

**'I have a clear understanding of my strengths and weaknesses, and I recruit people who can help my weaknesses.'**

**Jon Carder**

CEO, Client Shop, Inc.

# There Are 1 Million Reasons Client Shop's on Top

Business Journal's No. 1 Company Now Looking Toward 2 Million Customers



Melissa Jacobs

Jon Carder, the chief executive officer of Client Shop, Inc., founded the company in 2002. Since then, the firm has increased its revenue by 1,772 percent.

## No. 1

### Client Shop, Inc.

**CEO:**  
Jon Carder

**Location:**  
12670 High Bluff Drive, No. 210, San Diego 92130

**2004 revenues:**  
\$5.41 million

**2002-04 growth:** 1,772 percent

**No. of local full-time employees:** 60

**Web site:**  
Clientshop.com, QuoteMe.com, 4LowRates.com

**CEO's secret to success:**  
"I have a scalable business model with passionate, intelligent people working in a culture with open and honest communication. I drive continuous, agile redeployment of resources against our top priorities."

BY STACEY BENGTON

**C**lient Shop Inc.'s founder and Chief Executive Officer Jon Carder never envisioned the business he started at the age of 23 from the comfort of his own home and with the \$2,500 in his pocket would have such fast-paced growth in such a short amount of time.

Even with his entrepreneurial spirit — Carder started his first business, a company that sold baby products on the Internet, when he was 19 — Carder also never dreamed of helping his 1 millionth customer after being in business for just three years.

That entrepreneurial spirit is stronger than ever in Carder, now 27 years old, who founded Client Shop when a mortgage broker friend wanted help getting customer leads.

After several months of juggling his Internet business Baby's Heaven and helping his friend, he decided to sell the baby products company to focus all his attention generating leads online as Client Shop.

Client Shop, which finished in the top spot on the *San Diego Business Journal's* List of Fastest-Growing Private Companies, does business out of its San Diego office as QuoteMe.com.

The 60-person company, which recorded an astounding 1,772 percent growth since the inception of the company in 2002, provides consumers with a way to compare and acquire quotes from various qualified service professionals for free online at 4LowRates.com or QuoteMe.com. The company also has a call center for those who are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with finding quotes on the Internet.

The flip side of the business is that any qualified service professional can sign up through Clientshop.com to receive consumer leads. This service adds their company to the database where it is matched with the appropriate customer who is seeking a quote. That particular company is then charged by a cost per-lead basis.

"We generate leads for businesses. We provide a great service for providers and a free, convenient way for consumers to compare multiple quotes relating to their specific needs," Carder said.

Client Shop primarily serves customers in the mortgage, debt relief and real estate industries, but not for long. As revenues grow, so will the services, Carder said.

In the next three to four months, the

business wants to spread its wings into more territories.

"We plan on expanding anywhere from four to six more consumer services next year alone," Carder said.

He said they're tossing around ideas such as landscapers, garage door repair businesses or Web designers. Essentially the company is brainstorming to add any service a person may need in life.

Client shop grew from \$289,529 in revenue the first year of business to \$5.4 million in 2004, making it the No. 1 company on the San Diego Business Journal's List of Fastest-Growing Private Companies in San Diego County.

Client Shop became a multimillion-dollar company just in its third year of business and grew from one employee — Carder — to its current roster of 60 full-time employees. Carder anticipates having 300 employees within the next 18 months.

With such explosive growth came the inevitable problem of where to put all those workers. In short, it was crowded in his office.

"We had to move; we needed more room. We were packed like sardines," Carder said.

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# Client Shop: Company's Rapid Growth Forces It to Move to Larger Offices

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Client Shop grew at such a rapid pace that after moving the business out of his house to a 1,500-square-foot office in the second year, just three months later the firm had to rent a second 1,500-square-foot facility to keep pace with the growth.

Yet, with 3,000 square feet, it still didn't suit the company's expansion, so in August of this year Client Shop moved into a roomy 20,000-square-foot location in Carmel Valley.

Carder said the key to his success is made up of three factors: the passionate and intelligent people he surrounds himself with; his constant way of looking to improve operations and finding new ways to redefine and regenerate business; and his continuous tracking of measurement, which enables him and his staff to identify opportunities and areas of improvement.

The company's success, he says, comes because of his colleagues.

"I have a clear understanding of my strengths and weaknesses, and I recruit people who can help my weaknesses," Carder said.

After the company started picking up pace, Carder recruited four top executives from well-known companies to



Melissa Jacobs

With hard work and dedication, Client Shop, Inc. grew from one to 60 employees since opening in 2002. CEO Jon Carder said he anticipates having 300 workers within the next 18 months.

help carry out the growth of the firm.

Executive Vice President of Sales Justin Fornal came on board in 2003 with nine years of business experience with high-tech companies such as Collegeclub.com, which was acquired in 1999 by Student Advantage. Since then, Fornal has been responsible for developing sales systems that have helped triple revenues in the last six months.

Chief Financial Officer Frank Asaro

joined his team in 2004 from Union Bank of California's corporate banking division, where he served as a vice president. Carder then added Chief Operating Officer Jordan Glazier and Senior Vice President of Marketing and Strategic Planning Paul Ramirez in 2005. Glazier had been senior director and general manager of eBay Business, and Ramirez had various executive positions before joining Client Shop.

Carder also has four people on the

advisory board that he meets with monthly to help him employ the best people and make the right decisions.

Client Shop recently helped its 1 millionth customer receive free quotes and has more than 300 service professional clients, which Carder said includes Fortune 500 companies.

As for the future, Carder hopes that by the end of 2006 Client Shop will have reached 2 million customers served.

# Chassis Plans: San Diego Business Achieves Record Month for Sales

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by Dave Lippincott, a founder and vice president of engineering at Industrial Computer Source, once a household name in the industrial computer industry before it was purchased by an info-tech equipment supplier, Kontron.

Lippincott left ICS intent on forming Chassis Plans, a company that would design, but not build, "ruggedized," rack-mount computer systems. In 2001, Steve Travis was brought in as Lippincott's partner and clients began to demand that Chassis Plans become a one-stop shop, supplying not only the design, but the fabrication of the chassis as well. This would eliminate the need for the customer to shop around for a separate manufacturer. Seeing an opportunity in a slowly growing industrial computers market, Chassis Plans added this service along with system integration and testing.

Computer systems designed by Chassis Plans need to be able to withstand extreme stress in terms of climate as well as wear and tear. Chassis Plans could almost be viewed as a rebirth of ICS with similar employees, products and services offered.

Lovett stayed with ICS as chief information officer until it was sold to Kontron in 2001. In late 2003, Lippin-

cott called Lovett for assistance when Chassis Plans received a large order.

"After that, he asked me to stay on as president and CEO," said Lovett and, in January 2004, he accepted.

## Successful Formula

Since Lovett has come aboard, Chassis Plans has continued to hire a mix of new faces as well as a number of former ICS employees, a formula Lovett directly links to his current company's success.

"We're not only working together again, but we're working in the exact same industry," said Lovett. Chief Financial Officer Kathleen Winer and Vice President of Business Development Dan Barker were two of those previously employed with ICS who Lovett quickly hired after taking the reins at Chassis Plans.

While at ICS, Lovett, Lippincott and their former co-workers experienced years of doubling and tripling revenue growth. Now, with many of the same employees from ICS working at Chassis Plans, their current status with 593 percent growth from 2002 to 2004 hasn't surprised them.

"We knew it was possible; the industrial computer equipment market is between three-quarters of a billion to \$1 billion and we could just sense there was opportunity for someone to race to the front of the pack," Lovett said.

"You can come with a very specific

requirement and we can create a chassis for it," said Lovett, noting that sources of demand have changed within the market.

"Twenty years ago, factory automation provided our biggest customers, but now, it's switched to homeland and domestic security, telecommunications and defense."

## Competing In A Slow-Growing Market

The dramatic growth Chassis Plans is experiencing is in contrast to the slowly growing industrial computer industry.

"We knew we could grow just by taking market share ... so we've set out a plan to grow as rapidly as possible," said Lovett.

While rapid growth carries as many dangers as it does benefits, Lovett is comfortable with the dangers and confident that his long-term strategic planning will prevent cutbacks, layoffs and an early plateau of growth.

"We do our due diligence; Kathleen has superior financial management capabilities and we model different growth rates to see what would happen if we took off or if we took a hit," Lovett said.

"We know how big of a building we'll need (if we have to hire more employees) and we factor in costs. We can look out two or three years and visualize a larger business. I keep an organi-

zational chart that goes out two years with blanks in positions that will need to be filled. In the back of my mind, I know what that path is going to be."

As it stands, Chassis Plans has no cause for concern, achieving a record month in August with sales that exceeded more than \$1 million in shipments.

## ICS Recognition

"Our ICS background bolsters our reputation and when (industry familiars) hear that ICS people are heading up the management team, they think, 'These people know what they're doing,'" Lovett said humbly.

Though they were not heavily marketed, ICS and its employees built a name in their industry that is now synonymous with growth and success. The name has also made recruiting significantly easier.

"The gentleman who runs our integration group is married, has two kids and a mortgage," Lovett said. "He left a secure job because he knew us and knew what we were capable of doing. To see someone trust you to that degree is humbling.

"If there's a secret to my success, it's building a team of extremely talented individuals that share a common passion and vision for creating a successful company, and that's the reason for (our) growth: incredible teamwork."