

Red Eagle offers Web design services
by Gerry S. Ford



Pictured are Rick Tipton (l-r), Raul Garcia, owner of La Fiesta and customer of Red Eagle Web Design, and Jonathan McAlpin.

To be a successful entrepreneur, you need to master all the necessary business skills. And in today's business world, you need to add the technology knowledge on top of all those skills.

To some people, it can be overwhelming. To others, it seems like an episode of "Star Trek," complete with Captain Kirk.

Take Jonathan McAlpin, for instance. The technically talented 30-year-old started a Web site building business two years ago on the encouragement of his family and friends. The challenge of owning his own business looked as easy as the challenge of learning the technical aspects of automobiles and computers, which he learned at Middle Georgia Technical Institute.

A self-proclaimed 'techie', McAlpin learned how to build Web sites while he was working as a contractor at Brown & Williamson.

"I built a family Web site," the Houston County native said. "I just caught onto it. I would look at the code and taught myself."

So, in August 2005, Red Eagle Web Design was in business. The "techie" was in business for himself.

While McAlpin wanted to use his name in the name of the business, his wife, Melissa, thought of Red Eagle out of the blue, and it stuck with them.

"She was lying on the bed, closed her eyes, and sat up, saying 'red eagle'," he said. "She said she saw a red eagle when she closed her eyes."

At first, McAlpin relied on word-of-mouth advertising to drum up business, building Web sites primarily for friends and associates.

In early 2007, McAlpin had gotten to the point where business was getting harder to find and casual marketing efforts were not working anymore. "I am not a salesman," he said. "I tried Google ad words, but the return on investment was not there."

At the point of greatest frustration in mid-2007, McAlpin met Rick Tipton, a 20-year-veteran of the armed forces, who had relocated back to Jones County with his wife, Ann.

“I was helping a realty company with their computer system,” said the 58-year-old Tipton. “And he was with one of the vendors.”

Despite their age differences, the two men hit it off at once and began to talk about the possibilities with Red Eagle. The casual talking, and occasional “techie” speak, began to get more serious, and two years after starting Red Eagle, McAlpin now had a partner and a renewed enthusiasm for growth and excitement.

Tipton, and his lively personality and military experience, has become the needed boost McAlpin needed to revive his enthusiasm in the business.

Tipton, who grew up in Bellaire, Ohio, retired as deputy director for Command Control Communications and Computer for the U.S. Navy, stationed in Key West, Fla. The knowledge he gained in the military, plus the “20 years to think” brought Tipton back to his wife’s home of Jones County with an enthusiasm for small town democracy.

“This is democracy in action,” Tipton said. “I love the small-time feel.”

Despite being a partner in Red Eagle, Tipton sells real estate for Exit Preferred Realty and works part-time for Johnson and Johnson putting together heart packs.

“I look forward to quitting my three jobs and working only on this one,” Tipton said.

Red Eagle is now creating a lot of buzz for its company through Tipton’s marketing efforts. “We are in the Chamber welcome packets, being sent to all new members,” he said.

McAlpin quickly adds, joining in the sales enthusiasm, “We have pens and magnets as well.”

But the two men are not letting their excitement and enthusiasm get the best of them. They recognize there is a lot of hard work and patience required before they quit their day jobs. McAlpin works at Atlantic Southern Bank as an application systems analyst.

“There is a great opportunity,” Tipton said. “But, we have to have planned growth.”

Long term, they both would like to be working full-time in the business, have an office location, their own servers, and multiple streams of revenue.

Even though they come from different generations, they still both hope their business will “Beam me up, Scotty” in the near future.