

Case Study

Battleground Orlando

(Orlando Paintball)



As presented by



Introduction

One of the longest running paintball businesses in the world today can be found in Orlando, Florida, which lends itself to their name. Orlando Paintball was started in 1991 as Paintball City, during the early days of the paintball industry. The name change came in 1993.

They grew over the next 20 years and added laser tag in late 2011 to address several issues. They nearly doubled their laser tag fleet in 2012, and then expanded again in 2013 with iCOMBAT's newer tactical line of equipment as a premium product.

The new laser tag side of the business became Battleground Orlando, which is one of the most popular iCOMBAT laser tag operations in business today. They continue to grow and expand, and as owner Spiros Kodounis put it, "adding laser tag was one of the smartest things I have ever done for my business."

"What's funny," Spiros explained, "was that my competition first gave me the idea to do laser tag. And now I am much, much bigger than they are." The other guys were losing ground, so they started advertising their laser tag services on Orlando Paintball's sign posts and buildings, and eventually Spiros had an idea.

Challenges

After experiencing nearly 2 decades of growth, Spiros decided it was time for a change after realizing they had a number of problems that were preventing further growth. Plus, 2008 had not been friendly to the paintball industry.

1. Orlando Paintball had trouble reaching younger players who were not old enough for paintball. Plus, the general public tended to shy away from the sport. It consisted of 90% male players, as women and kids chose other, less painful entertainment options.
2. Local competition from entertainment venues and paintball parks took customers away. Orlando is one of the entertainment capitals of the world, "so a business that refused to diversify and offer something different could never survive," noted Spiros. Competition was plentiful.
3. The paintball business was saturated. They were getting near the maximum amount of paintball players they could from their market. The playing fields were not being used to full capacity, which meant revenue was being lost.

Like a smart business owner, Spiros spent some time exploring the entertainment industry to try and find ways to diversify his business. They tried airsoft for a while, but it was too dangerous and did not bring in a big enough crowd.

It was finally decided that laser tag was the way to go.

Solutions

So what did Orlando Paintball do about their problems?

1. They added iCOMBAT laser tag systems after extensive testing. This new attraction would bring in the younger players and the general public. A Groupon campaign was set up to spread the word about laser tag initially. After getting a solid base of players from that, they stopped running Groupon and word-of-mouth took over.
2. A good website promoting the laser tag was set up, and it was separate from the paintball business. They wanted to set up a new brand for the laser tag option, coining it Battleground Orlando. This would help differentiate laser tag from the paintball side of things and allow easier marketing going forward.
3. In order to maximize their current space, they found an activity that fit right in. Laser tag could be played on the existing fields, while current games only had to be slightly modified for this new audience.

After discovering laser tag, the solution was obvious according to Spiros. "Owning a business is a continuous process of improvement. Sometimes the answer is right in front of you and you only notice it after certain things fall in place. Sometimes you just have to stop and think."

"Before I bought any laser tag system, I went to other laser tag facilities in the area to play the game and learn what I could," said Spiros. "I then tried all of the other outdoor laser tag systems available."

"We did a very comprehensive analysis of each set of equipment I had and listed the features that were available. I then ranked the features that were most important to me. The equipment that scored the highest was from iCOMBAT. It was by far better than any other system we tested. Nothing else was even close."

Battleground Orlando settled on a few key advantages that iCOMBAT offered over other laser tag systems available:

- iCOMBAT's durability was far superior
- Paintball fields cannot afford some of the other systems, iCOMBAT was inexpensive
- At the time, iCOMBAT was the only gun with RF and gun-to-gun communication. Other systems still don't have this fully developed. "Being able to see who shot who, see live feedback is enormously important for the players."
- The LCD screen on the guns showed a player their stats, score, and live feedback

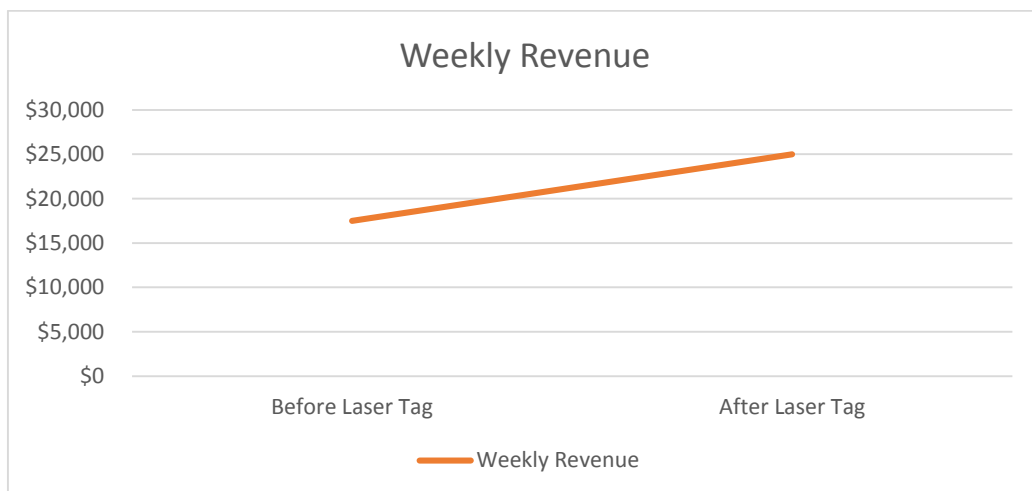
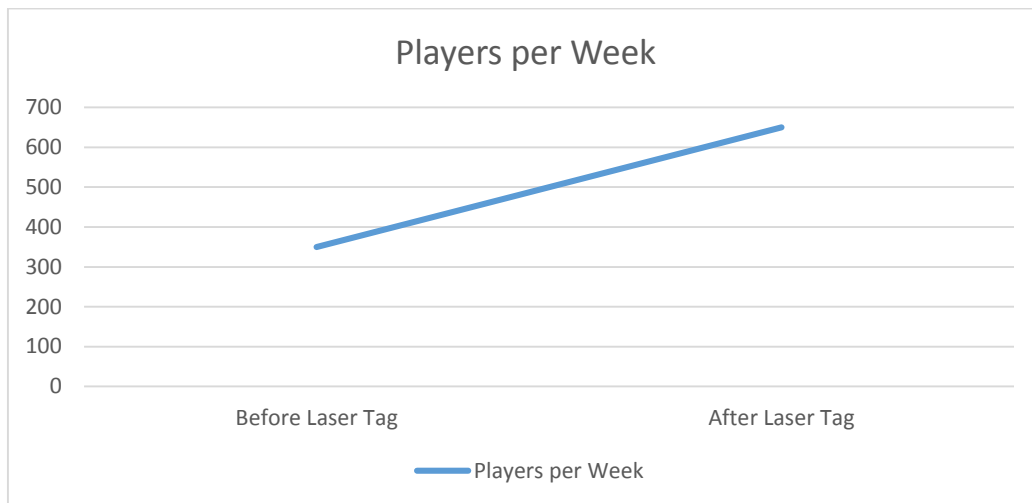
Results

After using iCOMBAT laser tag systems for only a short period of time, Battleground recognized their favorite features of the system (Barracuda in particular).

- On-gun scoring was huge, players loved seeing their stats
- Immense amount of game parameters can be set up, which make the customer feel like they are playing a video game in real life
- Laser tag is challenging, and is different than paintball with the game rules and variety
- Incredible durability of the guns in the humid climate with heat and rain
- “Having a person remotely control the whole game from a PC is incredible. And if the PC fails somehow, there is a backup option on the guns themselves. That’s huge.”

Orlando Paintball/Battleground Orlando **grew their business by nearly 100%** with the introduction of laser tag. The paintball business was averaging around 300-350 players a week, and laser tag brought in another 300 per week. They charge just \$25 for a 2 hour block of missions. To this day they still turn away customers because they are maxed on equipment.

They started with 30 Barracudas in 2011, added 20 more in 2012, and added 14 tactical systems in 2013 as a premium product. They have plans to buy more Barracudas in the near future.



Revenue based on 'players X average ticket price' (\$50 – paintball, \$25 – laser tag), does not account for additional paint sales, concessions, merchandise, or group rates

So what specifically can iCOMBAT laser tag do to benefit other similar businesses? Spiros was quick to list a variety of tips and things that are important to the paintball field business owner.

- “iCOMBAT is a great supplier. They are easy to contact and gear available on demand. Plus, they have a good warranty and the systems are very durable.”
- The inexpensive price of the guns allows businesses to start with a minimal investment. They can add more guns or upgrade to headbands and props when they are ready.
- The RF technology and live game feedback on the guns and computer make things easy for players and staff. This fosters competition and generates repeat business.
- iCOMBAT is always evolving. New features and software updates are constantly coming out. Players always get something new. “iCOMBAT feels like a major tech company like Apple. You don’t get that with some of the competitors,” proclaimed Spiros.
- There is crossover between paintball and laser tag players. This helps boost both sides of the business. Laser tag players often grow into paintball.
- The playing areas are always full, which generates excitement for people playing or passing by. “This also increases staff morale because downtime is non-existent.”

Spiros wanted to point out that you can’t just buy laser tag and run with it. “Setting up the game rules for maximum enjoyment by players is important. It has to be just challenging enough so everyone can have fun. Laser tag requires a smarter player and more strategy than paintball, but that’s what makes it fun.”

Recommendation

Battleground Orlando continues to be successful and highly recommends iCOMBAT laser tag systems to others.

“It has the best value out there of any laser tag system by far. Value means quality, features, price, service, durability, expandability, and programmability. You can’t find better equipment out there, period,” explained Spiros.

“The system gives so much value to the customer that it didn’t make sense to invest in more expensive systems. We have so many satisfied customers that it isn’t hard to think about what to do next. The low price made it so that anyone can play. It makes a lot of sense.”





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Please note:

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