

douglas stewart, 32

In the vanilla-and-chocolate-dominated ice cream world, it's nice to know one entrepreneur is having a little fun with the likes of mango, passion fruit and guava-strawberry. But it was more out of a sense of mission than fun that Douglas Stewart started Howler Products Inc. in 1994. The company, named after the Amazon's fruit-loving Howler monkeys, manufactures exotic sorbets and gourmet gelatos with ingredients and flavors taken from rare rain-forest fruits.

Stewart, president and CEO of the San Francisco-based company, began his journey in the Amazon jungle in 1989. Then a Stanford student, Stewart traveled to the Brazilian Amazon to research a thesis that ended up as a book on deforestation. He concluded that if farmers had a market for their rain-forest fruits, they might preserve the trees and plants that produced them. His convictions were so strong, he eventually left a job as a schoolteacher to start Howler Products. Six years later, with 100 flavors and sales between \$1 million and \$2 million, Stewart considers himself more of a "survivor" than a millionaire. "We've survived," he says, "and I think the formula for survival, whether you're 24 or 44, is you have to be persistent."

—P. Kelly Smith

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jason wall, 30

As Jason Wall sees it, success is all about having a ball. Since 1998, Wall has been topping car antennas with happy faces, 8-balls and even cowgirls—complete with braids and hats. Wall is president and CEO of In-Concept Inc., the company behind Antennaballs.com, which manufactures more than 500,000 custom antenna balls per month.

Based in Glendale, California, Antennaballs.com owes its success to one "man": Jack. It all started when Wall saw a Jack In The Box fast-food commercial in mid-1997 that said the company had sold more than 3 million antenna balls. Sensing opportunity, Wall came up with a few designs he thought would penetrate the auto accessory and novelty industries. The designs stuck. After selling four million balls through local gas stations and convenience stores, Wall recently landed some major national accounts, including AutoZone, Circle K and Wal-Mart, and he's negotiating licensing deals with Universal Studios. With sales of \$1.15 million for 1999, Wall attributes timeliness to his overnight success.

"It's very easy to think of a good idea," he says. "But I think [success] really comes down to execution and perseverance."

—P.K.S.