



From the Executive Director

"If you'd blinked, you would have missed it"

That's certainly what 2005 felt like to us here at Head Office, and I'm pretty sure that last year will go down as one of the most intensive, and fast-moving, for not just us in Amsterdam, but the classified industry as a whole.

For Head Office, 2005 was largely dominated by the Association's biggest single project - the development of PHOENIX to replace FAPCOM by our partner Joshua Advanced Media Services - and we're delighted that the November launch has gone so well (read the latest news on page 3). But we also had the small matter of holding one of the biggest GM's in recent years in Barcelona, and one of the most exotic ever, in India (check out the report and fabulous photos on pages 4 and 5). We also said goodbye to Gavin and hello to Craig, and saw Jack Humphreville, Sergey Pamukhin and Felix Erken step down from the Committee, and David Waghorne be elected to join a small (but perfectly-formed) group.

In the wider classified world, it's been Google, Google, Google everywhere. Everyone's favourite search

engine with its mission to "organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful" turned its attention to classified advertising in a big way. And as 2005 comes to an end, MSN's Fremont project joins the melée. Partly in response to the new players' entry, we've also seen a lot of selling and buying of classified businesses as publishers seek to secure their markets, whether vertical, generalist or geographical.

A final thought - if any of you have come across the term "snowclone" (a popular sentence structure which is recycled and adapted from the original quote by replacing key words), would that make Google the new eBay?

Here's to a no less interesting (but hopefully a little less frantic), happy and prosperous New Year for all!

Lucie Hime



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From the Chairperson

Dear all,

It was great to see so many of you at our last GM in New Delhi. It was a wonderful venue and I know many of you like myself took the full advantage of being in India and extended your stay. We had the opportunity to visit some of the other places and had some very memorable experiences, not least the bartering in the market places and the tuk tuk rides thru the city!

What were the highlights for you? The party on the Friday night has got to be mentioned again, it was fantastic, many thanks to Sidharth once again for the invitation, and the Gala Dinner was in certainly one of the finest and most elegant surroundings. To see the Taj Mahal for real was superb, although I think we were all rather weary of the bus trip, but hé, at least we didn't have to drive!

I hope that also from the conference, you were able to glean some new ideas for your business. The threat from the likes of Craigslist and Google classifieds was once again highlighted in the content of our conference and I am sure has provided food for thought for all of us. Have you done anything about it since you got back? In Ireland we are certainly working hard to improve on our online offering, our marketplace has become now so segmented, and with virtually no entry barriers to the online business it has become more important that we act quickly and strive to be the best locally, the most attractive, and of course simple to use. The big issue is to make some money from it, and that is not so easy - however we have recently launched Buy & Sell shops - take a look at it <http://shops.buyandsell.ie> - and are getting lot of interest from trade clients. It's early days yet, but we are hoping that our local branding is strong enough to encourage more shopkeepers to sign on and of course this will create another driver to our site and yet another reason to keep our site 'sticky' for visitors.

I was at a recent seminar on the UK and Irish economy and how changes in Europe and Asia impact on us. I am afraid the outlook is rather gloomy for this year - its conclusion gave a few fundamentals to follow if you are running a business in the UK - but I think certainly the broad advice applies to us all:

- Keep looking at your value proposition, is it as good as you think?
- How easy are you making it for customers to transact with you?
- Make sure you are an attractive employer (young potential employees will judge you by your

website, if it does not match your stated position, they won't turn up!)

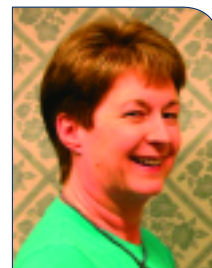
- The net allows potential customers to make easy comparisons between businesses, and the environment is more competitive than ever.
- The main conclusion that the next two years will be tough with cost pressures and price increase resistance, and the inability to grow margins significantly in core product markets will prompt the need for further innovation.

With that in mind you cannot afford not to send at least one of your senior sales staff along to the Sales Lab that ICMA is hosting in March, moderated by David Waghorne, they will definitely come away with more than 25 innovations for your teams! And of course in May we will all have an opportunity to meet up again and review our progress and share opportunities in Toronto, Canada. One of our biggest strengths is having the availability of so much expertise to tap into twice a year. I look forward to seeing you all there.

Happy New Year to you all.

Warm regards,

Jill Armer



Exotic India

This was definitely an exotic GM.
Read all about it on pages 4 and 5!



The last Ad Exchange report!

The last quarter of 2005 saw Loot send over 5,000 RU's through the system just in November, a massive increase on the previous month. So well done to Zulfa Hiles and her team, keep up the good work!

At the moment, FAPCOM and PHOENIX are running alongside each other. Please remember to download from both systems but only send ads through one system, preferably PHOENIX.

This is the final ever Ad Exchange report which will deal exclusively with FAPCOM, as we are planning to move fully over to the PHOENIX system and shut FAPCOM down at the end of January. Pay-to-Print for the second half of 2005 will be calculated in the first half of January and statements with invoices or credit notes will be sent out as normal. However, the system usage balance will not be calculated until after FAPCOM is switched off for the last time. And we will do a last "mopping-up" of January 2006 Pay-to-Print and send out a final statement in February.

PHOENIX reporting will be emailed to you on a monthly basis and will show you the balance for your publishing company, taking into account Pay-to-Print, ICMA tax, and the system fee (paid to Joshua for building the system). Remember, you can always check your current balance in the "live" system by going to PHOENIX Reports.

Under the microscope...

...for the first Sales Lab! This is a dedicated one and half day workshop, led by David Waghorne of Northcliffe Newspapers Group, and designed specifically for sales managers, co-ordinators and team leaders. Five highly-interactive sessions will tackle the most common and difficult challenges faced by classified sales managers, ranging from 50 revenue-generating ideas (with prizes for the best 3!), to evaluation of the best packaging and bundling policies, to discussion of the self-service offering, to developing a year-long sales management strategy, to a review of the best and worst motivational tools and competitions where yet more prizes will be awarded! Craig and Lucie will also run a session on selling more and better international ads through PHOENIX, and there will be an information pack to take away after the event, plus a detailed write-up of all the ideas exchanged. **The Sales Lab will take place in Amsterdam, The Netherlands on 9-10 March 2006**, and the registration fee of EUR 295 includes all sessions, lunches and dinner, and also one night's hotel accommodation. Attendance is strictly limited to 20 people so register now at www.icmaonline.org!



ICMA GM destinations 2006



11-13 May 2006 Toronto, Canada

Do you remember the feeling you get when you come across an amazing menu and want to order every dish? That's what it's like to be in Toronto, according to Tourism Toronto. You can find beautiful original architecture of the city's first settlers alongside modern, sleek, gold-tinted skyscrapers. The Torontonians are modest but celebrate over 1,000 festivals every year. The Mayor's limousine is a hybrid electric car. And the street vendors even dish up vegetarian hot dogs! Toronto is different and has great many things to offer its visitors. We're even hoping that our hosts, Trader Media Corporation, will be able to persuade the Canadian Mounted Police to make an appearance!

The hotel we have selected is a grand, traditional and historic hotel, opened in 1903 and located in

the very heart of the city. Le Royal Meridien King Edward is perfectly situated in Toronto's financial district, close to the Toronto Eaton Centre, Harbourfront, CN Tower, the Skydome and the theatre district. The hotel is also just a 30-minute drive from the international airport.

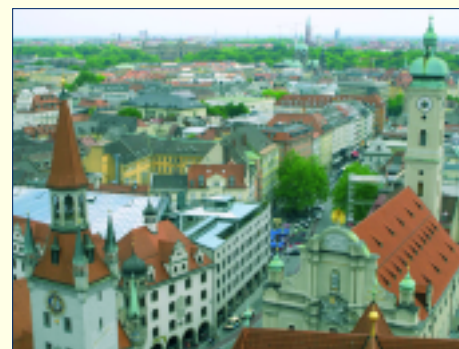
It is the city's first luxury hotel with tasteful, elegantly furnished rooms, reflecting the Edwardian charm. At one time, the 'King Eddy' was even the only place in Toronto that Hollywood stars like Liz Taylor and Richard Burton would consider staying in.

As well as a wonderful venue, the Toronto General Meeting will deliver the goods on for the formal programme front with a theme of **The Next Generation: Product Innovation**. Head Office has already proposed an ambitious and far-reaching programme encompassing some of the biggest names in our industry, and addressing the feedback and suggestions from delegates in India. The Committee will be working with Lucie and the chair of the Publishers' Meeting, Josef Kogler, to further develop these ideas in January and February so watch this space!



9-11 November 2006 Munich, Germany

For the GM in Munich we are negotiating at the moment with the Dorint Sofitel - Bayerpost Munchen, which is a gorgeous hotel in the city centre of Munich. Only 10 minutes walk from the famous Karlsplatz, it is next to the main railway station, with direct trains from the airport.



The building used to be a very old post office, but the only things left from the former building are the outside walls. The inside was completely gutted to create a spectacular luxury hotel with the unique feature of being able to see into Reception from the swimming pool!

Munich will also be the GM where ICMA celebrates its 20th birthday! Yes, it seems like only yesterday but in fact FAPIA/ICMA will have been operating for two full decades. The Committee are busy working on ways that we can mark this achievement (and have a great birthday party too!). Any ideas will be most welcome...



PHOENIX has risen...!

PHOENIX has now been officially launched and with great success! Launched at midnight on 23rd November 2005, the first live ad was sent by Christian Bandy of Das Inserat, Frankfurt who receives a bottle of champagne for his keenness! A large number of publications are now sending and receiving ads through the system and judging by the small number of support calls received, doing this quite easily. Our wholehearted thanks go to Konstantin Kandler and Stephen MacLachlan of Joshua Advanced Media Services for all their hard work, and good humour throughout. But, even more importantly, thank you to all the members who have made a concerted effort to help push PHOENIX forward and engage everyone in their organisation - we know this has been a difficult task but your support has ensured the majority of our members are now able to use a system that is almost fully populated.



Proofreading for a healthy balance...

They say that everyone loves a good read and with this in mind, here are a few examples of how proofreading your received ads on time should make your finance department happy. How? You ask. Well, if you proofread your ads on time you ensure that you are not breaking the ICMA rules (you wouldn't like it when Lucie gets cross...) and also you avoid paying any credit card transaction refund charges for self-service ads if you reject them after the 48-business hour deadline. You are probably thinking that it might only be a little amount of money but this 'little' amount soon increases and will be shown on the monthly statement that is sent to you, your publisher and your finance department (now you see how you can make them happy!). Also, if you don't proofread often enough your PHOENIX counterparts may well decide to delete their ad and send it to someone else! No one wants to lose money or received ads so let's all make a collective New Year's resolution and promise to proofread on time.



PHOENIX can help your love life...

It's official - PHOENIX can assist you in finding that "significant other"! ICMA Head Office had quite a surprise when our postman delivered not one, but three letters in response to an ad that was published by accident. We also discovered one of the letters was hand-delivered! Unfortunately the ad (Attractive Dutch lady seeks husband etc. etc.) was a test ad created by Lucie Hime, the Executive Director of ICMA. I feel I should point out that Lucie is happily "connected" with her existing partner and was not trying to "play the field". Although I also have to say, it amused me hugely in setting up a file named "Lucie's love letters"! ICMA fully understand that mistakes happen (we all make them), but I would urge all publications to check the sending dates on any downloaded ads and make sure that they do not inadvertently publish any rogue test ads sent before 24th November 2005.



PHOENIX Competition winners...

First of all thanks to everyone who entered the PHOENIX Competition. There were a lot of correct answers, especially considering that most of you have not actually met Konstantin, the PHOENIX Programmer!! But I heard that Konstantin's partner Stephen, got a lot of text messages asking for certain information about Konstantin... naughty!

We are pleased to announce that the following 12 people were the correct entries drawn out of the hat! They will receive a lovely bottle of Champagne.

Pia Muller
Rachael Williams
Maria Cuesta
Jouko Johansson

Joe Panek
Marjo Parson
Tapio Luoto
Helga Zimmermann

Elisabeth Wenger
Peter Gannon
Pino Loperfido
Kim Igel

If you would like to know what the correct answers were in the end, here you go:

Q1. What animals was Lucie's Mum trying to sell in Koopjeskrant ?

They were of course, Pedigree Siamese Kittens

Q2. What is a Network Online Ad?

It is an ad on 50+ websites hosted by PHOENIX

Q3. How tall is Konstantin Kandler, the PHOENIX programmer?

He is approximately 1.96m tall

Q4. What is a PHOENIX?

A mythical bird that dies in flames and is reborn from the ashes

Q5. What is the PHOENIX url?

An easy one! www.internationalads.org/publishers/index.php

Again, thanks to all of you who entered the competition.



Did you know?

...that PHOENIX now offers you a near real-time ad balance report?

After consulting with ACP's around the world, we have now added a "balance" report to the system so that you and your finance department can take an immediate look at the number of ads you are sending and receiving.

This "mini-statement" also displays the system charges PHOENIX applies to each ad enabling you to evaluate your ratecard prices in an instant! The final figure at the bottom of the Euro Amount column shows your PHOENIX account balance - a negative number if you are in debit, and a positive number if you are in credit.

You can even use the details to analyse which destinations are sending you ads and making you money! Keep your eyes peeled for future updates on how to use the reports more effectively.

PHOENIX partners



PHOENIX webpage

All PHOENIX news can be found in the Members section of the ICMA website.

India GM Report - 10-12 November 2005

Arriving slightly bleary-eyed in the small hours (when all the European flights seemed to land), ICMA delegates made their way to the Hyatt Regency, our base for the next few days. Everyone agreed that the hotel was one of the most comfortable we've ever stayed in, the Club Olympus scored particularly highly on the massages, beauty treatments and the fitness centre, and the food was delicious and varied.

After settling into our rooms, it was out for the Meet-and-Greet Lunch, where delegates registered for the conference, mingled in the ICMA Member Lounge, and (for some) tasted their first real Indian cuisine. A quick wash-and-brush-up later we assembled in the foyer to board the typically Indian buses for the tour of Delhi. Split into two groups, the buses visited the Parliament Building, India Gate (the New Delhi Arc de Triomphe), the Red Fort, Jamma Masjid, meeting a bicycle-riding baboon and separating Igor from a cobra en route, and finally deposited everyone at Cottage Industries where delegates browsed the stalls, drank Indian tea and negotiated like professionals.

The Welcome Reception and Dinner took place in the Water Court at the Hyatt Regency, an open-air walled garden festooned with lights, and with at least one waiter per guest(!). Jill Armer, ICMA Chairperson, opened the proceedings with a short speech welcoming everyone, thanking our hosts Free-Ads India, our speakers and sponsors (Joshua Advanced Media Services, Calligramme and ISV), and holding a short silence to remember the victims of the October 29 bombings. Everyone tucked into the delicious Indian food, caught up with old friends, met new people, and compared experiences so far.

FRIDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2005

Friday opened to a new format, the Keynote Address followed by the Publishers' Meeting and the Online Revenue Generation Forum. We were delighted to welcome Rajagopalan Sundar, Director Corporate of the Times of India Group, as the Keynote Speaker, especially when he was rather unwell at the time. Nevertheless, he did a great job of presenting the media business in India and analyzing the role of classifieds therein.

Publishers' Meeting

Following the coffee-break, a small and select group of publishers retired with Rob Paterson for the Publishers' Meeting, where the first session



addressed our response to the "Free-Free" threat that was discussed in Barcelona. This developed into an active debate on whether classified publishers could expect to compete against Google's move into classifieds. Who can ever forget Gerald's elephant analogy?! Cut all too short the publishers broke for lunch and then split into twin-tracks - a group facilitated by Sergey Kochurin discussed cost-saving ideas and approaches (a full report of all the ideas will be posted on the downloads database shortly), while the remaining publishers heard from Corporate Catalyst on the best way to approach the opportunities of outsourcing, followed by two case-studies from Buy & Sell and Friday-Ad who had conducted two very successful pilot tests with Free-Ads. A short coffee-break later, and it was back into workgroups to tackle "Getting the most out of your resources", the key to working smarter, not harder. As usual, there was simply not enough time to discuss all of the possible topics.

Winding up, Rob thanked the delegates and proposed that Josef Kogler of VMH Quoka should chair the next Publishers' Meeting in Toronto. Seconded by John Whelan, Josef was duly elected to this position, and we expect great things from him!

Online Revenue Generation Forum

In the next room, Jill Armer and Peter Zollman were leading the Online Revenue Generation Forum - a new meeting designed to meet the needs of sales managers and new media people. The initial session concentrated on sales with Jill tackling many of the issues that confronted today's sales managers. Peter then analysed some of the delegates' self-service pages, and made suggestions for improvements. Following the coffee-break, delegates broke into workgroups to address specific problems, reporting back to the group at the close.

Gathering in the foyer that evening, delegates began boarding the coaches for the evening at Sidharth's family's farmhouse just outside Delhi.

After a short journey, we were welcomed by the Gupta family with champagne and flowers into a beautifully decorated garden, filled with red and gold tables, surrounded with stations serving food from all of India's regions, a numerologist, a palm-reader, a tarot-card reader, a face-reader, people giving out bangles and several henna artists, all around a stage with live Rajasthani music and dancing. You'll just have to check out the photos to see what a spectacular evening it was!



SATURDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2005

On Saturday, there was a standing ovation for Sidharth's hospitality of the previous night, and an announcement of an innovation from ICMA, **the first Sales Lab** (to be held in Amsterdam on 9-10 March 2006 - space is limited and you can register online!) before plunging into the sessions of the Plenary Day. One of ICMA's regular speakers (and the top scorer from the evaluation forms) - Peter Rees of Trader Classified Media - spoke on "Maximising Revenues in a Multi-Channel Business" before sharing some of his thoughts on what the future might hold, especially with regards to Google. Peter was followed by Peter Zollman of Classified Intelligence who reviewed classified business models (successful and unsuccessful) before also addressing the Google issue.

and we certainly hope that you will be able to join us on 11-13 May 2006 - put it in your diary now!

Workshops

Three well-attended workgroups, led by Sally Winfield of Loot, Kaisa Ala-Laurila of Ilta-Sanomat and Bernie Neubauer of ISV, ran for 45 minutes each. "Adding value online", "The journey from paid to free" and "Keeping it local" were the topics and they all proved equally popular - thanks to all our facilitators, and participants for making it such a lively session.

ICMA Business Meeting

The final session was the ICMA Business Meeting where Lucie presented ICMA Projects, an update on PHOENIX and the proposed 2006 budget. The proposed budget was duly voted on and was unanimously approved by delegates.

People hit the gym and the pool, or just relaxed in the bar before gathering in the lobby to catch the coaches to the Gala Party at the Imperial Hotel, one of the world's best hotels. Delegates congregated on the terrace above the bar overlooking the gardens for cocktails and canapés before being served a delicious Indian meal, and listening to India classical music in the Royal Ballroom. Then, whisked from Raj-like splendour to the equally impressive Bollywood-themed Meridien nightclub where we watched a team of Bollywood dancers strut and wiggle their stuff before our Russian delegates led the dancing, and soon the dancefloor was heaving.

SUNDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2005

Bright and early (my alarm went off at 6.15), and with a lot of people wearing sunglasses, we boarded the buses for the four (4!) hour trip to the Taj Mahal. Sitting at the front, I had a birds-eye view of many types of traffic that were sharing the road with us - ranging from the standard cars, buses, scooters and motorcycles to the auto-rickshaws, rickshaws and push-bikes, to pedestrians, donkeys, ponies and carts, a man riding a horse, several trains of camels and at least



one elephant - some of these going in the opposite direction! We had an all-too-brief visit to the Taj Mahal, but we have a great group photo of us all. No-one could remember very much about the trip back except we were all very glad to see the hotel again!

What an amazing General Meeting - thanks to all the delegates, speakers, sponsors and guests, but most of all to our fantastic hosts, the Guptas of Free-Ads India, who have really set new standards in hospitality, and gave us all an experience that we will treasure for years to come. We'll be back!

See you in Toronto!



The final session before the coffee-break saw a new format, a Q&A session on "3 continents, 3 realities", led by Lucie Hime of ICMA, ably supported by Bobby Ralston of Target Media Partners, Sergio Melaragno of Primeiramao and Michiel van der Meer of Speurders.nl. Our thanks again go to Bobby, Sergio and Michiel for stepping into the breach at such short notice when our planned speaker - Orange - cancelled unexpectedly.

A quick break for coffee, and then straight back into a series of presentations focusing on upselling, led by David Waghorne of Northcliffe Newspapers Group. Three first-time speakers featured in this session, Beverly Crandon of Trader Media Corporation of Canada, Lazslo Gyenge of VMH Quoka, and Svetlana Zavodchikova of Pronto-Moscow who deserves special mention for replacing Vladimir Makaron who was unable to make it.

Lunch was a Canadian affair, with maple-leaf pins and flags and a beautiful video showing you just what's in store for you all next May. Beverly made a short speech extolling the virtues of her home city,



A round-up of who's selling and buying what...



Trader Publishing - Landmark Communications Inc. is selling its 50% shareholding in Norfolk, Virginia-based Trader Publishing Company. Its agreement with co-owner Cox Enterprises Inc. provides Cox with an option of buying its share. Landmark wants to reduce its dependence on classified advertising revenues. "If Cox does not buy Landmark's half-interest, then Trader will likely be sold to a new owner," Frank Batten Jr., chairman of Landmark, said. Trader made US\$ 1.1 billion (EUR 920 million) in revenue in 2004.

NORTHCLIFFE NEWSPAPERS GROUP LTD

Northcliffe Newspapers Group - Northcliffe Newspapers Group, owners of Ad-Mag, recent purchasers of Scott Davidson's Bargain Pages, and a division of the Daily Mail & General Trust, may be put up for sale. This option, which does not include Northcliffe International, is part of a strategic review by the DMGT board. Northcliffe's local newspaper publishing business is one of the most profitable DMGT divisions, and should it be sold on its entirety to another major UK player, could well attract the attention of the Competition Commission.



Trader Classified Media - Trader Classified Media announced that it intends to IPO its Central and Eastern European businesses on the London Stock Exchange in the first half of 2006. The new company, to be called Trader Media East, comprises businesses in the Baltic States, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Russia and the CIS, and represents US\$ 193 million (EUR 161 million) revenues, and US\$ 69 million (EUR 58 million) operating EBITDA.

Yellow Pages Group to acquire Trader Media Corporation

Yellow Pages Group, Canada's largest telephone directories publishers announced on 12 December 2005 that it has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire ICMA member Trader Media Corporation (TMC) for approximately CA\$ 436 million (EUR 317 million) payable in cash and equity securities of YPG LP. The deal should close on February 15, 2006.

"TMC brings significant value to YPG to help us continue to grow in the advertising market. We will do so by drawing on our core competencies in local advertising, including our ubiquitous brands and products, our rich local content both print and online, and our extensive advertiser relationships," commented YPG's CEO, Marc Tellier.

TMC is Ontario's largest publisher of classified advertising and web sites. Principally specialized in automotive and real estate advertising, TMC has 65 print publications including AutoTrader, Ontario's largest source of used vehicle photo-classified advertising, as well as Renters News, Resale Homes and New Homes & Condos, the leading guides to



housing in the major Ontario markets. It also hosts eight web sites including www.autotrader.ca for Ontario.



TMC is wholly owned by Fraser Francis Limited, and generates strong and growing free cash flow, and annualized revenues of approximately CA\$ 133

million (EUR 97 million) and adjusted EBITDA of CA\$ 43 million (EUR 31 million).

TMC's President, John Francis, said: "We are excited about this opportunity to join forces with Yellow Pages Group as it gives us the chance to take TMC to the next stage of its development and build new opportunities from the strengths of two market leaders."

TMC is the third ICMA member to be acquired by a directory companies in recent years, Trader Classified Media sold their Australian operations to Sensis in 2003, and their Swedish business to Eniro in 2004.



Speurders.nl Professionals help people to sell their goods

Speurders.nl is training individuals to become professional and reliable salesmen. To become a Speurders.nl Professional anyone from the Netherlands can sign in on the Speurders.nl homepage. Speurders.nl Professionals are entrepreneurs who make money by helping people to sell their second hand goods. General Manager Michiel van der Meer: "The concept is an example of the easy usability we offer, people do not need to sell the products themselves anymore. A professional will come and visit you at home and take over the complete task of selling the items."

Education

The people that sign on to become a Speurders.nl Professional get a 3 day course, where they will learn all the ins and outs of selling via Speurders.nl. Not only the website, but also law related subjects, bookkeeping skills, photography, the writing of ad texts and marketing are included in the course.

Free enterprise

After the successful completion of the course they will receive a Speurders Professional ID and can conduct business as an independent entrepreneur.

Income

The income of the Speurders.nl Professional exists of a percentage of the total revenue. This way they can earn their main income from their home. Michiel van der Meer: "The results of a pilot project shows that Speurders.nl Professionals can generate a monthly income of EUR 1,500 or more. The market for second hand goods is incredibly large. In the last year for EUR 1.8 billion goods were traded via Speurders.nl only. And there are still a lot of attics with goods collecting dust at the moment."

Easy

This concept makes selling things through Speurders.nl easier than ever. Someone who would like to sell something, just contacts one of the Speurders.nl Professionals. Michiel van der Meer: "With this concept the possibility to start your own business lies within easy reach. Also we open our site for people that have a lot of old things to sell, still tucked away in the attic, but do not have the time or can't be bothered with the hassle of selling their things to potential buyers."

Microsoft tests free classifieds

Two weeks after Google unveiled its classified service, Microsoft has started testing its own upcoming free classifieds site, code-named "Fremont". The release of the competing classifieds service comes at a time when the popularity of online listings sites is skyrocketing. According to research, released last week by the Pew Internet & American Life Project and comScore Networks, more than 26.3 million people visited the top 15 classified websites in September 2005 - an 80 percent increase over the same period in 2004.

Microsoft's Fremont - which was first revealed on the Techcrunch Blog, authored by Michael Arrington - is intended as a classifieds play, but



will also integrate with many of the company's upcoming Windows Live offerings. "It is more than just a classifieds service: you can post information you'd like to share with your social network - it integrates with Virtual Earth and aids in the discovery of items via search, MSN Alerts,

integration with WL Messenger, WL Spaces, MSN Shopping, and other Windows Live and MSN assets," said a spokeswoman for MSN. Google Base, on the other hand, is simply a database, into which any sort of information can be uploaded - from apartment or job listings to recipes for Chicken Tikka Masala. Although the search giant hasn't touted it as a classifieds offering, many of the pre-created information fields in the database relate to major classifieds categories, for example 'number of bedrooms' for apartment listings, or 'education required' for job postings.

Kelsey Group Analyst Greg Sterling said that Microsoft and Google appear to be going about providing online listings in different ways, adding that Microsoft's service seems to have been designed more specifically for classifieds, while Google's is designed for broader content. "Both Google and Microsoft recognise it as important," he said. "What Google has done is create a content upload system without really creating a user experience, but Microsoft has created a more conventional user experience."

Jupiter Research Analyst Gary Stein added that Microsoft might have a slight edge in the classifieds race, since Google Base isn't being specifically touted as a listings service.

Source: MediaPostPublications

Unused potential in online classified ads

Dramatic gaps exist between the classified offerings of large newspaper publishers, smaller publishers and online-only players, suggesting that offline players are missing the opportunity to use audio, video and other technologies. That's the conclusion of a new study conducted at the University of Missouri's graduate school of journalism. The research paper, "Interactivity and Vividness in U.S. Newspapers' Online Classified Ads," evaluated the automotive, employment and real estate classifieds at 24 online newspapers of various sizes, examining their interactive and rich media features. The study shows that while many newspapers have increased interactive and rich media features on their sites, "they appear to have gone after the low-hanging fruit, those features easiest to add". None of the newspapers studied use audio clips; video clips are deployed by only 4.2 percent; audio/video clips are available on just 8.3 percent of sites, and an IM chat feature can be found on just 2.8 percent of newspaper classified sites. E-mail notification is another feature popular with online-only sites, yet missing from the majority of offline publishers. When rich media was used in print classifieds ads, it most often was in the real estate vertical. Three newspapers used advanced technologies for virtual tours, while another used rich media to highlight a local real estate agent. Two

publishers included audio slide shows, in which photos of homes were accompanied by audio descriptions. Though some hoped the Internet would reduce the cost barrier for large and small publishers to compete with each other, making the medium a "great equalizer", this is not happening, the study suggests. Photos, animation, search functionality, and e-mail or Web-based forms are often deployed on the verticals of larger papers. Obviously, the online newspapers must deal with constraints that



aren't faced by online-only classified sites. Newspapers rely on formats established by print editions, and need additional technologies to facilitate the publishing of both print and online versions.

Source: ClickZ News

The Metro column...

Metro International S.A., the international newspaper group, launched its 59th edition, in Spain. The new national edition is distributed in 8 new Spanish cities: Burgos, Salamanca and Valladolid in Castilla-León; Gijón and Oviedo in Asturias; Santander in Cantabria; Pamplona in Navarre and Mallorca in the Balearics.



With this 11th Spanish edition and the conversion of the Barcelona edition into a regional Catalonia edition, distributed in the cities of Girona, Lleida and Tarragona, Metro is now the most widely distributed newspaper in Spain covering more than 30 cities in 12 of 17 Spanish regions, 67% of the Spanish population.

Metro also announced the acquisition of the 9.99% of capital of Metro Holland from existing minority shareholders, which it did not already own. Metro Holland was launched in 1999 and publishes 3 editions with a daily circulation of 500,000 and a weekday readership of almost 1.5 million. In its financial results for the third quarter of 2005, Metro reported a 20% year on year increase in net sales to US\$ 74.0 million (EUR 62 million), and a year-on-year increase in its New York sales of 177%. The quarter saw a net loss of US\$ 12.2 million (EUR 10.2 million).

And finally, Metro announced that their global daily readership rose 22% to 18.5 million readers as measured by analyst TNS in their Worldwide Readership Survey. The growth reflects both increased readership in existing Metro markets and geographical expansion.



Sits Vac

Google's looking for a Vertical Markets Director, Classifieds - based in either the New York or Mountain View offices. Reportedly paying in excess of US\$ 250,000 (EUR 208,000) p.a. specific responsibilities include developing a strategic plan for accelerated long-term category revenue growth, building a team of specialists to maximize revenue growth with top vertical-specific advertisers, and representing Google at classifieds-targeted industry events and associations. But there's no such thing as a free lunch, and the successful candidate will have to have some top-quality experience from major classified and Internet players plus a Ivy League level education. We can but dream...

UPCOMING EVENTS

23-24 February 2006

THE 2006 WORLD ADVERTISING CONFERENCE AND EXPO

Paris, France

www.wan-press.org

Organised by: World Association of Newspapers

9-10 March 2006

SALES LAB

Amsterdam, The Netherlands

www.icmaonline.org

Organised by: International Classified Media Association

4-6 May 2006

AFCP ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Miami, USA

www.afcp.org

Organised by: Association of Free Community Papers

11-13 May 2006

GENERAL MEETING

Toronto, Canada

www.icmaonline.org

Organised by: International Classified Media Association

9-11 November 2006

GENERAL MEETING AND ICMA'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY

Munich, Germany

www.icmaonline.org

Organised by: International Classified Media Association

Personal Column

Walking up the aisle

We had 2 marriages towards the end of 2005 and we would like to congratulate the lucky ones! Sidharth Gupta, the fantastic host of the India GM, and COO of Neighbourhood Directories tied the knot on 23 November. How he found the time to host the GM and plan this wedding is a miracle! We wish him and the lovely Tavishi all the very best for the future. Also Nick Sertis the General Manager of Quokka Press in Australia took the big step, congratulations to Nick and his new wife.

Arrivals

With the commencement of the new year and the recent launch of PHOENIX, comes another new face! Fran Cockrell of Friday-Ad joins our merry band and brings with her a whopping 69 destinations! We extend a very warm welcome to Fran and her team and know that you will do the same. You can find out more about Friday-Ad by going to Users, Find Users (Global) within PHOENIX.

And we would like to wish Birgit Bonhoff of Quoka the very best of luck as she prepares for the arrival of her first baby.

Leavers

We say a fond farewell to Simona Surdokaite of Alio Reklama, Lithuania who has been replaced by Violeta Rimkute as the new ACP.

Please note that Iz Ruki v Ruki, Ekaterinberg and Oglasnik, Croatia are no longer participating in FAPCOM and will not be continuing as destinations within PHOENIX.

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New Year annual amateur tennis tournament in Voronezh!

Every year at the end of December the free ads paper Camelot holds a New Year annual tennis tournament among amateurs. The first tournament took place six years ago and it has already become a tradition with participation increasing every year. One might say six years is not a long period and an amateur tennis tournament is not a big deal. But competitions of such a kind are quite rare not only for our town but also for our country, so we are very proud of holding this tournament in Voronezh and the idea belongs exclusively to Camelot.

A lot has changed since the first tournament in 1999. For the first couple of years there were only men's singles competitions, later - mixed, and now we can boast about women's singles, which (I think everybody agrees) adds a certain charm to tournament. Nominations list, entry list, age groups and even tournament name - everything that can be changed has changed. There is only one thing that was left unchanged - a great interest expressed by amateur tennis players from Voronezh and nearby towns. It is just amazing to see how these respectable serious people turn into reckless venturesome hot-tempered players, desperately fighting for every point. And in respect of hot fights on the tennis court Camelot tennis tournament is highly competitive with Roland Garros!

Last year's tournament attracted 64 participants who were fighting not only for the main prizes but also for the prizes in various nominations among which were Court Gentleman, Best Service, Most Persistent Duel, Best Debut and some others. And once again for the sixth time we had a chance for a whole week to be witnesses of breathtaking duels and overflowing emotions, successes and defeats.



ICMA Newsletter

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ICMA's second Newsletter for 2006 is due out beginning of April. The due date for any contributions will be Wednesday 15 March 2006.