

# Entrepreneur

## TRICKS & TIPS

A compendium of ideas you can use to grow your business.



### PAYDAY

CFD.com reports that Allstate will pay as much as \$120 million to settle claims that it refused to pay its California white-collar workers for working extra hours during nights and weekends. The suit alleged the company repeatedly assigned those employees so many claims that they had to work six days or more a week to handle them. California employers are required to pay time-and-a-half for work in excess of 40 hours a week. Almost 3,000 California-based claims adjusters are eligible to receive payments that could range from \$1,000 to \$100,000. So know who is exempt and who isn't.



### SOCIAL MOBILITY

If there's one piece of equipment most executives say they absolutely need, it would be ... the cell phone. A survey of CFOs from Robert Half Resource Associates confirmed this fact of business life. The phone was the choice of 44 percent of respondents, while the laptop computer was a close second - the choice of 39 percent. One explanation for the phone's popularity is that it often incorporates other technologies such as e-mail and Internet access. "These multifunctional phones are fast becoming one device executives are expected to own and use," said Robert Half Executive Director Paul McDonald.

# This is one business that's down to a science

BY LAURA CARROLL  
BUSINESS PRESS

"I have the longest tongue in the world!" said one boy. A group of about 18 children sit and watch as a mad scientist in a white labcoat prepares his spiel.

Electron John explained the difference between science and magic to the audience. He moves on to explaining Bernoulli's Principle. The techniques are enough to hold the viewers' attention while being cool at the same time.

It's hard to think that this scene is part of a multi-national group of franchises making money left and right. The Mad Science Las Vegas franchise is made up of bubbling potions, shaking quarters and a whole lot of business. For the past two and a half years, Mad Science has been available to valley children.

The Las Vegas franchise serves approximately 80 public elementary schools, 30 private schools and about 10 middle schools. Mad Science was brought to Las Vegas in January 2003 when owner Scott Rosen and his family needed a change from their native Chicago.

Before all the fun, Rosen headed up a manufacturing company. That career had him traveling six to seven days a week with little time spent at home. His wife, Robyn, was searching the Mad Science Web site for a possible job when she noticed the franchise opportunity. The Rosens left Chicago and headed southwest for the warmer weather. And they brought Mad Science with them.

"We love every second of it," said Rosen, who is in his mid-thirties.

The business was started out of the Rosens' garage, with five different storage facilities holding the science materials. "It was a logistical nightmare," remembered Rosen. Now, the franchise occupies two suites in an industrial park near Rancho Drive and Sirius Avenue. Within the next six months, Mad Science hopes to add one more suite, which would provide 2,000 square feet of much-needed space.

Inside company headquarters, interesting objects are everywhere and your eyes can't help but dart toward them, wondering what fun could be had. A bright yellow room serves as birthday party and demonstration space. In one corner a

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**SCOTT ROSEN**  
OWNER, MAD SCIENCE LAS VEGAS

table is filled with scientific-looking objects. "This is the Mad Science lab," said Rosen. In the near future, the company hopes to put together school field trips to the space. Rosen describes his company's services as a "hands-on inquiry-based science exploration." The presentations include theme-based activities with a combination of demonstrations.

"The key to Mad Science is that we're not trying to trick kids into learning. They're having so much fun that they don't realize they are learning," said Rosen.

Each child receives a take-home souvenir directly related to the subject matter and included

with the souvenir are instructions on how to perform a science experiment at home.

"The instructors at Mad Science are not allowed to be called 'instructors.' They are 'mad scientists,'" explained Rosen. Each mad scientist has to come up with his or her own bio and Mad Science name. Scientists working in the lab one Tuesday afternoon included Rocket Robyn, Asteroid Adam, Electron John, Supersonic Scott, Mad Meg and Carbonated Carlos.

Themed presentations take on specific subject matter and include "Machine Mania" and "Lights Color Action."

"In the fall we will have 80 mad scientists working," said Rosen. The scientists are paid between 25 and 30 dollars for each one-hour session.

"A lot of them are UNLV or Community College of Southern Nevada students. It's a phenomenal part-time job for them," he said. "We get them from all ends of the spectrum."

Mad Science hosts after-school programs, in-school workshops, birthday parties, community events, corporate outings and seasonal camps. The cost for a birthday party starts at \$175 for up to 12 children.

The company is introducing a program this fall called "Be Tobacco Free" to middle school students. Attendees watch a demonstration about the dangers of tobacco for 45 minutes. That features a huge lung with mad scientists dumping black ooze into it.

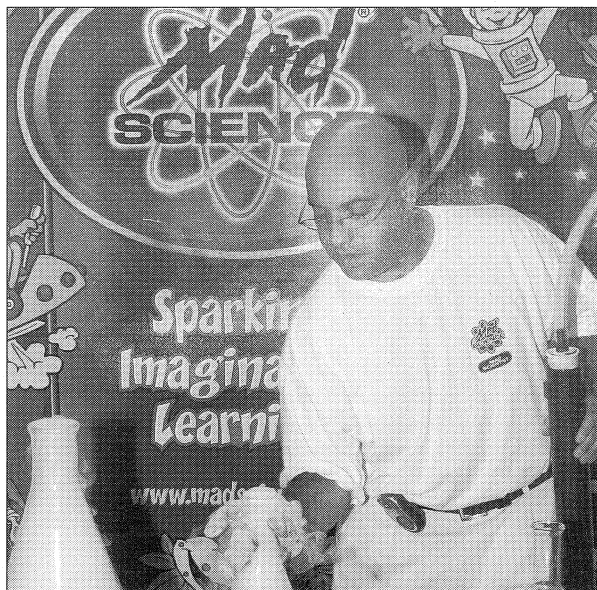
The franchise has been a featured exhibitor at the Summerlin Earth Fair, Red White & Boom Fourth of July event and Run for the Rainforest Foundation.

Last year, Mad Science attended around 200 events. This year Rosen estimates the company will attend around 300. At each demonstration, Mad Science donates one free birthday party to a child.

Future plans for the franchise include partnering with one of the large resort-casino groups. Although he wouldn't disclose which companies they were considering, Rosen did comment, "They're not going to select us, but we're going to select them."

Mad Science would provide an environment for children to go to while their parents went off in the casino to play table games or try their luck at the slot machines. The services would be offered to individual families on behalf of the casinos. Rosen also made sure to note that his company is looking for an exclusive relationship.

Rosen and his wife have had to re-write their business plan at least six times since its inception. "It's only going to get bigger," Rosen said



BYDIA MESA | BUSINESS PRESS

**Mad scientist Scott Rosen performs experiments in the company's teaching lab. He hopes eventually to put a lab and childcare center into a Strip casino.**

about his franchise. "There's no shortage of ideas in this bald head of mine."

Mad Science recently partnered with the Clark County Educational Association to offer free services for teachers. NASA Langley Center for Distance Learning and Mad Science have also partnered, to start the academy of future space explorers.

"Yes, we are a business, but we feel we are adding a valuable resource to the community," said Rosen. "Now that we're established, we're trying to give back."

They give back by donating their services to after-school programs and special events around the valley. This summer, for example, the company donated its services to all of the boys and girls clubs across Las Vegas. Mad Science was named the "Company that Exemplifies the Spirit of Las Vegas" for both 2004 and 2005 by the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce.

That was the first time the award had been won by the same company two years in a row. "The appreciation that we get from the community, it's the greatest feeling in the world," said Rosen.

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