

Internet strategies boost revenue

Search engine optimization, online advertising demonstrate solid results

GLEN KORSTROM

The Internet still draws guffaws when many small business owners discuss marketing strategies. About 40 per cent of small business owners believe the Internet will have little or no effect on their business during the next three to five years, according to a May **Ipsos-Reid** survey of 400 business owners whose companies have fewer than 50 staff.

But Internet marketing companies that survived the dot-com bust point to local clients whose sales have boomed thanks to Internet strategies.

Vancouver's **Exware Solutions Inc.**, Kelowna's **Searchengineposition.com** and Vancouver's **Internet Marketing Center** boost client positions on search engines, buy click-through advertising and design targeted e-mail campaigns.

"We focus both on traffic volume and quality at client websites," said **Exware Solutions Inc.** director of marketing **Molly MacDonald**. Traffic volume jumps when websites rank high in search engine results. Exware embeds client websites with key words inside HTML code and regularly refreshes client website content. It also urges clients to create a frequently-asked-question section to educate visitors because that will help garner higher rankings on search engines.

Buying sponsored links at

search engines such as Google and Yahoo! helps clients attract Web visitors likely to buy products and services, she said.

"Sponsored links work well. As long as you're truthful in what you're saying in that link, you'll find that you'll attract visitors who are really looking for the information or the product or the services that are on your website," she said.

The Boss Canada president **Rob Lancit** said his site traffic has jumped significantly in the two months since he contracted Exware.

Lancit sells advertising to franchise companies seeking franchisees. His business depends on high traffic from visitors interested in franchises. The more traffic his site attracts, the higher his advertising rates.

Lancit said he generated about \$200,000 last year, in part by partnering with the job search portal **Monster** (MNST:Nasdaq). Monster visitors link to Lancit's site (www.betheboss.ca) when they click an icon that says, "start your own business."

Aero Training Products president **Reilly Burke** tried some of his own strategies to maximize the potential of the Internet to boost sales. He hired Exware several months ago.

Christina Joe found online marketing well suited to selling kids' clothing on the Internet



Burke sold about \$1 million worth of maps, navigational tools and flight and maintenance textbooks last year. Established clients such as **Bombardier** account for 90 per cent of his sales. But he said a growing portion of his business comes from Web visitors. That's why he was frustrated with his low rank on search engines, he said.

MacDonald quickly spotted the problem. Burke had inadvertently incorporated tables in his HTML code that blocked search engine spiders.

Burnaby's **Just Kids Clothes** owner **Christina Joe** is another Internet marketing devotee. She pays **Searchengineposition.com** about \$200 a month to boost traffic on her Justkidsclothes.com website. She said she has realized "a great return on investment."

With no staff, Joe works part-time at her business. She generated in \$80,000 in revenue last year, which is double her 2002 sales.

Joe first tried conventional media, spending thousands of dollars advertising in *West Coast Families* and *B.C. Parent* magazines.

"It was a lot of dollars sunk into these print ads and it just wasn't generating any sales for us," she said.

She linked up with **Searchengineposition.com** in 2002 when she was mired in dismal sales, flogging children's rain gear and summer active wear to protect kids from the sun.

She sprang to No. 2 on Google when Web surfers typed the words "kids" and "clothes" and realized that she should capitalize on that high rank by offering conventional clothing.

"It's going great. We're seeing significant growth each year," she said. ■