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## The week in review

### BEVERAGE

#### 1. Coke shares decline

Coca-Cola had a disappointing second quarter, and it showed in Wall Street's reaction. Shares plunged nearly 8 percent Friday, closing at \$45.17. Coke's earnings report, which came out Thursday, included the news that sales volume increased just 1 percent worldwide.

### RETAIL

#### 2. Wal-Mart goes little

Basketball legend Earvin "Magic" Johnson has built fast-food restaurants and other businesses in neighborhoods where other developers fear to tread. Last week, he said he's moving on up to Midtown. He soon will announce plans for a major residential project in that tony quarter.

### DEVELOPMENT

#### 3. Midtown Magic?

Basketball legend Earvin "Magic" Johnson has built fast-food restaurants and other businesses in neighborhoods where other developers fear to tread. Last week, he said he's moving on up to Midtown. He soon will announce plans for a major residential project in that tony quarter.

### UTILITIES

#### 4. Southern faces suit

Southern Co. and four other utilities face a federal lawsuit aimed at forcing them to reduce emissions of the planet-warming gas carbon dioxide. The suit will make loans for orthodontic treatments and will purchase orthodontists' receivables — what patients owe — for its own loan portfolio or to sell in the secondary market.

### FINANCE

#### 5. Orthodontic bank

A Decatur-based company plans to acquire a Dalton-based thrift and convert it into a "virtual bank" to finance orthodontists and their patients via the Internet. The thrift will make loans for orthodontic treatments and will purchase orthodontists' receivables — what patients owe — for its own loan portfolio or to sell in the secondary market.

# THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

## UP CLOSE: JOE EGOSI

### Joi founder dials into clients' Internet needs

By PÉNALTE C. PAUL  
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Having brought Joi to the world, you might call Joe Egosi the equivalent of a low-cost Internet messiah.

Egosi, president and founder of Atlanta-based Joi Internet, has focused his 5-year-old company on customers who want inexpensive dial-up access to the Internet.

The industry — traditional Internet service providers as well as telephone and cable companies — has spent the last few years pouring millions into broadband access. That allows users to send and receive larger blocks of information at faster speeds.

But Egosi, who got his first computer when he was 8, believes the traditional dial-up market isn't going anywhere anytime soon.

In fact, the company plans to open a call center in Miami that is expected to create 100 jobs in addition to the 150 employees now working for Joi, a unit of the privately held Hawk Communications.

**Q:** Why did you feel there was a need for another Internet service provider?

**A:** In 1999, Hawk Communications started a Web-hosting company. At the time, we were providing a service to small mom-and-pop companies and other companies that could not afford the high prices. At the time, there weren't any Web-hosting accounts for less than \$50.

After having a few thousand customers, these same customers asked us to offer services to allow them to get connected to the Internet. So we did the same thing that we did for Web hosting. In 1999 we offered unlimited Internet service for \$7.74 a month. Everybody in the industry thought we would not survive. They said we'd either go bankrupt, or we'd have to raise our rates.

After five years, we've proved the industry wrong by actually lowering our rates to \$6.95 per month. And instead of going into bankruptcy, we have zero debt and grew from four employees in '99 to over 150 employees today. We found a niche, and other people in the market followed.

**Q:** Given the focus and push for broadband and high-speed connections, is there still a place for dial-up in a broadband world?

**A:** Our numbers prove themselves. From the start of the business through 2004, our company enjoyed double-digit growth every month. We continue to invest resources in making dial-up faster and more enjoyable and have some of the same features as broadband. Our dial-up connection is now accelerated up to 10 times faster for surfing the Web. Another example is you can now have one phone line for the telephone and Internet. You can pick up a phone call without interrupting your Internet connection.

We also continue to add more features and functions to our service without raising the price. We recently relaunched our Web site, offering our customers customized start pages.

### PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER OF JOI INTERNET

Each week, an interview with one of metro Atlanta's intriguing business personalities.

**► Personal:** 28 years old, single, two pets — a dog and a cat

**► Education:** Attended Georgia State University

**► Professional background:** Spent two years as a network architect at El Camino REAL, a consulting firm, and before that two years as a senior technician at TESA, which installs electronics systems in hotels.

**► Hobbies:** Computers, business and travel.

**► Favorite childhood toy:** Computer (of course)

**► Biggest fear:** "None. I do not fear things I can control, and I can't change anything not in my control."

**► Color that best describes your personality:** "Blue, because I always strive to be No. 1 at everything I do."

**► What he'd be doing if not in current job:** "Take another company on the road to success."



Joi Internet

that allow them to customize the news pages, for example, they want to see without having to look at banners or ads.

**Q:** So all your revenue comes from subscribers?

**A:** All of our revenue comes from customers. We have no ad revenue.

**Q:** How long can you keep expanding service without raising prices?

**A:** As long as we continue to get new customers by referrals, we could put money that we would otherwise have to invest in marketing into additional technology and services.

**Q:** Will you offer broadband at some point?

**A:** I'm sure we would one day, but we believe we can continue to make dial-up more enjoyable and make dial-up grow for at least the next six years. But the only way we will start offering broadband is if we meet two requirements. We have to be able to control our own network, which is impossible with today's technology because you have to rely on the local Bell telephone company, which is [historically] a monopoly, or the local cable company, which is also a monopoly. By relying either on the Bells or the cable companies, we're not able to control the quality of service or control the price.

If we can meet the requirements of controlling our own networks, we will offer broadband. And the second requirement is for our customer to want broadband. We believe our competitors are pushing customers to broadband, but we do not believe customers actually require broadband.

**Q:** Will the company ever go public?

**A:** We'd rather stay private and have no plans to go public. We believe we can be more focused on the customer needs and wants by staying private.

**Q:** What's to stop your competitors from copying some of your business practices?

**A:** Technology. Our competi-

tors do not have the same technology we have. For a company to try and copy us is very hard because there are no new investments going toward dial-up Internet service providers.

Our competitors underestimate the dial-up business. Our competitors are still busy focusing on losing money on broadband rather than focusing on what the majority of consumers in America still want and need, which is dial-up. And that stems from trying to satisfy investors rather than customers.

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## NEWSMAKERS

### Food industry

The following appointments have been made at Schwab's Bakery Inc.: **Ed Raldiris**, senior vice president and general manager; **Andy Johnson**, vice president, food service marketing; **Jim Schwytel**, vice president, distribution sales; and **Henry Gonzalez**, vice president, national accounts. **Mary A. Krier** has been named vice president of communications at Flowers Foods.

### Health care

**Lakisha D. Love** has been named regional sales director for Ameri-Plan Corp.

### Nonprofit

**James M. Sibley Jr.** has been elected chairman of the board of directors of Georgia Court Appointed Special Advocates Inc.

### General business

**J. Hardman Knox** has been named vice president of finance at Land Resource Cos.

### Communications

**Renata Franco** has been named multicultural marketing manager at C.V. Communications Inc. in Atlanta.

### Advertising, marketing

**Jacqueline Scheider** has been named vice president and group account director with ComGroup.

The following appointments have been made at Bennett Kuhn Varner Inc.: **Ed Raldiris**, senior vice president, and **Linda Stevens**, senior account executive.

### Real estate

**Rob Morris** has been named director of retail leasing at the Southeast regional office of Faison Enterprises Inc. **Latanya Ferrell** has been named general manager at Office Suites PLUS in Marietta.

### Finance

**Russell Brant** has been named president of the business credit division at Tostitos Financial Corp.

### Business services

The following appointments have been made at JC Nationwide: **Karl Sander**, chief operating officer, and **Sandy Garrett**, president.

### Insurance

**Louis R. Snage Jr.** has been named senior vice president of the Southeast and south-central regions at Venture Programs.

Only notices of promotion or appointment to supervisory positions will be considered. Newsletters does not publish awards. Proper names and positions must be provided. Photographs must carry identification and can't be returned. Notices should be sent to Newsletters, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, P.O. Box 4689, Atlanta, GA 30302, or e-mailed to hr@atljan.com.



Krier



Knox



Scheider



Morris

## Looking out for seniors

### Agencies in 11 cities certify businesses as elder-friendly

By JOHN SEEVER  
Associated Press

**Toledo, Ohio** — Sam Burnett walks through the grocery store, making sure the aisles are wide, the canned goods are within reach and the prices are easy to see.

Burnett is a "secret shopper" of sorts — a volunteer who evaluates whether stores are "elder-friendly." He works for the Area Office on Aging of Northwest Ohio, one of 11 government agencies in cities nationwide that check businesses and public places and advise them on how to remove the obstacles older people face.

The changes are significant — pharmacies adding benches to give shoppers a place to rest, grocery stores taking big containers off the highest shelves and restaurants training employees on the special needs of older customers.

"Once they began to hear what our concerns were, they started to pay attention," said Burnett, 72, a retired school administrator.

The Elder Friendly program began in Portland, Ore., in 1995. Since then, 190 businesses in the area ranging from auto repair shops to funeral homes have been deemed accessible and accommodating to older customers. They're listed in a directory distributed all over town.

Businesses ask to be evaluated. The program isn't meant to be punitive. In the beginning, businesses were reluctant, but Becky Wehrli, executive director of Portland's Elders in Action,

"A lot of them didn't understand why they should target the older market," she said. "They didn't know what the benefits would be for them."

That's not a problem

anyone.

"We've made it a point to say elder-friendly is good for all customers," Wehrli said. "Mothers with young babies want wide aisles and easy access to restrooms, too."

Older adults also represent a fast-growing segment of the population. It's expected their numbers in wheelchairs could nearly double in the next 25 years and that one in five Americans will be over age 65.

Stores are beginning to see the value in attracting those customers.

"Besides being the right thing to do, it's good for business," said Gary Huddleston, a spokesman for Kroger Co.

The grocery chain offers older customers their own keys to its motorized carts so they don't have to stop at the customer service desk. Its new stores are designed with wide aisles and restrooms near the front.

Glynda Sutter, 84, said the Kroger store in Toledo where she shops could use a bench so that older shoppers could take a break.

"I know some people that won't come because it's too much walking," she said. "Shar's Restaurants, which has about 30 locations around Portland, replaced the springs on its doors after hearing how heavy they were for older customers."

Some of its restaurants dedicated parking spots for seniors only, said David Archer, a company spokesman. The changes were a result of suggestions from Elder Friendly volunteers.

"They look at it from different eyes," Archer said. "It makes sense."

The program has expanded to Oklahoma City, Tulsa and Muskogee, Okla.; Waterloo, Iowa; Oakpark, Ill.; Albany, Ore.; Montgomery, and two Georgia cities, Gainesville and Brunswick.

Wehrli, whose organization helps other agencies start Elder Friendly, said budget cuts facing many social service groups and the daunting task of adding a new program have hindered its expansion.

The Arcare Aging Agency in Oklahoma City started the program a year ago and has certified 20 businesses.

A hospital added mirrors at its cafeteria buffet table so customers in wheelchairs could see all the offerings. Following a review, a toy store realized it needed to clear bulky displays out of aisles.

Even the agency's office needed a fix, said Jeton Woody, director of the Elder Friendly program. A few volunteers complained that the building's doors were too heavy, so automatic doors were installed.

"Seniors call regularly to find out if a certain business is certified," Woody said. "They want to shop at places that are elder-friendly."

The program evaluates grocery stores in the Toledo area.

Teams of three or four people visit the stores at different times of the day, usually during a two-week period. Stores don't know they're being evaluated until 13-page evaluations, noting such things as whether the stores had consistent lighting and a helpful staff.

"Once the evaluators have finished looking through a business, they meet with store managers to suggest improvements."

Burnett, who said he always left the shopping to his wife before he started going undercover in the stores, said the results have been rewarding.

"I feel like I've made a contribution," he said. "The older I get the more concerned I am about things like seniors being able to find the restrooms. I never thought of that before."

