

By Paul Belleflamme, 12 February 2014

## Can IPdigIT start a snowball effect?



In a [previous post](#), I described the success story of Alex Tew who managed to raise \$1 million for his university education by selling one million pixels on a web page, at a price of \$1 per pixel. In exchange for the pixels that they bought, purchasers had the possibility to display tiny images on them, have these images linked to some URL, and have a message appearing when hovering the cursor over the image.

I took this story as an example of the sort of self-fulfilling prophecies that may result from [network effects](#); as I wrote in the post:

*If each potential user expects that many other users will join a particular network, then this network will look very attractive and will indeed attract many users, which will confirm the initial expectations. [Yet] another self-fulfilling prophecy may well work in the exact opposite direction: if users believe that the network will never expand, they will have no reason to join and the network will indeed stagnate...*

So, depending on expectations being optimistic or pessimistic, self-fulfilling prophecies may turn into success or failure. The key questions are then the following: *Is it possible to generate favorable expectations and if yes, how?*

In the case of Alex Tew, as reported by [Wikipedia](#), the deciding factors were a combination of initial investments by friends (in the hope of making the snowball roll) and of sheer luck (unexpected exposure in the media amplified the word-of-mouth):

*The first sale, three days after the site began operating [in August 2005], was to an online music website operated by a friend of Tew's. He bought 400 pixels in a 20 × 20 block. The site was initially marketed only through word of mouth; however, after the site had made \$1,000, a press release was sent out that was picked up by the*

*BBC. The technology news website The Register featured two articles on The Million Dollar Homepage in September. By the end of the month, The Million Dollar Homepage had received \$250,000 and was ranked Number 3 on Alexa Internet's list of "Movers and Shakers" behind the websites for Britney Spears and Photo District News.*

Alex Tew's story has inevitably inspired other entrepreneurs. I know at least of two of them as they have taken the pain of contacting me personally to ask for some coverage of their project. To meet their request, I reproduce here the messages that they sent me. The first project is named *LogoBrowser*:



*(November 8, 2013) Dear Professor, I have found your article about Alex Tew and his Million Dollar Homepage and follow-up ideas that you used to write on IPdigIT. I would like to ask you if it is possible to write an article about my startup/project which is based on Tew's idea? The project is named LogoBrowser and it is an innovative way to promote the strongest brands Logos online! I think that my project has a great potential and needs publicity, which could help press release.*

*My project is the fruit of intensive work as I was inspired by the idea of creating a distinctive and recognizable place on the internet, with a smart layout and specially designed space for use by the largest possible number of globally and/or locally strong Logos or Logos aspiring to become such.*

*For advertisers a participation in the LogoBrowser project is a chance to emphasize their presence and succeed in being recognised/distinguished among the prestigious well known brands.*

*I hope that you will appreciate my idea. And now you can try and find out the potential of the LogoBrowser project visiting our DEMO page at [www.demo.logobrowser.com](http://www.demo.logobrowser.com) and soon, the main project that is starting in a few days, as you'll find at [www.logobrowser.com](http://www.logobrowser.com).*

*You can check Us also: [www.facebook.com/logobrowser](http://www.facebook.com/logobrowser)*

*I would be very grateful for any kind of help.*

*With regards,  
Marcin Gburski (LogoBrowser originator, Poland)*

The second project goes by the name of *Worldpixel*:



*(January 31, 2014) Lol i have no friends and i can't begin my project [worldpixel.fr](http://worldpixel.fr). I hope it's a great idea and i'm sure that some pixels are going to be sold soon because a pixel cost only 0.01 €.*

*It's really cheap and your advertise will be display for life.*

*Nevertheless it's a game and i promised to let clue in my post.*

*So (United kingdom : One of two pixels is free)*

*Matt*

So, I have done my part. I wouldn't pretend that IPdigIT has the same leverage as the BBC to start a loop of positive feedback and turn these two projects into new success stories. But who knows?

[I am very curious to know your views about these two projects and their probability of success.](#)