

Springwise newsletter | 3 February 2010

Spotted for you this week: gourmet wines designed for cooking, a wrist device that rewards kids for exercising, a foldable high chair made of cardboard, and more. Our next edition is due on 10 February 2010.



Soccer ball generates & stores energy

Over 1.5 billion people—one quarter of the world's population—live in areas with no access to electricity, according to [a recent UN report](#). Capitalizing on a sport's global appeal to address this problem, a group of Harvard University students developed [sOcket](#), a soccer ball that turns energy from a kick into electricity.

The portable energy-harvesting device captures the impact energy normally dissipated when the ball is kicked, storing it to charge lights, cell phones and batteries. It works with inductive coil technology, similar to that found in flashlights that power up when shaken. For each 15 minutes of play, it can store enough energy to power a small LED light for three hours. sOcket could eventually help ease the reliance on toxic kerosene lamps in developing nations, thereby reducing the associated health risks.

Currently in the prototyping stages, sOcket has been successfully piloted in Durban, South Africa, and the development team has plans to market a commercial version of the sOcket in Western countries as a high-end tech toy, possibly using a "buy one-give one" model, to subsidize the cost of distributing sOcket in developing nations. Being an all-in-one soccer ball, portable generator, community builder and global health tool, sOcket is another shining example of the [functionall](#) trend covered in our sister site's latest briefing. sOcket has attracted several development funding grants and is now in the process of developing production and distribution partnerships. One to partner with or otherwise get involved in? (Related: [Hippo water roller](#) — [Single-use toilet bag turns human waste into fertilizer](#).)

Website: www.socket.com

Contact: socket@ideatranslationlab.org

Spotted by: Raymond Kollau



Free makeover & online profile photo from Estée Lauder

With all the online profiles many consumers maintain these days, there's a greater need than ever for flattering photos. Which is why [Estée Lauder](#) is offering customers a free makeover and online photo of the result.

Late last month, Estée Lauder offered shoppers at the Carson Pirie Scott store in Orland Park, Illinois, a chance to get a free professional makeup job and photo for use on a social networking page, website or blog. Consumers had only to book an appointment and come into Estée Lauder on Jan. 30; no purchase was necessary. In addition to the makeover and photo—which, it should be noted, included the Estée Lauder logo in the background—participating customers also received a complimentary 10-day supply of foundation. Similar events were held last fall in other Estée Lauder spots around the U.S., beginning with New York's Bloomingdale's in October, [StyleList reported](#). More are planned over the next few weeks in select locations in Canada.

Combining [free love](#), [tryvertising](#) and [sympvertising](#) into a palette with unique [off=on](#) appeal, Estée Lauder's effort is one that could be replicated by any beauty-focused enterprise. What can *your* brand do to help consumers put their best face forward online....?

Website: www.esteelauder.com/locator/store_events.tmp

Contact: www.esteelauder.com/customer_service/contact.tmp

Spotted by: Judy McRae



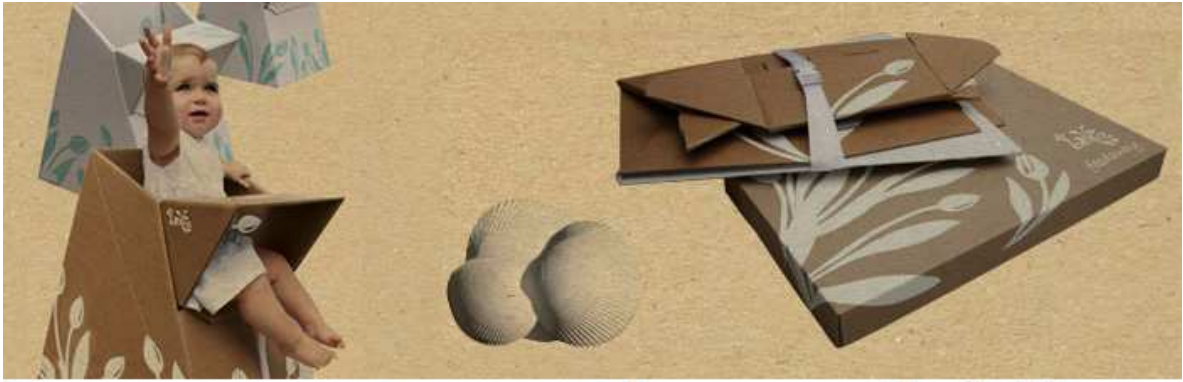
There are ever more fish in the sea of online dating, but still not everyone is willing to take the plunge. Concerns over safety and privacy, as well as a lingering stigma associated with dating services, mean that plenty of potential soulmates continue to float untethered. Now, [Thread](#) aims to reel those consumers in by tapping into the trust shared among Facebook friends.

Launched in September, Thread prides itself on saving users from the long questionnaires and registration processes of other dating sites. Rather, because the free service is based on [Facebook Connect](#), users begin by simply logging in to their Facebook account and answering a few quick questions including their gender, city and relationship status. Once connected, they can easily browse a list of their "friends of friends," or second-degree Facebook connections, sortable by gender and relationship status. If they see someone who looks promising, they can ask a mutual friend for an introduction or simply send that person a Facebook message. Alternatively, Thread lets users play matchmaker by forwarding promising profiles to their single friends. In the interests of privacy, Thread stresses that nothing users do on the site will be published to Facebook unless they specifically request it.

Now in beta, Thread is the brain child of California-based [SofaLabs](#), which raised USD 1.2 million in startup capital through Facebook's own [fbFund](#) incubator program. The site isn't yet wearing its revenue model on its sleeve, but possibilities include charging users to find out who has viewed their profile or to send virtual gifts, according to [VatorNews](#).

Given how many aspects of life have already benefited from the addition of social networking capabilities—from [ride-sharing](#) to [real estate](#)—there's little doubt dating should be among them. Facebook's 350 million or so users, meanwhile, make it the perfect match for such applications. Time to think about how *your* business can leverage the massive but globally interconnected ranks of Facebook friends...? (Related: [Dating via Twitter](#) — [Online speed dating](#) — [Dating cards](#) — [DNA-driven dating](#) — [Group dating](#).)

Spotted by: Susan Johnston



For parents on the go, folding high chair made of cardboard

There's a new kid on the flat-pack furniture block, offering a portable high chair solution. Made from recycled cardboard, the Feedaway from Melbourne-based [Belkiz](#) is an easy-to-assemble, lightweight version of the traditional feeding chair. It's designed to be used away from home, wherever baby or toddler feeding chairs aren't available, and otherwise folded away.

Designed for infants aged up to 20 months or weighing up to 20 kilograms, the Feedaway comes with a three-point safety harness. Its non-toxic food-grade coating can be cleaned with a wet cloth. It weighs approximately one kilogram (2.2 lbs), and Belkiz claims it will last for around 30 assemblies. After that, it's 100% recyclable.

Retailing for AUD 39.95, the Feedaway is a convenient piece of 'take away' toddler furniture and should fold nicely into the increasingly mobile lifestyles of parents with an eye for [eco-iconic design](#). Belkiz is currently seeking stockists for the Feedaway in Australia, and distributors in the US and EU. One to partner with?

Website: www.belkiz.com.au

Contact: feedaway@belkiz.com.au

Spotted by: Emma Crameri



Small businesses in need of marketing help already have countless resources out there at their disposal, including crowd-based efforts such as [FreshlyBranded](#) and [Concept Feedback](#). One we hadn't seen until recently, however, is an initiative that encapsulates thousands of marketing ideas in three decks of cards.

Australian [ChildsPlay Marketing](#) aims to help business owners create their own marketing campaigns without spending an arm and a leg hiring experts. Toward that end, it now offers a set of cards containing 125,000 different marketing ideas. The first deck helps businesses identify the target audience for their campaign—first-time clients, journalists or passing traffic, for example. The second, meanwhile, offers a variety of potential offers such as promotional sales, samples or new services. The third and final deck helps business owners choose a communication vehicle, with options including cinema advertising, packaging or mail-outs. Zeroing in on a card from each deck, then, guides businesses toward the best campaign to fit their needs.

ChildsPlay Marketing Cards are priced at AUD 69, including GST. One to try out on your next campaign—or, to partner with and localize for small businesses near you?

Website: www.childsplaymarketing.com

Contact: support@childsplaymarketing.com

Spotted by: Kathie Holmes



Wrist device rewards kids for exercising

Virtue may be its own reward, but that doesn't mean tangible prizes won't make the deal even sweeter. Just as [SmartyCard](#) uses gifts from popular vendors and family sites to reward kids for completing educational games, so [Switch2Health](#) uses much the same approach to motivate them to exercise.

New Jersey-based Switch2Health now offers the S2H REPLAY, a fun and innovative wrist-worn device aimed at tweens and teens that allows them to quantify their level of physical activity. In addition to displaying the date and time, the device also tracks and registers continuous, moderate-intensity activity, subdividing each hour into 20 three-minute segments. When users complete a full 60 minutes of physical activity over time, the device generates a reward code that can be uploaded and converted into points on the company's website. Those points are redeemable for items such as gift cards or free months of membership at sponsors including Barnes & Noble, GameStop, Best Buy, Webkinz and Club Penguin. Consumers can also set each other specific challenges and reward them for success using S2H REPLAY. No cables or software are required, nor is there any need to recharge the device's battery. Available online for USD 19.95, S2H REPLAY is water-resistant and available in three sizes. The device comes with a blue silicone band, but alternate colours are available for USD 2.99 each. A fully brandable device is also available for use in corporate promotions.

As part of a recently announced partnership with Boston Celtics captain Paul Pierce, S2H REPLAY will soon be incorporated into Pierce's FitClub34 from Harvard Pilgrim. Other fitness organizations around the world: could be a novel way to reward and engage your own customers or members. All others: One to get involved with on the sponsorship end? (Related: [Gyms for kids use gaming to keep them hooked](#) — [iPhone game gets kids into the \(hidden\) park.](#))

Website: www.s2h.com

Contact: amado@s2h.com

Spotted by: Goutham Bhadri

€ 2.48 hotdog



€ 16.00 Mug of beer



€ 76.00 Shirt and tie



More shopping & sharing, now from Estonia

The ink had barely dried on [our story about Blippy](#) when one of our spotters alerted us to yet another social shopping venture, this time out of Estonia. Much like Blippy, [WhosRich.me](#) gives consumers a way to share their latest purchases and comment on those of their friends.

Now in beta, WhosRich.me is a social utility that aims to make it easy for people to track their friends' shopping habits. Users enter their purchases via a simple interface, including a photo along with the date, time and price; for updates on the go, a mobile iPhone app is also available. From there, other members can view and comment on each other's purchases. The site's search tool also lets consumers sort results by country or keyword for a look at trends of interest to them.

WhosRich.me is free for users. No word yet on its business model, but as with other such ventures, there's clearly the potential not just for advertising but also for referral fees from vendors whose products get highlighted on the site. Next, we wouldn't be surprised to see WhosRich.me add real-time capabilities like Blippy's for an invigorating shot of what our sister site calls [nowism](#). Another one to watch!

Website: www.whosrich.me

Contact: info@whosrich.me

Spotted by: John Greene



More cards promoting random acts of kindness

We've featured several concepts that promote acts of kindness, including [KIND Snacks' series of KINDED cards](#). For those not yet convinced, comes yet another spotting: California-based [Boom Boom! Cards](#). Named for the karmic notion that every good deed comes back to its performer, boomerang-style, Boom Boom! Cards exist to inspire altruism. Available in packs of 26, the artistically designed cards each specify a particular act of kindness. It might be something as simple as saying "please" and "thank you" in every interaction over the course of a day, or it might be something more tangible, like buying a stranger a cup of coffee. There's also a pack aimed at teens that focuses on family, friends and school.

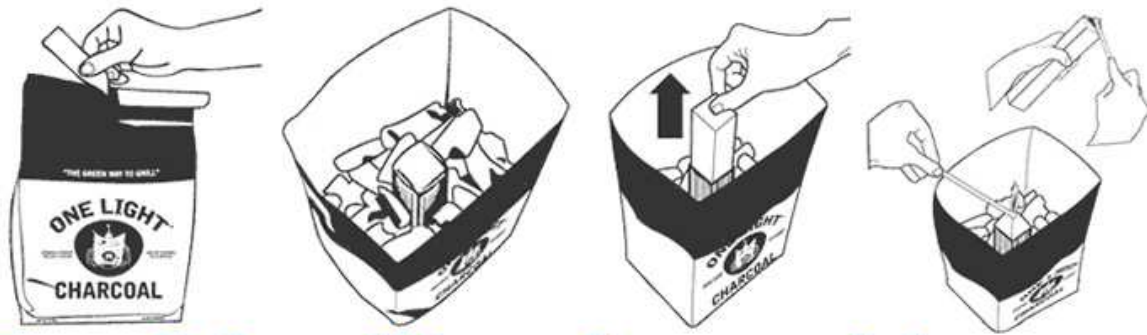
Either way, users begin by registering their deck and performing the specified kind acts, one at a time. Each time they do, they give the card away to someone else and then write about their experience on the Boom Boom! website. Users can upload photos and video to help tell their story, and the site's mapping feature allows them to follow each card and see where their kindness spreads. Since the site's launch into beta almost a year ago, more than 2,600 "agents of altruism" have joined what the company calls "the uprising of guerrilla goodness." Each deck of Boom Boom! Cards is priced at USD 9.99; of that price, 5 percent is donated to [iSpot Compassion](#) and 5 percent goes to the charity of the purchaser's choice.

Boom Boom! Cards are currently available both online and from select California and Minnesota retailers. Time to start proving that virtue really is its own reward! ;-) (Related: [Online game focuses on real-world kindness](#) — [Clothing brand asks its wearers to be kind](#) — [Random acts of kindness for Hyatt's most loyal guests](#).)

Website: www.boomboomcards.com

Contact: info@boomboomcards.com

Spotted by: Michael Corrales



Eco-friendlier charcoal bag uses paper chimney

Charcoal lighter fluid is responsible for the release of some 14,500 tons of volatile organic compounds into the atmosphere in the US each year, [according to the EPA](#), which is one of the reasons there's growing interest in charcoal alternatives like Sologear's [uGO FlameDisk](#). For those too attached to that authentic charcoal flavour, however, there's now a chemical-free, eco-minded option.

[One Light Charcoal](#) is a single-use charcoal bag featuring an internal chimney that uses air rather than harmful accelerants to ignite and roast the charcoal. No lighter fluid is added; rather, the consumer simply opens the bag, lights the long-stem match provided and places it in the chimney. The bag then burns from the inside out, allowing the charcoal to roast before the bag itself burns off, leaving only a pyramid of red-hot coals.

The brain child of Texas-based Innovative Barbecue Solutions, One Light Charcoal is priced at about USD 3.50 per three-pound bag and sold through stores including HEB, Wal-Mart and Whole Foods. Retailers in other parts of the world: one to add to your outdoor grilling section?

Website: www.onelightcharcoal.com

Contact: www.onelightcharcoal.com/contact.php

Spotted by: Shelly Wares



Gourmet wines designed for cooking

Opportunity awaits those who can make consumers' lives easier, as countless innovations prove every day. Take choosing a wine. We've already seen several efforts to simplify the process of finding a good one for drinking—including, among many other approaches, [a classification system](#) that uses colours and numbers—and now California-based [Académie Culinary Wines](#) aims to do the same for wines that will be used in cooking.

Académie wines are sourced directly from California's premier wine regions. With the help of gourmet chefs, the company has developed a line including four blends that are designed to make culinary creations the best they can possibly be. Blend #1, for example, is designed for use in red sauces and meat dishes. Blend #2, meanwhile, targets seafood, poultry and pork. Blend #3 aims to complement beef and poultry marinades, while Blend #4 is for game bird, fish and lamb. All Académie wines are highly suitable for drinking as well, the company says, and are packaged in a convenient, waste-proof 375mL size that's still ample for tasting while the cooking proceeds. To facilitate the culinary magic, the Académie site includes a variety of recipes geared toward each of the wines in its line.

Available online and from select California retailers, Académie wines come in single 375mL bottles for USD 7.99 each or sampler packs of four for USD 28.76. Shipping is currently available only within California; one to partner with and bring to the rest of the cooking world? (Related: [Wine tasting packs feature four mini samples](#) — [Wine search engine uses animation to visualize aromas](#) — [Modern wine paired with ancient Roman cuisine](#) — [Sommelier, go away: food pairing made easy](#).)

Website: www.academiewines.com

Contact: support@academiewines.com



Body Shop brings back old customer favourites

In this era of mass-customisation, consumers increasingly expect to be able to get exactly what they want, when they want it. Since discontinued products sometimes fall on that list, we're starting to see manufacturers make such goods available once again. [Lush was one example](#) we wrote about back in 2008, and now [Body Shop](#) has launched an effort along very similar lines.

Through its new Originals line, eco-minded beauty purveyor Body Shop—now part of L'Oréal—has brought back a collection of best-sellers from its early days. Starting in October, classics such as Dewberry Shower gel, Banana Shampoo and Carrot Moisturiser—all popular during the 1980s, and frequently requested since then—have been made available once again. To celebrate the products' return, Body Shop is holding a promotion whereby consumers who vote for their favourite product in the line by Jan. 31 can win a year's supply of it, or 12 bottles. Consumers can also request that additional products be brought back; those with enough demand will be added to the Originals line. A [YouTube video](#) explains the new campaign.

Lesson to be learned? Just as consumers can help design and refine new products, so they can tell you when an old product has the potential for new life. Rather than always scrambling for something new, your next success may lie in the annals of time. :-)

Website: www.thebodyshop.com/en/ww/beauty-lounge/originals/originals.aspx

Contact: www.thebodyshop.com/en/ww/services/contactus.aspx

Spotted by: Cas Stevenson



Person-to-person car-sharing service

Much the way [NeighborGoods](#) lets consumers save and earn money by sharing tools, ladders and other household equipment, so [RelayRides](#) enables them to do likewise with their underused cars.

Serving as a sort of community-run [Zipcar](#), RelayRides bills itself as the first person-to-person car-sharing marketplace. Launching soon in the Baltimore area, the site allows people with cars to earn money by renting them out to people who don't have cars of their own. Car owners begin by registering with RelayRides, which then arranges for a certified mechanic to install a device in the car that will allow authorized renters to access it without having to be given keys. It also establishes an insurance policy to cover renters during the rental period. Next, owners set the car's rental price, along with where the car will be rented and when it is usually available. Renters can then reserve the vehicle by the hour or day within the owner-set schedule. RelayRides screens the driving record of every renter; it also promises to take care of owners in the event of any loss. A renter rating system, meanwhile, lets owners provide their own evaluations. With suggested hourly rates of between USD 6 and USD 12—covering 20 miles per reserved hour or 160 miles per day along with gas and insurance—owners can earn as much as USD 8,000 per year by renting out their cars for just 20 hours a week, RelayRides says.

Every shared car replaces 14 to 18 vehicles on the road, RelayRides says, so the benefits are obvious not just for renters and owners (a.k.a. [sellsumers](#)), but also for the planet, which gets a much-needed break. RelayRides is already planning to expand to other U.S. cities following its Baltimore launch—one to get in on early in your neck of the resource-sharing woods...? (Related: [Parking operator launches car-sharing service](#) — [Bike-sharing comes to Asia](#) — [More social ride sharing](#).)

Website: www.relayrides.com

Contact: www.relayrides.com/contact.html

Spotted by: Michael Corrales