

Kevin Mount

New Smyrna Beach, Florida



FLAUNT Electric Bicycles

Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Kevin Mount:

For Kevin Mount, owner of FLAUNT Electric Vehicles, giving up was never an option. "I stuck it out," he said. "I had four and a half years of my life invested into it. During that time, I became very knowledgeable and passionate about the product and the industry. I also see the future going in the direction of electric vehicles and the benefits it can bring to people's lives. Throughout the entire journey, our customers were right there with us. They told us how much they loved us and couldn't wait for us to get back on our feet."

Entrepreneurship is not safe. It's risky. It's stressful. It's revealing. For some, those that decide to venture into the paradoxical abyss of pain, pleasure, excitement and fear, entrepreneurship eventually exposes our primal fight or flight response. Some of us run away when things get tough. Others, like Mount, muster up the courage and passion needed to

overcome the inevitable obstacles that derail so many aspiring entrepreneurs.

FLAUNT Electric Vehicles was originally launched in 2013 as a partnership between Mount, another investor, that had connections with electric vehicle manufacturers, and the investor's attorney. Early on, the focus was on electric scooters. As time went on, they gravitated to electric bicycles. Mount explained, "We didn't have as much control in the production process as we would have liked and electric bikes seemed to be a bigger market."

With a clear focus on product and how they would bring their bikes to market, Mount, and his investors, spent the next few years ramping up production, increasing brand awareness, establishing key partnerships, defining various revenue streams, working on multiple distribution channels and, of course, selling bikes. All signs pointed to a successful launch and the future looked bright. However, in early 2017, a concerning trend began to reveal itself.

"We had two frames/models," Mount said. "For our first two production runs, we did a 50/50 split of each. Unfortunately, one of the models, the Vicko, accounted for 80% of our sales. Eventually, we ran out of that model. That hurt us. Couples would come in to buy bikes, with one person wanting the Vicko, and they weren't able to get what they wanted, so they left without purchasing anything at all. In some ways we were kicking butt. People loved the product and they were always happy with our customer service, but we didn't have the bikes they wanted."

Around this time, Mount was presented with another challenge. His investor became ill and decided not to re-invest in FLAUNT. This left

Mount in a dire situation. He was losing his funding source and he didn't have the bikes his customers wanted. Nonetheless, Mount was determined to press on and find a path forward. He added tours and rentals to help supplement revenue. He also did a pre-order campaign for the next round of Vickos, raising a lot of money in the process. Unfortunately, it wasn't enough. He needed more. He met with a local bank and was able to secure a loan. Things were looking promising when Mount was dealt another blow. Mount's partners made the decision to shut down FLAUNT. In their eyes, FLAUNT was finished.

"We officially shut down production in December of 2017," Mount said.

"By the end of December, the shop was closed. I emailed all of our customers and let them know what was going on. I assured them that Todd Hilton, my right hand man, and I were going to work on getting the business back on track. I also had to email all of our pre-order customers and refund them. It was a painful process, but we received an overwhelming amount of positive feedback and well wishes. That's what kept us motivated. Ethics and honor are important to me. Through it all, my reputation and the good will of the business was the most important thing."

At this point, many entrepreneurs would lick their wounds and move on to the next venture or slide into the rigid, yet safe, confines of a "real" job, but not Mount. He wasn't about to let go of everything he worked so hard on for the past four years. Mount's passion and vision for what FLAUNT could be was always a centerpiece of his enthusiasm. His customer's felt it too. In fact, as Mount explained, many would come in to buy a bike and would express an interest in investing in the company. Mount kept a list of these potential investors. New investors have come

along as well, many with valuable experience, as well as a willingness and a vision to take FLAUNT to higher levels. A deal was struck between Mount and his former partners, and FLAUNT 2.0 was born! The company recently launched a sales pre-order campaign and, being careful to not repeat the same oversight, will base their production runs on the results of the pre-orders.

Looking ahead, Mount is considering a new location with a potentially smaller footprint than their last outfit, but with better exposure to foot traffic. He's focused on trimming overhead and ramping up the tours and rentals portion of his business. He's looking to grow the wholesale side of the business and get his bikes into as many retailers as possible. He's also building out FLAUNT's online sales channel and ensuring that out-of-town customers are met with a smooth and seamless ordering process. Some marketing efforts will be geared towards driving customers, in cities where FLAUNT doesn't have a retailer, to order their bikes online. For those local to Central Florida, FLAUNT's electric bicycles, capable of reaching speeds of 20mph with an average range of 40 miles, can be found at Ron Jon Surf Shop, JC's Bike Shop in DeLand and A1A Beach Rentals, to name a few.

Mount offers up some great advice for those looking to make the leap into entrepreneurship. "Work as hard as you can when you're not at your day job," he said. "It's going to take that to be able to get yourself to a place where you have confidence in where you're going. Make smart decisions. Generate some revenue as soon as possible, preferably before you leave your day job. It can be hard to walk away from benefits, a steady paycheck, a 401(k), but you'll never know unless you try. Don't wait for the perfect situation. Do your homework and come up with

some solid projections of what is realistic, but have contingency funds.

You never know what curve balls will be thrown at you."

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