

## Young Company Focus

# SimplyFun: They've Got Game

What do you get when you combine the \$2 billion game and puzzle market with the power of the Party Plan? If you're SimplyFun Co-Founder and CEO Gail DeGiulio you get a game plan for success.

After spending more than 20 years in management, marketing and business development for high-tech companies like Microsoft and Toshiba, DeGiulio landed at Wizard's of the Coast, a game

In 2003, the trio decided to determine if they could market games through home parties, but first they needed products. "There are hundreds and hundreds of game designers," said DeGiulio. "We went to the ones we knew and told them we're looking for games that would have the most appeal to the broadest audience. We wanted games that were simple to learn and fun to play and that were intellectually stimulating as well."

The next steps were to sign licensing agreements with the game designers, develop company branding and create materials for sales consultants. The trio also solicited feedback from others in the industry. "Creative Memories hosted us for two days at their facility and we formed partnerships with other direct selling companies that don't compete with our products," said DeGiulio, "I found that any executive who I met in the industry is more than willing to help, more than willing to talk, more than willing to share resources and best practices, with no hidden objectives."

Appreciative of the help she has received from industry veterans, DeGiulio encourages others to mentor those new to direct selling. "The Party Plan business will only be stronger if we continue to support each other. If every person who is a direct seller purchased from someone else in the industry, think how strong that would be," she said.

SimplyFun is a pending member of the Direct Selling Association and has taken advantage of several of the educational opportunities offered by the association. "We wanted to do it the right way from the very beginning," said DeGiulio. "We wanted to make sure that we are complying with the Code of Ethics and that we're doing what we need to do. We will continue to use the DSA to educate people who are new to the company and are trying to increase their skill set."

SimplyFun officially began recruiting sales consultants in late 2004 and launched with just five products. Training consultants was a



Left to right, SimplyFun Co-Founders Jeremy Young, Gail DeGiulio and Matt Molen.

developer in Washington state. "I just had a wonderful time and really developed a passion and love for the idea of sitting down and playing games with family and friends," DeGiulio said. "I think of it as intellectual sport."

Some years later, DeGiulio was invited to a scrapbooking party. She had a terrific time and began to think about home parties as a way to sell games. "As I was driving home, I thought, 'That's how you learn to play games,'" she said. "You go to someone's home, and they teach you how to play, or someone says they've played this new game and it was so much fun."

Around the same time, she met Jeremy Young and Matt Molen, who had started a company which translated European games into English. "I told them about this crazy idea I had and they didn't think it was so crazy," said DeGiulio.

Before they dove into direct selling, DeGiulio and SimplyFun Co-Founders Young and Molen

enlisted the help of industry veteran and consultant Alan Luce to help them research market conditions, identify their target customer and determine the types of products they wanted to make. Once they had the game prototypes, the SimplyFun founders started holding parties. "We found that people had an absolutely wonderful time and they wanted to know when the game was available," said DeGiulio. "At that point, we realized this was going to work."

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priority and a vice president of sales and two full-time regional managers were brought on board in early 2005 with more than 60 years direct selling industry experience between them.

"The consultants love having the parties. Where else can you go and spend \$150 and be in business for yourself?" asked DeGiulio. "With SimplyFun you get total back office, we give you a Web site for free, you get all the products that you need and



you get all the materials that you need to start your business. I think it's a really great career for anyone."

In May, SimplyFun tripled its product line and plans to introduce more new products at its first national convention this month. Just months after its launch, SimplyFun consultants number in the hundreds and are represented in 32 states. In the fall, the company will begin an aggressive public relations and advertising campaign to the consumer market.

"Our vision for the future is that we have taken games and made them into a recurring habit. Our mission here at SimplyFun is to promote the importance of play and create lifelong memories to enhance the quality of our consultants', customers' and employees' lives," said DeGiulio. "Playing games for a living, how fun is that?"