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Press Kit

PRESS RELEASE



Popular Retailer 'Unclaimed Baggage' Expands Online Store to Include International Markets

The United States' Only Retailer of Lost Luggage is Now Sending Its Fabulous Finds to Faraway Fans

SCOTTSBORO, Ala., December 1, 2022 — Just in time for holiday shopping, Unclaimed Baggage, a popular tourist destination and the USA's only merchant of lost luggage, is proud to announce the expansion of their online store to include shipping to Canada, Europe (including the UK), Australia and New Zealand.



A significant milestone for the beloved retailer, the expansion invites millions of new online shoppers to share in the unique opportunity to obtain luxe brands, electronics, jewelry and other merchandise at a bargain price from the comfort of their own homes.

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PRESS RELEASE

“Reflecting on our history and unique business model, it’s remarkable to consider that what began with a borrowed truck and a \$300 loan a little more than 50 years ago, is now an international business with millions of shoppers,” said president of Unclaimed Baggage, Paul Okimoto. “Given the unprecedented volume of unclaimed luggage and cargo across the transportation industry right now, and with the global economy requiring people to find ways to make their dollars stretch a little bit further, the time is right to extend the Unclaimed Baggage experience beyond U.S. borders.”

The retailer stocks approximately 7,000 unique, heavily discounted items each day in the retail store where they are discovered and “reclaimed” by new owners. Store finds range from clothing and sporting goods to musical instruments, vintage concert t-shirts and even exotic treasures, such as a 40-carat emerald, all priced at a bargain.

In 2020, when the pandemic caused Unclaimed Baggage to temporarily close its doors for the first time in its history, the pause in foot traffic served as a catalyst to develop a one-of-a-kind online store that has attracted more than 5.5 million visitors and counting.

The store has made national news for its ever-changing array of unique items from around the world, all sold at an incredible value.

“While we’re grateful for the continued growth of our business, what we’re most proud of as an organization is the opportunity to redeem lost and unclaimed items, giving them a second life and supporting sustainability,” added Okimoto.

For more information about Unclaimed Baggage, visit unclaimedbaggage.com.

About Unclaimed Baggage

Located in Scottsboro, Alabama, Unclaimed Baggage is a one-of-a-kind retail store that draws one million shoppers annually from all 50 states and around the world. As the country’s only merchant of unclaimed and lost airline baggage and its contents, Unclaimed Baggage offers a treasure trove of goods that airlines have been unable to reunite with their former owners. As part of its commitment to service and generosity, the company created the Reclaimed for Good foundation which has given millions of dollars’ worth of product and profit to meet needs around the globe. Reclaimed for Good’s Love Luggage initiative also supports thousands of foster children by providing personalized suitcases to replace the garbage bags many typically use to transport their belongings. Learn about Unclaimed Baggage at unclaimedbaggage.com.

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BACKGROUND

Just more than 50 years ago, third-generation entrepreneur Hugo Doyle Owens was struck with an idea. Using a borrowed pickup truck and a \$300 loan, he drove to Washington D.C. and bought his first load of unclaimed baggage from Trailways Bus Line. He then sold the contents on card tables in an old, rented house — the venture was an instant success! With his family's blessing, he left his full-time insurance job and Unclaimed Baggage Center was born.

Today, located in Scottsboro, Alabama, [Unclaimed Baggage](#) is a one-of-a-kind retail store that draws one million shoppers annually from all 50 states and more than 40 countries. The 50,000-square-foot store contains thousands of practical, unusual and special items that airlines and other transportation industries have been unable to reunite with their former owners. Unclaimed Baggage is the nation's only merchant of unclaimed and lost baggage and its contents.

The retailer stocks approximately 7,000 unique, heavily discounted items each day in the retail store, and thousands more online, where they are discovered and “reclaimed” by new owners. The store has made national news for its ever-changing array of unique items from around the world, all sold at an incredible value.

In 2020, the retailer developed an online store that has attracted more than 5.5 million visitors and counting.

As air travel and in-store retail have largely resumed following the onset of the pandemic, Unclaimed Baggage has embarked on a belated 50th anniversary road tour, initially scheduled for March 2020. The celebratory “50 years, 50 states” summer road tour began in May 2022 and will visit all 50 states over the span of 17 weeks.

Led by “Hugo,” the restored 1965 Chevrolet truck named after Unclaimed Baggage's founder, the tour began by following Owens' original route from Scottsboro to Washington, D.C. Over the course of the tour, Hugo will travel to iconic destinations across the U.S., posing with fans and roadside attractions, showcasing the entire adventure on social media.

As part of its commitment to service and generosity, Unclaimed Baggage developed a philanthropic program called [Reclaimed for Good](#), which partners with dozens of local, national and global charity organizations to find service opportunities and repurpose and distribute non-retail merchandise to those in need. On average, Unclaimed Baggage donates one item for every item they sell.

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BACKGROUND

Reclaimed for Good's "Love Luggage" initiative has also supported thousands of foster children by providing personalized suitcases to replace the garbage bags that many kids typically use to transport their belongings.

Unclaimed Baggage has established purchasing agreements for unclaimed items with all domestic airlines and other travel and transportation companies, including unclaimed cargo which has been lost or damaged during shipment.

BIOGRAPHIES



Bryan K. Owens

Founder of The Owens Group International

Bryan K. Owens founded The Owens Group International in 1989, along with his wife, Sharon. Bryan's companies under The Owens Group umbrella include his retail and e-commerce business [Unclaimed Baggage](#), as well as other software and managed services businesses. Bryan's companies, all industry pioneers in the world of lost property, exist to redeem the lost, unclaimed and rejected for the glory of God.

Unclaimed Baggage, founded in Scottsboro, Alabama by Bryan's father Doyle in 1970 and purchased by Bryan and his wife Sharon in 1995, is a one-of-a-kind retail and e-commerce business that sells lost and unclaimed items from the travel, transportation and hospitality industries. A perennial fascination of audiences around the world, Unclaimed Baggage has garnered global attention and been featured in many of the world's foremost media outlets, including The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, The Times of London, The BBC, Fox News and The Today Show.

A sixth-generation entrepreneur, Bryan grew up in Scottsboro, Alabama and is a graduate of Samford University and the Harvard Business School's Owner-President Management Program. He is married to his wife and best friend of over three decades, Sharon, and is the father of three sons, Benjamin (screenwriter and graduate from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts), Matthew (Director of Strategy & New Ventures at Irresistible Foods Group and graduate of Vanderbilt University) and Micah (Manager of Growth and Marketing Analytics at Coolmath Games and graduate of Belmont University).

Bryan is passionate about faith, family and free enterprise. His interests include his Reclaimed for Good Foundation, quail hunting, travel, hiking, Alabama football and the delicate art of southern barbecue. He and Sharon live in Atlanta, Georgia.

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Sharon Owens
Chief Brand Officer of The Owens Group
International

Sharon Owens serves as Chief Brand Officer of The Owens Group International, which includes Unclaimed Baggage and three related B2B companies, and serves on the Board of Directors. Her background in brand management with Frito Lay, product development and strategic marketing provided a great training ground for the entrepreneurial opportunities and challenges of the family business.

Soon after purchasing Unclaimed Baggage in 1995, market research initiated by Sharon showed that the business had a highly unusual fanatical fan base. As a visionary and conceptualist, Sharon has pioneered and guided many projects over the years to leverage the company's unique brand equity and develop new brand enthusiasts.

Sharon loves to shop and is a brand enthusiast herself. She is passionate about the opportunities that Unclaimed Baggage has to redeem lost items that can't be sold, so will instead transform the lives of people in need through donations.

Sharon is a voracious reader and enjoys hiking and exploring new places with her husband, Bryan. The perfect day for her is when she, Bryan, three grown sons and her two daughters-in-law are together—anywhere.

BIOGRAPHIES



Jennifer Kritner

Vice President of Retail and Company Culture;
Director of Reclaimed for Good

Jennifer Kritner joined Unclaimed Baggage in 1997. Her depth of experience includes leading the retail operations team, who welcome one million guests annually to its facility in Northeast Alabama. Jennifer is also responsible for leading the People and Culture departments as well as the company's public relations team.

Jennifer also serves as the director of Unclaimed Baggage's charitable foundation, Reclaimed for Good. She is passionate about the company's purpose "to redeem the lost, unclaimed and rejected for the glory of God." Jennifer lives in Scottsboro, Alabama with her husband, Patrick, and their four beautiful children. She and Patrick are passionate about foster care and adoption and regularly welcome children into their home.

BIOGRAPHIES



Paul Okimoto
President

Paul Okimoto joined Unclaimed Baggage as President in 2021. Prior to accepting the role, Paul was most recently the Senior Vice President of Marketing at the Haggar Clothing Company, an iconic men's apparel company with \$500M in annual revenues. He was hired by the company's former private equity owners, Center Lane Partners, to rebuild the entire marketing function from the ground up, creating a data-driven, digitally oriented organization capable of supporting global expansion into the United Kingdom, China, and Latin America

At Haggar, Paul turned a historically negative marketing ROI into a positive 125%+ return and played an instrumental role in enabling a 50% increase in annual revenues to \$500M. He successfully relaunched 90%+ of product lines and won the Bulldog PR Gold Award for the "Haggar Hall of Fame Dads Contest" launched on Super Bowl weekend with participants nominating fathers on social media for a chance to win a VIP trip to the Hall of Fame enshrinement ceremony. He also won recognition from the NPD Group for "Best in Class POS Marketing Efforts" in 2017 and "Best in Class Packaging" in 2019.

Paul previously served as the Chief Marketing Officer at The Sports Authority, a sporting goods retailer with \$3B in annual revenues. In this role, Paul led all traditional and digital marketing initiatives while implementing new advanced predictive analytics capabilities. He successfully reversed a 3-year trend of declining sales and delivered a 67%+ increase in e-commerce sales during the holiday season to \$100M+. He created some of the company's 1st brand campaigns and launched the highly successful "Unplugged" campaign encouraging customers to get outside and play with children.

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BIOGRAPHIES

Prior to joining Haggar Clothing Company, Paul was the Vice President of Marketing at RadioShack, an American retailer of consumer electronics with \$4B+ in annual revenues. At RadioShack, he drove brand development, go-to-market strategy, customer insights, data analytics, media, and all online / offline marketing initiatives. He created a new omnichannel marketing strategy, more than doubling annual e-commerce revenues to \$550M. He also won recognition from Twitter's Chief Executive Officer for "#u need a new phone" as the best retail campaign to date with 70M+ impressions. He also received the Forrester Groundswell Award for the "Holiday Hero" campaign.

Paul holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University California at Berkley. He is also a Guest Lecturer at the Haas School of Business of the University California at Berkley and a Board Member of the Global Retail Marketing Association, the YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth, the San Francisco Embarcadero YMCA, and the Asian Pacific Youth Leadership Project.

BIOGRAPHIES



Sonni Hood Public Relations and Community Relations Manager

A Scottsboro, AL native, Sonni Hood began working for Unclaimed Baggage at the age of 17 where she was involved in every department throughout the retail storefront. These foundational years provided her with a thorough understanding and passion for the Unclaimed Baggage brand, culture, and mission to redeem the lost, unclaimed, and rejected for the glory of God.

After graduating with honors from Auburn University with a B.A. in Communications and Theatre, Sonni returned to her hometown of Scottsboro to work in her current role for Unclaimed Baggage. Sonni's unique combination of studies in addition to her background in university recruitment, outreach, and performance has equipped her to act as an ambassador and spokesperson for the Unclaimed Baggage brand to media outlets and guests from all around the world eager to hear the story of the nation's only lost luggage retailer.

In addition to PR, Sonni manages the company's community relations, state tourism efforts, and event planning for the retail store. Born and raised in Scottsboro, a quiet town of about 15,000 which rests just where the foothills of the Appalachians meet the Tennessee River, Sonni understands the important role Unclaimed Baggage plays in its community and enjoys building and strengthening relationships both in Scottsboro and surrounding areas to see her hometown thrive.

In her spare time, Sonni enjoys traveling (most recently embarking on a cross-country road trip for Unclaimed Baggage's 50th anniversary celebration where she visited the lower 48 in a whopping 16 weeks), second-hand shopping, and drinking copious amounts of good coffee.

FACT SHEET

About Unclaimed Baggage:

- Unclaimed Baggage was founded in 1970 by Hugo Doyle Owens.
- In 1995, Owens' son Bryan and his wife Sharon purchased the business, adding a cafe and a Museum of Found Treasures, and making it a true shopping and tourist destination.
- The 50,000-square-foot store stretches more than a city block.
- Unclaimed Baggage has been dubbed the “Lost Luggage Capital of the World” and is one of Alabama’s top tourist attractions.
- Unclaimed Baggage is the nation’s only merchant of unclaimed and lost baggage and its contents.
- Unclaimed Baggage stocks approximately 7,000 unique, heavily discounted items each day in its retail store, and thousands more online.
- Unclaimed Baggage restocks the sales floor with up to 7,000 items daily.

About Reclaimed for Good:

- On average, for every item sold, Unclaimed Baggage donates an additional item to someone in need through the Reclaimed for Good program.
- Over the past five decades, Reclaimed for Good has established partnerships with dozens of local, national and global charity organizations so leftover items can meet the needs of others.
- Reclaimed for Good has given millions of dollars' worth of product and profit to meet needs all around the globe.
- Reclaimed for Good's “Love Luggage” initiative has supported thousands of foster children by providing personalized suitcases to replace the garbage bags that many kids typically use to transport their belongings.

SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- How was the Unclaimed Baggage idea conceived?
- How does Unclaimed Baggage receive its items?
- What types of items does Unclaimed Baggage carry?
- Why do bags go unclaimed?
- In your opinion, what is the most unusual or unique item ever acquired by Unclaimed Baggage?
- Approximately how many items does the store acquire annually?
- Can you share a shopper's story of a surprising discovery made about an item they purchased?
- When people visit the store, what are they most surprised by?
- How does Unclaimed Baggage help the airline and transportation industries?
- Does Unclaimed Baggage sell all the merchandise it buys from the airlines?
- What is Reclaimed for Good?
- What is Love Luggage?