

TAKIN' CARE OF BUSINESS

Selling men on skin care

It's not difficult to make money in the so-called beauty business in which tubes of skin-creams with extravagant promises can easily sell for \$100. But if you're aiming to keep your integrity and sell quality products at an affordable price, you've got your work cut out for you. And if you're selling to men, who for the most part are hesitant to do more than slap on some shaving-gel or deodorant, you're really facing a challenge.

It's one that **Brian Lau**, Com'01, (right), feels he's up to. He knows very well what men want – and it's not hanging around a sales counter getting the hard sell from a clerk, or worse, no service at all. Explains Lau, "The biggest problem with selling men's products is that men don't like to shop – they hate it." They also don't want to be paying a lot of money, nor will they be sucked into buying products they don't need. With that in mind, Brian has created a line of men's grooming products under the name Bread & Butter Skin, sold exclusively on the internet at www.breadandbutter skincare.com. The products provide the basics: face cleanser, moisturizer, shaving gel and lip balm in six- or 12-month supplies, retailing at \$49.99 to \$84.99.

Brian comes by his entrepreneurship honestly. As a School of Business student, he was president of the Queen's Chapter of the Association of Collegiate Entrepreneurs – a global student-entrepreneur organization helping students operate businesses.

Brian and his buddies ran a business aimed at harried fellow students. Copying past exams on file at the library, they compiled them into exam books. "It was one-stop shopping. Instead of students having to search for the exams they wanted and copying them, they were able to purchase the book containing all the exams for their courses."

Not only did the business make money, but it also garnered the Queen's Chapter an award for the fastest-growing student business in sales and membership in Canada.

After graduation, Brian landed a job with Unilever, a health and beauty products company, working first in Toronto, then in the company's New York offices. That experience made a lasting impression on him. At the time, Unilever had just launched its groundbreaking 'Dove Campaign for Real Beauty'. Going where no grooming products company had ever gone before, Unilever aimed to sell its wares by making women of all shapes, sizes and ages feel better, rather than worse, about themselves.

Says Brian, "It was such an eye-opener! It's rare to see a company with a true social cause doing well business-wise. Unilever was trying to debunk the stereotypes out there and it benefited their business in so many ways – not just in terms of the bottom line, but it also attracted better employees. It was amazing to see the network effects of doing something so socially powerful."

After his time at Unilever, Brian picked up an MBA at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University in Chicago before returning to Toronto to work for a holding company. It was at that company, which made products for high-end and hair-care brands – companies like Burt's Bees and Aveda – that Brian became more intrigued with the idea of creating his own line of products for men. "I got a good understanding of what's in the high-end formulas, what makes some great and others not great. I also learned how to manufacture these things at different costs."

With that know-how, plus the product knowledge he'd picked up during his time at Unilever's Dove ("We worked with research and development nearly every day"), he developed his own skin-care products. They're different from other men's products because they do not contain any fragrances, grain alcohol or exotic plant-extracts that aggravate men's skin after shaving. His moisturizer contains both UVA and UVB sun protection, which he says is a must. Right now, he's aiming his product line at two specific groups of men: those who spend a lot of time flying (all of his products come in airline-approved sizes) and those with very sensitive skin.

Brian is confident his guy-friendly approach will work. "Companies try to create need. Our motto is 'Everything a guy needs and nothing he doesn't.' All they need is to wash their face, shave and put something protective on after."

It looks like it's that kind of plain thinking that may just provide Brian with his bread and butter.



PHOTO BY SHARON PARKER

BY GEORGIE BINKS, ARTSCI'75

HONOURS



BASSIN

In March, **Alana Bussin**, Artsci'93, Com'95, was named by the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal* as one of the year's Top 40 Under Forty. Alana is a partner at Bowman and

Brooke LLP in Minneapolis. She was honoured for her personal and professional achievements. She has an outstanding track record as a litigator, having won hundreds of cases in Minnesota and 19 other states. Alana was also cited for her ability to balance her legal work with that of being a mother of three (with a fourth on the way), and for her involvement in a number of community organizations.

HOLLINGSWORTH

In April, **Brenda Hollingsworth**, Artsci'91, received a Businesswoman of the Year Award from the Women's Business Network (WBN) of Ottawa. Brenda is a bilingual plaintiff-side personal injury lawyer. Together with her husband, Richard Anger, she owns and operates Anger Hollingsworth. She has written two books: *Injured Victim's Guide to Fair Compensation and Crash Course: A Savvy Woman's Guide to Ontario Car Accident Claims*. In 2008, she was one of the *Ottawa Business Journal's* Top 40 Under 40 Award recipients.

JOB NEWS

CRAPPER

Marty Crapper, MPA'97
See 1980s Job News.

KELLOGG

M. Paul Kellogg, PhD'91, is beginning a new position as Assistant Professor with the Master of Arts – Integrated Studies program, Athabasca University, Athabasca, AB. Previous university teaching affiliations have been with the Department of International Development Studies at Trent University, Peterborough, ON, and the Department of Politics and Public Administration at Ryerson University, Toronto.

KEOUGH

In March, **Trent Keough**, PhD'92, became the new President of Postage College, in Lac La Biche, AB. Trent was previously Vice-President, Academic, at the college.

PARKER

Sharon Parker, MBA'91
See 1980s Job News.



THOMPSON

Mary-Alice Thompson, Law'92, has joined the Wills and Estates Group of Cunningham Swan, Carly, Little & Bonham LLP in Kingston. Mary-Alice is the only person