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TECHNOLOGY

Venture Capital **What's New**

The Latest on Technology Deals From Dow Jones VentureWire
January 28, 2008; Page R4

Too Legit to Quit

Rap artist MC Hammer, who declared bankruptcy in 1996 with almost \$14 million in debt, is looking to build a new fortune.

The rapper is known for bringing rap music to mainstream audiences in the late 1980s and early '90s through his flamboyant dance moves. He's back in the public eye with a company he co-founded called A Large Corporation Inc. The Menlo Park, Calif., company is developing a Web site called DanceJam.com that soon will allow people to engage in virtual dance competitions by posting videos of themselves dancing. It also will offer instruction in the newest dance moves.

THE JOURNAL REPORT



1

• [New security technology](#)² doesn't put a firewall around a corporate computer system. Instead, it scans traffic, piece by piece.

• [Lee Gomes offers tips](#)³ to make the most out of your BlackBerry by setting it up to play video and music.


• See the complete [Technology](#)⁴ report.

DanceJam plans to generate revenue from advertisements as well as merchandising. There is also the possibility of selling music or partnering to sell music on the site, says Mark Menell, partner at Rustic Canyon Partners, an investment firm that led a \$1 million round of funding for DanceJam.

Shopping Companion

Modiv Media Inc. makes products designed to help retailers market their goods in-store and make shopping more convenient. A device called the Modiv Shopper lets shoppers scan a bar code on an item to see the price and any applicable coupons. As shoppers walk through the aisles, they receive targeted offers and advertisements on the device, based on their purchases. The device, which also gives shoppers a running total of their purchases, can then be used for automated checkout. Retailers gain a wealth of data they can use to analyze customers' preferences and shopping habits and the effectiveness of in-store marketing efforts.

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Another device, called Modiv Deli, enables customers to place their deli orders electronically at kiosks. Modiv Media also sells software that delivers text messages from a brand marketer or retailer to consumers on their mobile phones.

WHAT ELSE IS NEW



Here's a look at some other recent deals reported by Dow Jones VentureWire.

- **Ribbit Corp.** raised \$10 million in Series B funding led by Allegis Capital to launch a platform for developers to embed telephone capabilities in a Web browser.
- **Element Labs Inc.**, a maker of light-emitting-diode displays for big-screen video at concerts and other events, received \$12.8 million in Series B funding led by Expansion Capital Partners LLC.
- **Freepath Inc.** picked up \$1.5 million in Series A funding led by Velocity Venture Capital to back software that lets users present a wider range of digital media than Microsoft Corp.'s PowerPoint program.
- **SensorTran Inc.**, which uses fiber-optic technology to monitor temperatures in oil and gas wells, raised \$5 million in Series B funding in part from new investor Advantage Capital Partners.

The Quincy, Mass., start-up raised \$12 million in Series A funding led by Oak Investment Partners and Ignition Partners.

Modiv's customers include Stop & Shop Supermarket Co., Giant Eagle Inc., Ukrop's Super Markets Inc., Subway, Unilever PLC and Cadbury Schweppes PLC.

Breaking the Language Barrier

Some say the best way to learn a language is to interact with native speakers. LiveMocha Inc. is letting people do just that without having to live in a foreign country.

The company, based in Bellevue, Wash., is building an online social network for people to learn foreign languages with each other. The company's site, LiveMocha.com, carries about 160 hours of lessons that people can use to learn one of six languages. But the focus is allowing people to teach each other. Users can write on the site in a foreign language or upload an audio file of a spoken passage and have others who are native speakers assist them in correcting the submission. Users can also chat live via text, audio or video with others who want to give or receive assistance on a language. The site also allows people to create a profile and link to friends on the site.

LiveMocha, which was founded in February and launched its site in September, says it has roughly 130,000 users. It raised \$5.3 million this month in Series A funding led by Maveron LLC to further the development of the site, including adding more content and different languages.

Waiters Go Wireless

Waiters at some restaurant chains are beginning to use devices resembling wristwatches to improve customer service.

The devices, part of a wireless system devised by ESP Systems LLC, alert waiters when food is standing by or when a new table is ready, among other things. Diners can use a device at their table to page their waiter if they need anything. At the end of the night, managers are provided with statistics about each waiter's service. Restaurants buy a monthly subscription to the service and ESP provides the

equipment free. The company also plans to offer an option to buy the system outright; clients would then pay a reduced subscription fee.

The Charlotte, N.C., company has deployed its system in 22 restaurants and plans to use a new \$5 million round of funding from Virginia Active Angel Network LLC and undisclosed private individuals to send it to 108 more. Current clients include TGI Friday's Inc., Applebee's International Inc. and Fatz Cafe, which is operated by Cafe Enterprises Inc.

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