

Gerry Udell Inc. delivers the Northeast market

In the ever-changing professional beauty business, the **Udell Family** has been a constant, serving distributors, retailers and beauty e-commerce platforms in the Northeast territory for three generations, with a fourth in the works. What has stayed the same is their commitment to helping their customers build their businesses in the Northeast territory—the most challenging in the country—with the most innovative products and sales techniques. So what are they up to today?

Beauty Industry Report recently sat down with **Gerry Udell** to find out.

BIR: Welcome, Gerry! Please tell our audience a little about your company.



Gerry Udell

Gerry Udell: We are a family-owned company that was started by my grandfather, **Gerry** (the OG), in 1962. His sons, my father **Glenn** and uncle **Gary**, are still very involved. As the company has evolved over the years, our philosophy has remained the same: Focus on our territory and be the best at it! While many other rep firms decided to go national or global, we focus on one territory and continue to grow within. I'm delighted to say that we have been very successful in accomplishing that goal!

BIR: Tell us a little about your personal life.

GU: I live in Hoboken, NJ, with my wife **Amy** and 3-year-old son **Oliver Grey** (the other OG). I recently ran the NYC Marathon, which like our territory, is very challenging!—and am so proud to tell you that I finished.

BIR: For our audience members who have never worked with a rep firm, what is the rep's role in today's evolving industry?

GU: The rep's role is to bridge the gap between the manufacturer and the customer. We communicate constantly with manufacturers and keep them informed about what's happening in the marketplace. We sell

new products and implement sales strategies. Sometimes selling is the easy part of the sales process—our follow-through is essential in launching a new product or promoting an existing line. We pride ourselves on developing personal relationships with both our customers and manufacturers. Although we use the newest technologies, the personal touch is more essential today than ever before.

BIR: What types of brands are best served by a rep firm?

GU: We are fortunate to represent some of the leading brands in their respective categories. Whether you are a new company with limited capital or an established brand with sufficient resources, using a good rep firm is an extremely cost-effective way to get your product distributed.

BIR: What states do you cover?

GU: Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia and Virginia.

BIR: How has the pandemic changed the Northeast? What is different?

GU: There have been many disruptions, and we continue to help our brands navigate through them. We have seen the permanent loss of salons, shops and stores and the growth of salon suites. It's more challenging to find and retain quality stylists and employees. Distributors have been stuck with large inventories, which has caused them to be careful with their purchasing. Buying patterns have changed, as they seem to be ordering less but more frequently to turn over inventory.

Throughout the pandemic, we have seen the breakdown of supply chains and increased cost of goods, which has caused a strain on business operations. Last but certainly not least, there are the challenges and ever-changing landscape of the internet, which only grew in importance during the pandemic.

BIR: How do you face those challenges?

GU: We have 11 people focusing on one territory, which allows us to provide complete coverage for our manufacturers. We have built the supporting infrastructure with the

personnel and our software system for our group to be successful. Great management and leadership is essential to the success of any business. We communicate with our group daily to make sure they stay organized and focused. We share success stories and discuss how they met the challenges they faced that week. We are a very proactive group! It might be a new marketplace but the basics of being successful will remain the same: Communicate, be a good listener, work hard, be persistent and be resilient. We do not wait for business. We create business!

BIR: Who are members of your team?

GU: I am really proud of our team. They are very experienced and understand the nuances of building a beauty business. They include **Gary Udell**, **Glenn Udell**, **Mary Dunne**, **Bill Becker**, **Brad Becker** and **Mark Richman**. We are very lucky to have **Pam Piacenza** as our customer service manager and backbone of the company. All of our manufacturers and distributors will tell you that she is the best in the business. **Donna Hampson** runs our order entry system and accounts receivables, **Destiny Minichiello** works in customer service and **Miriam Udell** (my mother) assists everyone—especially Glenn.

BIR: How do you like working with your father and uncle?

GU: They demand a lot from me—including that I have to laugh at their jokes.

BIR: How important is the rep today?

GU: Extremely important—and more so than ever! A good rep group has a broader overview and understands the marketplace much better than a company person. Our customers confide in us and tell us the truth about what they think of a product or promotion. They might not be as straightforward with a company employee. It has taken years to cultivate these relationships, which is why manufacturers find it so beneficial to partner with us.

For more information on partnering with Gerry Udell, Inc., contact Gerry Udell at 973-338-3100 or gerry@gerryudell.com. Visit www.gerryudell.com.