



NaturallyCurly.com gets money to grow on

Founders tell DV company ready to increase marketing

The Story

NaturallyCurly.com found success in the halcyon days of the dot-com era and is looking to grow with recently acquired funding, according to The New York Times.

Founded in 1998 by Gretchen Heber and Michelle Breyer, the site is a resource for curly-haired people. It has grown to boast about 180,000 monthly readers and has a following among hair care product advertisers like Aveda, Paul Mitchell, Redken and more.

Heber and Breyer intend to raise NaturallyCurly's profile with a recent \$600,000 funding from a group of investors that includes Tandem Computers founder James Tryebig.

"It was evident that to really realize our potential...we needed more capital," Breyer told the Times.

Austin, Texas-based NaturallyCurly will use the added funds to hire a marketing professional and expand its staff, which currently has seven people. Additionally, the company will improve its shipping and handling system and is expanding its two sister sites – CurlyKids.com and e-commerce site CurlMart.com.

The Research

DailyVista spoke with Heber and Breyer for more information on NaturallyCurly's plans for the future.

"We definitely see the funding as helping us taking the site to the next level," Breyer said. "We have some things we're already working on. We do think there's work to be done in getting the word out to people looking for curly hair info."

The company will be looking to add a marketing director and a vice president of marketing. Word of mouth and some public relations has been the site's main marketing tool since its beginning, but search engine optimization would be important moving forward, Breyer said.

Currently, NaturallyCurly's readership is about 98 percent women, but the company will look to improve its appeal to men in the future.

"We do try to provide some editorial content for men, there is a contingent of curly men who spend a lot of time on their hair," Breyer said.

"That's definitely in our plans," Heber added.

According to Breyer, the average visitor to NaturallyCurly.com views 30 pages per visit.

“They come for the curly hair info, but stay for all other types of things,” she said. “It’s a very strong community and we’ve had people on the site who’ve been on since we’ve started.”

In addition to its consumer offerings, NaturallyCurly has worked with advertisers to help them realize there is a market for curly hair, Breyer said. The site has worked on brand repositioning and market research initiatives with hair products manufacturers to help reach the niche of curly-haired consumers.

Both founders were optimistic and gung-ho in relation to their company’s marketing in days to come.

“We’re kind of open to anything that will be effective,” Breyer said. “We definitely want to explore different avenues.”

“We’ve done a little advertising, but we’re not the experts so we don’t know if that’s the direction we need to go toward,” Heber said. “That’s why we’re looking forward to getting someone on board.”

The Direction

NaturallyCurly presents a great opportunity for firms with plenty of experience in Web-based marketing. Approach the company soon with ideas that will improve the site’s interface and make it the premiere destination for curly-haired ladies and gentlemen. If your agency can fit the company with a sponsorship or cross-promotional opportunity, waste no time in getting a foot in the door at NaturallyCurly.com.

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