

Entrepreneur gets Down to Earth with skin care company

BY LYNN DUCEY

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George Dembow III is using his business experience to give a new life to a cosmetic product his father developed in the early 1970s.

Dembow started Down to Earth Skincare in February 2009, and after he spent a year working on formulations and developing a following, the products hit the marketplace. Now, Dembow is focusing on a national push for the line of skin care products for home and professional spa use.

The company's products include a cleanser, a toner, moisturizers in normal and dry skin formulations, and an eye cream. In addition, it markets products for use in spas by aestheticians and other beauty professionals, including a new expression of the original Down to Earth clay mask developed by Dembow's father.

"This is really kind of like full-circle again," he said.

Products cost between \$30 and \$50.

In the early 1970s, the Down to Earth clay mask could be found in Arizona department stores including Goldwater's and Diamond's, and through mail order.

Dembow's father founded Arizona Natural Resources, a Phoenix facility that manufactures cosmetics for a variety of companies. The original clay mask was formulated and made there.

Dembow still is listed as a co-owner of Arizona Natural Resources, along with his brother, Paul, and their father, George Jr.; but he has stepped away from its day-to-day operations to focus on Down to Earth.

His company contracts with Arizona Natural Resources to manufacture its products, but they are separate business entities, said Dembow, adding that he's slowly growing his business.

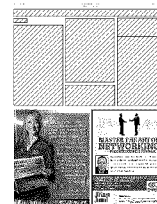
"We have 14 products: We have seven products in our retail line and seven for professional spa use," he said. "So far, we are in about 70 spas across Arizona, New Mexico, Southern California and Illinois. We are growing every day."

Down to Earth's skin care line incorporates a proprietary clay mixture and a number of berry extracts and minerals, including turmeric and acai berry, known for their antioxidant powers.

One local spa that carries its products is Amomi Pregnancy and Wellness Spa in North Phoenix.

"We believe that everyone should take care of their skin; it's the largest organ in your body. These are very pure products," said Rita DelVecchio, the spa's administrator. "The firm is discerning about its ingredients, which is very important to us, and these products are also very affordable. And we also like giving local business an opportunity, because we ourselves are a startup."

Dembow hopes to make more business connections at the Day Spa Expo and Business Forum in Las Vegas later



this month.

“So far, we’ve focused all of our efforts on the Arizona marketplace, and now this is the next stage in our development,” he said.

Cosmetics expert Edward Schack said the industry numbers bear that out.

“I’ve been involved in several recessions over the course of my 20 years in the industry, and the cosmetics and personal care industry has almost been recession-proof,” said Schack, principal of New Jersey-based EES Cosmetic Solutions Inc., a manufacturer’s representative and distributor in the cosmetic, personal care and household industries.

Schack cited financials for global cosmetics firm Estee Lauder, which posted a 14 percent increase in sales, to \$2.09 billion, for its first fiscal quarter ended Sept. 30. While that figure is impressive, the cosmetics industry overall has done fairly well over these past few years, he said.

During a recession, a woman may not have \$100 for a new pair of shoes or a new dress, “but she will spend a little bit of money to stay contemporary, give herself a new look and feel good,” he said.

Schack does not represent Down to Earth, but he said the company is tapping into emerging trends in that it uses natural ingredients and is a locally owned company with locally manufactured products.

“These are the types of products that can really take off,” he said.

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Down to Earth Skincare founder George Dembow III shows off some of his products as employee Darlene Barton, a registered nurse, applies a facial mask to Beth Stanard.