



The AMA History Project Presents: History of A MAIN HOBBIES

Since 2004



Written by JS (09/2011); Reformatted by JS (01/2013)

Jay Smith wrote the following, published in the About Us section of Model Aviation magazine, September 2011 issue.

About Us: A Main Hobbies

Business success stories of companies that literally started out of a garage are few and far between these days, but A Main Hobbies is one. Kendall Bennett and his wife Kelly started the company from the garage of their California home in May 2004.

Kendall, who started flying RC airplanes at age 10 and running RC cars at 15, was looking for an incubator project to learn more about e-commerce software since his full-time job was running a software company. He had previously sold parts for Kyosho RC cars on eBay and decided to turn it into a side company.

His new online venture was to be called RC Nation – that is until another company, RC-Nation, popped up on the Web and caused confusion for customers of both companies. Because Kendall's company's focus at that time was solely on RC car parts, the name was changed to A Main Hobbies. The name comes from heats called "mains" in RC car racing. Ultimately the best drivers compete in the A Main with the next best group in the B Main and so on.

Kendall realized early on that having software that used real-time inventory and stocking every available part for the products the company supported were vital to his success.

Less than a year later, in January 2005, it was apparent that the business was viable and a larger space was required to house all of the products A Main Hobbies carried. A 1,000-square-foot store front was available next door to Kendall's software company and it became the new location of A Main Hobbies. Not only was the company expanding in floor space, but it was also time to add employees to help maintain a high level of customer service.

By the end of 2005, A Main Hobbies had taken over most of the software company's space and it was again time to move to a larger space. Tripling in size, a 9,000-square-foot facility became the new home for A Main and the product line was expanded to include helicopters and soon afterward RC aircraft.

Kendall shared with me that he was aware the way the company was growing that even the new facility wouldn't be large enough to satisfy its needs for very long.

In August 2008, after searching multiple locations in the Chico area, a 52,000-square-foot facility that housed offices and a large warehouse would suit their needs. The new location even

provided an area for an indoor RC car track. Initially it was a carpet track that has since been turned into an RC dirt track.

Today A Main Hobbies carries 42,000 products, has a separate full-service hobby shop, and employs 65 people.

The company has won the BizRate Circle of Excellence award for online retailers for four years straight and has been recognized as one of the fastest growing companies in America according to Inc. 5000.

A Main is heavily involved in sponsoring and supporting more than 1000 events each year from local fun-flys to large events such as the International Radio Controlled Helicopter Association (IRCHA) Jamboree.

I am amazed by A Main's success story and shared that with everyone on our conference call including Kendall, Marketing Manager John Taylor, CFO Kevin Kiser, and PR Director Aaron Waldron. It was apparent that everyone on the call was not only familiar with the hobby, but also participants. Between them they had 63.5 years of experience!

The hobby business can be a tough market. More online and brick-and-mortar stores go out of business than make it, so I was curious about what Kendall felt contributed to their success. He shared with me that there was no single focus such as price or customer service.

A Main Hobbies has focused on all aspects and has worked to continuously improve. If they were made aware that they didn't carry a product, it was stocked. The website features real-time inventory so the customer is not left guessing if an order can be filled. Customers are taken care of and supported, building a customer-trust relationship that is important to Kendall and everyone at A Main Hobbies.

I asked Kendall what he was most proud of. "We managed to do this by ourselves," he said. "We have done well because I am an entrepreneur and I approach a problem from a practical perspective. Having zero experience in certain areas has allowed us to develop solutions ourselves and think outside the box."

I was also curious what was in store for the future of A Main Hobbies. I asked Kendall what his goals were going forward. "We have strong growth plans," he replied. "We want to continue to grow the online presence and refine the customer experience while integrating social media. Build a team website and allow people to interact with team members. We need to get our hobby out in front of people who have never experienced it."

John added that it is very important to Kendall to give back to the RC industry by sponsoring team members and events. There are even plans for a 1/8-scale outdoor racetrack at the local fairgrounds for RC off-road car racing.

In closing, I asked the group if there was anything else they wanted to mention and we discussed A Main Hobbies proprietary brand: ProTek R/C. Since its inception in 2007, power supplies,

chargers, and batteries have been extensively tested in-house prior to receiving the ProTek R/C name and the company stands behind them 100%.

My experience has been with the ProTek power supplies that have been powering charging stations at the National Electric Fly-In, trouble free, for the last two years.

After spending nearly two hours on the phone with Kendall, John, Kevin, and Aaron, it was apparent that they are as passionate about the hobby as we are here at *MA* and I look forward to seeing what they can do in the next seven years!

-Jay Smith
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