

Sunstream Corp. has experienced dot-com style growth

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The Sunstream story began in 1996 after Ken and Deborah Hey moved to Lake Washington and wanted to use their boat. The couple became increasingly frustrated, however, attempting to get their boat in and out of the water facing their property.

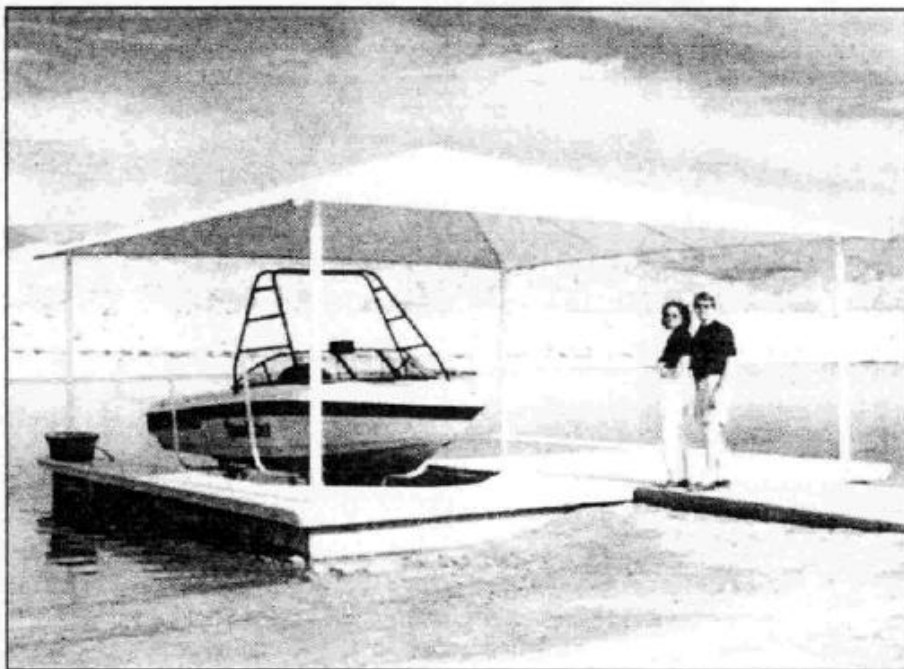
Ken Hey decided to apply aerospace technology to the low-tech boat market for his own use. Using remote control, high-speed hydraulics and solar power — along with his knowledge of engineering — the Sun Lift was created for what the couple thought would be for their own private use.

But after several of their neighbors saw how easily the Sun Lift worked, they asked Ken Hey to build each of them a lift. The product was so successful that the Heys decided to take their invention to the Seattle Boat Show in the fall of 1997. Their intention, Ken Hey said, was to sell at least five units.

They named their company Sunstream Corp. and etched out a business plan on the back of a piece of junk mail, which called for building one unit per month to be delivered that coming spring. That business plan, however, quickly changed when Sunstream collected orders at the boat show for more than 50 units.

When Sunstream was founded, the idea for the next great gee-whiz boat product for waterfront home owners was the main focus. Since 1997, Sunstream has grown from a home-based business to a leader in the industry by offering breakthrough design in boat lifts and other waterfront homeowner equipment, Ken Hey said.

Since its inception, the company has ex-



SUNSTREAM PHOTO

Ken and Deborah Hey etched out the business plan for their company, Sunstream Corp., on the back of a piece of junk mail.

perienced a dot-com style of growth, he said. During the company's first year, it focused on the local market, with the majority of installations coming on Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish. The first dealer expansion push came in 1998, with the Midwest and the West Coast as primary expansion targets.

Sunstream added more than 40 dealers to its company list last year. This year has proved to be a breakthrough year for the

company, Ken Hey said. Sunstream attended more than 50 boat shows, started a national advertising campaign and had penetrated markets in the South and Southwest.

The Heys designed their company business model to be as innovative as their products by combining the best features of bricks and mortar with those of a virtual corporation. As a result, the company now has 12 full-time (including Ken Hey's par-

ents) and four part-time employees. Sunstream has been able to double in size each year without outside investments. Annual revenues have also increased steadily each year.

It is Sunstream's successful start and business savvy that helped the company earn one of two 2000 Family Business Awards in the small business category.

To meet the growing demand for Sunstream products, the Heys knew they needed to get a little creative — if they wanted to stay successful.

Enter the Department of Correction's prison labor program. It allowed Sunstream to focus on product development and national expansion while providing a sensible solution for handling fabrication in a quality manner. The program also benefits the Pacific Northwest community by reducing prison costs, and provides inmates with valuable skills while helping them build a solid work ethic, Ken Hey said.

Sunstream has also provided a positive work environment for its employees, which includes an organizational chart that shows customers at the top and the presidents at the bottom, detailing Sunstream's customer-centric culture; a progressive company culture that empowers each employee to perform their job fully and with little supervision; and innovative incentive programs that provide profit sharing for employees.

The Heys said what makes their company successful is the way they positively influence their customers, employees and suppliers that they meet and interact with each day.

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