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Aether in national spotlight

Baltimore Business Journal - by [Roger Hughlett](#)

Coming off a successful second offering, Owings Mills-based **Aether Systems Inc.** decided to spend \$15 million on a national advertising campaign -- with print advertisements and a 30-second television commercial that began airing last week.

The television spot premiered Wednesday during ABC's "Spin City" and "20/20" programs. The commercial also ran during NBC's "Friends," "Frasier" and "ER."

The company's print ads are currently running in the Wall Street Journal, Time, Newsweek, Forbes and a handful of other publications.

Baltimore-based Gilden Advertising created the ad campaign for Aether, which develops wireless technology for voice and data telecommunications.

"Our goal for the campaign was to brand Aether in the most traditional sense," said Jack Gilden, president of Gilden Advertising.

Mitch Selbiger, senior vice president of marketing for Aether Systems (<http://www.aethersystems.com>), said the original goals of the campaign were fairly simple.

"... Aether sought to enthusiastically and creatively convey that we are the driving force behind a new mobile and empowered workforce," Selbiger said. "We believe this well-crafted campaign achieves our goals."

Only time will tell if the company's advertising has the desired effects on the public at large.

Still, in the eyes of investors, Aether Systems apparently can do no wrong. The company's stock has shot as high as \$315 on March 9, and has more than quadrupled since the initial public offering in October 1999.

Professional Web surfing

One's relationship with a particular search engine is a dysfunctional one at best. The primary problem is based on the fact that each search engine brings up different results for the same key words.

This has a lot to do with the relationships the operators of search engines enter into with different companies. Internet marketers call it "search engine optimization" and users call it a

pain in the [insert body part here].

Officials with Columbia-based Scherer Cyberian Services (<http://www.wscherer.com>), a research consulting firm, believe they may be able to help businesses and individuals by putting humans in charge of searching the Web.

The company, which was founded by husband-and-wife team Wendy and Andrew Scherer, offers businesses customized Web research work usually within 24 hours. Price and turnaround time depends on the amount of information requested, but some firms can pay as much as \$1,000 for a single project.

After a request for information is made, the company sicks its researchers on the task to scour the Web for specific data. The results are then e-mailed, faxed or mailed to the clients.

Company officials don't have revenue estimates for this year yet, but some observers believe there is plenty of growth potential for a service like this.

Canton firm lands capital

Web-On-Site Inc., the tech company that provides free Internet access in public places, secured \$250,000 in venture capital last week from The Delaware Innovation Fund.

Company officials are quick to point out that, although the funding will allow the company to expand into Delaware, Web-On-Site (<http://www.webonsite.net>) is staying in Baltimore.

"The funding from The Delaware Innovation Fund will help accomplish Web-On-Site's aggressive growth strategy over the next 18 months," said John Shin, chief executive officer of Web-On-Site. "We have used seed money to build an infrastructure that supports rapid expansion. By aligning Web-On-Site with premium content partners and sponsors, we are ready to provide the best out-of-home Internet experience."

Folks at the venture capital fund said the investment is important to Delaware, too.

"We are excited to be partners with a dynamic company like Web-On-Site and look forward to bringing certain aspects of the business to the technology favorable state of Delaware," said David Freschman, president of the fund.

The Delaware Innovation Fund, (<http://www.delawareinnovationfund.com>) is a \$10 million private venture capital firm that was established in 1995 as a public-private fund.

Do-it-yourself Web design

Web designers scoff at the idea, but the fact is: Small business owners like to save money when it comes to designing their Web sites.

Pikesville-based Hanover Digital has introduced a new product that allows businesses to create a Web site in a matter of minutes and save considerable amounts of cash in the process. To make the deal even sweeter, companies earn money by providing referrals to Hanover Digital each month.

The Web design service cost \$29.95 a month, and direct referrals are worth \$3 a pop. Indirect referrals -- when a referral refers another client -- earn clients a buck. The service, known as SiteDough (<http://www.sitedough.com>), was designed by Hanover Digital and offers users a selection of graphics and other options to create a site.

One local company already using the product is Towson-based HCF&L Certified Public Accountants. Ofer Lurman, partner with the firm, said the fact that the site can be updated in house is a bonus.

"If we need to update anything, I just log on and make the changes," Lurman said.

Hanover Digital is far from the only company offering do-it-yourself Web pages in Greater Baltimore. However, paying for referrals may be a first.

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