

## Andretti's Brings Entertainment

Andretti Indoor Karting & Games offers a twist on retail entertainment with activities for young and old.

Katie Sloan

A chance encounter can sometimes change your life. Just ask Eddie Hamann, whose concept Andretti Indoor Karting & Games grew from a clandestine meeting in Florida.

"Back in 1996, I had an encounter with John Andretti," says Eddie Hamann, managing member of Andretti Entertainment. "At that time, I was working at a go-kart track in Daytona Beach, Florida, across from the speedway. One thing led to another, we started talking about how great it would be to have a place with his name on it. By the time he came back in 1997 for the Daytona 500, he agreed to pursue it, and I was able to get the funding to build our first facility in Melbourne, Florida, which is now 19 years old and still operating."

The initial concept was an outdoor park that featured four go-kart tracks, miniature golf, bumper boats and batting cages. "It was your typical family center that you find in a lot of towns," says Hamann. "Very quickly, I realized that the weather deeply effects how well these businesses do. It's either too cold, too hot, too rainy – that's how the idea was born to build a facility in Roswell, Georgia, indoors."

The 100,000-square-foot space – previously occupied by Sam's Club – includes go-kart tracks, a restaurant with hamburgers and concessions and an arcade. "That space became very successful very quickly," says Hamann. "It took me a while to find the right uses to put together what Andretti Indoor Karting & Games looks like today. We realized that the more attractions we have, the more revenue is going to grow."

In 2008, the company began developing another prototype in Marietta, Georgia. "With this property, we decided to also include bowling, laser tag and virtual reality games," says Hamann. "We also included a sky bar in this space, and that's



The exterior of Andretti Indoor Karting & Games in Orlando, Florida.



Andretti locations now offer bowling alongside go-kart tracks, laser tag, virtual reality games and bars serving drinks and food.



when it really took off for us.” The popularity of this location led to the opening of a new location in Orlando, Florida, and the construction of a new property in San Antonio, Texas.

“One of the things that sets us apart from other entertainment venues is the amount of activities and spaces that we offer,” says Hamann. “In any of the markets that we’re in, you’ll find a great bowling spot that stands alone, or an arcade at a mall. What we’ve been able to do is put it all inside one building, so if you have a family of four or just a group of guys of different ages and they come to our facility, we have something to do for everyone. We are named after the greatest driver that has ever been, Mario Andretti, and that holds a lot of appeal. The Andretti name is synonymous with winning and professionalism.”

While the space appeals to families, the entertainment venue’s sweet spot is aged 20 to 35 years old. “We host a lot of birthday parties for younger children, but our bread and butter is corporate events,” says Hamann. “We allocate about 10,000 to 15,000 square feet of space in each location to community spaces with a scratch kitchen.”

“If you arrive on a Saturday in the morn-



One of the indoor go-karting tracks featured in the updated prototypes for Andretti Indoor Karting & Games.



The main bar in the company's new Orlando location.

ing, you see a lot of families and children playing games,” continues Hamann. “As the day goes by, it becomes more of an adult space. We have two bars—our sky bar is especially popular that overlooks the tracks. During the week, we do a lot of corporate events during the day. In the evenings, we get a lot of young couples or groups of friends who come over to watch a game in our bars, which offer 130 LED screens, or who want to bowl and grab something to eat. We get a little bit of everything depending on the time of day.”

“We’re in the growth mode, and we’re hoping to be in 20 cities in the next three to five years,” says Hamann. “Our buildings are about 100,000 square feet or more. We’re working on trying to shrink that space to about 80,000 square

feet right now without losing any of the extra amenities. We may go vertical in the coming years.” **SCB**