



ThePlaceFinder.com



Arel Moodie and his partner Bert Gervais.

A Moving Experience

BY AREL MOODIE

In the spring of 2004 my best friend, Bert Gervais, and I were in college and wanted to move off campus. Together, with another friend, we had a horrible time finding a place. We searched for weeks until we found a decent three-bedroom apartment. Everything was fine until our third roommate let us know that he would no longer be attending school the following year. Since we now only needed a two bedroom place we had to do the whole process again. After going through this twice we figured there must be a better way.

In discussing this with other students we found that we were not the only ones who went through this mess. My mentor once told me to never look for an opportunity, but look for a problem and work on its solution. Well here it was so Bert and I teamed up with another student, Matt Young, and decided to take action. We came up with the idea for placefinder.com, a website that deals specifically with finding off-campus housing, roommates and sublets for college students.

We uncovered a huge need and a great solution, so then money would just come rolling in, right? Wrong! There was so much we didn't know about business, and about building a website. We must have hit every single roadblock imaginable. We knew what we wanted to do, but we didn't know how we were going

to do it. We just didn't know enough. We thought if we built it, the customers would just come.

We launched the business in 2005 when we were nowhere near ready. There were huge problems with the website: it didn't work properly, it was not user friendly and there were many complaints. So we decided to take the site down and spent the next two years fixing it. While other students went out to parties on weekends, we were in our apartment working. It came to a point where I personally felt like I was in the business of trying to develop a business! We began seeking experienced mentors, planning our marketing strategies, and reading as many books on the subject of business that we could.

Many times I felt like quitting. Here I was, supposed to be this big-shot businessman, but my friends were making more money working part-time in the dining hall. I felt like a loser until I realized something that changed my world. It's just as impossible to flip a coin 100 times and get heads all 100 times as it is to keep trying and always fail. There is a huge correlation between how much one can fail and how much success one can have. The more you fail increases your likelihood for future success.

I'm happy to report that the sun is starting to rise for placefinder.com. It is finally becoming a great success at Binghamton University — so much so that we have already expanded to other schools. Others must think so too because we were recently featured in USA Today. Even though it was challenging, I would not trade the last three years of work for anything. Not only did I achieve business success, but I gained confidence and self knowledge that I don't suspect I could have found anywhere else. □

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