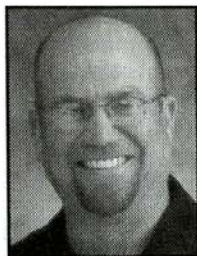


Consumer/Retail Products and Services Finalists

Altman Plants



Ken Altman
President
Altman Plants



Deena Altman
V.P., Marketing
Altman Plants

Although Ken and Deena Altman had both prepared for careers in social service, a mutual love of horticulture led them to pursue another dream. What began as a hobby growing cacti and succulents has become one of the top 20 wholesale plant nurseries in the nation. Aggressive marketing and innovative branding campaigns have helped **Altman Plants** develop into a thriving entity.

Agriculture-based industries deal with large degrees of uncertainty, being dependent on uncontrollable factors. While remaining self-financed, Altman Plants has dealt with droughts, excessive rain, pests, unpredictable utility costs and greenhouses destroyed by windstorms.

While competitors have cut costs by bringing cheaper products to the mass market, Altman Plants has invested to create more value for its customers and the end consumer. Altman Plants' marketing company, Floragem, has united more than 30 high-profile regional growers

across the United States to offer the first exclusive branded-plant program to a national garden center retailer, **The Home Depot**.

Altman Plants has pioneered plant-branding concepts with their Garden Music perennials and VIVA! herbs. These efforts have made Altman Plants the acknowledged leader in the industry for marketing and packaging plants.

Altman Plants also offers a full suite of Web sites to support both customers and end consumers. The company has become known for its integrity. Employees, suppliers and customers have learned to be able to rely on the word of Altman Plants.

Although it offers the largest and most diverse wholesale cactus and succulent assortment available in the United States, the product line has expanded to include all varieties of plants. Altman supplies plants to the nation's four largest garden retailers: Home Depot, **Lowe's**, **Target** and **Wal-Mart**. The quality of Altman Plants' product and customer service has twice earned them the Target Vendor of the Year award, as well as a marketing award for the VIVA! Herb plant program.

Altman Plants operates more than 350 acres of greenhouses, shadehouses and outdoor fields, with facilities in northern and southern California, as well as Arizona and Florida. A fleet of more than 100 trucks delivers the company's product, and the business provides jobs for over 800 people. Ken and Deena took their love of living things and used it to turn a dream into a remarkable reality.

Creative Host Services Inc.



Sayed Ali
President &
CEO
Creative Host
Services Inc.

When Sayed Ali foresaw the downsizing of the major electronics company where he held a prominent position, he chose to set out on his own before his job was jeopardized.

Ali analyzed his options and selected the food industry as one likely to remain in

demand despite variations in the economy. Creative Croissants' fresh bakery and deli model was the first of its kind in San Diego, and was an instant hit with consumers.

When an initial franchising model failed, Ali did not abandon the business, but re-evaluated his strategy and reinvented the company. He determined that the key to success was the location of the franchises, and that the best possible location would offer a "captive audience" market. The best captive audience segment was made up of travelers passing through airports, and this was the market Ali targeted.

But the airport concession business has high entry barriers and requires extensive up-front capital. Once again, Ali refused to be halted. He launched

an intensive networking campaign to the FAA and various airports around the country. While most did not respond, the break came in 1989, when John Wayne airport awarded **Creative Host Services** its first contract.

Because CHS did not have experience in airport concessions, banks refused to lend funds for expansion, and Ali was forced to rely on family, savings and credit cards to fulfill the contract.

To compete with the giants in the airport concession industry, Ali focused CHS on providing small to medium airports with the same high quality products that were enjoyed by travelers at larger facilities. He met with city architects and Chamber of Commerce officials to tailor the décor of the concession stores to the regional and historical flavor of the area. This allowed CHS to serve as a welcome to a city and to help define a city's identity, instead of existing as simply another concession concept.

Following a 1997 IPO, the company expanded into an era of profitability that has seen double-digit growth for almost six years. By inventing new strategies, trusting his own conclusions, and never giving in, Ali has built Creative Host Services into the third largest airport concessionaire in the country.