

## Making Work Fun

(Jason Therrien)



**F**or Web design company Thunder::Tech President Jason Therrien and his creative team, a good laugh is as rewarding as a good paycheck.

"We stopped eating crayons and started drawing more: ended up being better for our digestive systems," reads just one of the quirky slogans plastered on the company's Web site. The idea behind this brand of marketing is to make Thunder::Tech "stick out like a sore thumb," says Therrien. "If you can't jive with that personality, it could be a rough road, so we throw it right out there."

Since 1999, when he started the company, Therrien has increased his staff, adding a pinch of public relations, a dollop of advertising and peppering with branding and design to concoct a smorgasbord of services his clients devour from coast to coast.

The 27-year-old obviously knows how to get the public's attention. Here are a few business tips he shares:

**Young entrepreneurs should make the leap.** "You don't want to be tied down in mid-life thinking would've, could've, should've." If you fail, you at least know you tried, and you can pick the pieces up faster when you're younger.

**Be true to your clients.** Stay true to the message behind the brand and what the client stands for. "If it's not sexy, don't try to pretend it's sexy."

**Don't be afraid to try something new.** "We are always trying new techniques, as long as we can integrate them with each other. It keeps us on the edge of things. If the Internet gets unplugged tomorrow and skywriting becomes in vogue, someone is getting their pilot's license."

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## One Voice

(Scot Rourke)



**S**cot Rourke heads a local nonprofit that's turning 22 counties into a big, cohesive group. OneCommunity uses fiber-optic broadband to connect schools, government, libraries and other organizations to the Internet. The company installs applications (like Microsoft programs) and teaches clients how to use them in the hope that they will be empowered to create, innovate and improve the economy. Rourke, president and CEO, shares his goals for the company:

**Capitalize on unused assets.** OneCommunity taps into the unused underground fiber-optic network that stretches across Northeast Ohio to provide broadband wireless service.

**Engage in "venture philanthropy."** OneCommunity is funded by grants and investors. In recent years, foundations have been donating money toward economic development rather than charities. They want to see results, says Rourke. The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and OneCommunity recently announced plans to open the Knight Center for Digital Excellence in Akron, which will connect 11 square miles of the city to broadband.

**Close the digital divide.** With a grant from the Cleveland Clinic, OneCommunity's OneClassroom initiative is connecting more than 1,500 schools in the region. For example, the Clinic can broadcast a live surgery over the connection, so thousands of students can watch and interact with the surgeon.

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## The Search Is On

(Leslie Carruthers)



**L**eslie Carruthers wants to know what you're Googling. Carruthers is president and founder of The Search Guru, a search-engine optimization (SEO) firm that works with businesses to drive traffic to their sites and boost their search result rankings.

Carruthers began her foray into SEO in 2001, back when it was still an obscure concept. She trained with Heather Lloyd-Martin and Detlev Johnson (who are SEO "rock stars," Carruthers says) to become versed in the field, but started The Search Guru four years ago.

Made up of seven employees, The Search Guru works with clients across the country, such as the North Shore Animal League and Brookstone, to increase their online presence (Brookstone, for instance, reported a 63 percent increase in traffic after working with the SEO consultant team at The Search Guru). Now the company is planning to release informational e-books to help train even more businesses in the art of SEO copywriting.

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