



courtesy Chris Cadigan

CHRIS CADIGAN started his own Unishippers franchise in October. He currently works out of his home office in Oceanside.

O'side man re-invents himself after layoff

Chris Cadigan finds success in new venture

By **ANNMARIE FERTOLI**

Oceanside resident Chris Cadigan had been working in the sales business for more than a decade when he, along with many other Americans, was suddenly laid off from his job in 2009. Like many others who have lost their jobs due to the economic recession, he was faced a daunting task: restarting his career. But with a little bit of luck and foresight – and a lot of persistence – Cadigan has started a new venture, and in just a few months' time he has reinvented himself as an independent businessman.

Cadigan began his sales career at the shipping company Airborne Express, and quickly worked his way up to district sales manager, handling accounts in Long Island, Queens, and Brooklyn. When his company was acquired by DHL in 2003, Cadigan was made a district sales manager in Manhattan, and then, just two years later, he was promoted again, this time to regional sales director.

By 2008, Cadigan said he was managing an account book totaling close to a quarter of a billion dollars. In addition, he was managing a sales team of about 40 people. "Things were great with my world," he said. But unfortunately, his company was losing money. By November 2008, DHL

made the decision to focus exclusively on international deliveries, eliminating its air and ground services within the United States. That meant thousands of layoffs nationwide.

"My worst day ever was when I had to lay off my entire sales team, with the exception of about four people," Cadigan said. "I didn't trust corporate America after that." Cadigan survived that massive round of layoffs and continued working for the company as part of a global accounts group. But by that time, Cadigan said he had already decided he wanted to go into business for himself, and began researching other opportunities.

In January of 2009, Cadigan began talking with Unishippers, a franchise organization he had worked with in the past. Each branch of the company works locally with small businesses to consolidate shipments and negotiate lower shipping costs with major carriers like UPS. Cadigan explained that the major carriers still handle the pickup and delivery of shipments, while each branch of Unishippers provides local customer support for the businesses it works with. It was a business model he liked, and Cadigan began working on a plan to secure the money he needed to open his own franchise.

He spent the next few months applying for small business loans, and facing dozens of rejections. Eventually, after much persistence, he was able to secure several lines of credit, and by the end of the summer, he had the startup capital he needed to open

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his own franchise.

As luck would have it, Cadigan received the incorporation certificate to open his franchise on Sept. 12 – just three days before he was let go by DHL. By Sept. 18, he was working from his home office, making calls to find new customers. While he had a large rolodex of contacts, he knew he had to hit the ground running to build a new, local customer base.

He began by making calls, visiting local businesses door-to-door, and talking to as many people as possible. He said he had the desire to be out on his own, and was determined to make it work. Throughout, he was encouraged and motivated by his wife, Angela, and his young daughter, Chloe, 2. Cadigan used the skills he had strengthened over the years, and was aided by a little bit of luck. He admits that the shipping business is somewhat recession proof, since every business needs to ship. "This is a relationship business," he said, adding that all he needed was the drive to go out and talk to people everyday.

Now, just five months later, Cadigan has about 35 clients, including local businesses

like MAC Specialties in Oceanside and Sextet Fabrics in East Rockaway, as well as larger companies, like Steve Madden and MODO Eyewear in Manhattan. Gordon Stern, who owns Sextet Fabrics, said Cadigan has helped save his business money on shipping costs. He said the company also provides good customer service, and that Cadigan is prompt and dedicated to his work. "If I have a problem, he'll take care of it," Stern said. Sanjeev Sahni, senior vice president of logistics with Steve Madden, said Cadigan provides one-stop-shopping through Unishippers, and saves his compa-

ny from having to negotiate with many different carriers. "He's helped in streamlining domestic transportation for us," Sahni said, adding that Cadigan's bargaining power helps save the company on freight shipments including shoes and other deliveries to its branches.

Cadigan's Unishippers franchise is currently the company's only branch on Long Island, and so far, business is good. Cadigan's still working out of his home office, but hopes to expand to a new location in Rockville Center and hire two salespeople in the near future. He advises anyone look-

ing to strike out on their own business ventures to do their research and talk to as many people as possible, from financial experts to small business owners. As a salesman, Cadigan knows that the first product you have to sell is yourself. "You hear no a lot," he explained. "Just don't get discouraged. Use that drive and desire to be out on your own. Don't let fear paralyze you from doing what you want to do."

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