

realized she could tackle responsibilities and develop skills well beyond her Hollywood years.

Barnes' first gig in L.A. was as an assistant to a television director, a role she hoped would help her gain experience and allow her to work on her own writing. Instead, she was answering phones, doing finances, and walking dogs, not writing, meeting people, or even reading scripts. Barnes left the position after just three months and soon became an assistant to Jon Collier, a television writer for *King of the Hill*. This job proved to be ideal, but when Collier's development deal ran out, he had to let Barnes go. Two and a half months later, however, Barnes heard from Collier, who had just received funding to start an Internet company. He wanted her on board.

Barnes was hired as a development executive and copywriter. The job would be the first position where she wouldn't be answering phones for someone else. And instead of setting up lunches with agents, she'd be lunching with agents herself. "All of a sudden my ideas mattered. It's interesting

because you graduate from college where you're used to being taken seriously, and then you're thrown in the entertainment industry where you're picking up baby toys for the people you work for. You know that you can bring so much more to the table, and at Icebox, I feel like I've been able to do that," says Barnes. "It's very exciting. How do you make entertainment work on the web? That's what we're determining."

Working in development, the arena where scripts are evaluated and rewritten before filming begins, Barnes found a niche for her talents. After working 15-hour days in preparation for the site launch, she now spends her days taking calls from agents, evaluating submissions, tracking shows, and writing copy. She meets with the company founders on a weekly basis to review pitches and determine which projects get the green light, and she attends management meetings where the status of each show is reviewed.

Despite her present job satisfaction, Barnes' ambition remains film and television writing. For that reason, the essence of her experience at Icebox.com isn't the increased money or power, or the excitement of a new field. By working in development Barnes is picking up the contacts she needs to break into television writing. "The great thing about Icebox is that we bridge the gap between entertainment media and the Internet. I'm working every day with television writers and talking every day with agents."

More importantly, she's honing the skills she needs to use those contacts. "I can look at my own writing objectively now. I know how a development person or executive producer looks at writing. I'm also learning what makes a good pitch and what makes a good meeting." In other words, Barnes is set for the road ahead.

for anyone scrambling for a creative role in Hollywood, the jobs available at dot-coms may be a godsend—but joining a dot-com isn't the only way that Hollywood's fledgling talent is taking advantage of the new media landscape.

Icebox.com is a bastion of young talent, like Randi Barnes (bottom), looking to develop skills and build connections that will help them succeed in Hollywood.

