

## Inspiyrd: Luke Vukmer of Herban Cowboy

by Dan Cassidy | on April 11th, 2012 |



Inspiyrd.com recently interviewed Luke Vukmer, President of Herban Cowboy, a personal care company that creates natural grooming products for men. Luke sat down to discuss how he started the business from a log cabin over a decade ago, things men should look for in a skin-care product, and some advice on going after what you want in life.

**Tell us about Herban Cowboy. What does the company do, and how did it start?**

*Herban Cowboy is a brand of men's natural grooming products (shave, deodorant, cologne, etc.). In 2000 I set out to start the world's 1<sup>st</sup> men's green grooming line since I figured it was time there was one. So with just a few thousand dollars and some hand me down pots and pans, my wife and I began mixing the formula that would later turn into the products sold in major stores globally. We've certainly come a long way.*

**Nearly every start-up faces significant challenges in the early stages. What was the biggest challenge you faced when starting Herban Cowboy, and how did you overcome it?**

*Most start-ups struggle from the early grave-maker of all small businesses; undercapitalization. Overcoming this required nothing less than making a penny work like a dime. When we first started out, I was literally doing the job of 10 people. This meant working 18 hours a day, every day of the week. Vacations? Ha, I was lucky to sleep in fifteen minutes on the weekend. On top of building Herban Cowboy, I was working side jobs to get some sort of income, and then reinvesting the cash into the business.*

*Because resources were tight, it was extremely important to keep cost as low as possible. I spent lots of time haggling with suppliers and vendors. I had to convince them that we were a growing business, and that the partnership would grow as Herban Cowdoy did. For staff, I was able to convince some of my friends and family to help out with miscellaneous projects that needed to get done.*

*So looking back I was able to succeed by doing three things: I put everything I had into the business, fought to keep cost low, and leveraged all the resources I had at my disposal.*

**There are lots of personal care products available for men today, whether at pharmacies, grocery stores, or big box retailers. Why should consumers purchase natural or organic grooming products, instead of the traditional ones that are so easily accessible, and quite frankly, cheaper?**

*It's not really a choice of us versus another product. Our loyal customers already desire higher quality, eco-friendly products and we fit that need by offering a grooming regime that looks, feels and performs like conventional products, without all the harmful chemicals.*

**What should men be thinking about when considering a personal care product? What's important to look for?**

*Most men are still new to thinking about personal care in general. I think the best way to go about it is to try new products and go with what fits your personal preferences and values.*

*That said, we encourage men to choose grooming products that use natural ingredients. Lots of conventional products contain harsh chemicals that could potentially cause illness long-term, so it's important to look at the ingredients of any product you put on your body to make sure you're not doing more harm than good.*

*It's also important to think about the environmental impact of the products you're purchasing. Are the containers recyclable, or will they sit in a landfill for 100 years? We're seeing more men are being environmentally conscious, so considering the overall impact of the product itself, and the practices of the company, are important.*



**Compared to when you first started Herban Cowboy, do you see more men spending time not just on the way they look, but also focusing on the products they use on their body?**

*Yes and yes. There's no doubt men are spending a lot more time taking care of themselves, which includes choosing products that will help them look great, and also feel great too.*

**How important is it for you that Herban Cowboy "does good"?**

*It is the core of our existence. We pay very heavily for all the "good" we put into our products but it defines us, and, helps us sleep at night. This includes being one of the first personal care facilities in the US to be certified organic, using natural, food-based ingredients, minimizing our environmental impact, and being corporate members of the Arbor Day Foundation. It feels great to run a successful business, but it feels even better knowing that we're working to make the world a better place as well.*

**What advice can you share with our readers on following your dreams and going after what you want in life?**

*Each of us, if we are lucky, have the opportunity to take chances and, conversely, accept responsibility for the types of chances we take. I am reluctant to give advice since I feel it smacks too close to being self-righteous. Let's face it, if you try something and you "make it" then everyone calls you a genius but if you "fail" then they call you a "dreamer" or worse. I personally believe figuring out what makes you happy and gathering the guts to take a whack at it, is about all we can muster in the short time we are given.*

**What's next for you, and Herban Cowboy?**

*After years of only getting to use "seconds" from our men's line (our customers get the good stuff), my wife insisted we start a women's line, which will launch in Spring 2012. So all of you guys will be able to get your girlfriend or wife her own natural skincare products so she can keep her hands off of yours...*