



And for
**MY NEXT
PROJECT...**

BY TROY WATKINS

Casey Rankin '06

President / DealGator

In just seven years since his Assumption graduation, **Casey Rankin '06** has worked with a Fortune 500 company, started two dot-coms, and is developing several other business projects. The technology-savvy entrepreneur is not intimidated about striking out on his own.

In fact, right after high school graduation he moved out to the West Coast and spent a couple years developing web applications on a freelance basis. He decided to return to Worcester and attend Assumption so he could earn a computer science degree and progress in the field. The decision to attend Assumption was easy because his mom, Arlene Vadum, Ph.D., has taught psychology here since 1971.

He decided to double major in computer science and accounting, and today he credits his education with helping him run his own business. "In my business ventures, I constantly present ideas and proposals to groups of people, so having practiced doing this in many of my Assumption courses has been invaluable," he said.

"The small class sizes encourage individual attention to students and result in strong relationships between students and faculty," Rankin explained. He credits Professors Dana Aspinall, Jeanne McNett, Bill Sullivan, Frank Marino and Joe Foley for helping him succeed. "My writing skills dramatically improved while at Assumption and are now a very strong part of my entrepreneurial tool kit," he said.

Through independent study with Professor Elizabeth Driehaus he learned the Ruby programming language, which Rankin still uses in all of his Web applications. Outside of class, his experience included working with the College's Web developer, allowing him to further hone his programming skills.

During his senior year, with the guidance of David Kowalczyk in Career Services, Rankin received several job offers. He chose a position that drew on skills from both of his fields of study – an information technology auditor at PricewaterhouseCoopers in Boston. There he worked with a diverse team of professionals, developed time-management, communication and presentation skills, and gained the ability to be self-critical. "Most important, I learned that the projects that I was passionate about were ones I created myself, and that this type of work was what I wanted to do for my career," said Rankin.

After two years, Rankin left PwC to create his own companies. He already was running a network of Boston neighborhood business directories, which he developed further. Rankin still owns these active sites, which include newbury-st.com and boston-neighborhoods.com. He later created another web-based service called DealGator, a daily deal aggregator that organizes the bargains found on sites like Groupon and Living Social. The website, which operates in 52 cities throughout North America, sends a daily email with a list of offers from numerous sites. DealGator has been featured on many television news programs and in newspapers such as *The Boston Globe*.

While working on DealGator, Rankin became a member of the Boston start-up scene and learned about MassChallenge, the largest startup accelerator in the world supporting high-impact, early-stage entrepreneurs. Rankin teamed with his brother and another individual to found ArtVenue, a company that helps artists show and sell their work in local businesses, and entered the competition. That year 750

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companies were competing for a share of a \$1 million grant. ArtVenue was one of the top 17 winners to receive a 2011 Mass Challenge award and, in their case, a check for \$50,000. "The presentation skills I developed at Assumption played a key part in winning the MassChallenge startup competition," he said.

In January 2012, on the strength of the MassChallenge award, he was selected by Startup America Partnership (SAP) to be at the podium to ring the bell opening the stock market. SAP is the national effort dedicated to helping startups grow and jumpstart job creation nationwide.

Rankin has since sold his share of ArtVenue to continue with other businesses and to pursue his latest endeavor, PRDCR (pronounced producer), a service that allows musicians to offer free downloads of their music in exchange for engagement on social networks, like Facebook, Twitter, SoundCloud and YouTube. The resulting increased visibility within the different social media helps musicians build their online fan base and introduces more listeners to their music.

"I enjoy developing this product because it is a marriage of my entrepreneurial skills and my interest in music," he said. Rankin produces electronic dance music and performs at dance clubs when not working on web projects with his brother, who lives in Atlanta.

Rankin credits Assumption and its supportive environment with helping to get him started. "The two most important skills I developed while at Assumption are writing and networking, which I use daily," Rankin said. "I think that students should focus on fine-tuning these essential skills while in college."

He is grateful for the career he's created for himself. "Following through on ideas I have for products, and then receiving instant feedback from customers who are benefiting from these products is amazing," he said. "I truly couldn't ask for a more rewarding career." ♦