Passion for Movies Leads to Entrepreneurial Success Online

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TROY (WWJ) – A Novi native and graduate of Michigan State University and Walsh College is making a living online talking about movies in production.

Brian Renner’s MovieInsider.com is attracting more than 2 million unique monthly visitors with the latest movie news and release dates.

Renner, 28, said he’s always had a passion for movies — and started his website as a hobby when he was just 13 years old.

MovieInsider.com offers behind-the-scenes film information about upcoming Hollywood releases as well as independent films. Movies are tracked and information updated through all stages of film production from concept to release. Studio trailers, photos and posters provide the visual journey movie buffs crave.

The advertising supported website generates revenue through ad campaigns funneled through a variety of third party advertising networks like Google AdSense, Tribal Fusion, OpenX and ValueClick Media.

Renner’s hobby helped finance his bachelor’s degree in marketing from Michigan State University and his MBA at Walsh. While at Walsh he became involved in the college’s Blackstone LaunchPad program for aspiring entrepreneurs.

“Brian’s ability to motivate and mentor emerging entrepreneurs, combined with his ability to help our participants implement the critical thinking skills necessary to compete in an ever-changing global economy, makes him a highly-respected, integral part of our team,” said Walsh College Blackstone LaunchPad Director Carol Glynn.

MovieInsider.com got its start like a lot of entrepreneurial ventures do — on a credit card (although in this case, Renner was so young that the card in question belonged to his mother). After graduation, he worked for a couple of years at a film publicity and marketing company in metro Detroit, Allied Integrated Marketing, and did a summer internship at Disney with a post-production planning team in Burbank Calif.

Renner readily admits his biggest mistake in [business] was failing to register MovieInsider.com as a trademark early on.
“I didn’t realize, until I was doing some trademark research for a company I was working with on a new brand, that my brand, my name, my mark that I had been using so long, had been registered by a party out of Las Vegas,” Renner said. “I’m still in disbelief how they were able to successfully register the mark. The party was operating a site that would not have shown up on the first page of Google. And I was doing 300,000 to 500,000 visits a month at the time.”

In this story there’s a happy ending: After a two-year court battle, Renner was able to secure the trademark.

Renner’s site competes with sites like Internet Movie Database. But Renner says IMDb.com puts insider information on films in production behind a paywall. “I open source that content, make it free — movies in production, movies in development — so people can track the production, cast members joining, cast members leaving, trailers released, posters released,” Renner said.

Movieln Insider.com’s content, Renner said, is inspired by Facebook — short, punchy, to the point, focused on the basics.

Renner said he enjoys working with the LaunchPad program at Walsh because “a lot of entrepreneurs are starting web-based businesses, trying to break through all the clutter out there. ... I enjoy giving back and sharing what I’ve learned and making sure these budding entrepreneurs don’t make the same mistakes I did.”

The Walsh College – Wayne State University Blackstone LaunchPad program is funded by the Blackstone Charitable Foundation. Partners include the New Economy Initiative for Southeast Michigan, Automation Alley, the University of Miami, Walsh College and Wayne State University. The program helps aspiring entrepreneurs develop and launch their businesses.