

# Inc.

The Handbook of the American Entrepreneur

February 2008

## Ask Candee

Your Personal Consultant: Candee Wilde answers questions about the franchise business

### Q How do people turn their hobbies into successful businesses?

One of the real advantages a hobbyist has as they become an entrepreneur is the passion they already have for the product or service. After all, what could be better than to make money doing something you love so much that you do it free? This makes the work of researching and locating a market and getting the word out much easier. In fact, some of that work may already be done, explains Mike Dean, a partner and the director of sales and marketing for Epilog Laser, the leading producer of flying-optics based CO2 and fiber laser systems.

Headquartered in Golden, Colorado, Epilog Laser was created in 1988 to bring flying-optics based CO2 laser engraving systems to commercial distributors, small business owners and the home craftsman. CO2 laser engraving systems can cut and engrave into wood, acrylic, plastic, steel, stainless steel, and other metals. Mr. Dean says Epilog Laser's founders were the first to develop a laser that 'prints' directly from CorelDraw, making it very easy to operate.

People that start businesses from one of the three laser engravers the company makes, which range in price from \$10,000 to \$45,000, usually fall into two categories, according to Mr. Dean. The first are par-

ents whose children are involved in one of the many activities that give out trophies and plaques.

"They've replaced the metal engravers. Engravers would create plaques or name badges, using high speed drills to scratch the surface of whatever they're working on," Mr. Dean says. "The lasers started to replace those because they are more versatile. They can work in more materials."

"The other group is people approaching retirement age, or who have retired and are looking for something to do. They might start providing awards for the retirement community, for example, or if they are involved with dog shows, they will engrave photos of dogs on something and sell it at the shows. Their businesses develop by word of mouth," Mr. Dean says. "One California company has created a profitable business engraving pet urns." Other retirees have started their businesses by convincing their former employers to let them take on any engraving business that it had outsourced.

The challenge for home-based businesses is finding the customers, Mr. Dean says. "But a lot of people that get into this from a home base have at least one group of people they can sell to, and once they sell to this group, they get more business as the word gets out."

### CANDEE'S PICKS

#### Leading New Franchise Opportunities

##### AIS Media

[www.aismedia.com](http://www.aismedia.com)

##### DVDNow Kiosks

[www.dvdnowkiosks.com](http://www.dvdnowkiosks.com)

##### Entrepreneur's Source

[www.entrepreneurssource.com](http://www.entrepreneurssource.com)

##### Epilog Laser

[www.epiloglaser.com](http://www.epiloglaser.com)

##### Fast-teks

[www.fastteks.com](http://www.fastteks.com)

##### Lawn Doctor

[www.lawndoctor.com](http://www.lawndoctor.com)

##### Oxyfresh

[www.oxyfresh.com](http://www.oxyfresh.com)

##### Sonic Golf

[www.sonicgolf.com](http://www.sonicgolf.com)

##### Two Men and a Truck

[www.twomenandatruck.com](http://www.twomenandatruck.com)

##### Vendstar

[www.vendstar.com](http://www.vendstar.com)

TO CONTACT CANDEE, or to learn more about franchising opportunities, please visit the [inc.com](http://inc.com) home page and look for "Franchise Inc."



**E** Your Vision. Your Creativity. Your Business begins with **Epilog Laser.**

**EPILOG LASER** Systems Starting at \$9,995!

**Start or expand your business** - with an Epilog laser system you can create and sell custom-engraved and cut logos, photos, graphics and more. All on equipment that is as easy to use as your printer!

**Your product line possibilities are endless** - from engraving traditional promotional items to high-tech gadgets like cell phones and laptop cases, our laser systems provide a wide variety of capabilities to your business.

Contact us now to receive your free informational kit.

1.888.437.4564 • [sales@epiloglaser.com](mailto:sales@epiloglaser.com)  
[www.epiloglaser.com/inc.htm](http://www.epiloglaser.com/inc.htm)