

UNITED TRAILERS

www.united-trailers.com / HQ: Bristol, Ind. / Products: Custom trailers / Todd Bontrager, president:

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TRAILING NO ONE

UNITED TRAILERS REMAINS A LEADER BY PROVIDING CLIENTS WITH A DIVERSE LINE OF HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOM TRAILERS. **BY KELLY McCABE**



Founded just 20 years ago in Bristol, Ind., United Trailers has propelled itself to the top of its industry with a focus on quality and service. "When Warren Johnson founded United Trailers in 1989, his goal was to build a trailer that would stand out in the cargo trailer market," the company says. "He believed a key to success was to listen to the customer and focus on custom manufacturing."

Over the years, the company has grown to serve applications such as landscaping, concessions, construction and transportation of motor-sports vehicles. United Trailers' products range in size from 5- to 81/2-

feet-wide and 8- to 53-feet-long. The trailers are sold in Canada and the United States through an independent dealer network.

That variety and wide reach has helped it succeed. "United Trailers is one of the top U.S. manufacturers of steel-framed enclosed cargo and specialty trailers," President Todd Bontrager says. He recently took time to talk with *Manufacturing Today* about his company's success.

Manufacturing Today: What are United Trailers' areas of expertise?

Todd Bontrager: Custom trailers, producing high-quality trailers, a high

visibility in the race trailer market and building a diverse product line.

MT: What innovations has the company spearheaded?

TB: United created the UATV: the first drive-in, drive-out trailer with a V-nose. We also created the Arctic Green exterior color to match the color of certain popular snowmobiles. Warren Johnson, the founder of United, did design the first sprint car trailer, and United was one of the pioneers in that market. United has also innovated a non-cost-prohibitive lift-gate system for higher-end race trailers.

United has primarily focused on

custom manufacturing. In 2006, a brand-new 12,960-square-foot options building was added to the company's campus. The building includes six bays so even more attention to customization is possible.

MT: What sets United apart?

TB: According to several dealers, overall product quality and fit and finish from United is superior to the competition. The trailers are simply constructed better. United's expertise in custom trailers also sets the company apart. Many of the workers have been here since the company was founded, so they are experts in producing specialized trailers.

MT: How is the market changing?

TB: Dealers are buying more entry-level trailers. United has introduced

several more varieties of entry-level trailers to accommodate these needs.

Customers continually want more for less, and we continually strive to meet those needs and yet keep the quality and craftsmanship we have built our name on. Customers always want something just a little different from the average trailer, and they have their own ideas and vision of what they want in their units. This is where we really master the competition. We do far more custom building than any of the competition.

MT: What challenges has the company encountered recently?

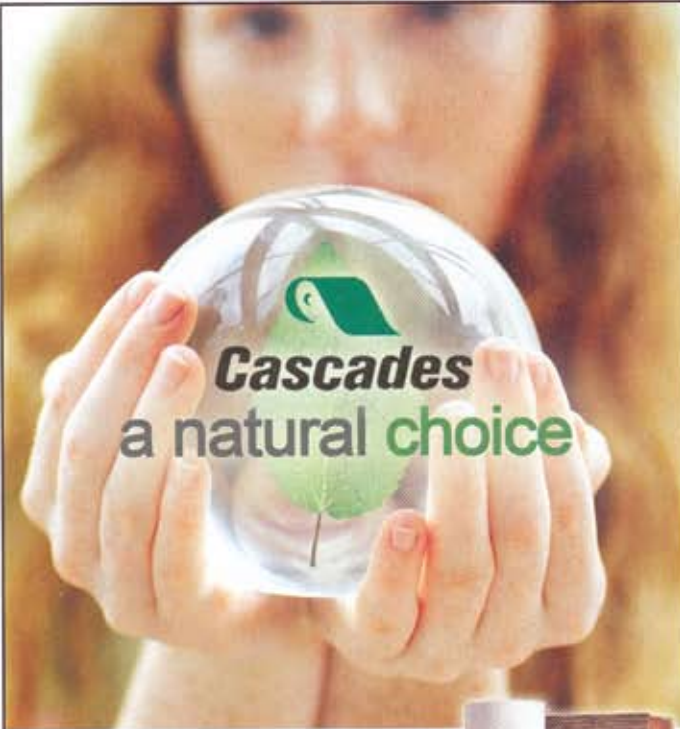
TB: Rising costs of materials and financing issues for customers are big challenges. United is constantly seeking solutions to the financing problem and has recently partnered with

Sheffield Financial to help with retail financing. United is doing everything possible to keep dealer costs low even as the costs of materials rise.

We also strive to maintain the integrity of craftsmanship and quality of our units for prices that other manufacturers are driving in the market. We are consistent in all areas of service – such as warranty, quality and sales – which will usually work in our favor compared to what the competition is giving away.

MT: What is the best advice you've ever received about the industry?

TB: It is crucial to understand the wants and needs of clients. Working with them is a partnership that needs to be nurtured every day. When we understand their business, it makes us a better company to work with. **mt**




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