

The Stuart News

Playing your SPACE card

Alternative
advertising found in
youthful cybersite —
MySpace

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Port St. Lucie business Vital Signs created a Web site to resuscitate fading sales. When that didn't work, the company found a cure in another niche of cyberspace — MySpace.

"We had to do it," said Vice President Steve Claus, whose company manufactures signs and banners of all shapes and sizes. "Our regular webpage has been up for seven years, and no one goes there."

MySpace has long been thought of as a way for preteens and twentysomethings to pass the time and stay connected. But for some businesses and organizations on the Treasure Coast, it has become an important place to advertise.

In fact, Cotton & Company's Director of Internet Services, Walter Franklin, a 14-year Internet advertising veteran, said he has seen an increase in businesses using MySpace in the last six months.

"They use a shotgun approach where they put up their ad and hope that a large number of people see it," he said.

But while MySpace provides free advertising on a heavily visited site,

Franklin said it isn't necessarily leading to a lot of business for his clients.

"Products that offer competitive prices such as printer ink would do well there but those that are more sophisticated use other tools that are available..." he said.

Vital Signs does a large amount of business with musicians who want banners and stickers made. They can add pictures to their own MySpace pages, thus creating more advertising for the company. Members can quickly up-

load sound clips and pictures and have them appear instantly on the screen.

Even Treasure Coast businesses that are Web-based have begun to take notice of how MySpace is changing the landscape.

Orlando Ramirez, founder of Pinwheel Media, an interactive media design studio that does work for a variety of Web clients, said he finds traditional advertising mediums such as television insufficient to reach potential clients. He said many companies he has seen posting MySpace ads have done well.

He added his own Pinwheel Media page to MySpace, drawn by the high volume of visitors and potential for new customers. In return, he said he got "many leads that were good for the future."

Treasure Coast businesses are not the only ones delving into the world of MySpace.

The Elliott Museum, a historical showcase for Old World Florida on Hutchinson Island in Stuart, has also begun to use the site. The museum's page not only gives the viewer a list of exhibits but also a calendar of upcoming events. The ability to quickly display information on the page makes it easier for museum administrators to let the public

know what is going on.

Heidi May, Elliott Museum's Director of Visitor Services, is impressed with MySpace as a business tool. "It is a wonderful outlet for free advertising so why not?" she said.

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