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Page 6/The Battalion/Friday, January 29, 1988

Students get valuable training after starting own businesses

Reporter

Many students at Texas A&M. whether they want experience in the business world or simply want extra income while in school, choose to start their own businesses

These students are not only their own bosses - they are the owners, advertisers, managers, bookkeepers and public relations spokesmen for these businesses. Some of these enterprises turn out to be extremely successful while others never get off

the ground.

While some students are imaginative in their ventures, others stick to the more traditional ways of making extra money, such as typing and mowing lawns. Some of the more unusual businesses run by students include things such as personal nutrition counseling, disc jockey services, a used-car dealership, a homemade pie service, a snow-cone stand, the "party line," a preferred customer card, a window-screen business and tutoring businesses.

Some students who decide to go into business for themselves do so because they do not want to work for a boss in a traditional work setting; some have other reasons.

Jose Quintana, who is originally from Mexico, began his software business so he could remain in the United States to work. Quintana started VerCom Systems in 1986, while he was in his last semester at A&M working on a degree in computer science

VerCom offers customized systems of computers, software, training and after-sale support to small businesses, Quintana said. It also provides word processing, desktop publishing and data processing services, he said.

Quintana said he would have preferred to work for a large company years, but he was unable to get government clearance to do so.

"Everybody starting out in business makes mistakes, and I wanted to make my mistakes working for someone else," Quintana said. "I don't know why anyone fresh from

school would start his own business."

Quintana said he began by conducting research for a year before he opened his business. He developed a plan and made numerous projections. He said he sold Bloom County T-shirts on campus and de-livered newspapers to raise initial

'I had a lot of experience with computers, but none with management, accounting or money," said. "I did a lot of reading."

Quintana started in a small office, but was able to relocate in about six months. But he had his share of

problems getting started.
"We had all the problems that a book about starting a business will tell you you'll have," he said. "We had problems with money, managing time and concentrating on re search and development instead of sales. At the beginning it was very

Quintana said his business is doing fine now. His company's profits have increased steadily. He even showed a profit after the first year, which is unusual for most businesses. Quintana said he has not allowed the company to grow fast enough to cause problems.

"The way to start is to start small," he said. "Never grow before it is time. The business will ask you to

Another student-run business that started small and grew is a tutoring service set up by Terry Gore, a senior business analysis major from Houston. Gore has a background in computers and often found himself helping friends — sometimes as many as 10 — prepare for tests in BANA 217, an introductory computer-language class that teaches data processing techniques.



Entrepreneurs Stephen Halsey, Dany Semsano and Juan Carlos Alba own and manage Showtime

showing up for my little review sessions," Gore said. "I just decided I was going to get a business started."

Gore said he and two friends, Ja-

son Huff and Craig Klein, made up fliers and handed them out to one BANA class the day before the first

Gore was surprised to find a turnout of 45 to 50 people with so little advertising. He said he had so much positive student input that he decided to offer a semester-long series of weekly review sessions and pre-test review sessions for \$30, a price he said broke down to about \$1 per hour per person.

learned more from me in three profits into more equipment. hours than they had learned in class in three weeks," Gore said.

Gore said he gambled \$400 of his the money back into his off-campus

As more and more students heard help, Gore expanded the business. He took advantage of his computer skills and used one to compile information packets for each student and kept all his records on file

Juan Carlos Alba, Stephen Halsey and Dany Semsano are in business to learn and to have fun. The three have a disc jockey service, Showtime, that offers music, videos and special effects for parties

engineering major from Venezuela, had a similar DJ service at home with four friends. Semsano said this serv ice is an industry in his country.

When Semsano came to A&M, he ered a common interest in sound equipment, and within two hours of meeting had planned to go into business together. One week later, they ordered their first turntables.

"When Juan and I decided to do it (start the business) we did it because we liked it," Semsano said. "We've always wanted to do it.'

After almost three months of getting equipment together, the two began working at parties, they said. They met Halsey, a senior marketing major from Dallas, and said he "I wanted to offer a high quality offers all kinds of window covering major from Dallas, and said he product at low prices," he said. He including blinds. jumped at the offer to join the busi-

Eventually, after the business began to expand, the three needed two trucks to carry their \$20,000 worth think that school teaches you everyof equipment.

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The group became Showtime, essary, but the work is not a and now, a year later, they are working two or three parties a week. They said the biggest event they have worked at was the All-Night agrees with the philo Fair at the Memorial Student Center ing as much as last February, where at least 1,200 been involved in people danced to their music.

Semsano said they were slow in

At first it was all losses," he said. don't, 'It came out of our pockets. Juan time talking with pe and I would spend the money our more than myself, parents sent us at the first of the Wingate says h month on equipment. Toward the 30 jobs since he end of the month, we would be visit- and he has neve ing friends around dinnertime so we sume. He has delive

enough equipment we find some-currently owns two windo thing else we want," Halsey said. "If businesses and a picture money for printing costs and expenses, and when it paid off he put the money back into his off-campus we'll get it for them. It will be at a price, but the money back into his off-campus we'll get it for them regardless of the brother Peter suggested the trouble we have to go to.

an example in a catalog. Halsey said opened Mt. Aggie Snow Cones he spent all day finding parts and built one from scratch. He said he wearing coats. was working on it right up until the Although their first day a party started, but said it turned out successful, their first summer

The group said the key to their repaid their 30-month loan an successful partnership is constant tiplied their investment seven communication and respect for one another. They said that although enormous profit, but they wen fects for parties. they are friends, when it is time to to make it through the winter Semsano, a sophomore industrial talk business, they talk business. their earnings, he said. The

pany called Campus Habits. He said Wingate said he got into his he originally wanted to sell clothing, rent line of work after some met Alba, a junior economics major but spoke with a receptionist at a backed their car into the snow of from Bolivia. They said they discov- wholesale clothing company who stand. He met a contractor who suggested that cosmetic sales would ommended that Wingate be more profitable.

Halsey found a product and said competition in town, and offer he decided to go into business after supply the screens.
his mother's encouragement.
He began his businesses

'I'm one to have an ear for oppor- ate's Screens and Celebrity W tunity," he said.

He markets an unlabeled brand of tract from the apartment of fingernail polish and lipstick at what he lived in at the time. Eventual he says is a low-percent profit. He discovered who manufacture said he was looking for a company screens and was able to elimi that had an initial investment of less "middle man," increasing his pr

said his company offers him sales experience he values highly.

learned from." Halsey said. "I don't about three years and is now of thing. The experience is very nec-business

book material. Phillip Wingate

"I had a lot of students who would come to me and tell me they d and the partners have reinvested all ance, and locally has owner of a snow con

Wingate came to A&M at One client wanted a fog machine, rowed money from the ban so Alba and Semsano showed Halsey their necessities together

Wingate said in six months the

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The Wingates didn't sho We need each other." Halsey summer was profitable, sin their expenses had been paid

screen business since there

Coverings, by getting his first

Wingate also started his own rience he values highly.

"Everything that I've done I've Sales. He sold this company." ing his time to the window

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