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THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS IN LOUISIANA



Reaching for the Sky

Lafayette-based FlyGuys uses AI to match drone operators with reality data clients across the nation.

As AI continues to evolve, Louisiana tech investor Joe Stough is leading the way with FlyGuys, which uses proprietary software to match supply and demand for drones. With a managed online marketplace business model, FlyGuys brings together over 14,000 Federal Aviation Administration-licensed drone pilots nationwide to assist clients and software companies in need of reality data.

FlyGuys' clients work in various industries, performing tasks such as studying the productivity of a solar panel, inspecting utility poles,

assessing the status of a commercial parking lot, or even modeling a cell tower. What unites them is a shared goal: easily finding and engaging drone operators to do work that would otherwise be difficult or dangerous for humans.

"Our drone operators are capable of delivering inspection reports quickly and with more precision than a human looking with their naked eye," says Stough, CEO.

Stough's extensive history as a global software creator and tech investor—with a focus on operational excellence—has given him

valuable insight into the industry. He came to FlyGuys after successfully investing in the food delivery app Waitr, a company he eventually ran and took public. When common investors between Waitr and FlyGuys asked Stough to serve as a coach to the FlyGuys founder, he became an investor and was named Board Chairman. In 2022, Stough shifted gears and became CEO with the goal of elevating FlyGuys to a new level by bringing operational excellence processes to an already promising business model.

How It Works

Engaging FlyGuys is simple. Once clients submit an order for data capture using FlyGuys' proprietary cloud-based software, the AI platform sources the appropriate drone pilot based on location and experience, obtains a commitment from the pilot through a micro-contract, and coordinates the mission. Drone operators then confirm the job by a specified check-in confirmation date, ensuring no customer commitments fall through the cracks.

"Other companies deliver a similar service, but most narrow their focus to one or two vertical markets," says Stough. "FlyGuys is AI-agnostic by design, so there's no limit to the vertical markets we can access." As partners to AI software companies and drone pilots or service providers, FlyGuys' pure horizontal focus makes it unique. The company also prides itself on delivering quality services however big it grows.

Market response has been exceptional. After a significant investment in cloud-based software, FlyGuys' revenue exploded from \$3.9 million in 2023 to \$10 million in 2024. By 2025, the company is projected to grow an additional 100%, and over the next five years its annual revenue is on track to reach \$100 million. "But even that," says Stough, "is nowhere near the limit of FlyGuys' potential."

"The total market for these reality data-gathering products is in the billions," he continues. "It's a highly disruptive technology in a sizable but fragmented market with very little competition. And it's exactly the kind of technology that clients nationwide will need to grow into the future."

