

SMARTS



Richard Rhodes

42, FOUNDER AND CEO OF RHODES ARCHITECTURAL STONE IN SEATTLE

DESCRIPTION: New and ancient architectural stone sourcing and crafting company

START-UP: \$100,000 in 1998

SALES: Projecting nearly \$10 million in 2003

CHINA SYNDROME: Purchasing stone abroad for a client of his stone installation business, Rhodes found himself admiring the exquisite beauty of a stone Chinese village near the Three Gorges Dam Project site. A new business was born when he realized the stones would inevitably be buried under 600 feet of water unless something was done. Now half of Rhodes Architectural's business involves 30 employees and a worldwide network of 600 stonecutters rescuing ancient stonework that would otherwise be lost or destroyed, including the site that first inspired him.

LIVE ROCK: Since he works in multiple time zones, the Web has given Rhodes a huge competitive advantage. Online, clients can instantly access information and photos of their projects, while a design system provides cutters with exact dimensions and angles of every cut of every stone. The company has even developed an iconographic language to communicate with illiterate stonecutters. "We're kind of an 18th century business using 21st century information technology," Rhodes quips.

INDIANA STONES: Although Rhodes' wealthy clientele spend plenty for the stone aesthetics to adorn homes and commercial buildings, it's never been "just business" for the passionate Rhodes. "It's a big win for me to be able to work in a material that will outlive not only me, but also my civilization."

---April Y. Pennington

18 %

of the U.S. population speaks a language other than English at home, and they're more likely to make a purchase if your marketing message is in their native language

SNAPSHOT

22 %

of U.S. companies purchased goods and/or services via online auction in 2002

