

## Ventura County Star Imagine and so much more from Web business

By Allison Bruce (Contact)  
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Eric Parsons / Star staff. Simi Valley 3/31/08. The shipping and receiving department of Simi Valley-based Reimagine Memories consists of a folding card table in the garage of CEO and co-founder Brad Jashinsky, who ships his customers' orders himself.



Eric Parsons / Star staff Brad Jashinsky is CEO and co-founder of Reimagine Memories, a Simi Valley company that specializes in converting older media types, such as VHS, into digital format and maintaining a file-sharing Web site for its clients. The business generated about \$25,000 in revenue last year. He said he would like to reach \$100,000 this year.

Post a question or place a call to Reimagine Memories about how to turn a videocassette of your kid's birthday into a DVD, and you'll probably get a call from CEO Brad Jashinsky.

Go to the Reimagine Memories Web site to sign up for a free account or upload video, pictures or text, and you'll also find video tutorials.

Send in an order, and it will be hand-labeled and shipped back to you. Or, if you live near his Simi Valley home, Jashinsky might drop it off himself.

For Reimagine Memories, it's about creating a company that distinguishes itself from competitors with good customer service, ease of use and a personal touch. The company has two main areas of business: converting old audio and video into digital formats and providing a Web site and service for sharing digital content.

"A lot of people can copy our idea," Jashinsky said. But he wants to set his company apart by emphasizing quality work and customer service.

Ariele Schiffer found the company through Google. The Simi Valley resident called Reimagine Memories and another company.

Jashinsky called her immediately and sounded very professional, she said. The other company didn't.

"Nowadays, people are just, they're very unsocial with business," she said. "It's like, Here, take a number.' "

Schiffer had 13 tapes, beginning with her baby shower for her son, who is now 7. She didn't have backups.

"I told him, This is my life here,' " she said.

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Jashinsky hand-delivered them back to her along with the DVDs. She's now recommending the company to friends.

Jashinsky does the bulk of the work at home, where he works in his bedroom, a garage and a home office.

A 60 percent owner of the company, Jashinsky is 19 and a full-time freshman at California State University Channel Islands. He does part-time computer repair and IT work to fund the startup, which is just beginning to be profitable.

Technical director and co-owner Daniel Story, who lives in Redondo Beach, is 20 and works full time as a software engineer.

Reimagine Memories grew out of an idea that Jashinsky had while watching childhood videos at a friend's house.

He thought: "Wouldn't it be nice to share this with people?"

He was a high school student developing video games, not interested in starting a business. But he couldn't find a company that did what he was looking for the way he thought that it should be done.

"It first started as a hobby," Jashinsky said. "Then I thought it might go somewhere."

Story had experience in Web development. The two met online and collaborated previously. Their visions meshed for Reimagine Memories.

Ideas from small startups

Story hoped that Reimagine Memories would reach beyond what was already out there to offer something new for sharing with family and friends. Often, new ideas come from small startups with a couple of people, not the large companies that don't take chances anymore, he said.

"While an idea might not be successful, you can learn from it, and that's what I wanted to do," he wrote in an e-mail.

The idea, which surfaced in 2005, spent a long time in development. Reimagine Memories launched in July at the Southwest Computer Conference in San Diego.

The response was positive, said Patricia Hill, media relations director for the conference.

The Reimagine Memories booth, with its grass skirt, inflatable palm tree and lots of youthful energy, was extremely popular, she said. The conference tends to draw an older crowd.

"They just absolutely pepped up the vendor expo and raised the energy level like you cannot believe," she said.

People were excited about the company and planned to go home, log on and learn more, she said.

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The Web site was carefully crafted, then carefully ripped apart and reassembled to make it as easy to use as possible. The idea was to move away from the clutter and confusion often associated with sharing sites such as MySpace or YouTube.

Although intended for people to post and share digital files from the past with friends and family, users have found other ways to use the site, Story said. For example, there's a band that has been using the site to upload free copies of its music that others can download.

The site has about 141 active accounts. Free accounts allow up to 500 MB of space for digital files.

Any single file can be up to the 500 MB max, which allows users to post high-definition or longer video content. A paid account, which costs \$10 a month, allows an unlimited amount of space. That monthly fee also lets members convert up to five videos, audiocassettes, films and the like each month.

Those without a paid account but with old video or audio can buy those services a la carte, with discounts by volume. Jashinsky said he's received a lot of video — the strangest on an old Betamax tape. He had to borrow his grandparents' Betamax player for the conversion. He's done some vinyl record conversions, but is waiting on that first audiocassette.

Two very busy months

The business generated about \$25,000 in revenue last year. Jashinsky said he would like to reach \$100,000 in revenue this year, but with the slow economy, he'd be happy with \$40,000.

The converting side of the business was very busy in November and December. Jashinsky was so busy, he had friends working part time converting about 300 to 400 hours of video.

"I even had my mom converting tape," Jashinsky said. "That's how busy it was."

For the Web site, the hope is to have a search feature in place by summer that will let users search public videos. There are other features that Story would like to get in place as time permits.

He'd also like to see more users. More paying members may help the bottom line, but "just to see members use the product is very fulfilling in itself," Story said.

On the Net:

<http://www.reimaginememories.com/>