

it's all about the e's

ANOTHER IN A SERIES OF PROFILES OF LEXINGTON'S OUTSTANDING ENTREPRENEURS

What's in a catchy name? More than you'd imagine!

Check out uHAPS.com!



Whoever named a website *uHAPS.com* must have been . . . innovative? Unable to spell? Just joking, perhaps? Would you think *all* or *none* of the above?

If you guessed 'innovative' – you're right. 'Unable to spell' and 'just joking' aren't relevant because the creators of this website concept and the company behind it certainly can spell – especially the words CREATIVITY and EXECUTION.

Lexington-based uHAPS.com is an entrepreneurial marketing group that has perfected a series of independent online social networking platforms that appeal to very targeted, otherwise difficult-to-reach demographic segments.

"Let's start by explaining the name," began uHAPS CEO, entrepreneur Stefan Jefferies. "Essentially, we're all about, 'You happen . . . we watch,' then, 'You watch us watching you' – and it ALL happens online and on the ground using 'hand-to-hand combat.' Our team either coordinates or participates in nearly 300 commercially sponsored events each year, currently in college markets like Lexington (as *TopsTV.com*), Knoxville, Louisville, Cincinnati, and Nashville. We show up at an event (like a concert) wearing our uHAPS gear, co-branded with our partners' logos, and we shoot a ton of photographs, as well as pass out a ton of business cards with our web address and that of the sponsor imprinted on them. Curiosity drives a high percentage of the events' attendees to the website, where they find photographs, user-submitted/humorous captions, promotional contests, and – not coincidentally – a message from our sponsor. We also distribute our content to all the social network sites in each city: Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Digg, Flickr, Slide, Windows Live Spaces, Gather, Bebo, Yahoo 360, orkut, Blogger– so our content is definitely where our demographic targets live on the Internet, 24/7."

What's the bottom line here? "It's pretty basic," Jefferies explained. "There are a significant number of high-profile national and regional companies that have a difficult time really connecting, one-on-one, with members of their college-age target demographic audience (18- to 30-year-olds)." Because of what Jefferies calls the 'iPOD Factor,' that group tends to isolate itself from TV, radio, and newspapers, and relies instead on the Internet and texting. "So," Jefferies added, "we created a way to engage that target audience within the social networking frameworks that carry the advertisers' messages."

The uHAPS concept has successfully changed the 'mix' of several key advertisers' marketing budgets. For instance, Budweiser distributors, which previously allocated approximately 10% of their local college-town marketing budgets to interactive media, now earmark up to 35% of those budgets to online applications such as this one, according to Jefferies. Why?

"Because it works!" he smiled. "UHAPS injects itself and its sponsors into the existing activities of the demographic. You happen . . . we watch. You go online to check us/yourself out, or to vote, or to submit content – and you also experience a very subtle message from our sponsor, in many cases Budweiser."

Jefferies, the son of an anthropology professor, certainly did not follow in his father's academic footsteps, although it's quite evident that this young entrepreneur is extremely intelligent. He graduated from Lafayette High School in '89 and attended UK, graduating in 1993 with a degree in Journalism and Telecom. At 21, he took the reins of the first of his many business ventures – a sports memorabilia company. That was followed by the founding of two record labels, Hello Records (Lex) and True Villain (Bronx), and two or three more ventures, some of which worked out quite well and some from which he learned important lessons. One of his most successful ventures was a software company, Encite Commerce, which he created to build e-commerce sites for others, including the first site ever to enable the purchase of music while consumers listened to streaming audio online. "In the late 90s and into this century, the Internet has been a landscape for us, so we partnered with others to set up e-commerce sites that sold music, tickets, and merchandise online, a concept that today has made Amazon.com, Ticketmaster, and others universally recognized icons."

In 2005, Jefferies and his partners joined forces with Keith Yarber, the entrepreneurial *Tops in Lex* CEO, and through Jefferies' team's ability to create dynamic interactive websites that appeal to specific demographic targets, they gained a partnership interest in the hugely successful *Tops* organization, where Jefferies is still heavily involved with their websites.

From that collaboration have come some statistically amazing and verified results. "We offer an appealing, positive Internet experience – good news, happy people, badly needed promotions for local non-profit organizations, causes, and events, as well as an impressive and growing list of very satisfied clients."



"Why are we successful?" Jefferies smiled, while proudly seated in his very spartan office at his very spartan folding table/desk. "We're here and growing because we invested the time and talent to create and test a business model that has great appeal to a specific target. It's a demographic that major advertisers were seemingly unable to reach through traditional media messages. Today they can, and they do connect, within our site. You happen . . . we watch. You check it out online. The sponsor's message is there. Everybody's happy. UHAPS.com!"



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> If you know of other entrepreneurial, e-type ventures in the Lexington area that deserve to be featured in this series, please email Gina Greathouse at ggreathouse@commercelexington.com.