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Salon adds a dot-com to its name

On-line magazine buys Web address

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OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

Salon Internet Inc. has become Salon.com.

If that sounds simple, it's not.

Salon, a critically acclaimed on-line magazine, announced Monday it had taken over the Internet domain name www.salon.com, buying it from a beauty care industry Web site after years of negotiation.

"Dot-com is the domain du jour," said Andrew Ross, Salon's vice president of business and development.

Companies adding ".com" to their names have seen stock prices soar in recent months, but privately held Salon has other compelling reasons to make this change now. (Prior to closing the deal, San Francisco-based Salon's official on-line address was www.salonmagazine.com).

The announcement capped a three-year pursuit of www.salon.com with a deal providing cash, stock, and a bonanza of technical perks for the previous owner of the address. It coincides with the launch of a \$1 million ad campaign for the San Francisco-based on-line magazine — a bit of timing Salon officials insist is merely "serendipity," although admittedly "great serendipity."

When the magazine first launched back in November 1995,

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it wanted to use the Web address www.salon.com.

But Roy Fredericks, owner of Avant Salon Rejuvenation in Plano, Texas, owned the address, running a Web site for hair salons. And he wasn't interested in selling.

Web addresses, also known as domain names, are very important on the Internet, especially when marketing a site through media other than the Web. The easier an address is to remember, the easier the marketing.

Salon has been engaged in talks to buy the name from Fredericks "off and on" for 3½ years. In the last four months, those discussions heated up, according to Ross, the Salon vice president.

"Ever since Salon started, we looked with obvious desire at salon.com," said Ross, one of many former Examiner staffers who have helped launch Salon.

It was a tough sell. In the end, Avant's Fredericks said he was won over by the quality of the general interest magazine's product.

"They have good ideas for the future," he said.

Ideas aside, the deal was also pretty lucrative. Fredericks and Salon officials said the deal was settled in a package that included an unspecified amount of cash and stock in the privately held firm, the hosting of Fredericks' Web site at the address www.salon.net, technical and design assistance for that Web site, four trips in the next three years to San Francisco where Fredericks will receive intensive assistance in developing the salon.net site, as well as assistance in developing Internet-based communities for the hair salon industry.

"It was a good deal for me," Fredericks said.

The stock is potentially very lucrative, since initial public offerings by Internet companies often soar to record levels. If Salon were to go public — a possibility no one interviewed for this story would comment on — Fredericks could cash in for a bundle.

Fredericks said he believes in Salon's potential for future growth.

"And when they do take it there," he said, "I will reap some of the rewards."

Salon currently employs 80 peo-

icant is the launch of a \$1 million ad campaign by San Francisco ad agency Odiome Wilde Narraway and Partners.

The campaign's slogan will be "Salon... Makes You Think." It will feature print, radio, outdoor and on-line spots highlighting Salon's articles. Odiome president, Wayne Buder has been handling the account since November.

Pat Hurley, Salon's vice president of marketing, said later this month print ads will appear in Rolling Stone, Wired magazine, Entertainment Weekly, Brill's Content, New Yorker magazine, Atlantic Monthly, Fast Company and the New York Times Sunday Magazine. These ads will feature the company's new name.

Buder said the second stage in the campaign — radio ads in selected cities — would probably start in June.

The campaign's budget will run at least in the \$1 million range, although final numbers had not been finalized. Eight people are working on the account and Buder himself is supervising the work. It's a small account for Odiome Wilde, but Buder said the agency expects "big things" from Salon.

Everyone questioned the timing of the campaign's launch was not determined by the deal to obtain the salon.com name, but all conceded that the name change provides a significant boost to that campaign.

"It was great serendipity," said Hurley.

"It all just magically came together at the same time," said Ross.

"It's certainly going to make it easier from the consumer perspective," Buder added.

Buder said the campaign had been prepared using the salonmagazine.com address, which was scrubbed out at the last minute when the name change came through.

The salon.com address was always "a gleam in our eye," Ross said.

