



INTIMIDATOR GROUP SUCCESS STORY

The Legacy

Many successful entrepreneurs have called Arkansas home over the years. Among these industrialists are innovators in logistics, food and beverage, aerospace, technology and retail. They all have common characteristics: a strong work ethic and determination to creatively attack obstacles in their path. Intimidator Inc. owners, Robert and Becky Foster, bear these qualities and then some. **They used creative and out-of-the-box thinking to navigate the unpredictable opportunities that the year 2020 has brought.**

The Intimidator Group is a family of businesses headquartered in Batesville, Arkansas. These businesses include Intimidator UTVs, Bad Dawg Accessories, Ground Hog Max disc plows, eNVy – Neighborhood Vehicles, Gourmet Guru Grills, and Spartan Mowers.

Intimidator Inc. proudly manufactures its beefy side-by-sides and zero turn mowers using premium components, some of which are produced by Arkansas vendors. Since its launch, Spartan Mowers has seen strong demand thanks to its performance and affordability. Additionally, management plans for a seasonal rise in sales each spring as the weather begins to change and grass begins to grow. However, they could have never predicted what 2020 would bring.



Figure 1: Intimidator Group's products are proudly Made in Arkansas.
(Photo courtesy of Intimidator Group)

The Challenge

In 2020, the world was hit with the COVID-19 pandemic, and Arkansas was not immune to its effects. In what typically begins Intimidator Inc.'s busy season, the company found itself in unforeseen circumstances around the usual uptick in orders from their dealer network. As companies across the country were forced to shut down out of precautionary measures, Intimidator Inc. faced uncertainty about government regulations and supply fulfillment from vendors as well as demand.

The Challenge (continued)

With these variables changing daily, management recognized the immediate need to increase production while still maintaining lean operations and flexibility.

The Solution

It's challenges like these that allow great leaders the opportunity to do even greater things. Robert Foster is continually striving for improvement and thrives on challenges. His relentless pursuit of perfection allowed the company to creatively attack the uncertainty brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Foster implemented innovative tactics that shaped the company's response to the pandemic, particularly in operations and sales.

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Each spring, the Spartan Mowers division of Intimidator Inc. has been required to hire additional production staff to meet surges in demand. In the midst of the pandemic, Robert wondered what it might look like to ask his workforce to band together in an unusual way. What would happen if individuals were temporarily moved from several different departments and trained to work on the assembly line? It would not only take sacrifice on the individual's part, but it would also require each department involved to expand their roles to cover the responsibilities of those members who were recruited.

In true Intimidator, Inc. style, the individuals asked rose to the challenge. Almost every department participated, including members of maintenance, engineering, marketing, quality, R&D, and the sales team.



Figure 2: Intimidator Group's state of the art Production Facility
(Photo courtesy of Intimidator Group)

Naturally, not all of the employees had experience working on an assembly line. Fortunately, Intimidator Inc. had worked previously with the Arkansas Economic Development Commission's Manufacturing Solutions to create an assembly operator training and certification process. Since the training development was already complete, the team was able to learn at an accelerated pace and begin production within a week of selection.

The Solution (continued)

As demand for Spartan Mowers began to increase rapidly, the team started producing. They hit the targeted rate of production and quality on the first day. Within a week, the team was hitting projected rates in less than the scheduled time. This allowed members to spend the second portion of the day in their regular departments and normal job tasks.

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The culture of quality and continuous improvement at Intimidator Group was reflected in the temporary operations team's response. **The members took on the challenge with a positive, "all-hands-on-deck" attitude.**



Figure 3: Team members hard at work on the assembly line
(Photo courtesy of Intimidator Group)

Simultaneously, the marketing/sales staff devised an improved lead generation program which resulted in a significant increase in orders. A call process was established to connect directly with the dealer network to offer needed support to the dealer base which extends across the country. The weekly calls to dealers were appreciated and paved the way for passing along information and ideas.

These conversations led them to increase their digital marketing efforts

and Intimidator to creatively push sales leads directly to dealers. The digital marketing team created a popup on the Spartan Mowers website which lead visitors to a short quiz. By answering a few simple questions, an algorithm allowed the site to generate the Spartan Mower series that best fit that customer's needs.

To take it a step further, the digital sales team then pushed those active leads to their territory sales representatives located across the country. Typically, these sales reps are on the road. However, the pandemic had most of them quarantined to their homes. **Thanks to increased use of technology, these sales managers were able to direct the customer leads to a specific dealership based on inventory, delivery options, and geographic location.**

The Results

Spartan Mowers watched as the lead generation tactic began assisting with an increase in demand and customer engagement, which resulted in sales. What began as a strategy created out of necessity during the pandemic, will no doubt remain in use to continue generating leads.

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Intimidator Inc.'s response to the COVID-19 pandemic exemplifies the spirit of Arkansas innovation. The flexibility and creativity of the company's leadership and workforce allowed them to navigate an environment of uncertainty with phenomenal success.

"Intimidator is a great example of the mechanical know-how and entrepreneurial spirit that flourishes in Arkansas."

- Governor Asa Hutchinson