

Case Study

Laser Tag of Miami



As presented by



Introduction

Laser Tag of Miami is one of the most successful mobile laser tag businesses in the United States today. Andrew Rodriguez started the business in 2011 when he noticed a big hole in children's entertainment options.

"The Miami area had a lot of party and fun options for kids younger than 6," explains Andrew. "And then there was a gap until you got to the adults. They have local bars among other things."

He set out to reach that 6-12 year old market specifically, with teenagers being a secondary market. The first step was researching and finding something that kids in that age range would enjoy. Andrew's parents attended an entertainment tradeshow to look for ideas. They came back with the concept of mobile laser tag.

Andrew pointed out that he was initially against mobile laser tag, but after doing some research he decided to give it a try. He would never look back.

The business launched in August of 2011 with nothing but 14 Barracuda laser tag guns and some inflatable bunkers. Andrew originally managed the parties by himself and maybe a companion, which often ended up being one of his parents.



Challenges

Andrew and Laser Tag of Miami tackled three main problems when they started out:

1. Miami did not have a lot of party options for kids.
2. Miami is a very large, so having a single laser tag location was out of reach for many.
3. Outdoor entertainment options in Miami suffer from a seasonal set back because summers are very hot and humid.

There was a similar outdoor laser tag business located outside of the city, but their gear was bulky and impractical for kids use. There was also the old-school indoor neon laser tag even farther away. So when Andrew was deciding on laser tag equipment, he wanted something that was more modern and suitable for his target market. At the entertainment tradeshow in 2011, iCOMBAT guns caught their attention. They started with these systems right off the bat after some rigorous durability testing.

Solutions

So what did Laser Tag of Miami do to address these problems? How would they become successful? Their solution for each problem was:

1. Started a business specifically catering to the entertainment needs of 6-12 year olds (and their parents). They pursued laser tag as a niche between bounce houses and bars. It was a unique option and the equipment they found was technologically superior to what they saw elsewhere.
2. They went with a mobile business model that would allow them to serve the entire Miami metro area. No customer would be left out. They had to have something easy to set up and operate and be easily explained to customers, which the Barracuda provided.
3. The summer heat was quite the challenge. Laser Tag of Miami decided to pursue a current customer, schools, for their end-of-year and summer programs. More people than usual attended these events. They also worked with local churches to put on indoor laser tag events. Lastly, setting up partnerships with area party planners was essential in spreading the word about this exciting new birthday option.

The things that led Andrew and his business to iCOMBAT laser tag guns as a means to help solve the aforementioned challenges were:

- Their extreme durability. The Barracuda test samples they got stood up to a very rigorous abuse test in a variety of weather conditions. They continued to operate as normal.
- The ability to run simple or complex games, with or without a computer. The guns were more than capable by themselves. The built-in redundancy was a major selling point. Even if the computer failed, there would be no need to cancel the event.
- Extreme flexibility in running games in any environment with any type of player. The ability to customize games to each player or parent's taste become a major selling point.

You might think other laser tag suppliers offer the same benefits, so Andrew elaborated on why he specifically did not choose a competitor's products for his operation.

“I saw some of the other stuff out there, and I knew it wouldn’t work for what I wanted to do,” mentioned Andrew. “The other gear was bulky, had wired headbands, it was all too expensive, and when I looked into repair costs, I found it to be very expensive.”

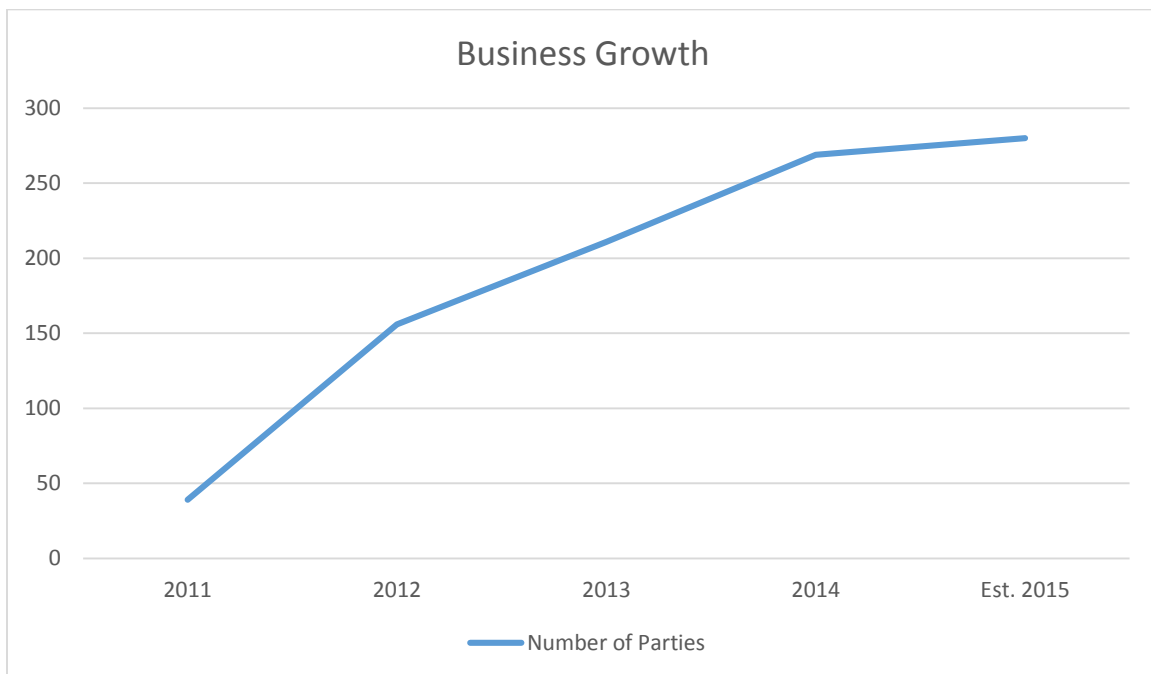
Results

After using the iCOMBAT Barracuda for a number of years, Andrew can easily point out his favorite things about the system:

- The complete individual player and team scoring
- Guns are lightweight and easy to use with 6-12 year olds
- No required bulky wired headbands that get drenched in sweat or need repair
- “By far the best thing about iCOMBAT is the software platform, because it’s very easy to come up with awesome and fun games. Plus, if guns lose their connection or shut down, they can easily jump back into the games.”

Laser Tag of Miami suggests that similar businesses could benefit from the simplicity and durability of the Barracuda. “You’ll save money in many areas from gear, to staff, to resolving problems,” stated Andrew.

Saying the company experienced growth since 2011 would be an understatement. The company has grown 25% year after year and all business debts were paid off in under a year. Andrew has since doubled the size of his business in terms of equipment and crew, bought multiple company vehicles, and manages multiple events at once throughout the metro area.



Laser Tag of Miami had to turn down about 25 parties in 2011 (Aug – Dec) after they opened because they did not have the supplies or manpower to meet demand. The company has also increased prices since 2012 to help sustain the company, and did not notice any decrease in business.

Andrew is also a fan of donating parties to school carnivals and charity events. This has led to a great number of additional groups booking events after trying laser tag out during a donated party. The goodwill has helped solidify relationships with parents, schools, and the community.

Recommendation

What is the single biggest reason why Andrew and his company would recommend iCOMBAT to others?

“You’ll get lots of customer support and easy service. The repair times are quick, questions get answered right away, and I’ve never waited more than 24 hours for a response. One great example was a 4-day turn around for damaged guns. I had some guns go down and had another party in 4 days. iCOMBAT was able to get the guns, fix them, and return them to me in working order in time for the party.”



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Please note:

iCOMBAT case studies are an objective look at successful operators, as told in their own words. All case studies are submitted for review by the operator prior to being published.