

Pictured: Daniel Beggs, Opus Marketing Rep.

OPUS MARKETING GROUP

With a proven track record of expansion, utilizing the logic of consumer demand and product value, OPUS MARKETING GROUP has changed the way we think about the electronics industry. Influencing incredible growth for notable names such as Kicker, Parrot, and JVC Mobile, as well as many other vendors and manu-

factures in consumer electronics, Opus Marketing is the definition of achievement when it comes to a representative firm. This was definitely a unique interview for RIX, away from auto concepts & celebrities; this interview touched the importance of representation when creating vendor/consumer businesses, as well as the importance of product choice and value.

What is the Opus Marketing Group, what do you do?

The Opus Marketing Group is an independent sales agency that operates in the consumer electronics industry. Companies like us are referred to as "Rep Firms". We are essentially a third party, outside sales force for hire; filling the role of field representatives for a variety of companies. Rep firms generally direct their geographic focus to one particular region or territory. Opus Marketing is somewhat unique in that we do business in four generally recognized territories of Metro NY, New England, Upstate NY and the Mid-Atlantic. We essentially cover the thirteen northeast states from North Carolina to Maine including the District of Columbia. With ten people (reps) on the road and three inside people working out of two offices (New Jersey and Massachusetts), Opus Marketing is a very small company which obtains it's only a revenue stream through commissioned sales arrangements with various vendors and manufacturers of consumer electronics products. We are not a distributor. We do not take custody of product. We are basically a broker of consumer electronics products, operating under exclusive contract to our vendors. If a manufacturer has a product they want assistance in rolling out to the marketplace they call us. We have strong relationships with all the major buyers of consumer electronics (especially 12 volt products) here in the northeast.

What was your strategy for expanding Opus into different areas?

Early on (1995) when we initially expanded into New England, we did it by establishing a dedicated New England based company with sales people who resided in that territory. I found a partner (Steve Cote) who could oversee and manage our business up there. I knew that most vendors wanted a principal involved on a day to day basis and I knew I couldn't do it all myself. I also knew the customers in New England might not respond as well to a NY rep firm. I thought we might be seen as interlopers. Steve's been my partner for almost 15 years and aside from our business partnership he's a tremendous friend as well.

The website is very versatile and detailed in introducing Opus' mission, staff, and work. Why is the staff shown in pictures and listed for their talents?

Because the personality of the firm can only be conveyed through the people in it. This is a relationship business. I've been in the CE business since 1978 (I started in high school) and I never understood what people meant when they said "it's a relationship business". I always thought if you've got a good product it will sell; but the bottom line is that it's a hell of a lot easier to place products when your customers know and trust you than if you've got a reputa-

tion as a liar or a cheat. There are some exceptions (who should remain nameless) but generally speaking, the people that exceed in this business are the ones that understand that for a deal to be good and a business relationship to be sustainable, it has to work for all the parties and stakeholders involved... the retailer, the manufacturer, the consumer (and yes even the rep).

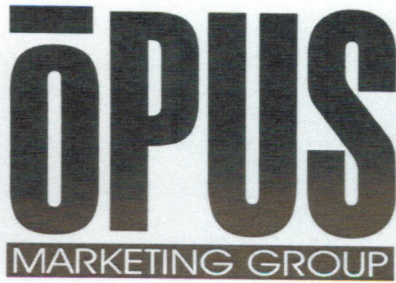
Your business splits between home audio and custom installation. What are you better at advising and what are your approaches to both?

Actually when we refer to custom install we are usually talking about custom home audio (CEDIA products and the like). But to answer what I think is your question, we have more history in the automotive channel but all of us have significant experience in the home and custom home sector as well. As the 12 Volt business continues to transition from a head unit centric, relatively high profit model to a more profit-challenged business, predicated more or less on connected devices (i.e. I-Pods) we attempt to diversify into adjacent markets like custom home.

What role and value does Mobile Electronics Detailing Affiliates (MEDA) play? What does it mean to be a 12 Volt Professional?

Detailing and in-store services become more important as merchandising venues become more crowded and sales floors become less specialized. Currently MEDA is not a significant part of our business although it has been instrumental in the past. With the demise of Circuit City, MEDA became less of a focal point although we can scale up quickly should opportunity present itself. As far as being a 12 volt professional is concerned, it means you're always going to be at the nexus of technology, culture and fashion. You make a living by understanding and leveraging these three components for maximum impact and profit. It also means you're going to spend a lot of weekends standing on asphalt next to really loud cars!

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What life line for business growth does Opus rely on and what can destroy Opus' future growth?

Our life line can be summed up in two words, "value added". If a rep can't add value then they have no value. Like so many things in business, if you're not adding value then you're taking it away and no vendor can afford to dilute their value proposition. As we manage relationships between vendors and their customers, we are constantly looking for ways to sweeten the deal on both ends. We make sure consumer electronic and mobile electronics customers understand all the ways that our vendor's products can benefit their business and we make sure our vendors understand what it takes to be important to their customers and what they could do to stimulate more business. Diversification is also a key life line for us; developing our ability to transfer our talents and attributes to other consumer products and industry sectors. This is critical; and our execution in this area will greatly impact our future growth. The current economic climate is clearly an impediment. We sell stuff no one needs. If people can't make their mortgage, they'll think twice about whether a remote start or an extra set of woofers is important to them at the moment.

Are there any venues, business that you would like to be apart of, work with?

Any new category we can approach without adversely affecting our service to existing business is interesting to us; perhaps pro and/or commercial products. We are certainly interested in broadening our position within the category of connected devices, home audio, and automation.

Is there a future or a change coming to this type of business? If so, how are you preparing?

The current economic condition provides a difficult confounding variable to an already challenging transitive period in the mobile electronics business. We've seen it coming for years and anyone who doesn't see it now probably deserves to go out of business. The business is less of a head unit centric model and now more focused on connected devices. I-pods, Zunes, cell phones all provide media content. The internet has really changed everything. Mobile Electronics retailers need to provide the solutions customers want and request; which are not necessarily the solutions they're most comfortable selling or installing. This goes for everyone, reps and manufacturers included.

Give me some examples of your most memorable accomplishments?

Other than my kids? Probably our success in the Mid Atlantic. Opus Mid-Atlantic opened up in 2005 and within 12 months it was a third of our overall business. My partner, Jamie White, and his team have done a tremendous job down there.

Well, RIX kindly thanks you, OPUS MARKETING, for such an in-depth interview clearly foreshadowing the changing market and consistent evolution of success you continue to have. All the bests for the year!



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