



Entrepreneur Goes Global with Ecommerce Site

Daniel Chou of Chou! LLC came up with his business idea in a college cafeteria. He was eating an egg roll when another student joked and said it would be great to have a shirt with an egg roll graphic that said, "That's how I roll."

Chou was an undergrad then, but the concept of making products that people found expressive and funny stayed with him as he went on to get a master's degree. He thought he'd get a stable job and start the business on the side, but the passion was too strong.

"What is an entrepreneur?" Chou asked. "I would say it's a combination of wanting to explore and create, and be in charge of my future at the same time."

Starting with the sale of t-shirts with catchy phrases and unique designs, Chou is learning and growing in his use of ecommerce. He sees no need for a bricks and mortar location and has instead set up shop at the Business and Industry Center at NWTC.

"I selected the location because it's affordable, the location is great, and I have access to counselors that can help when I have a question," Chou explained.

A graduate of E-Hub, Chou appreciates learning from other entrepreneurs. His role as a sole owner requires that he be a web designer, search engine optimizer, production manager, shipper, traveling salesman, printing technician, and bookkeeper. Chou seems to have mastered all of the jobs.

His website is easy to navigate and fun to search. Humor is injected into the product line that now includes almost 100 offerings.

Chou noted, "We'll print for businesses, individuals, or groups, but we also have our own line that focuses around culture and general humor. People enjoy the shirts because they speak to them and who they are."

These customers also make the best models for his ads and Chou, who says you can't underestimate the value of a free t-shirt, offers that as an incentive. He has found that the photos have the greatest response online where he has about a mega second to capture the attention of a potential buyer.

His business is a case study in using technology to grow a business. Chou is on Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and LinkedIn. He captures contacts' names by offering free membership in the "Street Team." There are contests, an email newsletter, and YouTube videos. And, with thousands of competitors online, he knows how to use search engine optimization. Everything is connected in order to direct buyers to www.choustore.com where the site is regularly refreshed and updated with new content.

In a highly competitive field, Chou! LLC is standing out from the competition. As Chou closely monitors pricing, production, inventory, shipping, and marketing, he is seeing the business grow locally, nationally, and globally. He is ready to hire his first employee.

His advice to other entrepreneurs using ecommerce is to recognize that competition is great. "Go and look what's out there," he said. "It's easy to go on Google and sell something, but you need to look closely at the other sites and do it better."

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