



## watchthisface

This online businessman is taking advantage of unexplored territories on the World Wide Web.

**Cameron Avery looks like the salesman** from Central Casting – a square-shouldered man with a boyish smile, relaxed manner and machine-gun sales patter. But behind the well-groomed veneer is a tenacious businessman.

Avery, the founder of communications company Elastic Digital, once snared a potential client by sending them an email "ransom note" with the tag line, "If you ever want to see your marketing budget increased again – click here." Needless to say, Elastic Digital won the contract.

In the past five years, the 38-year-old has transformed his fledgling operation into one of Australia's fastest-growing software start-ups. Elastic Digital now employs nine staff at its Paddington offices and will soon open its first overseas office in San Francisco. Its client list includes the Symantec Corporation, HP and Green's Foods. And the agency recently created a new interactive website for Supercoat Petcare, fronted by celebrity vet Dr Harry.

"Starting this company was the scariest thing I've ever done," says Avery, whose CV includes a building degree from the University of NSW and opening Planet Hollywood stores in Singapore, Guam, Orlando and London. "Elastic Digital began life in the bedroom of my Bondi flat with a \$20,000 loan from my father, Bill. He'd worked for IBM for many years and was always telling me to 'get out there and sell' and that's basically what I've done."

In essence, Elastic Digital is an online advertising agency that has developed programs that allow companies to minutely track the response of potential clients to online promotional material and marketing campaigns. "We cultivate the click," says Avery.

He derides traditional advertising agencies as "lumbering giants" that have failed to realise the potential of online and multimedia marketing. "We're kind of blue sea sailing at the moment – we're right ahead of the picture. But I know I'm the running man – [competitors] are snapping at my heels."

Avery was the marketing manager at an information technology company when the idea of creating online tracking technology occurred to him. "I had a big budget," he recalls. "I was buying banner space or databases and no one could give me a return on investment. You're spending a million dollars and not tracking anything? You've got to be kidding."

Together with two partners, Alojz Kiseli and Julius Cruickshank, Avery developed a software program called Profile2Lead that monitors user activity across several "touch points" (such as email, direct mail, blogs, banner ads, video etc) and feeds this information back to the client company. "This system tracks everything. You get daily, weekly or monthly activity reports and real-time leads."

For Elastic Digital to grow even further, Avery will need to spend more time in the United States pitching to the software big boys but the prospect of uprooting his wife, Michelle, and their two young children, Noah, 3, and Mia, 1, does not especially appeal.

"I love starting the day with a swim at Bondi," he says, "but this is like a new gold rush. It's unstoppable."

# cameron avery

Words **Mark Chipperfield**  
Photography **Sahlan Hayes**