

Springwise newsletter | 10 December 2009

Spotted for you this week: an adults-only colouring book, brand surveys by iPhone at 7-Eleven, an online retailer helping consumers design and sell their own knitwear, and more. Our next edition is due on 16 December 2009. In the meantime, check out our daily postings on www.springwise.com, send us your [tips](#), and please don't forget to [tell your friends](#) and colleagues about us. Much appreciated!



Translation tool checks prospective baby names

Most translation services are designed to help people break down language barriers they encounter in everyday life. London-based translation firm [Today Translations](#) has added an innovative twist to their list of services by applying their linguistic expertise to answer the question "What's in a name?" for soon-to-be parents of tomorrow's global citizens. Today Translations offers expecting parents the opportunity to check the meaning of potential baby names in other languages to avoid future embarrassment. For GBP 1,000, the company's linguists will perform a "basic name translation audit" which checks the meaning of prospective names in 100 languages.

The firm expects the service to largely attract celebrity clients, who are known for choosing unusual names for their babies. Illustrating the relevance of its new service, Today Translations suggested: Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes might have thought twice about naming their daughter Suri if they'd known that it means "pickpocket" in Japanese, "turned sour" in French, and "horse mackerels" in Italian.

Despite the wealth of information available online, countless hours of dedicated internet research would still only get people so far in this area. In what other areas could a neatly packaged research or translation service deliver customers results beyond what they could achieve themselves? And how about enlisting the crowds to create an affordable name check? (Related: [Translation service taps the native-speaking crowds](#) — [Real-time IM translation](#).)

Website: www.todaytranslations.com

Contact: info@todaytranslations.com

Spotted by: Raymond Kollau



Crowdsourced chocolate bar promotes Yellow Pages

Almost a year ago we wrote about [the Yellow Treehouse](#), the pop-up restaurant created by the publisher of the New Zealand Yellow Pages to prove that all the suppliers for any project can be found through its listings. Not content to stop there, it turns out the company is now in the midst of another inventive promotion—this time, to create a chocolate bar that embodies the colour yellow.

It all began in August, when [Yellow](#) put out a call for video auditions for its new, as-yet-unnamed project. Some 80 or so applications came in, and Yellow selected Josh Winger, a 28-year-old surfer and aspiring actor, to fill the role. Next, it announced Winger's mission, which is to design, market and distribute a chocolate bar that tastes like the colour yellow—and to use only companies listed in the Yellow books, both online and mobile, in the process. To gather Kiwis' opinions on what yellow would taste like, Winger first placed small cards in cafes, fruit shops and ice cream stores across New Zealand soliciting suggestions. Next, he made a nationwide tour and handed out 45,000 samples of chocolate in four competing flavours: pineapple custard, banana French toast, kowhai honey and lemon tart. Pineapple custard won the day, and the resulting chocolate bars will soon go into production. Currently, the project is soliciting consumers' votes on four alternate package designs. Winger's progress can be followed in detail on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and the [Yellow Chocolate](#) site.

Combining one part crowdsourcing, one part viral marketing and one part pure creative flair, Yellow's effort demonstrates once again that a little alternative thinking can blow traditional advertising out of the water. How is *your* brand using the crowds and social media to flex its own promotional muscle...? (Related: [Contest replaces ad campaign for Nissan launch](#) — [Job contest spotlights Great Barrier Reef Islands](#) — [Vitaminwater's new flavour created with Facebook app](#).)

Website: www.yellowchocolate.co.nz

Contact: info@yellowchocolate.co.nz

Spotted by: Kendall Flutey



Distraction is the enemy of good writing, as anyone who ever puts pen to (figurative) paper certainly knows. There are several text editors out there that aim to limit writers' visual distractions—[DarkCopy](#), for example, is one—but a new alternative uses elements of Zen to create a multisensory ambience that's designed to promote concentration.

Originally developed as an internal tool for the copywriters at Barcelona creative agency [Herraiz Soto & Co.](#), [Ommwriter](#) is a free text processor that uses visual elements and sound to help writers focus their thoughts. Aimed at bloggers, journalists, copywriters and anyone who simply enjoys writing, Ommwriter lets writers choose from an assortment of relaxing background images, fonts and Zen-like sounds to create a world where they can focus on their thoughts. A snowy winter scene, for example, can form the backdrop for the writer's words, while icy tinkling sounds mark the appearance of each letter. Ommwriter is currently available in a beta version for Mac computers.

With all the many devices, applications and modes of communication now competing for our attention, information overload seems to be here to stay. Keep the anti-distraction innovations coming! (Related: [Multisensory pop-up spaces](#) — [Being spaces for parents & writers.](#))

Website: www.ommwriter.com

Contact: www.ommwriter.com/en/contact-and-feedback.html

Spotted by: Leticia Pérez Prieto



Google window decals link online & off for retailers

Every day it's a little less clear where the online world begins and the offline world ends—or vice versa. Case in point: a new effort just launched by Google uses window decals to help the most searched-upon local retailers forge online connections from the bricks-and-mortar store.

How it works? As part of its [Favorite Places on Google](#) effort, the search giant has identified more than 100,000 local businesses in the U.S. that are searched upon most often by users. They include restaurants, stores and other establishments in more than 9,000 towns and cities across the nation, and each one of them will soon receive a window decal from Google featuring a scannable [QR code](#). Patrons and other passers-by can then scan that code with any of hundreds of mobile devices—including iPhone, Android phones, BlackBerry and more—and be taken directly to that business's Place Page on their mobile phone. There, they can find reviews and coupons or "star" the business as one they want to remember for later; soon, they'll be able to leave reviews as well. Apps that can read the QR codes include the USD 1.99 [QuickMark app](#) for iPhone users.

[OFF=ON and ON=OFF](#), as our sister site says—hence the growing world of digital lifestyle lubricants like this one. Google plans to send out more window decals to qualifying businesses in the future. Local businesses of every kind: time to get in line at Google's Local Business Center...?

Website: www.google.com/help/maps/favoriteplaces/business/

Contact: www.google.com/intl/en/contact/

Spotted by: Katherine Noyes



New packaging prolongs shelf life of bananas

Health-conscious consumers bananas are a welcome part of a convenience store's offering. That is, until they turn brown. Which is why [Del Monte](#) developed a new plastic wrap for bananas that promises to more than double their shelf life by keeping out air and moisture. [7-Eleven](#) has been trialling the second skin in 27 of its Dallas-area stores. If the trial is successful, the bananas-in-bags could be stocked in the majority of the chain's 5,787 shops by early 2010.

From the perspective of consumer health that's a thumbs up, but some have criticized the extra packaging as environmentally unsound. After all, bananas come wrapped in their own protective layer. Del Monte is looking to develop biodegradable packaging, but also stresses that the new plastic wrapper reduces the overall carbon footprint by enabling a reduction in deliveries. The company is also introducing specially packaged bananas in vending machines, underlining the wider context of increased consumer demand for food that's both healthy and convenient. (Related: [Vending machines for healthy food](#) — [Vending machines for farm produce](#).)

Website: www.freshdelmonte.com

Contact: www.freshdelmonte.com/contact.aspx

Spotted by: Cecilia Biemann



Financial newspaper crowdsources ad campaign

To build buzz for next year's ad campaign, [The Australian Financial Review](#) recently used a competition to crowdsource ad copy from readers. Dubbed [Write Our Next Ad](#), the brief was for a short, sharp, clever ad that would resonate with the audience and promote the benefits of regular readership, while reflecting the brand's focus on leadership, strength and inspiration.

Over 13,000 entries were submitted. Visitors' votes determined the winner of a people's choice award, and first and second place were selected by the organizers. Each winner received a Mont Blanc pen, but only the first place entry will be used in the campaign. While a valuable publicity tool in itself, a creative competition could have the added bonus of producing material that resonates with the target market—after all, it's their own creation!

Website: www.writeournextad.com

Contact: writeournextad@lavender.ad

Spotted by: Edward Baral



Design and sell your own knitwear

Knitwear fans can already design their own hats and even choose a granny to do the knitting, thanks to French [Golden Hook](#). Now they can design their own cashmere sweaters, scarves and more—and then sell their creations—on [Trendy Workshop](#).

Users of Custom & Co.'s Trendy Workshop—also from France--can create their own knit sweaters, scarves, dresses, tunics, bags and jackets in a choice of cashmere or cotton. The site's design platform lets users specify the shapes, sleeves, necks, finishes, belts, pockets and other details of a variety of items for men, women and children. They can alternate front and back views at will throughout the design process, as well as choosing from a wide range of colours for their creations. Pricing for a custom-designed cashmere scarf, for example, is EUR 89. Clothes designed on Trendy Workshop are produced in China and delivered within three weeks, according to [a report on Tiburon-TV](#).

Perhaps even more interesting than the design-your-own capabilities, however, is that creating an item on Trendy Workshop entitles the user to sell their creations on the very same platform. Beginners start with the status of "designer apprentice" and set up a personal store on the site. Their creations then get shown in the online boutique and offered for sale. For every purchase, a commission of 5 to 10 percent gets awarded to the product's creator, depending on their status.

Trendy Workshop currently offers delivery to Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, Switzerland, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Italy, Spain, Austria, Denmark, Ireland and Portugal. One to partner with or emulate for the knitwear fans near you...? (Related: [Design your own Keds & sell them on Zazzle](#).)

Website: www.trendy-workshop.com

Contact: bonjour@trendy-workshop.com

Spotted by: Tristan Daeschner



Adults-only colouring & activity book

Thanks largely to the anything-goes nature of the online world, audiences in mature consumer societies are not easily shocked. As a result, brands are harnessing ever higher levels of risqué to stand out from the crowd. [The Icecreamists](#) recently grabbed our attention by sexing up dessert with their x-rated gelato dubbed The Sex Pistol—touted to have the same charge as a dose of Viagra. For those of you who need added proof that [maturalism](#) is rife, look no further than [Hot Wax](#), an adults-only colouring book created by Atlanta-based pin-up artist Tyson McAdoo.

Pushing the boundaries in a traditionally child-centric domain, Hot Wax is a 32-page colouring and activity book (USD 14) filled with raunchy graphic illustrations. The images may be just outlines but the themes are unambiguous. With nudity, tattoos and lingerie featuring prominently, clearly this is not a colouring book for kids.

If you've read our sister-site's [latest trend briefing](#), you will know that 2010 is set to be rawer and more risqué than ever. What will be the next plain-vanilla product to be infused with a saucy new twist? Could a side of daringly super-charged seduction be the order of the day for your brand?

Website: www.tysonmcadoo.com/store_book/storeBook_02.html —
www.facebook.com/pages/Tyson-Mcadoo/54928786199

Contact: store@tysonmcadoo.com

Spotted by: Cecilia Biemann



Pick-your-price marketplace for music, games & ebooks

Buskers have played on city streets for hundreds of years, working on the premise that people are willing to pay for a decent performance. Operating on a similar model, Anjuno could be seen as returning music to its pay-what-you-want roots. Launched in May, [Anjuno](#) allows creators of music, games and ebooks to post their work on the site, which fans can download and enjoy, then pay the artist whatever they think it's worth. The system accepts payments at any level—including free. Anjuno takes a commission of 15% per sale.

Anjuno aims to make the economics of digital media better for both the producer and the consumer. Summing up the advantages for both the artists and their fans, Anjuno urges: "Instead of pirating that new album because you don't feel like paying \$15, pay \$2 here on Anjuno. And since we don't take huge cuts of the profit like record labels and publishers, the artist ends up making more from your small payment on Anjuno."

Up until now, similar (un)pricing schemes have predominantly been used as a promotional tool. Does this mark the beginning of a shift towards pay-what-you-want pricing models becoming more widely adopted as the basis of a business? Will we see more new businesses fundamentally eschew traditional pricing models in favour of letting their customers decide the prices? One to watch. (Related: pay-as-you-want [magazines](#), [restaurants](#), [hotels](#) and [ad agencies](#).)

Website: www.anjuno.com

Contact: office@anjuno.com

Spotted by: Cecilia Biemann



Fake 'kid in a kit' excuses workers for leaving early

Parents may feel entitled to leave work early now and then so as to accommodate the needs of their children, but that doesn't mean their childless coworkers will agree. Aiming to bring the same benefits to the grumbling employees left behind is [The Office Kid](#), a New York company that provides an all-purpose work excuse in the form of a fictitious "child."

For just USD 19.95, disgruntled childless workers can get what The Office Kid calls a "kid in a kit," including a framed picture of a child, original kid's artwork for cubicle display and a welcome letter with suggested starter excuses. Customers can choose the gender and ethnicity of their child, and optional extras—ranging from USD 5 to USD 10—include sports team photos, doctor's notes on "official" stationery, and additional kid's artwork. The Office Kid explains: "No muss, no fuss, just a seemingly tangible excuse to hit the road early for 9 holes, sporting events or a ticket to do absolutely nothing."

Ethical questions notwithstanding, there's no doubt The Office Kid provides an innovative solution to a perceived inequity that's long been part of the office world. The lesson? Find an itch, scratch it, and sit back while the orders come in! ;-)

Website: www.theofficekid.com

Contact: info@theofficekid.com

Spotted by: Jim Stewart



Surveys by iPhone at Swedish 7-Eleven

Regular Springwise readers may remember [our coverage this past spring](#) of the iPhone app used by Swedish [7-Eleven](#) to entice users into the store. That app combined a store locator with coupons for free coffee and biscotti, and now the company has added a third feature: the ability to conduct customer surveys by mobile phone.

When it's first started up, the new version of 7-Eleven's iPhone application displays the latest offer from a participating manufacturer. The first company to test out the new app, for example, was Wrigley's, which offered a free pack of its new Juicy Fruit gum. Consumers who enter their phone number then get a mobile coupon, redeemable at the nearest 7-Eleven store. Upon redeeming that coupon, consumers are sent a minisurvey by phone. Their answers to that survey will ensure they get more such offers in the future, each signaled by a "message" symbol on the iPhone's home screen. The new app—developed with Swedish production agency [Lonely Duck](#), publicity bureau Peacock and Bonnier Response Media—can be downloaded free of charge from 7-Eleven's homepage or from [Apple's App Store](#).

What's even better than convincing the relatively affluent hordes of iPhone users to come in to your store? Answer: giving your brand partners a way to collect customer feedback quickly and easily each time they do. Retailers and brands around the globe: time to put the mobile ecosystem to work for you! ;-)

Website: www.7-eleven.se

Contact: www.7-eleven.se/kontakt.html

Spotted by: Robert Olzon



Magazine publishing service now offers group shipping

When we wrote about [MagCloud](#) a little more than a year ago, it was restricted to the United States and shipping was arranged on an order-by-order basis. The magazine publishing service has since expanded to cover the U.K. and Canada as well, however, and it's also made it easier for self-publishers to serve large groups of readers.

To recap: MagCloud lets anyone with content upload a PDF and order a proof of the resulting paper magazine. After reviewing and finalizing the proof, they set a price and make the magazine available for orders via the MagCloud site. Single issues are then printed on demand and mailed out to individual readers. Now, with the service's new Ship to Group feature, publishers can mail their magazines to multiple recipients with a simple click. They need only create a group in their MagCloud address book—for clients, friends, family or (if they're lucky) subscribers. They then select that group in their magazine shipping options and MagCloud will take care of the rest, printing and shipping the magazine order to everyone in that custom address group.

Anyone still doubt the transformative—and growing—power of citizen journalism, consumer-generated content and, more generally, [Generation C](#)? We didn't think so. Other sites that cater to journalists, photographers, designers, entrepreneurs or other big thinkers: How are *you* helping your users serve their growing base of fans...?

Website: www.magcloud.com

Contact: www.magcloud.com/about/contact

Spotted by: [Derek Powazek](#)



Cheap & simple credit card processing for everyone

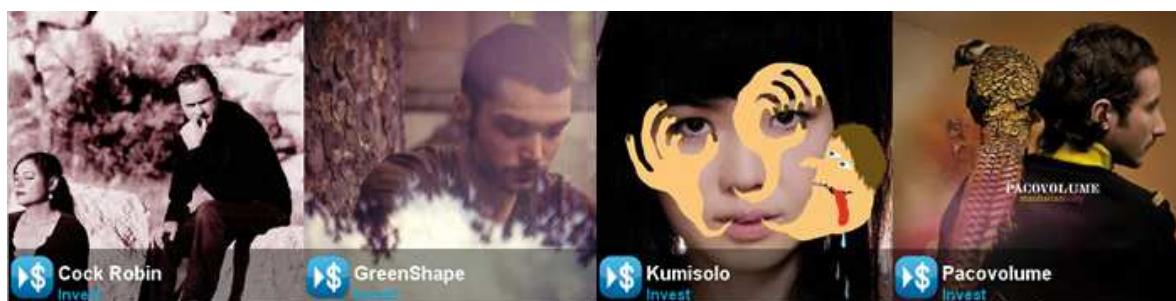
An entrepreneur may have the best product in the world, but if he or she doesn't accept credit cards, it can be a problem. That's something St. Louis glass artist Jim McKelvey learned the hard way, and it's also why he was inspired to create [Square](#).

Cofounded with Twitter founder Jack Dorsey, Square lets small business owners begin accepting payment cards immediately without the contracts, expensive hardware, monthly fees or hidden costs that are typically required. Using Square's intuitive app and a small plastic device that plugs into a mobile phone's audio input jack, payment cards can be swiped and read anywhere. Customers can have receipts sent to them via email or mobile phone and then access them securely online; they can also use text messaging to authorize every payment in real-time. For those who create a Square account, meanwhile, there's faster transaction processing and the option of photo verification. Now in limited beta, Square will donate a penny from every transaction to the cause of the user's choice. It will be widely available in early 2010. The reader devices will likely be free, while the app will cost about USD 1, according to [a report in the Los Angeles Times](#).

Similar in many ways to [ProcessAway](#), which we covered earlier this year, Square promises to open up a whole new world of opportunity for [sellsumers](#) and [minipreneurs](#). One to get in on early?

Website: www.squareup.com

Contact: partners@squareup.com



Music crowdfunding pops up in France

Netherlands-based [Sellaband](#) has already appeared on our virtual pages on numerous occasions, so we were interested to see a like-minded enterprise spring up in France. Much like Sellaband, [Kisskissbankbank](#) lets music fans invest in the bands they love and share in the rewards of their success.

Fans begin by browsing through the artists on the site and choosing one or more they'd like to invest in. As little as EUR 10 per band makes a fan an official "KissBanker," and those funds can be withdrawn or transferred to another artist at any time. Meanwhile, such investments entitle KissBankers to a share in the success of that band's efforts in proportion to their investments, as well as access to bonuses and exclusive content. KissBankers may also get invited to weigh in on decisions their bands make, and they are encouraged to help promote them in their own social networks and communities. Kisskissbankbank, meanwhile, gets a 20 percent commission on the amounts that are invested.

With all the many ways we've seen for bands to collaborate with their fans—whether via financial investments, help with music sales or concert promotion—it's clear the crowdfunding model has struck a "chord," so to speak, in the world of music. Bands get support, fans get involved—and paid. It's music to everyone's ears! ;-)

Website: www.kisskissbankbank.com

Contact: www.kisskissbankbank.com/contact_requests/new

Spotted by: Raymond Kollau