

No Boys Allowed

LimeLife is creating mobile content just for women.

By Ryan Olson



Ask Silicon Valley startup LimeLife what women want on their mobile phones and the company offers an answer you'd probably expect: content. But while games, wallpapers, and messaging tools are all things that have been available on handhelds for some time, those same things specifically geared towards women are rare.

It's time for that to change, says LimeLife CEO Kristin Asleson McDonnell. Plenty of other industries already specifically target women as consumers, but mobile phones remain an undeveloped frontier. "If you think about cable networks and magazine stands and the dearth of that kind of content in mobile, well we believe there's this huge opportunity," says Ms. Asleson McDonnell.

So she formed a company to do just that. Started in 2004, Menlo Park, California-based LimeLife has raised \$15 million in two rounds from Rustic Canyon Partners, U.S. Venture Partners, i-Hatch Ventures, and Monitor Ventures. In January 2006 the company launched Girls' Night Out Solitaire on Cingular phones, and in September, it debuted www.limelife.com, a web site offering mobile wallpapers, subscriptions to themed text messages, and games.

Certainly, LimeLife is onto a growing trend. Mobile content, already a huge business, will only get bigger. The worldwide market for content and services on cell phones will hit a staggering \$150 billion by 2011, according to research from Informa Telecoms & Media. SMS and

other types of messaging will generate the largest percentage of revenues, growing to an estimated \$93 billion globally from \$60 billion in 2006. Entertainment offerings including games, music, and television will hit \$38 billion by 2011, up from \$18.8 billion in 2006.

More than 100 million women in the United States own cell phones, and during December 2006, American women consumed the majority of content available on mobile phones—50.2 percent—according to M:Metrics. U.S. Venture Partners' Paul Mateucci believes LimeLife's focus on women could help it become one of the five biggest mobile content providers in the U.S. by the end of 2008. "I don't think anybody has this strategy," he says.

But Mr. Mateucci is quick to point out that the startup he backed isn't immune to the challenges of scaling up to a huge mass-market audience. "If you're a startup, the idea of being able to build two or three quality titles isn't daunting," he says. "It's the complexity of having to be a title factory."

February marked the official launch of LimeLife's first mobile application, dubbed InStyle Mobile. The software is the first of four properties the company plans to publish as part of an agreement announced last year with Time Inc., the parent company of *InStyle* magazine. Dubbed "Your Personal Stylist," the software is a downloadable application for phones that pulls data from the *InStyle* web site regularly and gives users the latest celebrity photos, fashion and

beauty trends, and shopping information. Initially available to Sprint customers, InStyle Mobile will soon make it to phones on the Verizon and Cingular networks.

Like nearly all other applications for mobile phones, building awareness can be particularly challenging. But partnering with major brands like *InStyle* and going through traditional media channels could be a great way to do that, Ms. Asleson McDonnell says. **RJ**

Both Saucy and Sensible

We received daily text messages from three of the nine themed categories offered by LimeLife for one week. Some samples:

CAREER & CASH

- Some utility companies offer free home inspections for energy efficiency. Call to find out. Maybe yours can recommend ways to cut heating bills.
- For a free "A Man Is Not A Financial Plan" bumper sticker, send a written request and SASE to P.O. Box 910014, San Diego CA 92191

REAL GIRL BEAUTY

- Does anything look good short and choppy? We think not. When it comes to bangs, go sideswept. They work on any face shape.
- Pink eyeshadow is in, but done wrong you might look like an albino bunny. Not hoppin'. Try layering sheer, shimmery pink over brown eye shadow.