

It's all in the (online) bag for local company

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1 GREEN PRODUCT/SERVICE

Three Stage's 'virtualTotebag'

Company: Three Stage Media

Top exec: Len Ostroff

Location: Columbia

Number of employees: 15

Why go green? "Green is where society is pushing us," said Chris Montanti, business development director for Three Stage Media.

Len Ostroff, president of Three Stage Media.

For those who attend trade shows regularly, you are familiar with the drill.

Walk in. Receive a tote bag with program materials and schedules.

But by the time the exhibits are visited and the sessions are completed, that tote bag is stuffed with pounds of papers — literally.

That's where Columbia's Three Stage Media Inc. comes in.

Last April, the firm launched a product called "virtualTotebag," designed to minimize the use of paper and waste at trade shows across the country.

It allows event organizers to offer an online tote bag and online materials to meeting and conference participants.

It works like this: As attendees are roaming through trade shows or similar events, they can text or e-mail exhibitors a request for their materials. The system also allows exhibitors and event organizers to track how many people open and access their information, said Chris Montanti, business development director for Three Stage Media.

"In the trade show industry in particular, going green is no longer a nice thing

to have, it's a must," wrote Len Ostroff, president of Three Stage Media, in an e-mail. "Attendees, exhibitors and environmental advocates are demanding eco-friendly alternatives that will reduce the significant amount of waste produced by the events."

Research has shown that the average trade show attendee takes home 10 pounds of paper, with typical trade show paper waste equivalent to 170 trees, Ostroff said.

"VirtualTotebag" not only cuts down on that waste, he said, but also reduces the environmental impact of printing and shipping crates of collateral to and from events.

"It's a much easier experience for attendees to manage, share and keep track of everything that they bring back from the show," Ostroff said.

Lori Anderson, CEO of the International Sign Association, touted the environmental impact of the product.

"In today's environment, green solutions like the "virtualTotebag" are essential to the future of our industry and our planet," she said.

So far, the reception to Three Stage's product has been strong, with eight clients signing on, Montanti said.

It ranges in price from \$5,000 to \$15,000 and is paid for by event organizers. Those that have used it or are plan-

ning to implement the "virtualTotebag" at upcoming shows include the National Public Health Information Coalition, the National Venture Capital Association and the American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology.

"Our true target audience is trade show organizers to help introduce green solutions to the events," Montanti said. Within that industry, the company is especially chasing the medical sector, he said.

As for challenges, Montanti said while most event organizers are willing to embrace the green movement, some still feel paper may be the way to go.

In some cases, he said, paper material can be blended with the "virtualTotebag."

Three Stage Media, formerly BDMetrics Inc., is not new to these challenges, though.

The firm offers an array of online and mobile products geared toward event organizers.

It lists its investors as Valhalla Partners, Greenhill SAVP, the Grosvenor Funds, New Markets Venture and the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development or DBED.

Karen Glenn Hood, a spokeswoman for DBED, confirmed Three Stage Media has received a total of \$640,000 from the Maryland Venture Fund.

