

ALWAYS\$ THINKING

By Issac Goldberg



I've always been a businessman. Amidst all my hobbies and activities, it is my entrepreneurial drive that keeps me up late at night as I carefully redraft the blueprints for my newest business model. My first business was a paper company at age seven. Working out of my dining room in Burlington, Vermont, I sold paper in various sizes, colors, and textures (which I had acquired from recycling bins at my elementary school). Yet somehow even a product as exciting as paper lost its glamour eventually. I quickly realized that by selling a more desirable product, my business would be much more lucrative. So that fall I saved my Halloween candy and laid it out on the ironing board by the back door. I set up some price tags and watched in awe as all my friends, friends' parents, siblings, and even my own parents, who had bought me some of the candy in the first place, gave me quarter after quarter for the little delicacies.

This same year, my family's first computer arrived. I was instantly captivated and now formally introduced to the Internet. Our new machine enticed me to learn more about its inner workings and spurred my interest in technology for years to come.

At age eight, I launched my first web site. I began designing professional web sites for organizations throughout Vermont and the rest of the country. My business demanded that I study concepts that otherwise would have remained foreign to me. As a web developer, I mastered many computer languages and tapped into my artistic side through graphic design.

Having developed sites for other organizations, though, I wanted to launch a project for myself, to pioneer and nurture a ground-breaking business model to fruition. I brainstormed ideas for a unique plan. After months of research, I arrived at the concept of incentive marketing: an advertising technique businesses use to attract customers. I had developed the technical skills to design a web site; now I had a plan!

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In March of my sophomore year of high school I launched The Cash Grab, a site which pays users to complete surveys and review trial products. In my business model, advertisers pay The Cash Grab for sending them prospective customers. After taking my share of the commission, I pass a percentage on to the user as an initial incentive. What started as my unknown, curious web creation has exploded into a large, successful enterprise. To date, over 12,000 users have registered, completing nearly 28,000 surveys and trials.

Between the initial investment and time commitment, the launching of my businesses has required significant risks. Ultimately though, the success of The Cash Grab has provided me with monetary gains as well as invaluable experience. In dealing with the marketing industry, I communicate with many larger companies and have learned much about business management, advertising techniques, partnerships, and customer relations. I have had to adjust my marketing strategies continually to address my competitors' efforts. With the success of my business I have met with accountants, tax advisers, and even identity theft experts in order to combat fraud on my site, each contributing to my knowledge of economics and commerce. □

