

Childhood idea anchors successful business

BY MELISSA GUNDEL
STAFF WRITER

An idea that Hugh Brydges had as a child seems to have anchored a successful business.



Hugh B. Brydges

Brydges, 42 and the son of attorney Richard Brydges, used to make trips during the night through dark, stormy woods to secure his father's boat and his own

small runabout. Wanting to quicken the mooring process, the younger Brydges devised a system with weights and pulleys. While recovering from cancer five years ago, he wondered if his idea had been patented. Surprisingly, it had not.

How does the Sea Safe Mooring System work?

It works on a counterbalance physics principle. The counterweights are made of heavy duty rotational molded PVC filled with sand. The counterweight attaches to different nylon lines that go through the pulley and attach to the boat with either a bronze or a stainless steel snap. It snaps onto the cleats so you don't have to do any tying.

How does this help the boat owner?

It keeps the boat in the middle of the slip and can be used on any watercraft. For owners who keep their boats in the water, they don't have to worry about their boat getting banged up on its pilings or other boat traffic pushing the boat around in the slip. The weight system will stay consistent with the wave or tide action, and it puts less strain on your dock and boat hardware than traditional mooring lines.

The Virginian-Pilot

SERVING HAMPTON ROADS SINCE 1865

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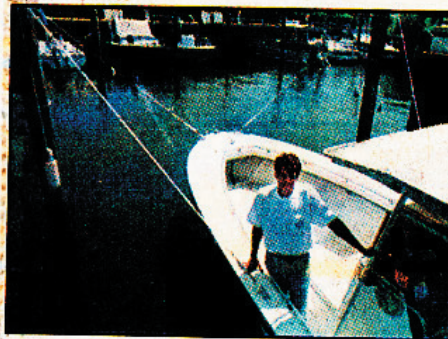
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SMALL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

What problems did you encounter when you started this?

My biggest problem was finding good stainless steel hardware that could hold up to the salt. I ended up having to make my own pulleys in Taiwan. Also, once the business started to take off, I was just not capitalized. I'd buy a



DAVID B. HOLLINGSWORTH/The Virginian-Pilot

Brydges's mooring system keeps boats in the middle of their slips.

hundred, sell a hundred. It puts the fires out and it keeps you moving ahead, but I'm still trying to fill orders.

What steps did you take to get the business going?

I got things rolling with Boston Whaler (a major boat manufacturer). I had to do it the old-fashioned way, which is show up as a humble guy with the hat in my hand saying I have nothing, I know nothing but you're the big guys, could you teach me something. Their marketing director told me what I needed to do — get in the shows, start winning awards, get editors to start writing about you. After following their plan, I've landed in West Marine and Overton's catalog companies. I'm able to advertise and just took the product worldwide about five months ago through international marina magazines.

Did you seek out any general business advice?

A lot of my business advice comes from the business school

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at Regent University. They've got some fantastic guys over there like the former president of Cadbury Chocolates and the former president of Exxon. These people are real good strategists and showed me how to phase this thing. I've learned how to protect myself, how to move my business forward, how to continue building value.

What advice do you have?

Patience, persistence and perseverance. If you're scared of death of rejection up front, you're not going to make it. Surround yourself with qualified people.

We're looking for small businesses to share their experiences: problems they've faced, successes they've achieved. Please fax your suggestions to Melissa Gundel at 446-2531.