

Small Business Success Awards 2004

NJSBDC E-Business Services
Winner: Sumit Bhanote
Business: LuggagePoint.com
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Rahway
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Currently in the peak of his holiday shopping season, Sumit Bhanote has developed an online business to compliment the traditional luggage wholesale business started by his father more than 20 years ago. So from November right up through December 23, he will be watching his site stats and managing his bids on key words even more closely than usual to monitor the success of his online outreach.

Bhanote has been involved with the business for the past six years in a business development capacity and went online, quickly realizing that he needed to invest in online marketing to bring his brand directly to consumers in addition to selling wholesale to stores in New Jersey and New York.

Bhanote has seen the online advertising market go from banner ads to targeted advertising programs such as Google's popular Ad Words, based on paying per click-through, rather than impressions. Although Bhanote does not have a set monthly budget, he increases advertising during heavy sales seasons such as the holidays.

The beauty of internet marketing is the capacity to quantify everything and Bhanote carefully watches performance on Google, Yahoo, Bizrate.com, Pricegrabber.com and "a ton of other portals that we're affiliated with," he said.

Last year, Bhanote was referred to the NJSBDC E-Business Services program where Nat Bender provided a comprehensive web site review, recommending that images be further optimized for download time and more products be presented

on the homepage. Bhanote realizes that www.luggagepoint.com, like any active web site, is a work in progress and implemented the recommendations.

With a 3,000 square foot warehouse in Rahway, Bhanote reports that online sales are competing with their traditional business and some of the wholesale shoppers even use the web site to see new products they may wish to order through the traditional channel, another use of the site.

Bhanote is currently working with the Mercer/Middlesex SBDC at The College of New Jersey to access financing for growth for www.luggagepoint.com and expand his operations.



Sec. Bauer and Hopper congratulate Sumit (center) and XXX Bhanote of www.luggagepoint.com, an online luggage retailer. Sumit started the online arm of his Father's wholesale luggage business and worked with Nat Bender, Director of the NJSBDC E-Business Services program (far right).