

## Getting results

List Management Services helps

firms improve direct marketing



JIM CARCHIDI

Steven Cohen launched List Management Services Inc. in 1995, using what he learned from Disney.

BY WES GOLDBERG

Years before starting his own company, Steven Cohen learned customer service from a business best-known for giving its guests a world-class experience: Walt Disney World.

Cohen, now president and CEO of Orlando-based List Management Services Inc., spent ten years working at various Disney World venues, wrapping up his career at Victoria and Albert's, Florida's only five-diamond special occasion restaurant. During that time, Cohen gained a great appreciation for the highest level of client/guest satisfaction, a knowledge that has severed him well.

"There are not many CEO's with a background in five-star service," Cohen said.

Cohen took his experiences working at Disney and launched List Management Services in 1995. The data processing firm, which specializes in direct marketing, uses its information processing skills and marketing plans to help companies target potential customers more accurately and increase their return on investment.

Direct marketing, Cohen said, offers a business the ability to target an audience more specifically and personally, primarily through mail, than what can be done through mass marketing, such as television commercials.

His business formula seems to be working: List Management Services has built client relationships with more than 800

### List Management Services Inc.

**Top executive:** Steven Cohen, owner and CEO

**Line of business:** Direct marketing services

**2010 revenue:** \$3.9 million

**Employees:** 22

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companies. "We are in the business of either saving you money or making you money," Cohen said.

The hardest challenge he faced was not having a step-by-step guide telling him what to do so far as growing his company. "It's like a chess match — every move must be carefully thought through," Cohen said.

That's why Cohen elected to run his business conservatively for the first few years by minimizing spending and building long-term relationships with clients. The University of Central Florida graduate started his company with approximately \$25,000 from family savings. List Management Services doubled its first-year revenue in its second year, earning \$50,000.

By 2009, List Management Services earned \$3.6 million and experienced a steady increase in 2010 to \$3.9 million. The comp-

any expects to earn \$4.3 million in 2011, with a client list that now includes Hard Rock Cafe, Sears, Wet 'n Wild, Amazon.com, the University of Central Florida and Stonewood Grill & Tavern.

"Steve and his team always strive for excellence," said Kellie Cofer, the marketing director at Stonewood Grill & Tavern who has worked with List Management Services for seven years. "They continue to exceed my expectations."

Cohen also believes what helped make List Management Services successful and survive the recession is its competitive advantage in being small. The company's size allowed it to focus on creative marketing plans and showing greater care for clients than larger companies sometimes can because of dealing with bureaucratic distractions, Cohen said.

His advice for starting a new business follows that same belief: "Do not lose sight of your competitive advantage — what it is that differentiates you from the competition."

As for the future, social and direct marketing likely will continue to play an important role, said Carolyn Massiah, a lecturer for the UCF department of marketing.

Because marketing is rapidly evolving, she said companies like List Management Services fill a need for information that will continue to expand.