



Man of Many Colors Turns Tragedy into Opportunity by Utilizing the Benefits of the Internet

Name:

Brian Wilkes Media

Internet:

www.BrianWilkesMedia.com

Products/Services:

Web hosting, design and promotion; E-commerce systems and support; and Private tutoring and group instruction

Location:

Marion/Crittenden County

Leadership:

Brian Wilkes, Proprietor

Employees:

1 to 7

Founded: 2000**Reach:** International

Innovative Insight: *“Shipping costs on the Internet are zero! We are shifting more emphasis on online delivery of products and services.”*

Way Internet Has Made You More Competitive: *“The Internet is the great equalizer. We’re judged by our online presence and we keep that as sharp as possible.”*

Advice to Growing

Companies: *“The cost of doing business in west Kentucky is about 25 percent what is was in the Northeast and broadband is easily available.”*

Marion, Kentucky - Brian Wilkes knows a few things about media and communications. He has been an educator, journalist, artist, author, businessman and a high-tech telecommunications troubleshooter. So it’s no surprise that his company, Brian Wilkes Media, located in Marion in Crittenden County, Ky. is fielding more work than it can handle.

Living in New Jersey, Wilkes began his online business as a part-time venture while working as a troubleshooter for Verizon. After the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Verizon began downsizing and he turned tragedy into opportunity by transitioning his part-time venture into a full-time job.

“I took the golden handshake from Verizon while it was still being offered and started doing this business full-time,” Wilkes said. He moved to Kentucky in 2003, and since then the business has steadily grown.

Today, Brian Wilkes Media offers web hosting and development, design and promotion, e-commerce systems and support and private tutoring, as well as group instruction to its customers. Most recently, the business entered the publishing field, offering digital information products, including e-books and software.

Operating out of his home, Wilkes outsources his employees on an as-needed basis. “I have a need for people who are able to outsource their technological abilities from program coding to design, graphic and marketing work.”

His clients come from all over the world. “When you’re online, you are everywhere simultaneously. It’s just as easy for me to do business with someone in Holland as it is with somebody in the next county. It’s a question of changing the way you do business.”

Even though he caters to the world, a source of pride for Wilkes is the website, www.marionkentucky.us, which he created and maintains for the City of Marion Tourism Commission in Crittenden County. The old website was getting an average of only 50 hits a month before he redesigned and promoted it, and now the site is seeing about 11,500 visitors a month, he said.

“We’ve gotten out-of-state tourists and even out-of-country guests, all because they came across the website,” said Wilkes. He hopes to eventually create a web portal to promote western Kentucky, which would act as a one-stop-shop for area artisans.

“Kentucky has a very exotic image, and it would be easy to sell local products that fit that image – things like local honey, woodwork and books written by local authors,” said Wilkes.

Wilkes refers to the Internet as the great equalizer. “A number of years ago, Bill Gates said there are going to be two types of businesses – those that are online and those that are going out of business.”

“In the past, if people heard about your business, they went to the Yellow Pages. Now the stability the Yellow Pages had has transferred to the Internet. People question the permanency and stability of those businesses without web presences,” Wilkes said.

He said that his business is still growing, and he and plans to operate it for many years to come.

“This has easily turned into a full-time business. I’m enjoying my fourth or fifth career right now.”

