



CRESBI Crate System

by Linda Fritz, Founder & Owner

Verona, KY

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Linda Fritz, creator of CRESBI Crates, hates waste. For this reason (and a few others), she created a reusable crate that is more sturdy and durable than reusable or plastic bags, can be cleaned in a dishwasher and folds up flat for easy storage. Now she's on a quest to bring a crate to every home in America.

It all started with having just a little too much edamame. As the owner of Sun Sugar Farms in Veron, Ky., she has been growing edamame and sun sugar cherry tomatoes for several years. By 2012, she was selling hundreds of pounds of edamame and donating some to schools with a goal of getting Kentucky children to eat healthier.

"I was transporting the edamame in boxes, and I hated that the boxes were getting soggy and probably getting thrown away," Fritz says. "So I bought a couple bins like the produce guys at the grocery store use. And I thought that if only it was a little taller and a little lighter, why couldn't we use this to grocery shop with?"

The bins Fritz bought originally were a bit too large and industrial for what she was looking for, but after many trials and tribulations, she found a crate that was the perfect size and weight for her idea, sunk her savings into it and hasn't looked back.

Fritz dubbed the crates CRESBI as an acronym for Collapsible Reusable Environmentally-friendly Stackable Box Idea. The fact that the systems include a strap, custom hook and thermal protection set it apart from other collapsible crates in existence. Although she had to go overseas for the crates and her custom designed hooks, the webbing is made in Oregon and Rhode Island and sewn in Kentucky. She developed multiple systems to fit any shopper's lifestyle from just needing a single crate to grab a few items to having enough crates (and a way to carry them into the store) to fill an entire cart full of products.

"One CRESBI crate can replace up to six plastic bags and are much better than reusable bags, which start to fall apart if you wash them, and there's nowhere to recycle them," Fritz says. "But the best part about the crates is the time they save. You simply put your items in them with the barcodes up and have the checker use their handheld scanner to scan the items right in the crate."

Currently, Fritz is selling the crates on her website, www.cresbicrate.com, through customers who have become resellers, and to businesses looking for a durable, truly sustainable promotional product for customers or for use as employee gifts or incentives. Examples of CRESBI clients are as diverse as her consumer customers: ESPN, TVA, Usborne Books, Theatre House, Kremer's Market, Cincy Favorites, Huff Realty and the Bank of Kentucky.

Founders Questions:

1. How do you define success?

Knowing that you've left this world better than when you came into it. A business owner told me about giving out CRESBI Crates as gifts. One of her employees actually had tears in her eyes since she now had something better than the reusable bags that everyone had to carry (because of the bag ban) and she'd no longer have to worry about ecoli. A lady in Florida said her 7 year old could now carry in all the groceries by himself. A California woman bought over \$1500 2 Pack & Bags to give to friends and family as gifts, wanting to share the bright-colored crates and straps since they reminded her of her home in Hawaii and they eliminated the need for the plastic bags.

2. What has been your proudest moment as a founder?

When a city in the state of Washington ordered 1000 Convenience CRESBI crates with their logo on the strap to give out on their Earth Day event. That they embraced my idea enough to buy and distribute that many was awesome. It was also pretty tight timing and I had a great team who helped me get all the crates and straps from Washington in time.

3. What has been the toughest decision you've made during your time as a founder?

To not put on the Knights of Northern Kentucky Scholastic Chess Tournament in 2014 (so far) and run my local middle school/high school chess club. It just takes too much time to put on a big tournament like I had developed it into over 8 years with the help of other volunteers and I wanted to give my focus to this new business. It kills me though when I see some of the kids or parents and they ask when I'll start chess club again and do the tournament. I have to tell them I need to get my investment back first because I've put a lot into it and now's the time. Once I do make up all the money I invested I will definitely do chess stuff again.

4. What have you learned about yourself during this startup process?

I need to be more like a shark in order to ever be profitable. I give too much away but I love my customers. It means so much to hear people talk about how much they love their CRESBI crates and how much easier their lives are when they use them. Anytime I see someone shopping with a CRESBI crate system I give them a prize, I am so happy.

5. What advice would you give to another budding startup company?

Don't do it.

Just kidding. You never know if you don't try. Actually I've been keeping a video diary of my little entrepreneur journey (or entre "Manure" as one of my chess kids called it) and recording myself after certain events that went very well or very poorly. Someday I'll publish it and call it "YOU'RE DOING WHAT???"

6. What are your next milestones as a company? What kind of support and resources do you need to achieve these milestones?

Introduce some of the new accessories we're developing like glow in the dark accents for the Camping CRESBI and more stylish crate totes. Reach \$100,000 in sales. Hire my part-timers as full-timers. Have a customer order from every state in America (currently at 35 states). Get 300 facebook likes. Sleep more than 5 hours a night.

Would need continued exposure from great venues like "Dream Big America". Also to have access to the decision makers at big organizations who want to purchase and brand their name on a TRULY green product for their customers or employees would be fabulous.