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Mike Hasselblach, owner of Junk King in San Antonio, says he is offering clients a green option for decluttering their homes and offices.

'EVERYONE HAS CLUTTER AND UNWANTED ITEMS, BUT FEW HAVE THE TIME OR ABILITY TO DISPOSE OF IT PROPERLY.'

Mike Hasselblach
Owner, Junk King of San Antonio

Franchise uncovers new business opportunities

BY MIKE W. THOMAS

After spending 40 years in the international shipping business, Mike Hasselblach is finding new business opportunities in piles of "junk."

Earlier this year, Hasselblach opened the first Junk King franchise in San Antonio and is now making inroads in the multi-billion-dollar junk removal and hauling industry by giving his clients a green option. More than 60 percent of the materials that he collects are recycled, giving his business a secondary revenue stream.

"Lately, we have been making good money on recycling," Hasselblach says. "We are getting a lot of metal items that we can strip down and recycle."

Junk King works with homeowners, Realtors, property managers and business owners to haul away anything and everything that is not a hazardous material. This includes old furniture and appliances, electronic equipment, fencing and lumber, yard waste, tree branches and garden refuse, tires and automotive parts.

"Everyone has clutter and unwanted

items, but few have the time or ability to dispose of it properly," Hasselblach says. "Peoples' homes are their castles and we understand they lead busy lives. We can give them back their garage, basement or spare rooms so that their home will look like they always dreamed."

Hasselblach says he charges clients by the volume that their items take up in his trucks. A full-load costs \$488 and a minimum charge on any job is \$89. The company is currently operating two trucks with a staff of six people, but Hasselblach says he hopes to have at least five or six trucks in operation as the business continues to grow.

"I think we will get up to \$150,000 to \$175,000 (in revenues) in our first year," he says. "But I think Bexar County could easily support five or six trucks eventually."

Hasselblach says he has the franchise rights to all of Bexar and Kendall counties. He says the franchise arrangement with San Carlos, Calif.-based Junk King has been very positive so far. They provide him with call center service and a Web site

where he gets most of his business inquiries right now.

"I have been very happy with the level of service we have been getting," he says. "They handle the order taking for us leaving me free to concentrate on our local business operations."

Founded in 2005, Junk King is a full-service junk removal franchise concept with 16 locations currently opened and operating nationwide.

Happy customer

Steve Garnsey recently hired Junk King to help him clean out a storage shed and says he is very pleased with their work.

"They did an outstanding job," Garnsey says. "They were out there for four hours and I was very impressed with their professional courtesy and attitude of support."

Hasselblach and his crew pulled everything out of the storage shed and sorted it into "keep" and "throw out" piles as Garnsey inspected the items. Then they even placed

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the "keep" items into a different storage shed at no extra charge, Garnsey says.

"Ultimately, they helped me to free up three-quarters of the space," he says. "They did an outstanding job."

Hasselblach calls his business "point and haul," meaning that the client points at something and he hauls it away. The one thing they try not to haul is household garbage, but they will haul that as well if the client pays them.

"We have a financial incentive to salvage and recycle as much as we can because it costs us money every time we take anything to the landfill," Hasselblach notes.

Career change

Hasselblach, 60, says he decided to open up a Junk King franchise this past June because he needed a new line of business and wasn't ready to retire. His last business in international shipping went under after the economic crash of October 2008. He had two partners in Mexico and he says that when the economy soured, the business came to a complete halt and he couldn't sustain it.

After taking some time off and spending it with his family, Hasselblach says he started looking at different franchising opportunities and settled on Junk King because it was something he could do with

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his four sons.

"It is a new concept and I think I am one of the first ones in Texas," he says.

He financed the startup of the business himself using retirement savings and some inheritance money. The office is located at 845 Isom Road near the San Antonio International Airport. The startup franchise fee was \$180,000, which Hasselblach says he found to be very reasonable after comparing it to other franchise opportunities. In addition, he has invested a little over \$100,000 in additional capital purchasing the trucks.

Hasselblach says launching the business hasn't been easy, but it is moving forward. He says the industry hasn't been impacted by the negative economy as much as others have.

"We work responsibly and we're proud of our reputation as an advocate for residential and commercial junk recycling," Hasselblach says. "Our customers get their space back by de-cluttering without filling up the landfill."