



Bears

In the ever-evolving world of Information Technology (IT), career possibilities are no longer limited to programmers writing code, fighting viruses or encrypting personal information. All companies from restaurants and retail outlets to universities and hospitals must use technology for direct communication with their customers, clients and employees to stay competitive. The faster the word gets out, the better. This urgent need has created a whole gamut of niche IT professionals and the demand has made these opportunities quite exciting and lucrative. **baylor business alumni j. martin, don kersting and ben lamm are riding this new wave of highly concentrated IT. everyday they are behind the screens of e-learning and interactive marketing.**

J. Martin, BBA 1999 in Performance Improvement Technology, is a consultant for Jamcorp Solutions, LP, a company he owns in San Antonio.

"My first class with Dr. Mo in 1998 got me hooked on the e-learning industry and a career in IT," said Martin. Like Lamm and Kersting, Martin became passionate about the field after taking classes under Dr. James Moshinkskie, "Dr. Mo" as he is known to the students. Moshinkskie recently retired from his posts at the Hankamer School of Business, but remains an e-learning consultant.


"Dr. Mo taught me all I know," said Lamm, BBA 2004 in Finance with a concentration in IT, who owns Simply Interactive in Waco. "I work closely with him today on e-learning projects. We have a great, symbiotic relationship. He is a great friend, mentor and teacher."

At Jamcorp Solutions, Martin is responsible for a small contract work as a web producer with a team of business, marketing and IT professionals for USAA.com, among other clients. His team produces in-house e-learning and company Web sites.

"My first business contract gave me the opportunity to work with the Air Force. For three years, I worked with a great team of people as we designed, developed and launched an e-learning system that is used by airmen across the globe," said Martin. "Today, I enjoy working with people and finding the right technology that meets their needs. It is a thrill helping clients find solutions that work – whether it is placing learning on the web, designing custom websites, or managing IT projects for my clients," he said.


Behind the screens

BY BETH BARBEE



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J. Martin 000 1999



Martin met his wife April, BBA 2000, while attending Baylor business classes together. They dreamed of owning their own business someday – and it didn't take that long. They opened their first company in 2002 and now own three small businesses together along with a movie production company started with Martin's brother, Josh, in 2005. Martin takes pleasure in the thrills and personal growth of being an IT entrepreneur.

Ben Lamm BBA 2004


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"I started four businesses in my twenties and look forward to watching them grow in my thirties and beyond," said Martin. "I enjoy the learning, the pace, the challenges and the sense of accomplishment with this business. I also find it appealing when the checks actually show up."

Lamm knows what it feels like to get your first big break. He started Simply Interactive as a class project at the business school. The company they did the project for was so impressed they offered Lamm a six-figure contract for the work.

"That first client gave us capital to get established," said Lamm. "Unlike most businesses, we didn't have to raise or borrow money to get started. We have been profitable from day one; we are cash heavy – no debt. That was our biggest jump-start."

At Simply Interactive, Lamm is responsible for all client interactions and managing the technical team responsible for developing his company's services, which provide interactive marketing and e-learning services to a number of retail companies. Lamm recognizes the role of interactive marketing in establishing brand loyalty with the young consumer. He works with companies to conceptualize fun and engaging interactive games, online contests, giveaways and other targeted campaigns to meet their business objectives. Simply Interactive



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also strives to get its share of the distance-learning market by doing online trainings for clients.

Lamm relishes the independence of owning his own business at such a young age.

"I needed the freedom to make decisions now, not 10 years from now when I had gained some experience in the organization. Few organizations let 24 year olds make some of the decisions that I am forced to make on a daily basis. It has been a great learning experience for me, while being financially rewarding," Lamm said. "At the same time, it is not stable or an eight to five. When you own your own company, it is a 24-7 commitment. If something goes wrong for your clients or a project is behind, then it falls on you."

In the time that Lamm has owned his business, he has seen much success and enjoyed the freedom that has followed, but is not satisfied to stop striving for more.

"I love having the ability that if I wanted to take a week off and go to the Bahamas, I could and no one could tell me not to," he said. "But with our continued growth, finding times to get away are harder and harder. I would encourage others who achieve success to reward themselves. Take that vacation, but when you get back, set new goals."

Setting new goals are nothing new to Don Kersting, BBA 1998 Computer Information Systems. He has gone both the freelancing route and owned his own business in his IT career before landing as Baylor Learning Network Project Manager for Baylor Health Care System in Dallas. He was successful on his own, but leaving the single life behind caused him to abandon the '24-7 commitment' of entrepreneurship for the stable corporate gig. Now, in addition to his roles as devoted husband and new dad, he oversees day-to-day operations of all aspects of the Baylor Learning Network (BLN), which includes setting technology-based learning strategy for Baylor Health Care System, managing multimedia e-learning development projects for entire system and individual departments and coordinating and negotiating vendor contracts for the BLN itself and off-the-shelf e-learning.

Kersting feels that e-learning is revolutionizing healthcare training, which in turn, is bolstering the level of patient care at his hospital.

"Although I love technology, I really enjoy the people part of my job. I spend a lot of time in our hospitals working with departments who could really use some e-learning so they can focus on patient care. For example, we are putting the finishing touches on a very interactive e-learning lesson that teaches our entire nursing population on the general points of our new blood and IV pumps. This e-learning will allow the nurses to take the learning during a free moment in their day, and not force them to head to the classroom. More time can be spent taking care of patients."

Of course e-learning in the healthcare industry has its own environmental risks.

"I have a very queasy stomach and some of the e-learning content for healthcare professionals includes graphical elements not for the faint of heart."

Kersting, Lamm and Martin agree the constantly changing nature of technology is the biggest challenge for professionals in the field to keep their edge and relevance.

"I require myself to at least have a general knowledge of the latest programming tricks, graphic design software or e-learning industry standard," Kersting said. "The next big challenge is the need for rapid e-learning development. There is such a need for high quality e-learning, but of course it is needed yesterday. I believe the challenge of the industry will be to find a way to rapidly create e-learning while not sacrificing quality and instructional design standards."

Kersting sums up the enthusiasm that keeps them enthralled in the day-to-day fervor of the IT world. "I think computers, and really technology in general, is cool. Yes, I know it is simplistic, and in some circles a bit dork-ish, but I think that the growing power, portability and use of technology is incredibly exciting. When you consider that the computing power in my cell phone is more that what was used to put man on the moon – well, it is hard to put your head around that."