

# Springwise newsletter | 18 November 2009

Spotted for you this week: the wisdom of the crowds put to work for pregnant women, samples delivered by UPS, a site that helps neighbours share lawn mowers and leaf blowers, and more. Our next newsletter will come your way on December 2nd. In the meantime, check out our daily postings on [www.springwise.com](http://www.springwise.com).



## Wine by numbers, with a digital content twist

We've seen several innovations at the intersection of wine and technology, including Aromicon's "[virtual taste search engine](#)," which we featured just last week. Dutch startup [94wines](#) is now bringing a new technological twist to the table, so to speak, by offering a line of numbered and colour-coded wines that can be personalized with digital content.

Launched a week ago, 94wines offers a line of French wines in which each variety is indicated by a number and a bottle colour rather than a name linked to its maker, vintage or region. Consumers begin by taking a short quiz of six questions regarding their likes and dislikes. That, in turn, produces their personal WineID, which can then be used to guide their choices from among the company's series of wines. The use of numbers and colours makes wine preferences easy to remember, while personal ID profiles allow friends to see each other's preferences for gift-giving purposes.

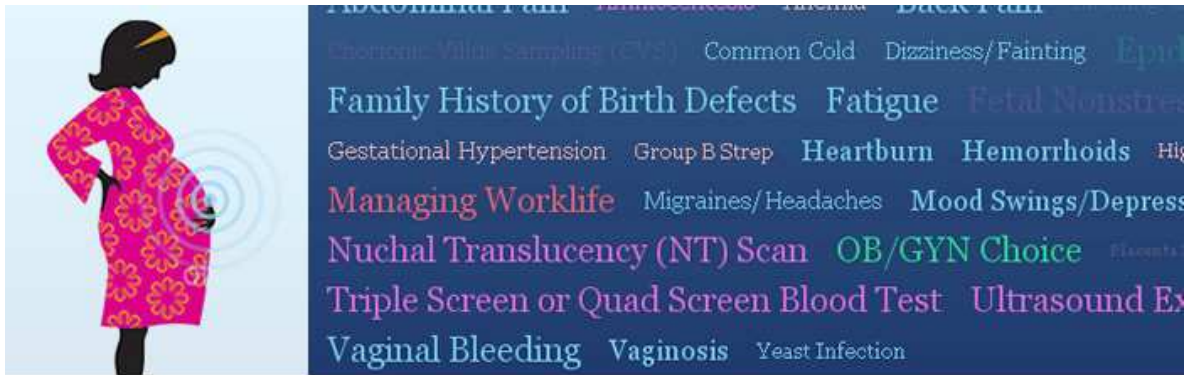
Perhaps even more interesting, however, is that—much the way [Enthusem](#) allows consumers to create printed greeting cards with digital attachments—94wines customers can attach electronic content to any bottle of wine. Upon placing an order, they simply upload a text, photo or video file (one is allowed per bottle of wine), which 94wines stores on its server. 94wines then converts that content into a QR code, which it attaches to the bottle. (QR codes are included on all 94wines bottles, so if consumers don't upload their own content, the company includes a standard message instead.) Recipients can view the attached content using their mobile phone's camera or by entering the code at 94wines.com. There's also a free 94wines application for iPhones that includes an advanced QR reader along with the WineID test, an overview of the 94Wines assortment and the

ability to view the profiles of friends. Per-bottle pricing at 94wines ranges between EUR 5.99 and EUR 9.99, with no extra charge for personalization.

Another shining example of the [OFF=ON](#) trend, 94wines currently delivers primarily within the Netherlands, with delivery elsewhere in Europe by request only. One to partner with or emulate for personalization-happy oenophiles in other parts of the world...?

Website: [www.94wines.com](http://www.94wines.com)

Contact: [info@94wines.com](mailto:info@94wines.com)



# The wisdom of the crowds, tailored to expecting parents

Google may put a world of information within easy reach, but for important decisions, most of us want personalized advice. That's the premise behind [Hunch](#), which we covered earlier this year, and it's also the basis underlying [WiserPregnancy](#), which focuses specifically on all the many decisions that must be made by expecting parents.

Now in beta, Washington, DC-based WiserPregnancy aims to help users make informed decisions by showing them what others have done in their own situation, including the choices they made, their rationale, the outcome of those choices, and how they felt about it afterward. The searchable site—which is part of the more broadly focused [WiserTogether](#)—includes data from thousands of women about more than 600 choices that can be faced while pregnant. Those decisions relate to a number of health-related issues, from back pain treatments to nausea remedies to the question of getting an epidural, and are collected via a medically approved questionnaire. Respondents include a prescreened panel of randomized participants as well as visitors to the WiserTogether site, who are asked to contribute their own, anonymized input for aggregated inclusion. Users of WiserPregnancy can search for information on topics relevant to them, even filtering data so that they see only decisions made by people similar to themselves based on age, education, number of pregnancies and more. Most features on the site can be used anonymously and for free. Tailored data or forum contributions require registration, while custom medical searches—offering summaries of current medical literature on user-requested topics—are normally priced at USD 39 each, but free through the end of this month. Advertising and referrals also contribute to WiserPregnancy's income.

Social networks are all very well for connecting, communing and commiserating, but improved decision-making may very well require something more—such as the collective wisdom of other people who have faced similar decisions before. A model to apply to the decision set of your choice...?

Website: [pregnancy.wisertogether.com](http://pregnancy.wisertogether.com)

Contact: [info@wisertogether.com](mailto:info@wisertogether.com)



## Site helps neighbours share tools & equipment

In tough economic times, it can make sense for consumers to be both [transumers](#)—eschewing the burdens of ownership in favour of shorter-term privileges—and [sellsumers](#), making the most of what assets they do own. Aiming to facilitate both is [NeighborGoods](#), a brand-new site that helps consumers borrow, lend, rent, sell and buy stuff in their community.

Focusing for now on Southern California, NeighborGoods is an online community that lets consumers save and earn money by sharing with their neighbours and friends any of the assorted tools, ladders and other things they use only occasionally. Users of the site, which just launched into beta, can decide how they want to share their stuff. They can allow their friends to borrow an item for free while charging others a rental fee, for example, or they can decide to make the item available only to friends. NeighborGoods helps facilitate transactions with a reservation calendar, automated reminders, wish-list alerts and private messaging. It also tracks and shares the transaction history of each member. Neighbours can rate each other and even flag another member's account if something goes wrong. Borrowing and lending items on NeighborGoods is free of charge. Members who want to earn money by renting or selling items must have a Pro account—currently free, but ultimately by paid subscription.

Besides the obvious financial advantages for those involved, of course, sharing tools and equipment—much like [cars](#), [bikes](#) and [boats](#)—has distinct eco-benefits as well, minimizing the redundant things so many households typically buy. Looks like another sharing-enabled win-win-win—for borrowers, owners and the planet—and one to be emulated in communities around the world! (Related: [Neighbourhood approach to renewable energy](#).)

Website: [www.neighborgoods.net](http://www.neighborgoods.net)

Contact: [info@neighborgoods.net](mailto:info@neighborgoods.net)

Spotted by: [O Magazine](#)



# Water bottle with integrated filter purifies as you drink

While over a billion people live without clean water, the world is drowning in the waste of millions of water bottles. The [Hydros Bottle](#) could provide a simple solution. Available for the US market by the end of the year, the 700 ml bottle features an integrated filter that cleans water as you drink. The bottle was originally developed by the University of Pennsylvania to provide purified water to increasingly mobile, urban people in the developing world. However, the researchers discovered water quality problems closer to home, with high levels of heavy metals and toxins in the tap water in some areas of the States.

The Hydros Bottle's filter reduces arsenic, particulate and dissolved lead, mercury, copper, chlorine and cadmium, which is more than some well-known household filters. The company is also aiming to wean Americans off bottled water by outlining the potential savings: at USD 6, one recyclable filter lasts for 320 refills, amounting to a saving of over USD 500 compared to bottled water. The bottle plus one filter costs USD 25; replacement filters are USD 6 each. Hydros Bottle is treated to prevent odours and can be branded with company logos. (Note that bottles with different types of integrated filters are available for the outdoor sports market; [see Trailspace for an overview.](#))

Hydros Bottle's plans to develop a customizable filter for the developing world are temporarily on hold, but the company is still actively engaged in projects to promote worldwide access to potable water. One to partner with locally? (Related: [Reusable water bottle flattens and folds when empty](#) — [Generator turns plastic bottles back into oil.](#))

Website: [www.hydrosbottle.com](http://www.hydrosbottle.com)

Contact: [www.hydrosbottle.com/contact.php](http://www.hydrosbottle.com/contact.php)

Spotted by: Eduardo Orozco



## Female-friendly taxis arrive in Mexico

Puebla, Mexico, is the latest city to offer a taxi service exclusively for women. Intended as a safe means of transport, the thirty-five strong fleet of bright pink Chevys are driven by women only and will not stop for men. For further female appeal, the cabs are equipped with beauty kits, GPS and emergency panic buttons. **Pink Taxi de Puebla** has privately financed the initiative, [according to an AP report](#). The regional government, which is licensing the service, has trained more than 60 Pink Taxi drivers (aged 25-45) in driving theory and practice, as well as aspects of car maintenance, such as changing tyres.

Despite the best intentions of the scheme, some local women's rights campaigners claim that the girly vehicles are promoting harmful female stereotypes. Still, they are certainly eye-catching and for women who have experienced harassment by male drivers in the past, the 24-hour service is sure to offer peace of mind. Similar operations have already proved successful in places from [London to Teheran](#). Mexico City proposed it in 2007, but settled instead for [female-only buses and subway cars](#). If this service in Puebla is successful, there are plans to expand to other cities. If your own town doesn't yet have a fuchsia fleet, now's the time to launch one.

Website: not available

Spotted by: David Licona



# Twitter for entrepreneurs

We've already seen the Twitter model applied to organizational employees via [Yammer](#), which encourages coworkers to share and collaborate by frequently answering—in 140 characters or less—the question, "What are you working on?" Now Canadian startup [Sprouter](#) invites entrepreneurs to do the same thing as an opening for discussion, support and collaboration.

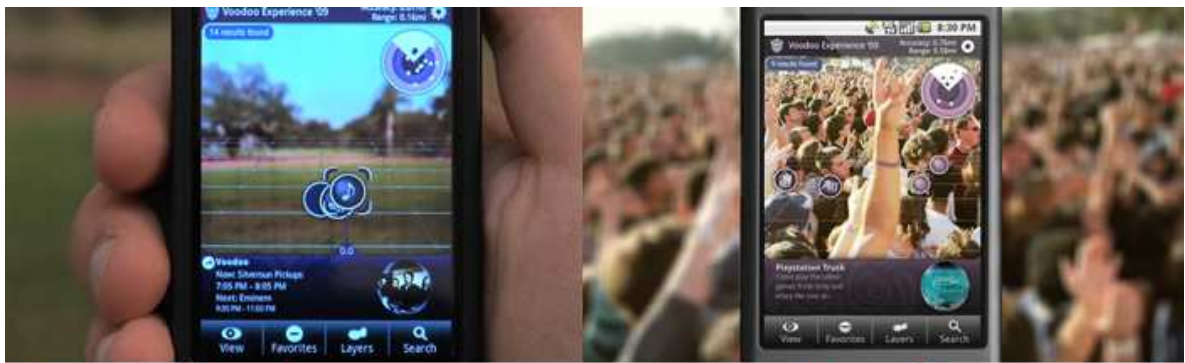
Toronto-based Sprouter is an online community that allows small business owners and entrepreneurs to share links, ask questions and share expertise with their peers. Whereas most social networks focus on connecting users with people they already know, the premise behind Sprouter is that it's often the people one hasn't yet connected with—but who share common goals and interests—that can be the most valuable resources. Accordingly, the site's search function can help members find not just entrepreneurs in their area or industry, but also those who are discussing a topic of common interest—funding, for example. Members of the site can create profiles and start real-time discussions around any concept, company, association or event.

Sarah Prevette, Sprouter's founder and CEO, explains: "The power of social networking by individuals has been made more than evident, and Sprouter is striving to create that same sense of community and sharing for entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs face struggles on a daily basis—from how to get funding to the best business tools to use. Sprouter can provide the forum for real-time networking and collaboration so everyone can benefit from mistakes and successes." Sprouter is free for users, and hopes to generate income through partnerships with venture funding agencies and small business associations, Prevette [told the Financial Post](#).

Launched to the public just this week, Sprouter also hosts monthly events to bring local entrepreneurs together for in-person networking. The site's community currently includes members from all over the world, including India, Australia, Europe and North America. One to try out for your own entrepreneurial edification...?

Website: [www.sprouter.com](http://www.sprouter.com)

Contact: [info@sprouter.com](mailto:info@sprouter.com)



# App brings augmented reality to music festival

Just a month or so after augmented reality browser [Layar](#) won EUR 75,000 in Vodafone's Mobile Clicks contest, the technology was already being put to work in a custom-designed application for Louisiana's [Voodoo Experience](#) music festival.

Layar is a free mobile browser for Android devices and the iPhone that overlays computer-generated information on top of real-time, on-screen images from the handset's built-in camera. The Voodoo app was designed by New Orleans ad firm [Zehnder Communications](#) using Layar 2.0 to let festival-goers with enabled phones get information on performances, attractions and services simply by pointing their phone cameras toward key parts of the festival grounds. When viewing concert stages, for instance, one custom AR layer provided information on lineups, schedules and current artists performing, including artist profiles and Web links. Pointing a phone camera at a vendor would show menus and pricing, while other points of interest highlighted by the app included vendor locations, artist displays, restrooms, ATMs, entrances and exits, medical sites and other services. Zehnder was one the first 50 firms worldwide named as developers of the Layar platform. A demo of the Voodoo app [is available on Vimeo](#).

In addition to a whole new world of entertainment and useful information for mobile consumers, augmented reality also opens up a wealth of new [OFF=ON](#) opportunities for advertisers. Time to explore the possibilities for \*your\* tech-savvy brand...?

Website: [www.z-comm.com](http://www.z-comm.com)

Contact: [jzehnder@z-comm.com](mailto:jzehnder@z-comm.com)



## More baked goods by subscription, now in the UK

Much the way [Dulcinea](#) delivers sustainably baked goods once a week to busy New Yorkers, so [Le Dolci](#) aims to do the same for time-pressed Londoners.

While food-of-the-month clubs are not uncommon in North America, Le Dolci offers what it says is London's first weekly cake club. Launched in September, the bakery uses seasonal, organic, free-range and fair-trade ingredients whenever possible in the creation of its biscotti, scones, brownies, pies, Sicilian treats and more. Members of the club get a bundle of home-baked goodness delivered to their doorstep each Friday; it's a different assortment each week, but members can tell Le Dolci of any dislikes so as to avoid disappointments. Three subscription levels are available: Mini, with four to six servings each week for GBP 14 plus delivery; Mezza Luna, with seven to 10 servings for GBP 20 plus delivery; and Grande, with 11 to 15 servings for GBP 30 plus delivery.

So that takes care of New York and London; who will offer a weekly delivery service for sweet-toothed foodies in other parts of the world...?

Website: [www.ledolci.co.uk](http://www.ledolci.co.uk)

Contact: [info@ledolci.com](mailto:info@ledolci.com)



## A box of samples, delivered by UPS

When we covered UK-based [Matter](#) last year, we wondered when we'd see the concept pop up again. Now, from none other than [UPS](#), comes Direct to Door, a like-minded effort to deliver a targeted assortment of offers and samples to select US consumers.

In late September, UPS conducted a week-long pilot-test of its new effort, delivering a small, custom-designed UPS Direct to Door Pak to consumers in select ZIP codes who were already receiving another package via UPS. Each sample box contained about 12 offers and samples from brands including Bed Bath & Beyond, Sephora and Pottery Barn; the targeted test markets were Chicago, Dallas-Ft. Worth, Miami, Phoenix and Washington, D.C. The Direct to Door Paks did not bear the addresses of the recipients, according to [a report in the New York Times](#); rather, they carried phrases like, "Inside are premium offers from some of America's best-known brands." Banking on the familiarity and trust consumers feel for its delivery people—and making sure the promotional boxes arrived only when another, ordered one was already being delivered—UPS aimed to see how receptive consumers would be to receiving unsolicited materials through the company. Some 250,000 Direct to Door Paks were delivered to "high-opportunity consumers" in about 150 ZIP codes, the NYT reported.

The promotional world—like all others—may be increasingly digital, but that's not to say tangible communications have lost all value. Reach out to targeted consumers through a trusted medium—and with offers of real, hands-on value—and you can still beat out your average page view any day. Who says direct mail is dead? ;-)

(Related: [More cosmetics tryvertising by mail.](#))

Website: [www.ups.com](http://www.ups.com)

Contact: [directdoor@ups.com](mailto:directdoor@ups.com)

Spotted by: Patrick Snyder



# Personalized books starring a child's favourite toy

We've seen a few examples of children's books that can be personalized with photos of the child who will be reading them, but it wasn't until recently that we learned of one that can be customized to feature a favourite toy instead. Sure enough, French publisher Typlume & Graphine offers a series of books called [La Vie de Mon Doudou](#) in which a treasured toy or security blanket is cast as the hero.

Parents or other gift-givers simply upload three photos of their child's security blanket or favourite toy: one head-on, one profile shot and one alternative view. From there, the company stages the "doudou" in various adventures and situations, such as sitting on the back of a cow or riding the Paris metro. Seven story themes are available, including "The day of my security blanket" and "My security blanket protects the planet." Each spiral-bound, hardcover book costs EUR 29.90 and is printed sustainably in France. Typlume & Graphine currently ships to France, Corsica, Belgium and Luxembourg. (Related: [Gravamy books for kids](#) — [Narrate-your-own storybook videos](#) — [Personalized e-stories for kids on Kindle and iPhone](#).)

Website: [www.laviedemondoudou.com](http://www.laviedemondoudou.com)

Contact: [contact@laviedemondoudou.com](mailto:contact@laviedemondoudou.com)

Spotted by: Fadila Merizak