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by Adam Worcester Contributing Writer

Logos Create Identity for Promotion Firm

The Compleat Company can place brands on 485,000 items

Put a bullet next to The Compleat Co. on this year's list of fastest-growing Puget Sound businesses.

If owners' plans pan out, the firm will shoot up the chart like a hot country single.

"This is our slow-growth period," said CEO Matthew Mason, who has watched revenues rise 72 percent -- to \$1.6 million -- since 1996. "We'll be a \$10 million company in a couple of years."

An ambitious aim? Sure, but it doesn't seem unrealistic for a firm that had one employee -- Mason -- and virtually no revenue at the start of the decade.

What began as a part-time hobby designing T-shirts has blossomed into a full-time career creating promotional merchandise.

The Compleat Co. helps businesses make and imprint their logos on paraphernalia ranging from pens to golf clubs.

There are actually 485,000 different items on which one can put logos, Mason said. His firm specializes in helping customers pick precisely the right ones.

Suppose Bill Gates wanted Microsoft beer mugs, for example. Mason would show him 10 different types from a variety of vendors.

"Creativity is really important. If a client comes to us and says, 'I need you to give me some concepts,' that's where we shine," Mason said. "We have to understand what their company stands for. We almost become a part of their marketing department."

The Compleat Co. helps customers brainstorm and fine-tune their logo and choose the best merchandise on which to stamp it.

Mason buys in bulk from preferred vendors. The items are then distributed to customers, employees or potential clients.

The firm's clientele includes Microsoft, Cinnabon, Nordstrom, Nickelodeon, The Ackerley Group and many other well-known names. All told, 11 Compleat Co. employees service more than 1,000 commercial accounts in 29 states.

"We deal with everyone from the person off the street to national corporations. No order is too small

here," said controller Mike Spino, a longtime friend of Mason's who sold his share in a legal messenger service last May to join the firm.

Another childhood pal, E. Glenn Leimbacher, became joint owner and vice president in 1991 after a chance meeting with Mason at Bumbershoot.

"We were both on our own, freelancing in textiles and printing. We thought if we put our heads together, we could do a better job," Leimbacher said.

He oversees marketing and new business development, while Mason and Spino concentrate on accounting and overall operations.

Leimbacher and Mason met at the University of Washington, from which Mason graduated with an economics degree.

In 1987, Mason went to work in the import office at Nordstrom, a post he continued to hold even while establishing The Compleat Co. between 1989 and 1994.

The initial success of his brainchild was not unexpected.

"We've laid solid groundwork for more aggressive growth," Mason said. "I have even bigger plans, actually, going forward."

They include establishing more international accounts, expanding an Internet presence and more than doubling the current staff.

Though there are no current plans to go public, Mason said he would never rule it out.

"I've always been driven by success," he explained. "To me, success is enjoying what you do. This is something that has never stopped being fun."

Mason's staff shares his enthusiasm, according to his partner. "We're all type-A people," Leimbacher said. "We can never grow fast enough."

The Compleat Co. Seattle Special events marketing Total Fiscal operating No. of year revenues employees
1998 \$1.57 million 7
1997 \$1.16 million 5
1996 \$0.91 million 3
Attorney: Lasher, Holzapfel Sperry & Ebber-
son Bank: KeyBank Accountant: Randy L. Joseph