

# MINORITY BUSINESS REPORT

## Black web developer launches three new divisions

**SAN FRANCISCO — (BUSINESS WIRE)** — On Nov. 24, NetNoir Inc. announced the creation of three new business divisions: a redesigned web site, an AOL channel (<http://www.netnoir.com>) or AOL Keyword: NetNoir, and an expanded online shopping mall.

With this announcement, NetNoir takes the proliferation of black culture in interactive media to new heights, with a potential reach of 10 million AOL subscribers and millions more on the web.

Based in San Francisco, NetNoir Inc. is the leading new media company promoting, developing, archiving and distributing distinctive black programming and commercial applications for all forms of interactive media.

The name alone delineates what this innovative new media company is about. 'Net,' short for Network, and 'Noir,' the French word for black, combine to form NetNoir, the Black Network. A majority African-American-owned firm, NetNoir specializes in disseminating information about and promoting an understanding of black culture while appealing to a broad-based market.

"NetNoir is a leading new media company focusing on black

culture," explains E. David Ellington, president and chief executive officer of NetNoir. "We're very excited about bringing over 250,000 unique visitors per month to our redesigned web site and AOL, as well as our product offerings for the holiday season."

### New Corporate Structure — A Broadened Scope

With a new business model, NetNoir is broadening its scope and widening its reach. Since its inception in 1995, NetNoir Inc. has expanded its business model to include three business divisions — NetNoir Multimedia Services, NetNoir Online, and NetNoir Market Research.

**NetNoir Multimedia Services (NMS)** — provides consultative and production services to individuals, companies and organizations. NMS consults in the areas of digital formatting; database development and management, including back-up, storage and security systems; Web page design, development, and distribution methods, as well as appropriate formats and platforms use.

NMS also acts as a "digital black content studio" by providing "private label" or "company branded" black programming and/or content for corporate web

sites, e.g. Christmas/Kwanzaa, Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday, Black History Month, etc.

**NetNoir Online (NNO)** — focuses on programming and distribution as its primary services, serving as "the soul of cyberspace," bringing black interactive culture and entertainment to the web. Initial distribution of content/information is via consumer online services beginning with America Online (AOL) and the Internet. NNO, in different forms, is also distributed on other new media platforms, such as web sites, general ISPs and ISPs delivered through television, e.g. NetChannel.

**NetNoir Market Research (NMR)** — provides research services and data mining to companies and organizations interested in reaching and understanding the affluent African-American online market. Due to the success of NNO, the market research division is uniquely positioned to leverage NNO's traffic/audience data for testing, polls and surveys.

### Web site Redesign — A New Look and More Information

Calling itself "The Soul of Cyberspace — Your Home for Black Interactive Culture &

Entertainment," NetNoir Inc. was founded in 1995 with a mission to bring global black programming to the Internet through its first service, NetNoir Online (NNO).

"We have been building a community on the web for almost three years," said Malcom Casselle, senior vice president and chief technology officer of NetNoir. "The service on AOL launched with four departments: Music, Sports, Education and Business. However, in our quest to be the No. 1 black interactive online community in the world, we have added new departments and divided our service into those areas our community feels are important and relevant."

The new departments are: People & Culture (PEEPS) — A place for people to meet through chat rooms (Chat House), message boards (Black Boards), Club NetNoir (member photos).

News & Information (NEWS) — Daily national and international black oriented news feed, daily polls/surveys, resources, international, national, regional events calendar (Around Town).

Entertainment (FUN) — Black culture and entertainers drive the industry. Here we have celebrity interviews, multi-player games (AC Butler/Roots, Knowledge & Culture), relation-

ships (Ask Heartbeat!).

Business & Politics (BIZ) — Networking opportunities, job searching (JOBS), marketing black businesses/products (NetNoir's Black Pages), business chats and tips, political issues from the Left and Right (Talk Politics).

Shopping (SHOP) — The ability to patronize black businesses and get discounts on mainstream items.

### Desktop holiday shopping — real presence, real benefits

NetNoir sells an array of goods through its online service on AOL, providing customers and businesses with real presence and real benefits.

Users can buy products such as African-American clip art, Kwanzaa gifts, designer ergonomic keyboards, gift baskets, Uncle Darrow's sweet treats, and special screen savers. Customers don't have to leave their homes to do their shopping and businesses will have access to over 250,000 NetNoir Online visitors per month.

In addition, NetNoir's Black Pages allow black-owned businesses, professionals and product manufacturers to showcase their products on the web. The "stores" never close; there's no pushing;

and there are no lines. Products and services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. NetNoir Online brings your business message to millions of affluent, highly educated African-American men and women who are ready to be your customers.

"We have boutique crossover," as Ellington describes it. "NetNoir Online's shopping area serves as a digital mall. It's the ultimate shopping experience in cyberspace for those interested in buying products through a black company."

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## From Downsize Victim to Out-source Contractor

When companies downsize, or go through a process of re-engineering, they usually have one purpose in mind, and that is to reduce operating costs. To accomplish this in logical and sensible ways, two things are usually done. First, owners will identify the most expensive areas of the business, and second, they will identify production departments where the actual work can be done just as well outside the company as it can be done inside.

Most businesses, both large and small, have anywhere from 50 percent to 70 percent of their expenses tied up in wages, salaries and employee benefits; and when net profits are being crushed under the weight of operating costs, owners, managers, and executives are compelled to find ways to make the business more profitable. Downsizing became the surest way to do it, but it meant eliminating full-time employees from all areas of the business, and shutting down certain departments and production areas.

When I argue this issue with my colleagues, I tell them the affects of downsizing and re-engineering have created a multitude of opportunities for the creation of new



### Let's Get Down to Business

Evelyn McMahon

businesses. The very first group of employees to be downsized or eliminated are typically those with the most seniority and experience. Many of those employees will have extensive expertise in their field, and might even have access to high-level decision makers. In my opinion, they are in the ideal position to start their own business, specifically for the purpose of becoming an out-source contractor for their former employer, by offering to do the work that was previously done in-house.

My colleagues tell me downsizing became such a demoralizing and humiliating experience that most people affected by it wanted to be as far away from it as possible once it was over. It is true that corporate executives tried to change the image of downsizing by giving it a new name. For a while it

was referred to as re-engineering, but employees knew it was still downsizing with the same purpose and results.

My point is this, out-source contracting is a very attractive arrangement. Downsized businesses get the opportunity to increase profits by eliminating operating costs, and downsized employees can use skills and knowledge gained from their professions to start their own businesses. Of course not all downsized employees want to start businesses. For those who do, the opportunities are golden. And they are not limited to their former employers. Companies throughout the United States are out-sourcing all kinds of jobs, ranging from manufacturing to finance to high tech. Every business owner or entrepreneur should seek contracts from other busi-

nesses, regardless of whether you are a new or existing business, or a downsized employee.

If you decide to become an out-source contractor, be prepared to compete. The No. 1 business rule of who can do the best job for the best price, still applies. Out-source contractors will have to bid on the jobs they want, and that can be a little tricky for new businesses. Placing a bid that is too high may turn away potential clients, and

bidding too low may get the job, but you could lose money on the deal. It will take a few tries to learn how to bid appropriately. Get help from a professional person you trust.

Call the Micro-Enterprise Loan Program at 722-9600 for more information on out-sourcing. We offer small business loans, business education courses, and small business support groups.

## Benefit program raises money for area AIDS patients

The VYM Entertainment Group, along with the HIV/AIDS Consortium has announced the first annual "Help Us Help" Aids Benefit program. The event is scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 13, at the Reynolds Auditorium. The program begins at 7:30 p.m.

The benefit is designed to assist in raising money to be used for the

medical needs of HIV/AIDS patients in the immediate area. Due to the closing of the AIDS Task Force in Winston-Salem, some of the many patients who were receiving funds for their medical needs will no longer be able to receive financial assistance for their prescriptions or other medical needs.

Nancy Young, of the Sara Lee Corporation, and Nigel Alston, of the Integon Corporation, will be mistress and master of ceremonies. A donation of \$9 and a can of food are requested, \$10 without a can of food. The goal is to provide food and funds for the AIDS Consortium to distribute locally.

## N.C. employment better than most

WASHINGTON (Reuters) — The number of Americans lining up to file for unemployment benefits for the first time plunged by 31,000 last week to the lowest level in nearly a month, the government said.

Initial claims fell to 303,000 in the week ended Nov. 22, the Labor Department said. That was down from a revised 334,000 the prior week.

That was the lowest level for new state jobless claims since the week ended Oct. 25, when claims totaled 299,000.

Wall Street economists had forecast new claims of 320,000 for the latest week. In the previous week claims had risen to 333,000, but analysts said that figure could have been skewed because the week included the Veterans Day holiday.

The four-week moving average of new jobless claims, seen as a more accurate gauge since it smooths out weekly fluctuations, rose to 316,500 from a revised 315,500 the week before, Labor said.

The four-week moving average

was at its highest since the week ended Sept. 13, when it stood at 317,000, the department said.

The number of workers continuing to file for benefits fell 31,000 to 2,189,000 in the week ended Nov. 15, the latest week for which data were available, from a revised 2,220,000 in the prior week.

The department said five states and Puerto Rico reported decreases in claims exceeding 1,000 on an unadjusted basis in the week ended Nov. 15, the latest period that data are available.

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