

Virtual Success

By Alan S. Horowitz

Art by Jimmy Park

Three Park City Businesses Park Themselves Online

Despite reports to the contrary, Internet-based commerce is not dead. Three Park City businesses are online-based and hoping to capitalize on the economics and reach of the technology.

House of Copenhagen (www.houseofcopenhagen.com)

Furniture is physical. There's nothing virtual about it. But that doesn't mean you can't be virtual to sell it, which is what Chris Jorgenson and his wife Bodil are counting on. This past May, they launched House of Copenhagen, which Chris calls, "the most extensive site ever done on the Internet, anywhere in the world, for any type of furniture."

House of Copenhagen sells high-end modern Danish furniture. One day, the Jorgensons looked around their house and found it filled with Danish furniture. This prompted the idea of starting an online furniture business specializing in the furniture they loved from their native Denmark.

An investment of a year and nearly \$1 million, with computer code written in India; Web site design from Denmark; and technology from Los Angeles, Germany and Canada resulted in a sophisticated Web site. The business, which is home-based, never takes possession of the merchandise; it is shipped direct from manufacturer to customer.

The company's marketing strategy is to focus on partnering with interior designers, since customers willing and

able to buy this high-end furniture typically work with designers. Growth will come from moving into new geographic markets and diversifying the product offerings. Notes Chris, "This business is easy to scale and move from country to country." He will eventually expand beyond residential furniture to furnishings for office, healthcare, schools and other markets.

Kits and Kaboodle (www.kitsandkaboodle.com)

Necessity is the mother of invention, as they say, and after looking recently for gifts to give newly-minted high school graduates and coming up empty handed, Janet Esty, with her partner Bobbie Downey, decided to meet this market shortcoming by creating their own Internet-based business, Kits and Kaboodle.

The business sells "survival guides," which won't help if you find yourself stuck in a blizzard in Parley's Canyon, but could ease your transition from one stage of life to another. There's a college survival kit, complete with laundry bag, picture frame and flip-flops for the shower, among other items. New parents get their own kit, which has nose plugs, air freshener, corkscrew, and such literary endeavors as a baby owner's manual, along with a CD containing soothing music for those times when all else fails. The kits sell for between \$40 and \$100.

Esty isn't new to the business world.

She is managing partner of The Prospector Group, based in Park City, an executive search firm specializing in positions for senior management and attorneys.

Esty and Downey plan to expand the Kits and Kaboodle business by adding more survival kits to her product line. She won't use advertising, but has engaged the services of dMedia (see below) to help promote the site via search engines. So far, "a few thousand dollars" has been invested in the site, says Esty, and she hopes to be profitable by the end of 2003.

dMedia LLC (www.dmediallc.com)

Are you from the pre-digital generation? Did you even know you could be? Dave Knight has created an online agency that does Web site design, hosting and promotion, and whose target market is "pre-digital" entrepreneurs.

"We're looking to smaller business, a guy from the pre-digital generation who's 40 years or so and older," notes Knight. "If a man is pre-digital, he might be very savvy in business, but he may not be very sophisticated in designing or promoting his site."

Knight, who owns dMedia with his brother Peter, sets his services apart from the competition's by working to get client sites high up a search engine's listings. "Research now indicates that up to 90 percent of traffic goes to the first 20 listings (on a search site)," says Knight. "If you're ranked



well with search engines, you're the beneficiary of a lot of traffic that converts well into sales."

Park City offers some advantages as a business location. "On the odd day when the powder is falling, some of our marketing guys have been known to come in late," he comments.

"Also, I find that Park City has a very qualified labor pool of well-educated people." The business is a successor to another Knight-owned agency, Current Media, and has 14 employees.

Dmedia uses its own technology to promote itself. About 90 percent of

the firm's clients are from out-of-state, which is possible when a business is online-based.

As the digital age progresses, Park City's savvy business people are discovering that the Internet has made most any business possible, and one need never miss a powder day. ❄️