

Data mine: Research firm pumps up growth

By: *Bill Shea*

Research firm pumps up growth with online tool

John Gongos is a numbers guy. He likes polls, surveys, interviews, statistics and the psychology behind all of it.

He's parlayed that love into Gongos Research, an Auburn Hills-based custom market-research company formed in 1991...

A 57 percent growth in Gongos' retail division from 2005-06 and the rollout of an online market survey research tool known as iCommunities have fueled a revenue boost that the company forecasts to hit \$12 million this year.



...The result is the addition of a slate of new national and local clients, including Hershey's, US Bank and Borders Group Inc...

"Retailers have really gained power in the marketplace in the past few years," Gongos said. Best Buy makes heavy use of Gongos research to design its store floor space to target customers, said Camille Nicita, principal and head of retail/services research at Gongos.

...Domino's Pizza has a 300-person iCommunity and has used data from Gongos to develop new products, such as its brownie dessert squares rolled out last fall, said Kristin Lozon, marketing research manager for the pizza maker.

"We use Gongos as an extension of our research department," Lozon said. "When we launch new products, they're the ones that contact our customers (for buyer behavior studies)."

...General Motors was the first to use an iCommunity for product research, beginning in 2005, and the research has expanded to Europe and Asia. GM has been a Gongos client since 1991.

Joyce Salisbury, manager of GM's global product research division, said Gongos provides quick, cost-effective research that, thanks to the online community, is continuous.

"They're very customer-focused in what they're willing to do, in trying to do new things," Salisbury said. "Everything (from Gongos) is very customized in how GM likes to do things."

... "Even if you get new business, if you can't get talent, you can't retain and grow that business," Gongos said.

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