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Searching for You



Chad Gilhoi uses the power of the internet for a 21st Century phonebook.

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Maybe you're like Chad Gilhoi.

Back when he was working in sales and marketing, he was late to an appointment and anxious to call his contact to say he was on his way. But the company had just been purchased and had a new name and phone number.

"I couldn't call 411 because directory assistance, which essentially only has access to a phone book, wouldn't have had the new number," Gilhoi says. "I thought, 'If only I could call someone with Internet access who could look it up.'"

Now Gilhoi is that person. As the founder of Voom411, he and his staff provide live, local, Web-enabled directory assistance—"those are our buzzwords and our differentiating features"—to people who call in desperate for driving directions, traffic reports, a place to eat, even sports scores.

"We're all about complex searches," Gilhoi says. "People call us and ask, 'I'm on my way to a company that sells granite in Elk River, but I can't remember the name.' Or 'I'm in St. Paul. Can you see whether there's a Walgreens in the area?'" They get answers on the phone, by text message, or by e-mail.

Gilhoi started beta-testing Voom411 in July. Gratis service continues until mid-January. Then users will be charged \$4.95 a month (sign up on line at voom411.com or during your first call to 612-VOOM-411) for unlimited help from local, Web-savvy operators, available daily from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Camille LeFevre, based in St. Paul, writes about architecture and design for a variety of publications.

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