## Case Insight 2.1: Holdz®

# Steve Goodair, Managing Director

Hi, my name’s Paul Baines, I'm Professor of Political Marketing at the University of Leicester, and co-author of the fifth edition of *Marketing* by Oxford University Press. In this next clip, we talk to Steve Goodair, managing Director of Holdz, and he talks about how to take into account customers’ needs in the climbing centre, Holdz market.

My name’s Steve Goodair, I'm Director of Holdz.co.uk, which is a climbing company that specializes in hand-holds and matting for the indoor climbing market.

I started Holdz 16 years ago, mainly to start a market in indoor climbing holds because there wasn’t such a thing, there was only every hold manufacturer was associated with a war builder and they used to put their own holds on a wall that they’d just built so if you went to do the route, you could read the route from the ground because there was only 50 shapes. So I decided to become an independent manufacturer, making my own holds, but they resembled more rock-like structures than the ones that you used to get…and add that to the mix.

My customers tend to be climbing centres and bouldering centres who need lots of different types of hold to replicate different types of problem and teach different types of problem on an indoor environment and they want to keep the problems fresh because they refresh them every two to three weeks to keep people coming back to try new types of problem and new variations of problems.

Because we’re a smaller manufacturer and distributor of holds we’ve good customer service, we can deliver within 24 hours if it’s in stock, we've got one of the largest ranges in the climbing world for holds and type of holds you need to build the problems you want to build and we also put extras in people’s packages, as little surprises and thank yous.

In terms of advertising, we’ve got quite a strong brand name and we’ve been going for quite a while so it’s search engine optimized when you type in ‘Holdz’, we come up number one. All the products have the Holdz on it so when people like a hold in a climbing centre the, they don’t need to think or ask who the manufacturer is, it says on it so they can then think ‘Oh, I’ll buy a set of those myself and take them home’.

We use a lot of social media because it’s easy for us and good for us because we can, we can show people the product through either a photograph or little video, but print matter, don’t use much these days at all.

Right, back in 2000, the world’s first dedicated indoor bouldering centre opened and it was unchartered ground, nobody knew if it would work, how many people they’d get through the door, so we put regular matting in there which would be used in a normal climbing centre. We found it didn’t really hold up to all day use every day because I mean these centres are open 12 hours a day and they get 100-200 people in there a day, jumping on the mats. We found the chalk dried it out; the seams would start splitting which leaves potential problems for people’s ankles dropping down between the mats, twisting ankles, all sorts, so we had to come up with a new solution to solve this.

It was a problem for us because we had to go out to repair these problems and it was also a problem for the centres themselves because they had to close that area off until it was repaired because it was a potential hazard, trip hazard or people could fall through the, the matting and damage their ankles, so we had to come up with a solution for this.

We didn’t realise at the time just how popular bouldering would become and the sheer amount of people that would get through a centre in a day and the mats were wearing out quicker than we expected. I mean if you think about a gym mat, it’s used for one piece of apparatus and one gymnast on it in a two or three hour session, these were getting three, two, or three hundred people an hour going over them, so we had to come up with a new solution, a stronger solution and one that we could guarantee so we weren’t going back to site every two minutes to repair them and we started with different types of foam, different densities of foam, we worked out the optimum one for the use we were gonna use and we came up with a sandwich of foam, dense foam and a super-dense foam so the top would be hard, firm, for feet first landings.

We also added self-adhesive Velcro which is stuck to the surface then sewn, so you’ve got belt and braces, you've got a chemical bond and a key bond which makes it a lot stronger than just stitching, stitching alone, it perforates it like toilet paper so when it stresses it sideways, it just splits and then we also got rid of all the seams in the top surface and every mat became, not every mat but the majority of the mats became modular so you, if you’ve got one that wears out underneath a steep overhang which always goes first, you can swap it with the one that never gets any traffic after two or three years, prolonging the life of the matting, it’s just a matter of dismantling your system, putting it back together again and you get another four or five years out of your system.

This was good for us because we could make mats a lot quicker, slightly cheaper, and we can transport them to site quicker but the main thing is we could uphold our five year guarantee.

The future for Holdz hopefully is to push to other countries that we’re not quite in yet. We’re in parts of Europe and parts of Asia but we really need to push and get established in other countries. Hopefully, climbing will become an Olympic sport and then the sky’s the limit, we can be everywhere and really push indoor climbing.