

What have you learned along the way?: The past few years, those were very difficult economic periods. We had to learn how to be aggressive in marketing but keep our prices reasonable. Be aggressive without breaking the bank. We've also learned that advertising cannot be universally transferred between different markets. That means the marketing and promotional offers vary greatly depending on the location. Also customer service is so important these days. With the Internet and social media, one mistake and you're all over the place. You're done for.

Annual revenue: About \$23 million. We haven't closed the books yet.

Is it profitable?: We turned profitable after eight months. And we never had outstanding debt to fund the company.

Challenges?: The biggest challenge is always finding the right people. No matter how bad the economy is, it's finding the right people.

Growth plans?: One, we want to open a new market in the halfway point of this year. We're researching a few different places still. Two, we want to do commercial work. Now, we're 100 percent residential replacement. We've hired someone to build up our commercial work.

Next big idea?: We're working on possibly doing online sales of windows, but we haven't launched that site yet. Most of what we're working on is customer-related. Everything we do for growth has to do with relaying information to our customers in a way that is better than our competitors.

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