



Family-owned Deer Outfitters in Grayson County Successfully Take Kentucky Hunting Online

Name:
B.C.O. Enterprises, LLC

Internet:
www.buckcountryoutfitters.com

Products/Services:
Deer Hunting Outfitter/Wild Game Calls and Accessories

Location:
Clarkson/Grayson County

Leadership:
Patrick L. Willis

Employees:
3

Founded: 1996

Reach: International

Innovative Insight: *"The Internet works! Spend some time learning the tricks and you can make your business shine."*

Way Internet Has Made You More Competitive: *"Exposure! Exposure! Exposure!"*

Advice to Growing Companies: *"Persistence is key. Never give up! Take into consideration all advice given and make sure you can trust the source."*

Most Valuable Lesson Learned in Growing Business: *"Be good at what you do and take care of your clients. If you take care of them, your business will take care of you."*

Clarkson, Ky. – Combine the rich hunting lands of Kentucky with the opportunity of the global market and you have a recipe for success. Pat Willis, co-owner of Buck Country Outfitters in Grayson County, can attest to that!

With 4,500 acres of lush hunting ground and the expertise to make it happen, Willis and his family – including his brother, Ken, mom and dad, and even his children – have managed to spin a business from their love of hunting. They've done it by becoming one of the most respected outfitters in Kentucky – offering first class trophy whitetail deer and turkey hunting for nearly 10 years. The family leases the majority of the private land on which they've had a strict quality deer management program in place for nine years. They began the venture promoting themselves through trade shows, but to tap into the global economy, they went online with their outfitting business, and today their web presence attracts most of their customers.

"We created the website because we recognized the global opportunities," said Willis. "The type of business we run doesn't appeal to local residents, so we appeal to folks who don't have the opportunity to hunt."

The business brings people from all over the United States to Kentucky. Willis said he's had hunters visit from every state, and he has been contacted by people from as far away as Scotland who are interested in taking advantage of Kentucky's No. 2 ranking in the nation per square mile for trophy bucks. Guests are provided lodging, Southern cooked meals and knowledgeable guides during their hunts, which range from three to five days depending on the type and style of hunting.

"It took awhile to get a web presence – in the beginning we only had three clients. Now we run 80 to 100 hunters per season," said Willis. "It's been a tremendous growth."

The business has been recognized nationally for its excellence. Willis's expertise was recently featured in the August 2006 issue of *Field and Stream* magazine in an article titled "Legendary Advice," which offered advice from 13 well-known big buck hunters. The article highlighted Buck Country Outfitters' use of hunting long sheets and journals as an important tool for finding and hunting mature whitetail bucks.

Many of the Willis's clients become regular visitors, and they range from experienced hunters to amateurs. Willis recalled one amateur hunter who set out on a hunt a little too prepared.

"The first time we set up with this guy, he had six turkey calls around his neck and every time he walked, he rattled," said Willis. "We didn't want to be rude, but he was beeping, thrashing and rattling away. He's since gained valuable experience and became a better hunter as he's hunted with us over the years."

In addition to their outfitting business, the family maintains another website, www.devastatorgamecalls.com, specializing in the sale of game calls and other hunting accessories. They use Paypal, a company that enables businesses with an e-mail address to send and receive payments online, which Willis said works well.

"They don't have a real high processing fee, and it's also very secure and that gives our customers greater peace of mind when they're ordering our product," Willis said.

Willis said that despite the sometimes dangerous aspects of his job (last summer he fell 15 feet from one of 81 deer stands on the property while hanging it) he plans to operate the business for many years to come. He credits the website for most of the business's success.

"The web has made our business," he said. "We could not have accomplished this type of success without it."

