

Bringing whimsy to tech tasks

Man & Mouse reflects owner's personality

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When you talk to most Internet marketing companies, they'll talk in jargon, using terms such as search engine optimization, preferred landing page and Google algorithms.

Not Fred Sexton. To let potential customers know immediately that his approach to business — and life — is whimsical, creative and playful, he named his business Man & Mouse and gave himself the title of The Big Cheese.

"If people don't get the name or don't like it, the business relationship probably isn't going to work out," says Sexton, who formed the company in 2003 in Raleigh and moved to Charlotte in 2006. "I like to be true and real about what I am.

"I do the opposite of what the crowd does," he adds. "The people I talk to are not tech people. If I can make them laugh by being different, it often leads to success. Even

if I don't make the sale, at least I've had fun."

Sexton's whimsy is based on extensive knowledge of the business of the Internet, the subtle differences between various online marketing techniques and hard-core technical skills.

QUICKINFO

DID YOU KNOW?

•Sexton employs two part-time staff members and hires contractors when needed.

•Mouse & Man is based in the office of one of its clients, Studiobanks, in South End.

For example, he explains that while some might think a useful goal is to get 10,000 Facebook friends, it is far more effective in the long run to get 10,000 additional visitors to their website.

"There are so many more ways to get people to your website," says Sexton, 30. "The thing is how to best utilize all the resources out there in a creative way. To master that is complex."

Many of Sexton's clients have limited budgets, so "I train them in best practices."

He enjoys teaching people and often creates presentations and blogs to do that — and also to get his name out. And he keeps abreast of what's new by reading the work of other bloggers and attending conferences and meet-ups.

Sexton



photo NANCY PIERCE