

By Matt Ottinger



Sailrite

NAVIGATING SEAS OF A UNIQUE MARKETPLACE

"In our industry, word of mouth is huge and sailors are very transient. We have a lot of customers who are sailing around the world. It's not uncommon that we'll get photos from customers who are sewing their projects on the docks or their boats, and someone will ask them, 'Where did you get that?' And the conversation begins."

– Hallie Grant, President
www.sailrite.com

Sailrite not only provides sewing machines, tools, fabrics and more, but the company also creates instructional YouTube videos to educate its customers.

From the dock

- Second generation company, founded by amateur sailors Jim and Connie Grant in 1969
- Full-stock online retailer of fabrics, tools, kits and videos
- Operates warehouse and fulfillment hub in Columbia City
- Flagship product: Sailrite Ultrafeed Sewing Machines
- Employs 40 to 45 people in season

Rippling wave

- Jim Grant was an accomplished amateur sailor
- Succeeded by building his own sails
- Wrote books on sailing. *The Sailmaker's Library* still sold by Sailrite today

"Ultimately, we ended up building a catalog company that caters to do-it-yourself sewers in the marine industry," explains Matt Grant, vice president and Jim and Connie's son. "(My wife) Hallie and I have taken that vision and moved it from just sailors to all types of marine projects and also outdoor living spaces and home DIY upholstery projects."

Instructional resource

"The guiding force to all of that has been video," Matt says. "We don't think of ourselves as just a retailer; we think of ourselves as educators. If you go to our YouTube channel, you'll see we have thousands of videos. We've developed a loyal following because we give out all kinds of free content you just can't find anywhere else."

Casting the net

The company employs two full-time web developers. "You have to keep a top notch web site running all of the time and keep your customer base happy," Matt notes. "... It's a brave new world, and it's a scary concept. We don't exist unless we're out there online."

Off the bow

- Sailrite experiences annual revenue growth between 8% and 15%
- With Matt and Hallie's son heading up its wholesale division and other family members involved, Sailrite is expected to remain the Grant family business

