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SELLING SOLUTIONS STRAIGHT TO END-USERS BROUGHT THIS COMPANY BACK TO LIFE.

BY SARA WILSON
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ESTABLISHED IN 1958, Handi-Ramp is the oldest manufacturer of ramps for the disabled. By 1995, however, the Libertyville, Illinois, business had stalled. Thom Disch purchased the struggling company that year and, with the help of a new company website and solution-selling tactics, revitalized it at a growth rate averaging 30 percent per year over the past 11 years.

When Disch, 51, launched www.handiramp.com in 1996, the online presence let him sell to end-users directly rather than depend on the traditional but less effective method of using a dealer network. Now, about 75 percent of all sales are to end-users, who find Handi-Ramp via the web--and with 1 million site visitors annually, the company projects year-end sales of \$5 million. Disch also targets niche markets: He's done jobs for troops in Iraq and has even customized ramps to safely transport sea turtles and three-legged rhinos. Says Disch, "Solution selling has really enabled us to expand the business."