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# Hand sanitizer company draws customers

San Antonio Business Journal - by [Mike W. Thomas](#)

Ever since the first reports of a swine flu outbreak began appearing in the media, the Mendoza Group LLC, doing business as Kleenhanz, has seen its products fly off the shelves at local H-E-B food stores.

“We can’t keep enough in stock right now,” says Randall Mendoza, president and CEO of the Mendoza Group, which manufactures Kleenhanz antimicrobial towelettes. “I’ve sold out of everything I have this week. Right now, H-E-B wants everything we have,” Mendoza adds.

Mendoza says that with this pandemic looming, the best way to reduce the transmission of the disease is to keep your hands clean. The best way to do that, he says, is by washing your hands with soap and warm water. But, if you are not in a position to do that, using Kleenhanz products is a good alternative, he says.

“When you are in a rush or don’t have access to soap and water, this is the next best thing,” he says.

Mendoza says the swine flu pandemic has raised people’s awareness of the need for personal hygiene and that has led to a greater demand for the company’s product. Kleenhanz products are currently available at area H-E-B stores and are also distributed to all the schools in the Northeast Independent School District (NEISD).

Last year, the company had about a quarter million dollars in revenues. This year, they are expecting between \$1.5 million and \$2 million, says Lance FitzSimon, chief operations officer and partner with Mendoza.

“We’ve known this day was coming for some time,” FitzSimon says. “But convincing organizations of the need for preventative measures, when there isn’t a regional or national scare like there is today, can be difficult.”

### Company vision

The company, which employs just three people, currently outsources its manufacturing to a company in Toluca, Mexico, and has a contract with locally based ArchPoint Sales to serve as its national broker. But FitzSimon says he expects that over the next couple of years, the company will need to start hiring its own sales staff and will soon be up to 10 to 12 employees.

After founding the company in 2003, Mendoza and FitzSimon spent the next five years developing the formula for Kleenhanz. They wanted to stay away from foams and gels because those tend to be alcohol based.

Mendoza says he wanted to stay away from alcohol content for a number of reasons. First, the alcohol tends to dry out the skin and he wanted a product that would moisturize the skin. That way it would be soothing on the skin and provide lasting protection. Secondly, he had heard reports of students in some schools trying to extract and drink the alcohol content from hand sanitizers, and he wanted a product that would be safe for school officials to put in the classrooms.

FitzSimon says the company also determined that it needed to develop towelettes that would scrub off the dirt and germs rather than just coating them like some other hand sanitizers will do.

“We didn’t want something that would just mask the germs and not remove them,” he says. “You have to scrub your hands to really get them clean.”

Kleenhanz’ first big success came in 2006 when the company persuaded NEISD to beta test the product in several schools. Kleenhanz dispensers were placed in the classrooms at five schools during the 2006-07 school year and compared with five other schools that used a different hand-cleaning regimen. The results were very positive for Mendoza’s company.

“The pilot has shown that schools with Kleenhanz have lower absenteeism than schools without it,” says Speedy Gonzales, executive director of safe and healthy schools at NEISD. “We believe that this has helped students to be healthier, which allows them to be in class, especially during the flu season.”

NEISD Superintendent Richard Middleton adds that the strength of Kleenhanz is in its convenience.

“Our students can easily fight germs by grabbing a wipe on their way to lunch or grabbing one when they return from P.E.,” he says.

Mendoza notes that reducing absenteeism is a financial windfall for the school district because a higher attendance rate helps to draw in more funding from the state.

“It is something like \$32 per student that the district misses out on from the state every time a student is absent due to illness,” Mendoza



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Randall Mendoza and Lance FitzSimon of the Mendoza Group LLC, makers of Kleenhanz sanitizing products, have seen a big jump in sales for their business.

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says. "When you can improve the absenteeism rate by even 1 percent, it means millions of dollars for the district. So for their investment in the trial they got it back ten-fold."

The success at NEISD led to demand for a consumer product, so Mendoza and FitzSimon developed some retail products for Kleenhanz and struck a deal with H-E-B Grocery Co. Kleenhanz currently has 30-count and 90-count containers for sale that range in price from \$1.69 to \$2.79 and recently introduced individually wrapped towelettes that can be carried in purses and lunch boxes.

Mendoza says he wants his company to be more than just the guys who drop off the towelettes. He wants his company to really make a difference. That is why Kleenhanz stresses the education component and works with the school district and other customers on communicating the proper use of the towelettes to promote good hygiene and to reduce the spread of disease.

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