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gifts

and decorative accessories

FASHION HOME CANDLES BATH & BODY STATIONERY GOURMET GIFTABLES HOLIDAYS PLAYTHINGS

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The 'Apple' of His Eye

Ten years in, Tony Gross has expanded A Cheerful Giver's fragrance roots into new home categories. BY LAUREN DAVIDSON

Eight years ago, Tony Gross acquired A Cheerful Giver, a small candle company that was making quite a name for itself with its signature fragrance, juicy apple. "They started the process at the house," he recalled, "and it evolved into retail stores." After working for major corporations for about 20 years, Gross longed to own his own manufacturing company. "I wanted to make, sell and market the product," he said.

The business has since experienced somewhat of an explosion. "We manufacture 10,000 to 14,000 candles a day. We start manufacturing first thing in the morning, and work throughout the day. All product goes through quality control, then packing and shipping out to independent gift retailers to department stores." A Cheerful Giver even sells candles on QVC. Gross said it took some convincing, but retailers carrying his product are happier than ever. "I hear from retailers that as they're unpacking the box, people are buying the product!" Brand recognition has soared, and now, Gross said, "we have one of the top-rated products on QVC."

In the past few years, A Cheerful Giver has expanded past candles, adding home decor items to the mix. "We started this three and a half years ago," Gross said, "with just a few pieces. Now there are about 500 unique items." He happily exclaimed his excitement over the "wonderful fall line" that includes ceramic wares, LED pumpkins, indoor/outdoor lanterns and "the cutest snowmen you've ever seen," the Willie collection, which is Gross's personal favorite. "We've had great success expanding over the last few years." Combining trendy home decor with fragrance is something that greatly inspires Gross to continue expanding into new categories.



PRODUCT EXPLOSION

Above: Tony Gross, president of A Cheerful Giver, oversees the production line. Below: The latest in the company's Farm Fresh candle collection.





BRAND MESSAGE

Cheerful candles come in a variety of scents, including Autumn Orchard and Balsam Fir.

Expanding his company's imagination is what Gross counts as the key to the company's success with its recent expansion. "It's working with different designers, goofing around and looking at different things. It's finding something that's unique. When you get that smile or feedback from the retailer that the product is selling through like no tomorrow, that's what we want," he said.

Gross takes the utmost pride in the manufacturing process. "We use the highest quality waxes available, which are food-grade paraffin wax. We sometimes try 300 to 400

different fragrance blends just to get one. If it doesn't fill the entire room, we pass on it. We spend an incredible amount of time testing fragrances. It's a painstaking process. The fragrances are all from the

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- Tony Gross

United States. Our candles are 100 percent made in the U.S.—the wax, fragrance, wicks and coloring are all U.S.-based. The only thing we outsource is wicking in every jar, and that is done with our special needs partnership," he said.

A Cheerful Giver prides itself on being a major U.S. candle company that gives back to U.S. causes. Gross fondly described their special needs

BRANCHING OUT

Above: The Willies new home decor items.

outreach program's mission as "restoring a sense of pride in a group that's really been forgotten in our society. People with special needs are transformational people. They transform hearts, and that's what people need." A Cheerful Giver now has three centers with about 700 employees that wick every candle. "Many companies focus on profit," said Gross. "We focus on how we're operating and our responsibility. It's our responsibility to give back."

This positive, open-minded philosophy is what has helped A Cheerful Giver continue to grow and achieve success. With a constant desire for improvement and expansion, this company shows no signs of slowing down. •



BRANCHING OUT

Right: Keepers of the Light candles come in three sizes.



Endcap

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As independent retailers, our toy stores, gift stores, they're curated. When customers go to your website, they want that same experience. We need to be able to do that better than anyone else on ecommerce."

—Christine Osborne, Wonder Works Toys



product pick p. 160

I like big mutts and I cannot lie.

"Most dog owners like to express their love for their pets even when their pets stay at home. One of our biggest sellers is wearable humorous pet apparel."

—Doug Stein, Mad Style

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▼ it's a man's world p. 176



A \$21 billion industry of men's grooming and skincare products.



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—Tony Gross

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