



Small Business
Development Centers
Los Angeles Regional Network

Success Story

SBDC Helps Turn Imaginative Idea into Pet Products Company



Small Business Development Center hosted by College of the Canyons
Cat Livin • Valencia, CA

When Jeremy and Angela Moser got their first cat, the then-newlyweds hated the typical, shag-carpeting cat trees available. Befitting their backgrounds in retail and department store design, they made their own sleek, hip version to fit their sleek, hip loft.

Thus was born the idea for Cat Livin (www.catlivin.com), a Valencia start up that, with help from the Small Business Development Center hosted by College of the Canyons, has gained national and European visibility in the pet world.

"We've seen incredible interest from Europe," says founder Jeremy Moser. "Europeans are very design savvy and like what we're doing. So, we're at a point right now where we're looking into how we can manufacture in Europe."

Moser realized when he made his cat tree in 1998—a portable unit that hangs on doors—that it had business potential. But he didn't actively pursue it until 2006 when he attended a pet trade show in Las Vegas and spoke to manufacturers there about his idea. Wisconsin-based GHL Industries, with its line called SmartCat, agreed to manufacture a SmartCat version, plus produce Moser's own design under the Cat Livin brand.

Moser will receive royalties from sales of GHL's version, launching in PETCO stores nationwide in June. But he also must run his own smaller, boutique brand, Cat Livin, which features highly-designed pet products like the cat tree, sleeping blankets, cat grass containers, feeding placemats and a toy rat. For that reason, he contacted SBDC consultant Gil Murphy for help on a business plan and worked with SBDC consultant Tora Brown on public relations outreach.

"Gil coached me every week and would tell me what to rework," Moser said. "Financials were definitely my weak point and that's where he was a big help, this, plus helping me structure the whole company. That's because I'm doing wholesale and Internet retail. I'm going to have distributors and royalty income feeding back into the company."

Using friends and family financing, Moser launched Cat Livin in January. The website immediately caught the attention of a website writer at Modern Cat and thousands logged on to CatLivin.com. Blogs in Sweden and Japan picked up the news and Moser was interviewed for three days while at a pet expo in San Diego. Articles on the company are due out in the Tree Hugger website, Pet Product News, and Tails.

"Jeremy has an excellent business plan. He has a really good design background and graphic arts people behind him," Murphy said. "His name's all over the world now. He's got blogs and instant recognition."

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Cat Livin**

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