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OCTOBER 2007

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KING OF THE KITCHEN

DAVID HOLCOMB, (founder and CEO, Chef'n)

WHEN HE WAS A BOY OF 10, David Holcomb wanted just one thing in the world more than any other. He daydreamed about it. He begged his grandparents to get it for him. No, not a skateboard or an Erector Set.

Holcomb wanted a Veg-O-Matic.

"I was enthralled by the commercials," Holcomb remembers. "You put a whole onion in and it was transformed into neat piles of chopped onion. Fabulous."

That's the foundation of Holcomb's Chef'n, a Seattle-based firm that has created hundreds of kitchen gadgets ranging from the iconic one-handed pepper grinder (known

as the "PepperBall") to a special tool for cracking crab shells called the WiseCracker. To date, he has been granted more than 250 patents worldwide on his kitchen tools and is awaiting patents on more than 100 others. Despite such success, Chef'n has kept a low profile locally because its line of more than 70 clever and colorful items is largely sold online or through wholesalers. The Chef'n idea factory works like this: Holcomb dreams up the basic ideas for most of the products and then turns the exact implementation over to a team of designers "who make me look really good."

Holcomb got his first taste of business success while in his early 20s when he began manufacturing skateboards in 1973. He sold the company for "way more money

than any 20-something ought to have" and moved to Hawaii. When the money ran out and he returned to Seattle, Holcomb started working in the restaurant industry. He quickly noticed that many kitchen implements didn't work as well as they should.

Thus, the impetus for his first gadget: a garlic press that he dubbed the "Garlic Machine." In 1982, he founded Chef'n and has been inventing ever since, even though he is now CEO and Chef'n's chief stockholder as well. The fact that kitchen gadgetry is one of the most hotly competitive industries on earth didn't deter him.

"I knew about manufacturing from the skateboard days and I'm a risk taker," Holcomb says. "If I'm sitting on the edge of a cliff, the question isn't will I jump off. I know I'm going to jump." —E.L.



[ONLINE SERVICES continued]



Travel that Comes to You

BRETT ALLSOP, *co-founder, Yapta.com*

Brett Allsop broke onto the web scene when he founded Fogdog Inc. and transformed it into the internet's leading sporting goods retailer. His new project, Yapta.com, which he co-founded with CEO Tom Romary, is an innovative airline ticketing approach that Allsop hopes will take the travel industry by storm as well.

Available nationwide, Yapta uses e-mail to alert potential customers when the price of a ticket drops or rises. Should the cost of purchased tickets fall after they have been purchased, Yapta will notify buyers and suggest that they request refunds or coupons from airlines—an element that sets Yapta apart from other travel sites such as Farecast or Expedia.

In July, Yapta closed a \$3 million Series A investment round, led primarily by First Round Capital. However, Allsop says, the company plans to generate most of its revenue through advertising sales, with some additional money coming from affiliate fees charged to airlines. —A.F.

Making Lawyers Squirm

MARK BRITTON, *founder & CEO, Avvo*

The days of thumbing through the Yellow Pages or relying on word of mouth to find a lawyer may be coming to an end thanks to Avvo, an online attorney rating service.

Launched in June with the help of \$13 million in venture capital, the Avvo.com website lists profiles for every lawyer in nine states and the District of Columbia, covering about 80 percent of the nation's lawyers, says Mark Britton, Avvo's CEO and founder and a former general counsel for Expedia. Since early July, more than 100,000 consumers have visited the free site.

Similar to other rating sites such as Amazon for books or Monster for jobs, Avvo provides lawyer profiles and gives each a rating on a scale of one to 10, with 10 being the best. The rank is calculated by

a mathematical model combining state bar scores, court records, peer endorsements and other publicly available sources.

Just days after its inception, however, Avvo was sued by (you guessed it) lawyers who say the scores are unfair and inaccurate. Britton, who counters that his company has a First Amendment right to rate legal services, says that his site "will continually change as new technologies and more lawyer information become available." —Jenna Curry

Image Consciousness

DAVID NORRIS, *chairman & CEO, OnRequest Images*

David Norris wants your business to be original.

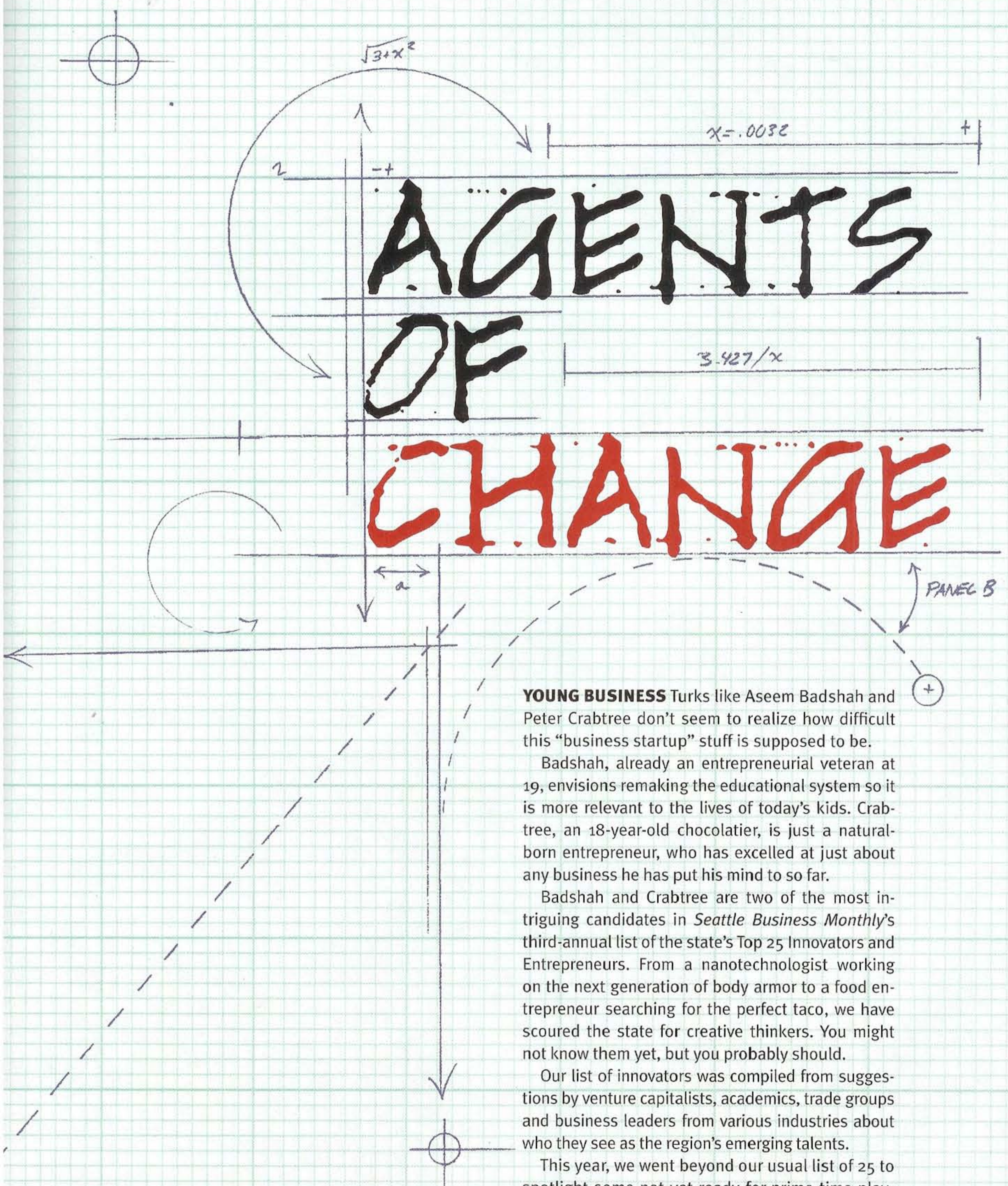
A longtime entrepreneur who is working on his fourth startup, Norris launched OnRequest as a new wrinkle in the world of corporate branding and marketing. His aim is to end the business community's reliance on used imagery in its advertising, websites and marketing materials. Instead, OnRequest is creating a worldwide network that connects 1,600 photographers in 53 countries; this group can shoot an original corporate image almost anywhere on the planet. The company's patent-pending technology allows OnRequest to automate the photography work and image handling.

OnRequest has developed unique tools for helping companies brand their products and track their images. It can analyze a company's artwork and find out if a firm's unoriginal images are also being used by other businesses, an embarrassing problem that happens more often than companies realize.

These branding bells and whistles have helped OnRequest grow by about 400 percent in 2006, and the same rate of growth is expected this year. The company's success has caught the eye of the venture community, with a number of local firms investing millions in the startup.

Norris, who has won various awards for his entrepreneurial exploits in the field of high technology, says he is still enjoying the process of building OnRequest.

"I'm definitely a serial entrepreneur," Norris says. "I like building new companies. I think it's a lot of fun." —J.B.



YOUNG BUSINESS Turks like Aseem Badshah and Peter Crabtree don't seem to realize how difficult this "business startup" stuff is supposed to be.

Badshah, already an entrepreneurial veteran at 19, envisions remaking the educational system so it is more relevant to the lives of today's kids. Crabtree, an 18-year-old chocolatier, is just a natural-born entrepreneur, who has excelled at just about any business he has put his mind to so far.

Badshah and Crabtree are two of the most intriguing candidates in *Seattle Business Monthly's* third-annual list of the state's Top 25 Innovators and Entrepreneurs. From a nanotechnologist working on the next generation of body armor to a food entrepreneur searching for the perfect taco, we have scoured the state for creative thinkers. You might not know them yet, but you probably should.

Our list of innovators was compiled from suggestions by venture capitalists, academics, trade groups and business leaders from various industries about who they see as the region's emerging talents.

This year, we went beyond our usual list of 25 to spotlight some not-yet-ready-for-prime-time players. Three firms remain in "stealth mode" as they develop their initial products. We also profile the winners of the UW's Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship annual business plan competition.

Some of these dreamers are destined for failure; others are poised for success. But all have the potential to be agents of change for years to come.

By Manny Frishberg and Eric Lucas
 With additional reporting by Jeff Bond, Jenna Curry,
 Andrew Freeman and Randy Woods