Two students awarded for 'Good Vacations'

■ Senior James Pippin and junior Ryan Schmid strutted their entrepreneurial skills at Enterprise Creation 2001

By Hank Hager
Oregon Daily Emerald

For two University students, spring break didn't mean fun under the sun — it meant business.

Senior James Pippin and junior Ryan Schmid traveled to Ball State University in Muncie, Ind., to present a business plan at Enterprise Creation 2001, an international undergraduate business competition. The two received an award for the Best Entrepreneurial Applicant for their team's company called "Good Vacations." They competed against eight other teams from various universities in the nation.

Schmid, who majors in business administration and is the captain of the football team, said the competition was a great experience and helped him understand how the real world works.

"It was a really great opportunity to make networking contacts," he said. "Ball State has a great entrepreneurship program."

Pippin, who majors in English and is in the Robert D. Clark Honors College, said the experience was well worth it.

"There's no doubt that it's a good experience for all students who participate," he said. "The judges are top quality, and this is all about life experience."

Schmid and Pippin said "Good Vacations" is an information broker for volunteer vacations. Schmid compared the vacations offered to the one taken in "City Slickers." People can take trips for up to six weeks and join service organizations.

Alan Meyer, professor of entrepreneurship management who acted as faculty adviser for the trip, said Schmid and Pippin's company should have been one of the top three winners.

"It's got both a socially responsive point, but also has a business aspect," he said. "It's a great little market niche that many people don't know about."

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>
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> junior,
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Meyer said Schmid was chosen because he is a good public speaker, and Pippin because he was is able to think quickly on his feet.

Schmid and Pippin "strike people as an unlikely team," Meyer said. "I really enjoyed getting to know each one."

The two originally were to compete as part of a team of four, but due to budgetary constraints and competition rules, only Schmid and Pippin attended, Meyer said.

"It was a really neat thing to see two people come together who would have normally not met," he said.

The two said they did not know each other before they attended the class.

"James had a really great idea and I just signed on," Schmid said. "I could tell he was sharp and would work hard."

Pippin echoed Schmid's statements, and was glad he joined the same team.

"Ryan has an excellent background in entrepreneurship," Pippin said.

He said the competition was a grueling experience that helped teach the pair the constraints that can sometimes hamper a business. For example, he said the two were scheduled to present their business plan at 3 p.m., but were informed that morning it had been changed to 1:45 p.m.

"It's always nice to have some time, but the business world puts you on the spot," he said. "Entrepreneurship is a constantly changing world."

Schmid and Pippin were required to attend a class during winter quarter that would help them put together a company and ideas on how to market it. During the last week of the term, teams of four present their businesses at Quest for AdVenture, a competition at the University. Because they were on the winning team, they were able to attend the national competition at Ball State.

"You really get more out of the class," Pippin said. "That's where you learn everything."

Schmid said the class required him to spend more time working for his goal than he ever has at the University.

"It was the most realistic life experience I've had in college," he said.

Meyer said the class is basically a workshop where attendees help build the equivalent of a scale model of a business.

Pippin said the class requires a lot of time and effort to be successful.

"If people want to get into it, it will be more than a regular business class," he said.

Jennifer Pratt, Venture Championship chairwoman for the Lundquist Center for Entrepreneurship, said the competition is the ultimate challenge for students in the field.

"For students interested in starting a business it's a highlight — the pinnacle," she said. "It's a fantastic learning opportunity, they can really see how their plan would hold up against the rest of the nation."

Tech firms optimistic in spite of slowdown

By Mark Harrington
Newsday

CHICAGO — Even after their tech-sector brethren sent the stock market plunging with another round of profit warnings Tuesday, companies at the Comdex trade show attempted to put a bright face on market prospects.

Whether it was justified by actual business or the result of trade-show optimism was another matter.

"I think it's a fun time," said Dennis Tokac, Midwest director of San Francisco-based Digital Island, which bills itself as a "global e-commerce delivery network."

Echoing comments from many working the floor of Comdex, he said companies are looking to economize, and what better way to do that than by employing efficient technology?

"We know people are in a cautionary mode," he said. "We appeal to that by helping them save money."

Digital Island's technology, he said, lets companies cut costs by using the Web for global training, for instance, rather than having to fly employees to a central training facility.

Others joined in the pitch.

"We'll benefit from the slide more than anyone," said Tzaras Christon, a consultant for T-Systems, a Lisle, Ill., company that remotely hosts other companies' computer services. "Companies are cutting back on their expenses, but it's a matter of where are they cutting back. Maintaining their infrastructure themselves is very expensive."

T-Systems does that for them remotely for a monthly fee.

CompUSA, the Dallas-based computer retailing chain that also sells to companies, expects to find opportunities in the current downturn by undercutting the prices of firms that traditionally sell to large corporations.

"My feeling is it should be an opportunity for us, especially if corporations are looking to save a buck," said representative Don Kane. "We're situated well to provide services they need. It's cheaper for us to provide training for them rather than hire their own training staff."

Meanwhile, Computer Associates, the Islandia, N.Y., software giant that last July rocked Wall Street by warning of revenue and earnings shortfalls, said it is seeing an uptick in at least one part of its business.

"It's a good time for us," said Jim Trost, divisional assistant vice president of the company's interBiz division. He's based in Lisle, Ill., where the company cut about a dozen staffers in July.

Companies are no longer frantically scurrying to simply put up a makeshift Web presence for fear of missing the boat and going out of business. Rather, Trost said, small and medium businesses are showing more focus and direction in their e-business interests, and that has helped his business.

"What we have that's different is the integration to the back office," he said.

Some entities were so bullish in the face of the slowdown that they traveled to Chicago solely to recruit.

Patty Vanaman, a specialist with the Michigan Economic Development Corp., stood at a booth busily scanning the badges of passersby so she could electronically enter them into the state's tech-worker recruitment database. Michigan companies "are still needing those few highly skilled individuals," she said, noting the state's bustling Ann Arbor tech district. But she admitted that the numbers needed aren't what they were in the past.

"Instead of a few months ago, when some companies needed 10 to 20 people, now it's two or three," she said.

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