



UCG Alumni Success Stories

This is the fourth 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 UCG's very first employee, Shari Harris. Shari, thank you for being a part of UCG's success!

Shari Harris

"I still think about my years with UCG. I am so happy that Jim started so small and grew the business to be very successful. All his hard work, dedication, and enthusiasm really paid off. I was part of that and will always be thankful for the great experience! Thank you, Jim. It was terrific working with and for you!"

Shari, you have the distinct honor of being UCG's very first employee! When and how did you meet Jim Kandrac, and how did it come to be that he offered you a position at UCG?



Shari Harris circa 1989

It was 1988, and I replied to an ad in the paper for a secretary at UCG. Jim called me to arrange an interview, and as we spoke, the job sounded very interesting and far beyond a typical secretarial position. It was in a field I was not familiar with, but it was an up and coming industry. I was lucky enough to be called and offered the job.

What was it like to work for UCG in those early years when the company was a startup?

I think that it's really great to get paid to do a job that is fun and interesting. This was definitely one of those jobs. We started in a large office space in Strongsville, Ohio with folding tables, an adding machine and a couple of phones. However, we were selling the current technology. Our office computer was a 386 that we daisy chained, had a dot matrix printer, and did back-ups on a 5 ¼ disk. (We're really going back in time, here.) But again it was the current technology. Jim did the selling and I did the administrative stuff. We picked up used IBM computers, cleaned, tested, packed and shipped them all over the country.

We were on the "cutting edge" and it was a wild and exciting ride! As each new technology came out – PC, laser printers, emails, software – we were learning it and implementing it. We had a color laser printer that we used for mailings. I learned to do newsletters to update our resellers, and then we did bulk emails overnight so the resellers received their newsletters immediately.

Please tell me about some of the responsibilities and tasks you were involved with initially, and how your role evolved over the years.

As secretary and administrative “staff” I was responsible for correspondence, phones, accounts receivable and accounts payable. As we grew, I was able to upgrade my tasks and skills to include data entry, accounting, computer maintenance, and back up, learning new software, learning to program labels, etc.

Jim had a very good relationship with I-O Corporation in Utah. We were the reps for their printer boards that made the IBM computers able to print to Epson, Lexmark and HP printers. As we began to sell more and more printer boards, I was the connection with Tech Support. I-O’S Tech Support were great people to work with and they had top notch products. I learned an immense amount about printers and hardware. I was extremely lucky that Jim sent me to I-O Corp. in Utah multiple times to learn how the twinax/coax boards and remote controllers were manufactured and what to do if there were problems. It was very exciting to be able to solve our customers’ problems!

What did you enjoy most and what did you find most challenging during your 17 years at UCG?

Jim was a great person to work for. He had vision and was able to make the vision happen. He was more than willing to share that vision and train and work with me so we could make that vision come to fruition. We did a little bit of everything, from picking up equipment and catching lunch at Slyman’s for corned beef sandwiches, to mailings, to installing printer boards, and anything in between.

The most challenging part during these years was that I was not and am not a salesman. Still, Jim was able to teach me how to work effectively with resellers and customers. I was able to learn the product so well that it almost sold itself; I could speak intelligently about it and they actually purchased the products from me. I also had to learn to use Word and our accounting software as we grew and expanded. What a ride!

When you left UCG to retire, what was your most valuable take-away?

I really missed being on the cutting edge of technology and the high energy of the sales atmosphere. It was a very rare and special job that not many people have a chance to do; anything after that is rather dull. Jim really shared all his knowledge and drive to succeed.

Can you offer some advice for individuals looking to set or adjust their career path?

If you’re going to do something every day it should be something that you enjoy and gives you the satisfaction of a job well done. Feeling successful in your job will also get you through bad

days or dry spells. And, it is a bonus when you work with people who are just as focused and engaged.

Last but not least, please share some of your most memorable moments during your time at UCG?

I remember laughter. I remember that Jim was so excited that he called me as he drove Pam to the hospital for the birth of their daughter. I remember going to Salt Lake City and meeting the people I spoke with on the phone all the time. I remember all of us going to lunch and again, the laughter. I will always remember the people I worked with even if I don't see them anymore. We had a great team and did some wonderful business.



*Shari and Gary Harris,
2015*

Shari and Gary have been married for 44 years and have two adult children. They enjoy traveling and are planning a trip to Washington DC this year. Next year they'll travel to Oregon and Washington State to celebrate their 45th anniversary. They enjoy attending local music concerts in Cuyahoga Valley, Medina on the Square, Wolf Creek Winery and Sully's Irish Pub. Shari is an avid reader, and also loves to ride her bike on the Rail Trails. Shari and Gary are always looking for some new adventure or activity.

Learn more about [UCG Technologies](#) and its founder & president, [Jim Kandrak](#).