

Mason's T-shirts Snowball into Business

When Matthew Mason started creating T-shirt designs in 1989, he never imagined it would snowball into a \$3 million business.

Mason, 38, is president of The Compleat Co., a promotional merchandise agency that emblazons logos on virtually anything from baseball caps to ballpoint pens.

He began his career in the import office at Nordstrom. "That's where I learned that customer-service background," Mason recalls.

During his tenure there, the University of Washington graduate rang up about \$2,000 on his credit card to begin a side business of screen-printing shirts. As his business and customer base grew, he left the corporate world to run The Compleat Co. full time. It now services about 600 customers nationwide.

While not as big as some competitors, including Bensussen Deutsch and Associates and Zebra Hill Marketing, Mason says attention to each customer's needs sets his company apart. "The most important part is delivering in service, being on time at the right price," he says.

Despite recent tough economic times, Mason is proud of the fact that his company has managed to maintain profitability. He attributes this accomplishment to "making some tough decisions across the board, including at the top, of reducing salaries and having people do more with less."

The Compleat Co. is involved in many local special events, including the Nordstrom Beat the Bridge Run and the St. Patrick's Day Dash. Mason believes in giving back to the community so he helps to raise funds for these events and contributes in-kind donations to the charities involved.

After 13 years, Mason's passion about his company has never wavered. "The key to success in any business is to love what you do because you have boundless energy for that."

Vital statistics

Single

Book on your nightstand: *Last one I actually finished was "Jack" by Jack Welch*

Favorite movie: *"Blade Runner"*

Favorite musical artist: *Aztec Camera*

Favorite escape: *Golf course*

Wheels: *1993 Ford Explorer*

Personal hero: *My parents. The older I get, the more I realize what they had to deal with in raising my sister and I! They gave us this most important thing you can give your children — love, time and attention.*

Person you'd most like to meet: *Leonardo DaVinci*

Your three passions: *Work, learning new things, becoming a better person*