

UNTUCKit -

SHIRTS TO TAKE YOU FROM WORK TO WEEKEND - AND EVERYWHERE IN BETWEEN

BY CHRISTINE CHRISTOPOUL

I have an 18-year-old son who never tucks in his shirt, so I was pretty excited to come across the brand UNTUCKit, a line of shirts designed to be worn – well, untucked. I was even more excited to learn that the founder of the company, Chris Riccobono, was raised right here in Franklin Lakes.

Growing up, Chris attended the Academy of Most Blessed Sacrament, Franklin Avenue Middle School and Don Bosco Prep. He was an avid tennis player, playing at the Indian Trail Club as well as in high school. Chris also played soccer for the RYSA Wildcats and travel basketball. After high school he headed to Providence College where he continued his tennis career before earning his bachelor's degree in 2001 and then accepting a position as an account manager at GE Healthcare. But Chris had the entrepreneurial itch. He always felt he wanted to start his own business and he experimented with a few ideas, one of which was a wine blog called Pardon that Vine. The blog didn't really make any money, but it did teach him a lot about marketing and effective use of social media. More importantly, it helped Chris get comfortable with the idea of taking a risk. He was still working at GE and also enrolled in the MBA program at Columbia University when his big idea hit. Chris says, "The best ideas come when you are solving your own problem. I was away on a trip and had brought several shirts with me, but found I wanted to wear the same one every night because it was the best length and looked good untucked." As soon as he got back to New York, Chris conducted a survey of 500 men and 95% of them were excited about the concept of



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a shirt meant to be worn untucked. He brought that favorite shirt to several factories hoping they could just match the measurements. But it wasn't so easy. Creating the right cut and fit took time, because changing a shirt's length means changing the rest of its dimensions and moving away from conventional design standards. Money was also an issue. "It's hard to raise money when you tell people you are trying to make a shorter shirt," Chris says with a laugh. He spent about a year meeting with technical experts, talking to factory owners and raising the initial seed money, and in 2001, Chris, along with a partner, officially launched UNTUCKit.

I guess, in addition to my son, there are quite a lot of men who are interested in wearing their shirts untucked, because the company has really taken off. They currently have 79 stores in the United States, 5 in Canada and 2 in England. Later this year they are expanding into the Netherlands, France, Scotland and Germany. The shirts are so popular that other big-name brands have started copying UNTUCKit's product, but Chris isn't worried. He explains, "The great thing is that our name has become synonymous with the product, kind of like Xerox was to copy machines. UNTUCKit has become a buzzword - I can't tell you how many times I have overheard people in public talking about the brand." He adds that UNTUCKit implements 100% inspection on every shirt produced to ensure they are all made to specification. This way the customer knows they are getting high quality and the right fit every time. "No one else really does that," says Chris. Another thing that sets UNTUCKit apart is their brick and mortar store model. The retail stores have minimal square footage, a cool vibe - and complimentary scotch. When a customer visits the store, there are a number of 'try-on' shirts so they can determine their perfect size. Once

that's done, the customer can use the store-provided iPad to place their order. Chris says it's a very relaxed experience and guys like to come to the store, buy a shirt, and hang out for a while. Oh, and did I mention the scotch?

UNTUCKit shirts are so appealing, they have many celebrity fans including Warren Buffet (it's his favorite shirt), Tim Cook and Leonardo DiCaprio. Drew Brees, of the New Orleans Saints, likes the shirts so much, he reached out to Chris to invest in the company and is now UNTUCKit's United States brand ambassador. Similarly, Wayne Gretzky represents the company in Canada and soccer star Kevin De Bruyne recently joined the team to endorse the brand in the European market. In recent years, UNTUCKit has also expanded their product line to include men's sweaters, polo shirts, pants, jackets and accessories. They also have an extensive women's line including, dresses, blouses and, you guessed it, shirts that can be worn untucked. Chris says, "The business world is changing. People don't wear suits anymore and our products can be worn casually on the weekends, dressed up in the evenings or professionally in the office."

Today, Chris lives in Madison, NJ with his wife and two young sons and the couple is expecting a girl later this year. His parents still live in Franklin Lakes and he brings his family back to visit often. He says he has fond memories of growing up in town and still enjoys going to local restaurants (although he misses Delpinos, which was his favorite) and the beauty of the Indian Trail Club.

To learn more about UNTUCKit visit www.untuckit.com or stop in to one of the New Jersey stores located in the Garden State Plaza, Short Hills mall or Freehold Raceway mall.



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