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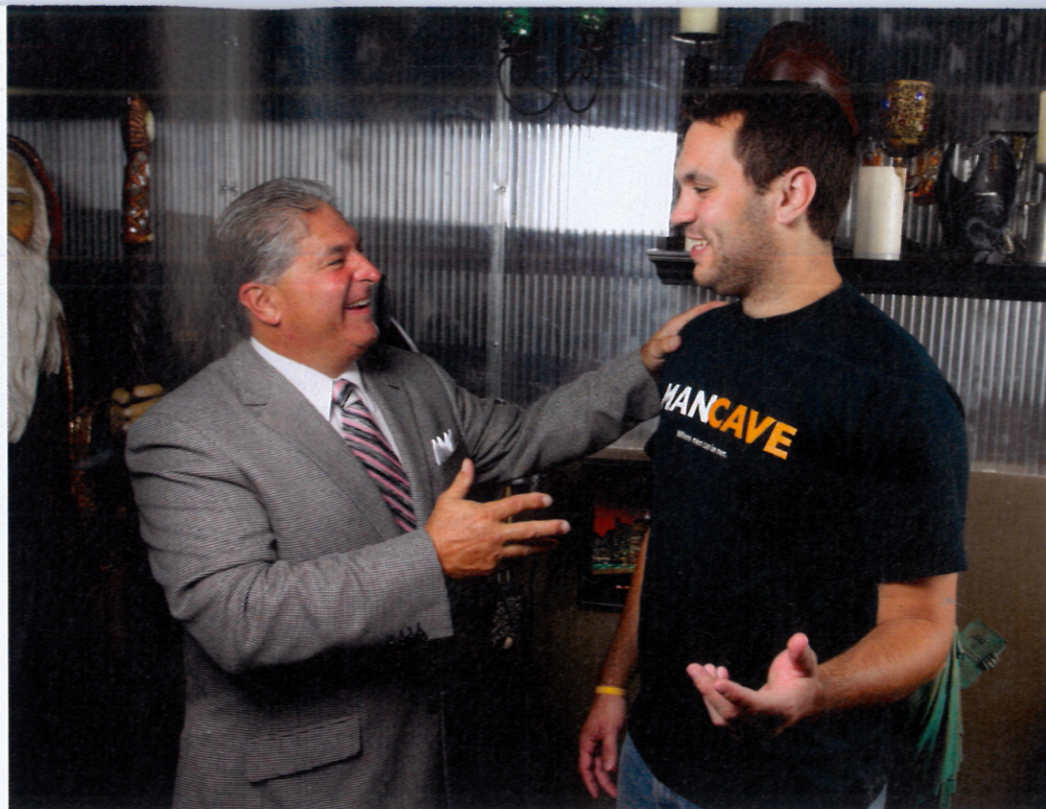


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A Journey into the Man Cave with Nick Beste

BY STEVEN SCHUSSLER



NICK BESTE, THE 23-YEAR-OLD CEO of Man Cave, is an inspiring example of an entrepreneur who found success during the recession. He did it by identifying a market niche that is virtually untapped: direct sales to men. Thousands of companies demonstrate and sell products to groups of women in their homes, and Man Cave has spun the concept towards groups of men with a concept called "Meatings." Their product line ranges from premium meats, grilling tongs and accessories to beer holders and mugs and specialty T-shirts. What happens at a "Meating"? The Man Cave advisors demonstrate and teach grilling techniques—and make money! Sales in 2009 approached \$100,000. In 2010, the company is expected to make nearly \$2 million.

SS: How did the Man Cave idea evolve? **A:** My cousin hosted an event where a Weber Grill rep was doing a demonstration and I thought, "There's nothing like this for men," and the idea snowballed from there.

SS: How long have you been in business? **A:** We started in November 2009 and today we have 937 sales reps in 47 states; and we're growing fast!

SS: Man Cave has been well-received—what types of comments are you getting? **A:** The response is amazing. People see a Man Cave demonstration, get excited and come over to see what it's all about. We get positive feedback from both men and women.


SS: Research and development is a big part of what we do at my company but R&D costs money and requires serious attention to detail. How do you approach the creation and development of your product

and product lines? **A:** We have a full-time R&D specialist. He and I work together on the formation of products and ideas. We also take customer feedback and surveys into account so that we are delivering the products that our customers are asking for.

SS: Why are Man Cave's products so unique? **A:** We do our research. We have to have a product consumable for residual sales, so we did our homework on what's consumable that's male-driven. The research showed that meat was the answer, but we felt steaks were not unique, so we choose brats. Our thought process included "what's the craziest brat we can sell, what's the most high-quality brat we can find, what's the manly version of brats, what do guys eat?" We know that men eat Philly [steak] sandwiches, drink beer and eat chicken wings. That's what we're going for.

SS: Did you put your business plan together while you were at the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Entrepreneurship? **A:** Yes, my degree is in entrepreneurship.

SS: What was your biggest business mistake? What advice would you give to those who are facing a similar situation? **A:** We accumulated overhead too fast—faster than we should have. My advice is to make things as variable as possible and don't lock in for the short term.

SS: Who inspired you to be where you are today? **A:** When I was younger my mom gave me a book about the stock market. I wanted to play basketball but she [told me to read it]. I learned about business, people and real estate. I ended up working for a real estate broker, and he became my mentor; he saw a piece of land, he had a vision and he made it happen. 

« Steven Schussler (steven@schusslercreative.com) is the founder, chairman and CEO of Schussler Creative, Inc., which specializes in creating, designing and developing theatrical attractions, restaurants, retail stores and entertainment venues worldwide. He is also the author of the upcoming book, *It's a Jungle in There - Inspiring Lessons, Hard-Won Insights, and Other Acts of Entrepreneurial Daring*.