

# With SmartSearch, clients' Web sites just 'click'

*Search-engine marketing industry growth fuels local agency's takeoff*

**BY CARON SCHWARTZ ELLIS**

News Editor

BOULDER — Seven-year-old SmartSearch Marketing hasn't always been in the right place at the right time, but it is now.

The search-engine marketing firm grew its revenue 138 percent from \$1.3 million in 2004 to \$3.2 million in 2005, placing it No. 4 on the Business Report's fast-growing companies list with revenues more than \$2 million.



"This entire industry is growing like gangbusters," says SmartSearch President Patricia Hursh. "Online advertising is making quite a comeback, and search-engine marketing is growing exponentially."

Companies hire SmartSearch to increase their visibility online. The goal is to increase traffic to their Web site and increase Web-site activity for sales, lead generation and brand awareness.

Search-engine optimization, pay-per-click advertising and Web-site conversion are part of the package SmartSearch sells.

Although Hursh attributes her company's growth to the industry — search-



JONATHAN CASTNER

**SmartSearch founders, President Patricia Hursh and Chief Executive Dale Hursh, have grown their company from a mom-and-pop marketing shop to a 10-employee search-engine marketing agency with annual revenues of \$3.2 million.**

engine marketing grew 74 percent between 2004 and 2005 according to Marketing Sherpa's 2005 Search Marketing Benchmark Survey — she says the real reason SmartSearch continues to expand

is because of "unparalleled customer service. That's how we differentiate ourselves as an agency."

Last year SmartSearch ranked No. 2 on the less than \$2 million in revenue list.

**SmartSearch Marketing**  
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Patricia Hursh, president;  
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Employees: 10  
Primary service:  
Search-engine marketing  
Founded: 1999

It jumped to the higher revenue list with well-known consumer companies like Time Warner Cable, Microsoft and Breath Right nasal strips as well as many mid-size high-tech business-to-business companies like Illinois Tool Works and TradingPartners, Hursh said.

Hursh and her husband, Dale, who's the company's chief executive, founded the company in 1999. Between his background in high-tech sales and hers in traditional and online marketing, the two realized they had the skills necessary to build their own Internet-focused business.

From then the company has blossomed from a mom-and-pop shop to a 10-employee agency that hires consultants and contractors as needed, Hursh said.

According to Hursh, there are two main ways SmartSearch grows its business: acquiring new clients and doing more work for existing accounts. "Clients are doing more and increasing their budgets," she says.