

BONUS! BEST TIPS TO
GET ORGANIZED

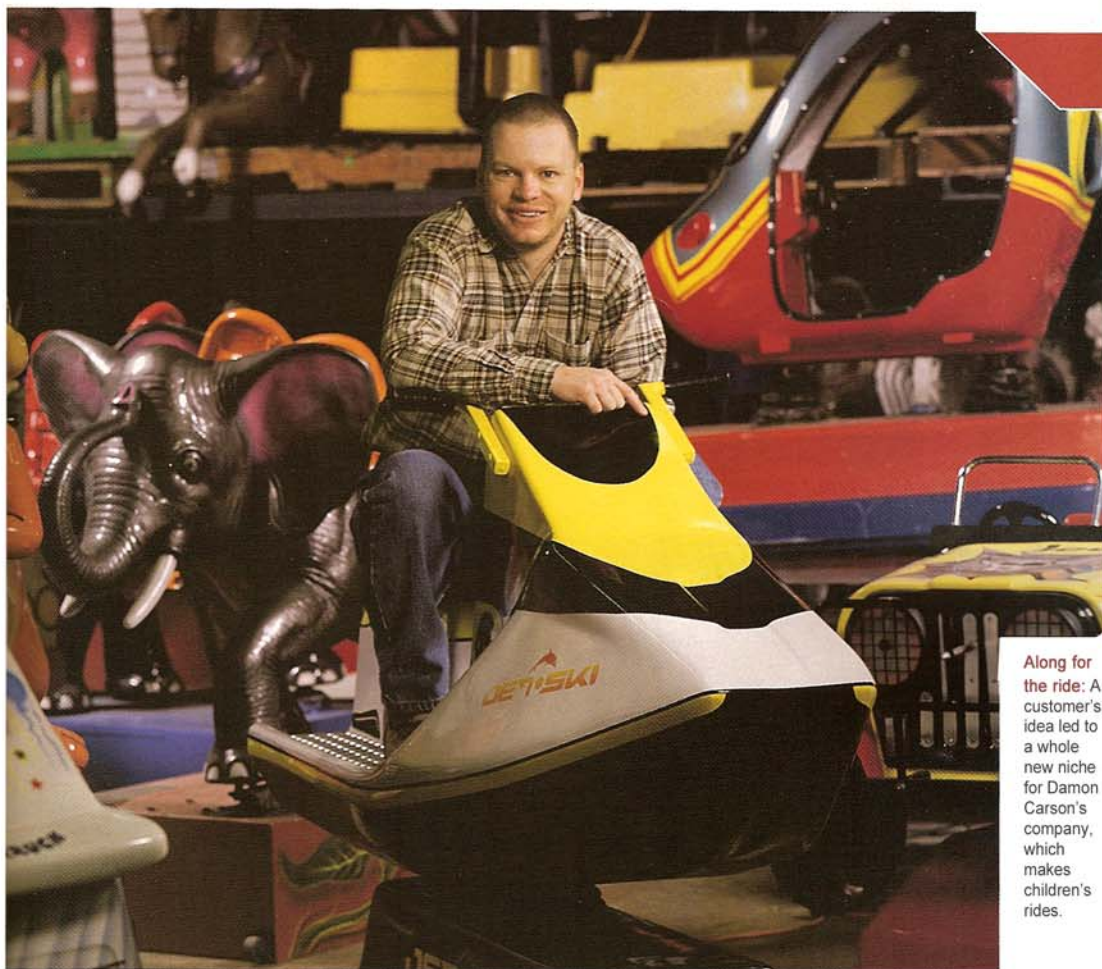
2006
**HOT
100**

READ THIS BEFORE YOU
BUY A FRANCHISE!

Entrepreneur®

[26 BIZ TRAVEL 28 INSIGHTS 30 BOOKS 32 WHEELS]

FORWARD



Along for the ride: A customer's idea led to a whole new niche for Damon Carson's company, which makes children's rides.

Power to the People

YOUR CUSTOMERS ARE YOUR LIVELIHOOD, SO WHY DON'T YOU LET THEM HAVE THEIR SAY?

"They were looking for fun, creative chairs for children to sit in while they get their hair cut," says Damon Carson, 34, president of Kiddie Rides. "[The

KIDDIE RIDES USA is pretty much what you'd expect—a manufacturer of quarter-fed children's rides that sit in shopping malls and outside grocery stores around the country. That is, it was—until the owner of a children's hair salon called the Denver company in early 2004.

idea] to mount the ride on a hydraulic lift came about because of this [salon owner's] own genius."

That simple idea has led to a three-year deal for Kiddie Rides USA to produce chairs for an entire chain of salons. Now Carson is actively soliciting more customer feedback to help him find new ways to expand his nearly \$2 million company.

Reinier Evers, founder of Trendwatching.com, a Netherlands-based trend-tracking agency, has dubbed the trend of seeking direct customer input "customer-made," which includes companies engaging consumers in everything the company does, from product development to marketing.

"Consumers are more demanding than ever, and the mantra of 'marketing is a conversation' has fi-

\$4.99 U.S.



2542 9
R.COM \$6.99 CAN
REPRENEUR MAGAZINE