



UCG Alumni Success Stories

One of the greatest benefits of LinkedIn and other social media platforms is that it gives us the opportunity to stay in touch and follow the success of individuals who began their careers at United Computer Group: our interns and alumni. These individuals joined UCG full of potential and energy. It wasn't long before they became strong contributors bringing fresh ideas and building client relationships, all the while learning business strategies that would eventually support their growth into successful careers.

This is the second in a series of interviews, UCG Alumni Success Stories, conducted by our marketing consultant, Francine Ciaccia, of MoMo Companies Ltd. We are pleased and honored to introduce former UCG Intern, Keith King. Keith, thank you for being a part of UCG's success!

Keith King **Chief Operating Officer at Scratch Off Systems** scratchoff.com



Keith King, COO
Scratch Off Systems

Keith King is Chief Operating Officer of Scratch Off Systems, a successful printing and label manufacturing company based in Brecksville, Ohio. Scratch Off specializes in label manufacturing; scratch and win promotions; gift card printing; and promotional printing. Scratch Off Systems manufactures all of their products in-house.

Keith was the second employee when he started in 2001. Today he is responsible for sales, marketing, human resources, estimating, operations management, and the overall supervision of their 45 employees.

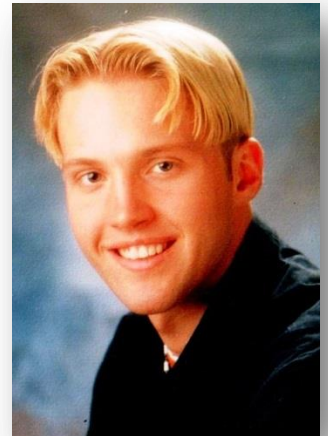
“I have grown this company by always ensuring that our value exceeds our price. I train my employees not to sell products, but rather to be a consultant and a problem solver.” – Keith King

Keith, in 2000 you were a freshman at David N. Myers University in Cleveland, Ohio majoring in Marketing. When and how did you meet Jim Kandrac, and how did it come to be that he offered you an internship at UCG?

At the end of my senior year of high school I was the student council president at CVCC and they informed me about the internship at UCG. I wasn't really looking for an internship as an office assistant, but after meeting Jim Kandrac, I was interested in learning more about him and his company. Jim was very enthusiastic and seemed to know the secret to being happy and successful.

You were at the right place at the right time, and trusted your instincts; good for you! Please tell me about some of the responsibilities and tasks you were involved with during your year at UCG.

Thank you; that is true! Jim and UCG's VP Mike Powell noticed my interest in sales and marketing and allowed me concentrate more of my time in that area than with the general office assistant duties. This allowed me to use my creativity to compose email invitations to seminars and demonstrations. I also took great pride in my ability to cold call prospects to develop leads for Mike and the rest of the sales team.



Keith King, 2000

Jim and Mike clearly recognized your potential. In addition to growing your sales and marketing aptitude, what did you learn about the world of technology while at UCG?

Mike taught me the value of CRM software and how it can organize a company, allowing for simplistic production and communication throughout the organization. What was really interesting to me at the time was that end user companies who purchased VAI's S2K ERP Solution via UCG could have their customers check live inventory, pricing specials, and even configure complex product purchases. Today this is called "web self-service", saving their clients time, money, cost, and overall increasing efficiencies and responsiveness to client needs. Mike was a wealth of knowledge when it came to technology.

What did you enjoy most and what did you find most challenging during your year at UCG?

I loved learning how to sell from Jim and Mike. They taught me how to sell with confidence and how to get responses from my voicemails and emails. As a training initiative, just prior to a new marketing campaign Jim would have me leave him voicemails until I *finally* left a voicemail that would interest him enough to call me back. I was 18 years old, and Jim was the most intimidating person that I had ever met, so having him listen to my voicemail within hearing distance was horrifying! After failing more times than I would like to admit, I was able to finally earn his approval. This was a huge boost to my confidence; I figured if I could get this 6'4" successful businessman with his powerful presence to approve my voicemail technique, then there was not much else out there to be afraid of. To this day there are only two people to ever intimidate me: Jim and my grandfather!

I also enjoyed going on sales calls with Jim and watching him command a room during a presentation. I remember how impressed I was to drive to the presentations with him in his white GMC Denali. After our first successful year at Scratch Off Systems, my first purchase was indeed a GMC Denali!

Those experiences are priceless, and were the catalyst for the wonderfully successful career you now have. What was your most valuable take-away when you left UCG to join Scratch Off Systems?

Absolutely! Being young and seeing the successful business that Jim and Mike created made me extremely hungry for my own success! When I started with Scratch Off Systems 14 years ago it was a very small startup located in the upstairs of a beat up old house. I took a huge risk to leave a thriving company for a small startup, but if I was going to be somebody in this world, I had to take a risk sooner or later. Using Jim and Mike's passion for success as inspiration, I was able to take the company from doing \$25k per month in sales to over \$150k per month in under a year! Today, we have a 25,000 square foot facility with 45 employees!

What advice do you have for individuals looking to set or adjust their career path?

The best advice that I could give anyone looking to adjust their career path is to find what you are good at and then dedicate your time and energy to perfecting that craft. Whether it is sales, marketing, or website development, pick a skill and dedicate yourself to becoming an expert. I can train anyone to be great at what they do and to make a lot of money *if* they like what they are doing and are dedicated to improving their skill level.

I would also suggest finding a mentor who is successful in the field that you are looking to move into. I was able to learn a lot from Jim and Mike in a short amount of time that and that helped me to springboard my career. There is no question that you will learn much more from a successful mentor than you will ever learn from a book or in a classroom.

Keith King is 34 years old and married to his high school sweetheart; they have been together since they were 15. Keith and his wife have three children, ages seven, five, and one. He grew up in Macedonia, Ohio and currently lives in Hudson, Ohio. Keith enjoys hiking, fishing and sport clay shooting.

Learn more about Keith King by visiting his [LinkedIn profile](#). Visit Scratch Off Systems online at scratchoff.com.

Learn more about [United Computer Group, Inc.](#) and its Founder & President, [James A. Kandrac](#).