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March 19, 2008, 1:49 pm

Buying a Brand, Then Building a Business

Posted by Wendy Bounds

Here's a new twist on startups: Buy a brand first – then start your company.

At www.circlerbrands.com, there are several for sale, like “[We Do the Math](#)” for aspiring accountants or “[BloomService](#)” for someone looking to get a foothold in the floral industry. Each brand already has a registered trademark, logo, registered domain names and a vanity toll-free number.

That's a lot of hassle out of the way. All that's left is to well, build the business.

This “plug-and-play” strategy is the brainchild of Susan Murphy and her husband William Pilipchuk, whose interior design and branding company [iContact Designs Inc.](#) is based in Pleasant Ridge, Mich. After helping clients come up with brand names and slogans for two decades, the pair decided to see what the market would bear for their inspirations.



This brand for sale @ www.circlerbrands.com

“We've always had these ideas,” Ms. Murphy told me today. “We'd be in the shower and screaming for the other person to ‘get a piece of paper.’ We're looking for a forward-looking company that wants to hit the ground running.”

Though they haven't sold any packages yet, Ms. Murphy thinks their upfront legwork will run in the “six to seven-figure range.” But, she notes she's open to negotiation and other payment possibilities, like an equity stake.

Other brands for sale: **LaBeatOh!** (Ms. Murphy is thinking a Latin food chain: “I could help design the interior”), **Dr. ChewLittle's** (organic baby food?) and **Pizzapotamus** (pizza delivery with a hungry hippo logo).

Readers, what do you think of this idea? A time saver? Lazy entrepreneur's way out? Which of these names stand the best chance of making it?

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Sounds like an extension of domain squatting.

Comment by Mike - March 19, 2008 at [2:20 pm](#)

This may be a short term time saver but a prospective buyer better have a good trademark lawyer and determine whether the trademark registrations are viable. Except under certain circumstances where there is a related foreign registration, U.S. trademark law doesn't allow the registration of trademarks that are not in use with the services in the registration.

Comment by Scott - March 19, 2008 at [2:25 pm](#)

I have a similar concept in the works. I've gone a step further & actually fleshed some of the trademarks out with an actual product/service. (not cheap) I wish them well but without funding...or actual products...that's gonna be a hard sell. PIZZAPOTAMUS...that's kinda' cool.

Comment by DR. VEGAS - March 19, 2008 at [2:42 pm](#)

Some folks are skilled at building the business, others with marketing/branding that, when based on truth, brings to life a coherent "personality" that consumers love. Like a playwright, these are simply great brand scripts that need directors, producers, and actors to manifest them.

Comment by Cynthia - March 19, 2008 at [8:53 pm](#)

I think its a brilliant idea.

Everyone has a different skill set.

These fledgling brand ideas might provoke a pizza entrepreneur to go from local pizza dude to regional or national pizza baron (assuming that's what they're looking for).

These days, more and more people (and businesses) want things done for them. This clearly fits that demand.

Finally, its one solution to a problem that occurs in volume: terribly boring businesses with marketing that makes you want to snooze.

I love it.

Mark Riffey

<http://www.rescuemarketing.com/blog/>

Comment by Mark Riffey - March 20, 2008 at [12:34 am](#)

Cute idea. However a logo (or corporate identity) is supposed to be a reflection of the owners passion and the business purpose. I'm afraid that this fast-food approach to identity creation will entice too many would-be business owners to skip one of the most valuable parts of the start-up: asking themselves "Who am I"? and "Who



aspirations, quirks and unique challenges and opportunity of entrepreneurship. The Journal's Gwendolyn (Wendy) Bounds, is the lead writer. After a decade at the Journal following fashion, media, retail and technology, Bounds became small-business editor and columnist in 2004. She also pens a home improvement column called "Did-It-Myself." A native of North Carolina, Bounds is author of "[Little Chapel on the River](#)," published by William Morrow, which chronicles her experiences at a small Irish pub fighting to survive in New York's Hudson River Valley. Please post comments to the blog. If you have a comment or topic suggestion for Wendy, please email independentstreet@wsj.com.

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do they (the customer) want?"

Great line from the movie "Wall Street" - "Sometimes, good things take time".

Comment by Chris Tonsing - March 20, 2008 at [9:05 am](#)

I think it depends on the individual. I meet so many people who have great technical skills in an area, but few business management skills. For these individuals, I don't see that it would work well. However, for those individuals who have strong business management skills but are weak in creativity or want to build on an established idea, I think it could work. In my opinion, it still shows a great deal of entrepreneurial spirit.

Comment by Jones Loffin - March 21, 2008 at [6:44 am](#)

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