



Samuli Hepola - a passionate snow border who became businessman

Entrepreneur Samuli Hepola, 34, brings fashionable and young Finnish clothing brands to the United States. He launched Tripletwo store in Huntington Beach less than a year ago. Samuli has been a member of the Finnish American Chamber of Commerce on the Pacific Coast since the beginning of this year.

How did you start as an entrepreneur?

When I was in a high school, I lived in Northern Italy with my family. Snowboarding was my passion and I didn't care that much about school, so my dad arranged a job for me. I started to import local snowboard brand products to Finland. Business was growing fast and I didn't have time to finish any of my three attempts at university education: School of Economics and Business Administration, School of Science and Technology and Faculty of Law. Maybe I will graduate from one of those schools when I am older.

What kind of business is Tripletwo?

It represents the following Finnish youth clothing brands: Makia (www.makiaclothing.com), CTRL (www.ctrlclothing.com), WhtMoment (www.whtmoment.com), Costo (www.costo.fi), Napapiiri Jean (www.napapiirijeans.com) ja Asenne (www.asennesurf.com). We also sell Norwegian Moods of Norway (www.moodsofnorway.com) and Swedish WESC (www.wesc.com).

Why did you choose California?

My good friend Jari Laaksonen suggested that I should introduce these brands to the U.S. He studied at Orange Coast College and now lives in Huntington Beach so we chose a familiar place to establish our first store.

How is the Californian business culture different from the Finnish one?

The Finnish way of doing business is more straight forward. The Southern Californian way reminds me more of Southern Europe. We have so many different nationalities and they all bring something extra to the table. It was challenging to start a new business in a new place without existing social contacts. But I am sure that Americans feel the same way when they start a business abroad. Cultural differences and different kind of bureaucracies are challenging. But I do believe that it is easier from now on.

What kind of future plans do you have for Tripletwo?

To build a successful retail and distributing organization. And open one of two more stores.

Do you have other companies?

My main business is Finesta Conglomerate. It operates in Finland and the Baltic countries. Finesta Conglomerate provides industry consultation services on mid-range strategic planning on out sourcing and other business support services

Where do you live?

I am traveling between California, Finland and the Baltic. The ideal situation would be that I stay in California during winter and enjoy the lovely summers in the Nordic countries. In the next year or so, I'll try to stay more in the United States and focus my energy on this new business. Hopefully I have also time to sail, play golf and snowboard.

Who is taking care of the store?

Our store manager Heidi, and a few part time workers. Paavo Tikkanen, who is an ex

professional snowboarder is taking care of pr.

Does Tripletwo have any celebrity costumers?

Our customers include well known snow borders, skate borders and surfers as well as a couple of musicians and ice hockey players and a racecar driver.

Where Tripletwo is located?

In the heart of the Huntington Beach . One block off the Pacific Coast Highway and Main Street . The address is 222 5th St (Huntington Beach, CA 92648).

Do you have a website?

www.triple-two.com. It will open when we start nation wide distribution.