



Tech that

WORKS

By G.K. Sharman

TWO NEW COMPANIES ARE AMONG THOSE GROWING IN CENTRAL FLORIDA'S DIVERSE HIGH-TECH LANDSCAPE.



In September 2005, Jeff Douglass moved his live event-production company, Cybis, out of his home into an office in Oviedo. It's time to move again already.



"We keep growing by word of mouth," says Douglass, the company's founder, CEO, president and executive producer, who expects to outgrow the current office by the end of January.

Word of mouth is a strategy that has worked for him since his first foray into business in 1995.

Douglass, a 2002 graduate of UCF, began as a technology and computer networking consultant. In addition to developing business information systems and providing computer training, his early trademark was free telephone computer service to his clients.

After a small initial marketing effort, he began generating 100 percent of his new customers by word of mouth.

Douglass always kept up with the latest technology and began adding desktop video editing and computer graphics to his list of services. By 1999, Cybis was moving into media production, creating corporate identities, developing promotional videos and combining media and technology to help clients meet their goals.

Cybis Communications Corp. was officially established in February 2001 and quickly moved into conference production, using technology to orchestrate large-scale events. The initial client was a national high-school leadership conference in 2002. Cybis continues to draw its clientele primarily from the non-profit sector, working with Preserve America Summit, a historical preservation project, and with the White House on Helping America's Youth, a series of conferences led by First Lady Laura Bush. Most recently, Cybis worked the White House Summit on Malaria in Washington, D.C., featuring the President.

The company expanded with the client base, from one guy — Douglass — to 15 people, either full- or part-time, working on the shows.

What sets Cybis apart, Douglass says, is its focus on the client's message. The company doesn't just provide some audio-visual bells and whistles, he said, it uses technology to further the mission and goals of the organization. For instance, most conferences have an



awards ceremony or other major event. Cybis does it up big, making the audience "feel like they're at the Grammys or the Academy Awards," Douglass says.

He wants the participants to walk out of the event feeling energized and ready to change the world.

The expansion is as much about expanding Cybis' market and strategic efforts as it is about additional office space.

Many of Cybis' clients are from out of town, and Douglass hopes the company can one day open satellite offices in other cities.

But Orlando is one of the nation's — even the world's — top meeting and event destinations, and Douglass, who grew up here, sees growth potential among local companies.

"It's about time to let Central Florida know who we are and why we can set a new standard for events," says Douglass.

SONA PILLOW

Dr. Najeeb Zuberi's invention can help you lose weight, live longer, sharpen your memory and improve your love life.

Actually, the Sona Pillow prevents snoring — which Zuberi, a Harvard-educated neurologist and sleep specialist, says helps people sleep better and therefore improves their lives in a variety of positive ways.

The pillow itself, with a hump in the middle that gradually flattens out toward the sides, looks deceptively low-tech. But don't be fooled. Zuberi holds a patent on it and it's the only such pillow that's FDA certified.

Researchers at the Departments of Neurology and Sleep Medicine at Florida Hospital-Kissimmee studied the pillow's effects and found that it reduced snoring and sleep apnea (a temporary breathing stoppage),

increased oxygen saturation and improved the snoring sufferer's quality of sleep. Their findings were published in the medical journal, *Sleep and Breathing*.

It's the latest solution to a frustrating and worldwide problem that's more serious than it appears. According to Zuberi, who uses the pillow himself, snoring is linked to heart attacks, high blood pressure, stroke and heart failure, as well as increased tiredness, weight gain, memory loss and a decline in, ahem, romantic relations, as anyone who sleeps with a window-rattler can attest.

Snoring has a genetic component. What happens is, when snorers sleep on their backs, their jaws fall backward and cause an obstruction in the back of the throat. The Sona Pillow ensures that users sleep on their sides, thus putting the jaw at the right angle to improve breathing and prevent snoring and sleep apnea.

Unlike other methods, Zuberi says, the Sona Pillow is easier to use and at \$69, far less expensive. It doesn't have to be customized to the user and there's no ongoing maintenance other than occasional fluffings.

The pillow has been on the market for about a year, says Zuberi, who estimates that he's sold between 3,000 and 4,000 of them through his Web site, sonapillow.com. Made in China and shipped back to the United States to be stuffed with hypo-allergenic fill, they're popular all over the world. Zuberi has testimonials from former snorers from Britain and several other countries and recently shipped an order for four pillows to Afghanistan.

Since the venture is Web based, it could operate anywhere in the world, Zuberi acknowledges, but he finds Kissimmee an ideal home base for his neurology practice and four-bed sleep lab as well as for pillow sales.

He's loved the area since he and his wife honeymooned here in 1990. Central Florida is warm, clean, new, relatively affordable compared to other cities and, according to Zuberi, has "a big-city feel without the big-city problems." 