



# Sprinter MARKET UPDATE

## Ultimate Toys Setting New Standards for the Industry

DECEMBER 2017

### Why Ultimate Toys Began

When I first talked to Gary Green, I was surprised by his level of enthusiasm for Mercedes-Benz Sprinters. As the founder and CEO of Strategic Franchising, Green's companies have awarded thousands of franchises in over 16 countries, so when I asked him why he started Ultimate Toys, he said it was to fill what he saw as a void in the industry. He explained that for years he owned a 45-foot very high-end Prevost bus that weighed over 40,000 pounds with all the amenities including marble floors, granite and electronics everywhere you turned. While he got a lot of enjoyment from it, he said it was like owning a "yacht on wheels" and he grew tired of the continual maintenance and repairs.

He wanted something simple, something that he could enjoy; yet take it down the street and get fixed if something was wrong. After searching high and low, he simply couldn't find another vehicle on the market that met his needs. This is when he decided to take things into his own hands and design his own. He would create the one-of-a-kind Super Sprinter—the perfect family van, luxury limo and ultimate tailgater all in one.

"When people saw what I created, they immediately wanted one," said Green. His entrepreneurial spirit kicked in—thus the creation of Ultimate Toys, a perfect name for Green's new endeavor.

Right from the start, Green knew he wanted only quality. He also wanted a vehicle that was easy to maintain with convenient and qualified service available locally, across the country and around the world. That's right, he has sold units as far away as Canada, Dubai, Nigeria and Nicaragua. After taking an in-depth look at nearly every vehicle on the market, he chose Midwest Automotive Designs



to develop a new custom Sprinter just for him. They were certified as a Preferred Approved Upfitter by Mercedes-Benz and were also the largest manufacturer of their kind. Six months later, Green and Midwest had put a lot of work into a completely

redesigned and re-engineered floor plan and had created the new Super Sprinter, which would be offered exclusively through Ultimate Toys.

"I knew after meeting Midwest, that they were the manufacturer that I could trust to build my Sprinter," said Green. "No one else comes close to their reputation, quality and exceptional service. Not to mention, they are owned by REV, a publicly traded \$2 billion company. So, I knew my new owners would have the support behind them should the need ever arise."

Green wants to ensure his customers get the most for their money. While Super Sprinters are big toys and loads of fun, Green knows they still have to be practical. So, even though the Super Sprinter offers many more features and higher quality workmanship than competitors, Green keeps his overhead down and operates Ultimate Toys more as a distributor or a wholesaler than a retail store. This means his customers walk away feeling good knowing they got the best deal possible.

"Some 'private label' companies try to hide their manufacturer," Green explained. "But we are extremely

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proud to have partnered with Midwest and make no effort to hide this fact. A Sprinter manufactured by Midwest is of such high quality, from the custom woodwork to the hand-crafted interior, they were the obvious choice. For example, I won't mention names, but a well-known competitor uses a \$3 hinge on their cabinets. We use a \$41 hinge on ours. We also use up to 50% more wiring fasteners inside our walls than some manufactures and utilize conduit where wiring rests against a beam – all to avoid rattling and future rubbing or breakage. These are all things no one would ever know because they can't see them, but in 6 to 12 months you won't have those problems while going down the road in one of our Sprinters."

### Limited Selection

If you're interested in purchasing a Sprinter and have done any shopping at all, you've probably found what Green discovered. That is, buyers really only have three types of Sprinters to choose from:

1. Limo – Limos are great if you always have a driver. If you don't, and you are the driver, then you are separated by a privacy partition and you can't enjoy everyone's company or be part of the party.
2. RVs – The layout just isn't functional or convenient. While a few people can sit up front, others have to sit in the back. There's a shower and a stove crowding the middle section, maybe even a microwave and large refrigerator separating them from everyone else, it's impossible to entertain...it's just plain awkward and the floor plan isn't designed for multiple uses.
3. Group Transportation – You've seen them. They're everywhere and just a basic vehicle with all seats facing forward. It's functional but noth-

ing special and is generally used for transporting a large group of people from Point A to Point B. Think bus.

In the end, Green found that each Sprinter seemed to be built with one specific use in mind and,

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unfortunately, there were no multi-purpose Sprinters on the market at any price. Very few had bathrooms and, if you found one, it was very small and uncomfortably claustrophobic. With 29 to 31 inches being the standard in the industry, it was nearly impossible for an adult weighing over 175 lbs. to comfortably enter through the 20-inch door, turn around and get the door closed.

Green says, “When I first saw the bathroom, I had to suck in my stomach to close the door. It was ridiculous. I couldn't imagine one of my larger friends trying this or asking one of my female guests to fight their way into the bathroom. I just wasn't going to do that and completely re-engineered our floor plan!”

### What's Different?

The Super Sprinter is so different in so many ways; it's hard to know where to begin. For starters, it has a roomy 42-inch bathroom with a flushing toilet and a sink with running water that's huge by comparison. There's also 36 cu. ft. of storage space for luggage, golf clubs, sports equipment, kids' toys and supplies. Plenty of room for a family to go on an extended trip and take everything they need.

There's easy access to luggage from the back doors of the Sprinter and

also from the inside when you are on the road. There are two refrigerators, one drawer-type in the lounge area for entertaining and a dorm-size refrigerator for food and drinks that is thoughtfully tucked away so it's convenient, but doesn't ruin the beauty of the upscale interior.

Push a button and a retractable awning with lights extends out creating plenty of shade to enjoy while watching kids' sporting events, family outings or tailgating. A third flat-screen TV can be hooked up outside in a matter of minutes using the hook-ups located just under the awning—great for watching the pre-game or letting the kids play video games while the adults are grilling and enjoying food and drinks with friends. There's also a convenient outdoor shower for rinsing off muddy paws and shoes.

The swivel captain's chairs in the middle section and the driver's area are unique to Ultimate Toys and are a customer favorite. Face the middle captain's chairs forward and everyone can talk and enjoy each other's company. Then, swivel the chairs around facing back and now it's a luxury limo with plenty of separation between passengers and the driver. This is great for conversations, entertaining, playing games and watching the flat-screen TVs. There are also two sofas that fold down to create a bed—convenient for naps or overnight travel. All of the amenities, from the lighted bar to the high-end audio and flat-screen TVs, are of the highest quality. The Super Sprinter really is an upscale family van, elegant limo and great tailgating vehicle all rolled into one.

### Conversion vs Manufacturer

When shopping for a Sprinter, most people don't recognize the difference between a conversion company and a

manufacturer. A conversion company begins with a completely finished Sprinter from a local Mercedes-Benz dealership. Then they usually modify the intricate electrical and mechanical systems and retrofit the rest of the vehicle. Unfortunately, this often voids the Mercedes-Benz warranty without the buyer's knowledge.

To make things worse, in the end, the Sprinter's internal computer system still "thinks" it is a cargo van, which can lead to a rougher ride, poor gas mileage and a number of other issues. And, even with all these enhancements, the vehicle can be difficult to finance or insure and can have a substantially lower resale value. This is because insurance companies, banks and buyers are unable to authenticate the value of the upgrades since the National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) and Kelley Blue Book (KBB) doesn't recognize most conversion companies.

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For Green, the icing on the cake was that Midwest was one of the few in the industry to be classified as a manufacturer and to be recognized by Mercedes-Benz as a Preferred Approved Upfitter. So, what does that actually mean? Well, first off, a company can't receive these accreditations with both the government and Mercedes-Benz without meeting stringent criteria. They are required to pass DOT testing and are subject to engineering inspections of the facility, product and process controls—something that smaller companies simply can't comply with.

While a Sprinter built for Ultimate Toys is beautiful, it actually has to be sent back to Mercedes-Benz to

have the entire brains of its computer reprogrammed because it's a whole different vehicle. Otherwise, it would still "think" it was a cargo van and its computer programming would not take into account the extra weight, changes to suspension and other critical factors. In short, it would be confused and therefore, everything would be effected—performance, fuel mileage and ride.

"When buying a Sprinter, there's a lot more to understand than just the cosmetics," Green said.

### What's Next?

Green certainly seems to be on to something. Ultimate Toys is already one of the largest distributors solely focused on this specialized market. In fact, he has recently introduced two other versions of his Super Sprinter so he can actually hone in on anyone's special wants. So, what does the future hold for Ultimate Toys? Since Green's main business for the past 30 years has been franchising, it should come as no surprise that he has recognized yet another opportunity with Sprinters and has recently announced a new franchise—LuxurySprinterRental.com

"So many people kept asking if they could rent one of our Sprinters. They loved them, but either couldn't afford one or didn't want to tie-up that much money on a luxury item. You simply can't find a Sprinter as nice as ours to use for a family trip or corporate outing," says Green.

Now, through LuxurySprinterRental.com, customers can rent a Sprinter for a business outing, entertaining clients, fun family vacation, wedding, or other special event. Franchise owners can be selective when choosing whom they will rent their Sprinters to. With an average rental fee of \$600-\$800 per day, and more

with a driver, a franchise owner can rent out their Sprinter as much or as little as they want and help pay for it. They can make it a hobby or a full or part-time business. Green believes, for those who really want to make a business out of it, the opportunity is wide-open.

Where will the Super Sprinter end up? Only time will tell. If you continue to follow Green and the Super Sprinter, there's likely to be more innovation and exciting ways for having fun and building businesses on down the road. If you'd like more information on the Super Sprinter or any of the other models, contact Ultimate Toys at [www.UltimateToys.com](http://www.UltimateToys.com).

*- S. Cunningham is a freelance writer for Sprinter Market Update*

Sources: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20170413005584/en/REV-Group-Acquires-Midwest-Automotive-Designs>