

At Gerry Udell, focus on the Northeast equals success

With a 55-year track record of success built on hard work, integrity and innovation, **Gerry Udell, Inc.** is going strong. As the third generation takes on a greater leadership role, the manufacturers' rep agency continues its targeted focus on the Northeast territory, one of the most challenging—and most important—regions in the country, especially for brands striving to grow a national presence. While many of their competitors are focused on building a national presence, Gerry Udell's closer-to-home approach ensures that their team has the expertise needed to work deeply into all levels of the territory to accomplish their brands' goals.

In addition, in an age in which the changing landscape has created uncertainty at all levels of our industry, Gerry Udell continues to upgrade and modernize its capabilities and expertise. As just one example, they hired a full-time social media specialist to work with all of the firm's brands to amplify their messages to their mutual customers.

To learn more, **Beauty Industry Report** recently caught up with **Gerry, Gary and Glenn Udell** for the inside story.

Gerry Udell, who joined the Rep Firm in 2010, is the grandson of the agency's founder and shares his name with pride. Gerry carries on the family's and firm's traditions of perseverance, professionalism and integrity.

BIR: Welcome, Gerry. You are one of very few millennial rep principals in our industry. How do you view Manufacturers' Reps?

Gerry Udell (GU): They are the unsung heroes of the beauty business. They play a critical role as the trusted liaison between a distributor and manufacturer.

BIR: Your company's slogan is "A higher form of Beauty Representation." Please explain.

GU: Our business model differs from other rep companies. We are the only company that focuses on the Northeast, which is considered the most challenging area in the country. New York City is a territory within itself!



The second and third generations of the Udell dynasty—from left, Gary, Gerry and Glenn—are not only the most focused reps in professional beauty with a specialty in the Northeast territory, they are also the tallest!

BIR: Has that business model proven to be successful?

GU: Very much so! We have become the largest regional rep group in the country. With 11 people, we have the advantage of being able to offer more support for our customers and manufacturers. We have become the "Go-To Group" for complete coverage in the Northeast.

BIR: What else is unique about your company?

GU: In addition to award-winning customer service, we created what we call "Precision Management," which is a unique system of communicating daily with each member of our organization. This support system assists us in making sales.

BIR: How does your company keep up with evolving technology?

GU: We were the

first rep group to develop a customized order entry system, which our manufacturers and customers love! We also hired a full-time social media director to coordinate campaigns between our manufacturers and distributors. This is an extra service that we provide to help grow our business.

BIR: How would you describe your sales force and your office team?

GU: I truly believe that we have assembled the best team in the industry. Each member supports one

another. They are all self-motivated and very proactive in soliciting business and new accounts, as well as taking good care of existing customers.

BIR: Please describe your customer base.

GU: It's very diverse. We cover everyone our brands want to reach, including full-service distributors and OTC stores, plus nails, skin care, barber, multicultural, e-commerce and specialty accounts.

BIR: What manufacturers do you represent?

GU: We are proud to represent the most prestigious and well-known companies in our industry. We are fortunate to have leading brands in all segments of our industry.

BIR: How do you find working with your father and uncle?

GU: That's a good question. I fire them every day, but they keep coming back!



Helen of Troy's Scott Hagstrom with Gerry Udell.

In part two of this exclusive interview, BIR checks in with Gerry's father, Glenn, and uncle Gary, the brothers who represent the second generation of Gerry Udell, Inc.

BIR: Glenn and Gary, you are both seasoned veterans. What are the keys to your company's success?

Glenn: Passion, communication, resilience, persistence and flexibility, as well as being intuitive, proactive and relevant. Also, a little bit of luck and a sense of humor! Did I cover everything?

Gary: You forgot our father's advice to never be complacent! We are fortunate in that our father was our role model and taught us to be honest and forthright in our business and personal lives.

BIR: Many rep companies went national several years ago. Why didn't you?

Gary: Most reps panicked and felt they had to cover the entire country. That created a vacuum in the Northeast. It worked to our advantage, as we expanded and grew our business in this area.

BIR: Have the internet and Amazon disrupted your business?

Gary: There has always been disruption in our industry, whether it be a change of styles or new innovative products. Eventually, the balance between e-commerce sales and brick-and-mortar will stabilize.

BIR: Do full-service and brick-and-mortar venues have a future?

Gary: Brick-and-mortar stores will survive and grow if they innovate and adapt to the new business and cultural environment. Personal touch is in our DNA, especially in our industry. Full-service will survive, as servicing salons will always be essential.



Family means everything to the Udells, both in their own organization, as well as with the family-owned businesses they have represented for generations. Here, the Udell Group visits with the Wahl Professional team, including Lance Wahl and Anne Marie Kollias, at Wahl headquarters.

BIR: How does your management style differ from other rep groups?

Glenn: We manage only one group in one territory. Multi-territorial groups have the almost impossible task of trying to manage different sets of salespeople with different sets of lines in different territories!

BIR: Why do you suggest manufacturers choose a regional firm over a national one?

Gary: These firms claim to look out for your best interest while they might represent your competition in another territory. Why put all your eggs in one basket with one rep

from Gerry that you swim seven days a week regardless of the weather.

Glenn: Confirm!

BIR: We also hear that you text, email and phone him at least 20 times a day.

Glenn: Deny. I think it's only a dozen.

BIR: Gerry also says that when you go on vacation, you text and call him even more?

Glenn: Let's not forget FaceTime!

BIR: Gary, we heard you founded and are president of a well-known Bath and Tennis Club in the Hamptons whose members include many high-profile names, such as top Wall Street people. Any names?

Gary: Sometimes I swim with the sharks!

BIR: Gerry also said that your former tennis partner is in the President's Cabinet.

Gary: There goes his invitation to the Hamptons this year!

For more information about Gerry Udell, Inc., and how to work successfully with a rep agency, reach Gary Udell, president of Gerry Udell, Inc., at 973-338-3100 or garyudell@gerryudell.com. Visit gerryudell.com.



The Udells represent Zvi Ryzman (second from right) and his sons Elie (left) and Rafi (third from left) from American International Industries.