

A REAL PLUS!

Redemption Supplier Offers Customized Goods to Operators

Nine years ago, Ron Hill set out to transform the redemption prize business. He created a plan, based on his experience, that not only challenged and improved prize quality but enhanced the ways that manufacturers and location owners satisfy one another's interests while keeping the patron happy, too. The result is Redemption Plus, a savvy and popular leader in redemption supply for the educational learning, fundraising, and family amusement industries.

"We set out to change the face quality of redemption prizes," said Hill. "A lot of our competitors are doing the same now."

Redemption Plus' prizes come from a variety of categories, including crane/merchandise kits, balls, books, candy, vehicles, electronics/lights, games/crafts, accessories for girls, novelty items, and plush/beanbag items, among others. Each category offers an impressive selection of contemporary trends specific to consumer interests, from the last four Harry Potter books to some of the newest two-way radio models. These prizes aren't just for kids either. CD laser lens cleaners, DVD players, and even a programmable coffee maker are available for young adult and adult preferences.

"The flow of work really begins with the purchasing department," Hill said,



Boyd Shearon, Ann MacAdam and Justin Michaels proudly serve as entertainment division **account representatives** at Redemption Plus.

acknowledging the team who keeps a finger on the pulse of the toy industry. By tracking up-and-coming items and monitoring customer feedback, Redemption Plus is able to quickly acquire hot products, such as those affiliated with film and television, so that operators can obtain them at lower prices and then redeem them at higher values.

The team weighs quality, diversity, seasonal changes, and profitability to determine which must-have items are the real deal and ideally suited for redemption. The company's proven track record at accomplishing this goal, while also

maintaining a supply of staple favorites, allows the purchasing team to consistently acquire popular items and to keep expanding their inventory.

The Redemption Plus website showcases the entire prize line by category with product information, images, and ordering information, ensuring that businesses are able to research, purchase, and receive these game incentives through convenient, cost-efficient means.

Moreover, operators are able to customize items to their specific arcade or family amusement center — an option that constitutes one of Redemption Plus'



Left: Anthony Bruce organizes and shelves inventory.

most unique and singular attributes. Through customization the company adds value to many of the items that come through their facility.

“We’re different in that we focus on making our customers more efficient,” explained Hill regarding the dual ability to supply customers with specialized advertising as well as prizes. “We have the only customizable website. In-house, we call it ‘smile’ after our slogan, ‘Growing your business one smile at the time.’ It’s the third version of our website, and it allows customers to come in and shop, whether they operate with ticket, token, or point systems, or whatever formula they may use. A business can get a token, for example, labeled with its name.”

One of the most fascinating custom features actually targets players. Redemption Plus has set in motion an opportunity for operators to use an offshoot service called PlanetPrize.com, which has made player prize redemption a virtual reality.

“We noticed a trend of people wanting gift certificates,” Hill elaborates, “so we created this site so that we have a selection of items that can be directly shipped to customers. They can buy the PlanetPrize cards, and they can redeem them for tickets.”

So if a location’s prizes do not particularly inspire customer redemption or if the desired prize is not available, the



Fred Blevins (left) and Benny Simmons pack request orders for prizes.



Once assembled and packed, a customer’s order is palletized for truck shipment.

Redemption Plus

player can go online and secure a preferred prize by redeeming the specified number of PlanetPrize cards. Keeping the business owner's name and interests in mind, Redemption Plus can also customize the look of the web page so it appears that a user is accessing a particular amusement center's site. This ability to streamline the manufacturer/customer relationship, while preserving and improving upon the business name and operation of an amusement center, is the gem of Redemption Plus' offerings.

For traditionalists and those wanting a quick and handy reference, the Redemption Plus catalog is also published in Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter editions, showcasing many name brand, high value, and low ticket items.

Redemption Plus has gone a step further in providing specialized customer solutions by developing strong partnerships with other industry suppliers. Networking with partners has allowed the company to more fully accommodate customer needs and requests whether or not they have the desired item or service. Brady Distributing, Ideal Software, and Trainertainment are some of the partners who share Redemption Plus' dedication to developing customer solutions for their operators. The company has also partnered with the International Association for the Leisure and Entertainment Industry by hosting the association's workshops throughout the year.

Hill's formula for providing profit-increasing solutions to businesses has certainly paid off. Today, the supplier services between 1,500 and 2,000 companies with 60% of sales going toward the amusement industry and growing.

Located in Lenexa, Kan., a suburb of Kansas City, Redemption Plus' home base in the heartland comprises 26 employees, a 32,000 square foot facility, and an alternate facility for bulk service. From this central location, the company caters to the North American marketplace and to a number of customers in the Caribbean, especially in Puerto Rico.

"Customers and business tends to consolidate on the coasts, but our most significant growth is currently in the southeast," said Hill, who has recently sent his sales team into South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

Hill also has an interesting vantage point to watch the development of coin-op amusement. "The role of the family



Staff members gather with a selection of prizes in front of Redemption Plus' headquarters.

amusement center has come away from the arcade. The majority of our clients are not typically urban. I think most of the industry growth is in city suburbs. A lot of the more traditional arcades have shut down like the arcade near where I grew up. Here in Kansas City, there's a lot of renovation downtown, so hopefully some will be brought back."

Redemption Plus will also undergo significant changes in the near future. The company is actively seeking a site for their new headquarters with 60,000 to 100,000 square feet, and plans to relocate within the next year.

As one would expect, working at a major toy distributor is a lot of fun despite the stress that creeps in. The company is characterized by a family at-

mosphere in which employees' children are often seen around the office, including Hill's two sons, a 4-year-old and a 2-year-old.

"We try hard to do a lot of fun things for our employees to make it a home-like environment," Hill said. "There are lots of regular outings."

Redemption Plus has been voted "Best Customer Service" for 2001 and 2004 by IALEI and has been named the 47th fastest growing company in Kansas City.

For more information about Redemption Plus' many offerings, call 888/564-7587, email info@redemption-plus.com, or go to www.redemption-plus.com and www.planetprize.com.