

A GUIDE TO SUCCEEDING IN SMALL BUSINESS

Making a success of stationery

Today, one store chain; tomorrow, the retail world

Paper-making firm grows

BY JOHN ECKBERG
The Cincinnati Enquirer

For any paper company with only one employee, getting shelf space to sell stationery and notebook paper in 117 Meijer stores scattered across five states would be a big, big deal.

For William D. Shoecraft and his 8-year-old firm, Did You Know Publishing Inc., showing up on Meijer shelves is just another footprint on the path of success. While he is happy to be in Meijer and glad that a store mauler of 500,000 items pegged to Black History Month includes his products, Mr. Shoecraft has bigger plans.

He wants a Meijer's presence for his stationery and paper throughout the year—not just in February during Black History Month—and he wants to reach out to the rest of America through other mass merchandisers.

"Walgreens, CVS drugs, Target, Kmart, Wal-Mart," he said, rattling off retailers expected to attend an October conference in Louisiana sponsored by the

books to buy or borrow from libraries to read to her. He could not find any written about African-American history at a level that could be understood by preschoolers.

Mr. Shoecraft, a Wyoming resident, decided to publish a book himself, and his first effort was a hardbound book that chronicles Rosa Parks' refusal in 1955 to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Ala., bus to a white passenger and the massive bus boycott by blacks that followed. Colorful illustrations were by Mr. Shoecraft's uncle, David Gullatte, a retired illustrator.

Two more biographies written for preschoolers, a teacher's guide and a line of posters followed. It was while trying to market those products that Mr. Shoecraft stumbled upon the idea of printing faint portraits of great African-Americans on stationery, and "Lasting 'M' Impressions Notebook Paper" was born.

"We were at a conference in Louisiana and wanted to thank people who had stopped by our booth for information," he said. "We thought we would send a note with a portrait from one of our books. Soon, people began to call us back and wanted to know where they

Enterprise insight

"Slow and steady growth — I think with any organization, as you grow, you've got to put systems in place to handle that growth. Otherwise, you can't deliver on time and you can't deliver a quality product. Slow and steady growth is what we focus on."

— William D. Shoecraft, developer of stationery featuring Dr. Charles Drew, George Washington Carver, Rosa Parks and others

