

Entrepreneur Profile: **JUSTIN KITCH**

RÉSUMÉ

Title: CEO and co-founder.
Company: Homestead.com builds web sites for small businesses.
HQ: Menlo Park.
2005 revenue: \$12 million.
2006 revenue: \$16 million.
Number of employees: 120.
Year founded: 1998.
Source of startup capital: \$50,000 in credit cards.
Background: Stanford University, B.S. degree; Founded KartoffelSoft in 1994, which became Homestead.com.
Age: 34.
Residence: Palo Alto.
Web site: Homestead.com



BIG PICTURE

Reason for starting business: I was unemployed. I didn't feel like I could work for anybody else. I only want to do things that I'm passionate about, so I wanted to create a place where people like me could be happy.

Most difficult part of decision: Facing failure. I was working for no money and leaving a secure career path that all conventional wisdom said was the right thing to do.

Biggest plus of ownership: The privilege of employing other people and creating a culture that everyone likes. We have a no-idiot and no-jerk policy.

Biggest drawback: The responsibility of other people's livelihoods.

Biggest misconception: That it's stressful and risky. I don't think it's any more than working somewhere you don't like.

Biggest business strength: Being able to put myself in other people's shoes.

Biggest business weakness: I tend to be enamored with opportunity, and that can lead to lack of focus.

Biggest risk: We've turned down large buyout offers and also the opportunity to go public.

Those were all good decisions.

Biggest mistake: They've all been not thinking big enough and being too conservative. We focused on being profitable during the downturn when we could have invested in opportunities.

Smartest move: Shutting down our free service and focusing on our core business.

Biggest worry: That we're not maximizing our potential to be a great company.

Top source of inspiration: My parents and other mentors.

DAILY ROUTINE

Most challenging task: Keeping all the different constituencies marching in lockstep, but still feeling empowered.

Favorite task: Rolling up my sleeves and solving a problem either technical or strategic. I spend probably one-third of my time doing that.

Least favorite task: Firing people. The company fires people on a monthly basis. I'm not always involved, but I take it very seriously.

Biggest frustration: Things always take longer than they should.

Source of support in a business crisis: I have a network of mentors and advisers as well as my wife, my parents, my twin brother and our team. Pretty much anyone who will listen.

DREAMS

Key goal yet to achieve: Build one of the world's greatest companies that lasts a long time. Even longer than I do.

First move with capital windfall: I'd put it into my family foundation, which I'm lucky enough to already have.

Five-year plan: We want to exceed \$100 million in revenue and be the clear market leader in small business web services.

Inducement to sell: If all the members of our team decided the time was right and it would accelerate the objectives of our company.

First choice for new career or venture: I'd be the oldest rookie to enter the NBA or be a professional musician.

PERSONALS

Most-admired entrepreneur: People who follow their own definition of success.

Most interested in meeting: Bill Clinton. I'd love to take him to lunch.

Stress reducers: Basketball, being with my family and being in the mountains and playing guitar.

Favorite pastimes: Isn't that the same? I only do things that reduce my level of stress.

Favorite book: "Built to Last" by Jim Collins and Jerry Porras and "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance" by Robert Pirsig.

Favorite film: "Life is Beautiful."

Favorite restaurant: Union Square Cafe in N.Y.C.; Delfina in S.F.

Favorite destination: Tuscany, Italy and Santa Fe.

Automobile: Which one should I say? A Volvo S60. Oh, and we have a new Highlander Hybrid.

— Lizette Wilson ■