

An Innovative Business Model That Works in Today's Economy



Charlie Wilson

Charlie Wilson is the founder and CEO of Salvex, Inc., an online commercial salvage company. Salvex, Wilson's third company is built from the experiences gained from the combination of his former companies, SeaRail International and SalvageSales and the knowledge passed down from his father. With agents in twenty-five countries, Salvex has become one of the world's leading salvage companies.

Wilson was exposed to the business world at a very young age and accomplished what many young business owners dream of. As a kid, he accompanied his father during the summer to different worksites across the world. In 1990, shortly after college, he started his first company SeaRail International, Inc. selling abandoned cargo from the Port of Houston. In 1994 SeaRail was the 13th fastest growing company in Houston. To accommodate the company's growth, Wilson applied and was approved for an SBA 7(a) program loan which allowed him to add ten employees, increase R&D, and purchase office equipment. In 1998 Wilson was the first to launch a website that sold salvage over the internet, opening a new door for the salvage business. The following year, SalvageSales.com was formed. Wilson later sold both companies and started Salvex, Inc. in 2002.

Salvex's strategy is to partner with existing service and manufacturing companies dealing with asset recovery, insurance claims, bankruptcies, liens, and mishandled cargos to maximize recovery for their salvage goods. Their services include salvage appraisals, transportation and storage, asset & salvage recovery, research and product placement, and theft recovery. Like many companies across the country, the declining economy dramatically impacted their business causing Wilson to lay off most of his sales force. The silver lining came when he developed an innovative business model to incorporate a commission-based sales team. He restructured the company to incorporate a 100% commission model for his field agents. Salvex has grown from eight employees and field agents to eleven permanent employees and forty-two agents. With this new model, Wilson is able to employ more people and bring in industry specialists from all over the world. He plans to continue building the company to become fully integrated with the government and oil and gas industry and have an agent in every country. Wilson is currently pursuing another SBA loan to help with the expansion.

For more information about Salvex, visit their website at www.salvex.com or their office located at 723 Main St., Ste. 600, Houston, TX. Information about SBA programs and services can be found at www.sba.gov.

Is your business successful? Would you like to be featured on our local webpage?

In our efforts to recognize the achievements of small businesses, the Houston District Office features success stories on our website. The small business success stories are selected by the district office and represent small businesses that have received services from SBA and/or our Resource Partners.

All success stories are entered into our Washington database. Some are featured in our SBA Houston Newsletters and are submitted to local newspapers, associations, chambers of commerce, and community newsletters for publication.

To qualify for consideration a small business must meet the following criteria:

1. Receive assistance from SBA or a Resource Partners, i.e., SCORE and Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs)
2. Must be in business a minimum of three years
3. Owner must sign Consent Form

If you would like our district office to consider your business for a small business success story, please contact our Public Information Officer at 713-773-6516 or email at Valerie.nguyen@sba.gov. Please note some small businesses may also be included in public officials' speeches.