Snail’s Pace: The Rest of the Story

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Since launching just 18 months ago, Snail’s Pace, a new venture from the monks of Abbey Press Printing, has significantly contributed to the preservation and conservation of the environment. In fact, according to the company’s environmental calculator evaluation, the business has preserved 385 trees for the future, took an equivalent of four cars off the road for one year, and prevented 35,603 pounds of net greenhouse gases through eco-friendly printing procedures and socially-responsible practices.

Owned by the monks of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, the company blossomed from a rich monastic history of environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and meaningful communication. In fact, Snail’s Pace was the brainchild of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in an effort to revitalize their business. In February 2010, John Wilson, general manager of Abbey Press, asked for some marketing insight from Sue Ellspermann, director of University of Southern Indiana (USI) Center for Applied Research, who enlisted the assistance of Michael Mayers, adjunct professor of Marketing at USI who enjoyed over forty years of marketing and research fields working in industry. Mayers conducted several focus groups to determine the appeal and likely success of a new line of quality printed items as fundraisers among Catholic parishes including St. John’s in Newburgh; St. Luke’s in Indianapolis; and Holy Rosary in Evansville.

“Because Snail’s Pace calls Saint Meinrad Archabbey its home, our company’s primary objectives are reflected in the principles and traditions practiced by the monks, particularly the commitment to environmental stewardship,” said Wilson. “Saint Meinrad Archabbey makes that commitment real through numerous on-site recycling and conservations efforts, and now through Snail’s Pace. By ensuring every step in our production process is designed to be as ecologically responsible as possible, and by producing the majority of its products in our on-site facility, Snail’s Pace continues the tradition and good works of the monks.”

The Snail’s Pace production process values both the social and ecological conservancy of natural resources. Snail’s Pace products, featuring designs that celebrate the artistry of God’s creations, use 100% U.S.-made materials and are certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, a premiere, not-for-profit organization that promotes the responsible management of the world’s forests. This certification confirms that the company follows a meticulous set of eco-friendly standards to produce goods that are at the highest manageable level of environmental responsibility.

Snail’s Pace is always looking for expansion and enhancement opportunities to benefit the consumer experience. One component of Snail’s Pace is the fundraising program.

“The Snail’s Pace fundraising program is a healthy alternative to the multitude of candy and cookie dough fundraisers in the market. Our program allows groups the opportunity to raise funds selling products they can truly be proud of,” said Wilson. “And because many schools already support and participate in ‘green’ activities, choosing Snail’s Pace is an appropriate way to strengthen their eco commitments, while stressing to children the importance of the need to protect the health of the planet and the people on it.”

In an effort to build the fundraising customer base, the Snail’s Pace team is working hard to find the best audience. In addition to producing direct mail pieces for schools and churches and buying ads in industry magazines, a team of company representatives travels to various PTO, PTA, school and church conferences located throughout the country to promote products, network with other industry members, meet potential buyers, and better understand their cliental.

At the shows, the Snail’s Pace booths display an outstanding presentation of products, program information, and free samples.

“When the potential customers can see and feel the products firsthand, it makes a much more lasting impression,” said Greg Tate, director of Marketing Services.
So far, the team has participated in various fundraising shows in Indianapolis, St. Louis, Chicago, Evansville, Louisville, and Columbus, OH.

The Atlanta gift show was the first exposure to the retail market where the team found interests from the Atlanta Botanical Gardens, Yosemite National Park, and the Chicago Zoo.

“These high traffic retail establishments saw interest in the animal and floral designs that Snail's Pace offers,” said Sue Ann Kloeck, national sales director. “And the eco-friendly, made-in-the-USA attributes of the product line fits their missions and goals of their business and customers.”

Since then, the Snail’s Pace team continues to penetrate retail markets ranging from nursery, wildlife and garden centers, fresh grocery markets, paper stores, and all-natural product retailers.

“We are continuing to penetrate these markets through shows, website, sales rep contact, and e-mail marketing,” said Kloeck. “Our new key account manager is focusing on developing Snail's Pace business in high volume retail sales establishments such as the Smithsonian Museum gift shop in Washington D.C., Event Network who maintains 60 retail shops in zoos, botanical gardens, and museums across the country; and natural grocery market chains with multiple locations.”

The trade shows have been promising experiences and have developed positive leads and connections; the rave reviews from attendees encourage a high success rate as the company continues to develop its product line.

“It is no surprise that Snail’s Pace has already shown success in the originally planned channel as a parish fundraiser, but has also indicated even greater potential with specialty retailers, nature and national park gift shops, and other environmentally friendly venues,” said Mayers. “During the research we could clearly see the respondents’ enthusiasm for this new product line and its high quality and fine artisanship, and laudable mission. I believe that the Snail’s Pace team has only scratched the surface of the company’s full potential.”