

Local couples team up with Unishippers

By Jordan Guinn
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Two Lodi couples have had enough of the so-called "Great Recession" and are using their entrepreneurial spirit in an effort to guide themselves and others out of it by helping small and medium-sized businesses find easy, safe and cost-effective ways to ship goods.

Earlier this month, Steve and Christy Doll and Richard and April Bastress teamed up with Unishippers, a national company that specializes in the reselling of shipping services. They provide assistance to businesses in San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties that use freight and express shipping while supplementing their incomes.

"To us, this is the like best of times and the worst of times," said Christy Doll. "We saw an opportunity to start a local business and help the community."

Steve Doll said he and his wife were looking at many options for starting a business and even considering moving out of Lodi before Richard Bastress brought Unishippers to their attention. The couple is happy to stay in Lodi, Steve Doll said, because he has been in medical sales for 35 years and Christy is a missionary with International Church Missions. Both remain active with their respective positions while also attending to their responsibilities with the shipping business.

Unishippers has contracts with freight shippers and UPS. The company serves more than 75,000 small and medium-sized businesses nationwide. Its combined shipping volume enables the company to get discounted rates from its carriers.

Richard Bastress serves as customer support for the local branch of Unishippers and helps coordinate shipping. The savings of time and money get passed onto Unishippers customers, he said.

"If you were to call each of these freight carriers individually, you would get put on hold and it could take 10 minutes just to get one quote," Richard Bastress said. "We can get quotes from multiple shippers in 90 seconds."

The local touch is critical to the new branch's success because finding the best deal on shipping can be time-consuming and a hassle for business owners, he said.

"Our services do not cost extra," Richard Bastress said. "You just pay for shipping."

The most common items they help ship are legal documents and large automotive parts such as transmissions and engines.

The target customer for Unishippers are businesses that ship multiple pallets or dozens of legal documents a month.

Since Unishippers consolidates the shipping process, there is less paperwork and confusion for business owners, Richard Bastress said. "The accounting departments love it," he said.

Although Unishippers, which is headquartered in Salt Lake City, doesn't have a local office, Richard Bastress and administrative assistant Stacy Schmierer are available by phone and e-mail to answer questions and provide assistance. They help coordinate deliveries and enable businesses to coordinate pickups and deliveries with the carriers.

"Even though it's five people here, Unishippers is a big company and we are the local face," Steve Doll said.

About Unishippers

Who: Richard and April Bastress, Steve and Christy Doll.

What: Unishippers, a national company that specializes in express and freight shipping.

How it works: Unishippers contracts with freight carriers and UPS to provide low-cost shipping options. The local couple helps coordinate shipping for companies based in San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties.

More information: richard.bastress@unishippers.com, 209-329-8502 (sales) 209-368-7474 (customer service).