

Pangolin reaches out to text someone

Provider's interactive software
marketed for clubs, parties.

BY CHRIS KAUFFMANN | STAFF WRITER

ORLANDO — Pangolin Laser Systems Inc. has added a subtext to its core business of laser display software and it's all about getting the message out.

At least that's part of what company president and owner Bill Benner is trying to communicate about Pangolin's newest product, Interactive Messaging Unlimited.

The product is a Windows-based software that allows businesses such as nightclubs to better take advantage of their projection video and laser systems by allowing their customers to immediately send text or picture messages to those video screens from their cell phones, Blackberrys and other wireless devices — via a site-specific telephone number.

Those messages also can be shown simultaneously with static and animated images, video and live broadcasts.

"It provides a level of interactivity customers may not get elsewhere," says Benner, noting the typical target audience that businesses buying the software are trying to reach is between the ages of 16 and 24.

Apart from giving customers the opportunity to make song requests, play games and to engage in (screenable) chitchat, it also enables businesses to

Pangolin Laser Systems Inc.

Headquarters:

Orlando

Founded: 1986

Owner: William R.
Benner Jr.

Core business: Provider of laser show software

Employees: Eight

Revenue: \$1.2 million

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www.pangolin.com



build a database in which they can send out announcements about upcoming events or specials, Benner says.

"Fun, powerful" software

J.R. Silva of Casselberry's Silva Entertainment, which has been conducting video dance parties since 1995, believes the new technology has plenty of possibilities.

"Text messaging makes events more fun, more interactive, more enjoyable; it's for people who like to be engaged," Silva says. "We're very excited about this. This software is the most powerful interactive video software I've seen."

Silva, who started using the software in April, says that during one four-hour party recently, some 800 messages were sent. Moreover, he has just signed a contract with the Orlando Magic to use the system on a trial basis during 15 home games this season to see what kind of response it generates.

Although nightclubs and other types of entertainment businesses such as television stations are the most logical clients for the software, there are other potential applications.

The software, which sells for be-

tween \$1,000 and \$2,400 depending on the features desired, can also be used in educational, marketing and business situations.

While reality television shows such as *American Idol* use a similar software for voting purposes, Benner says it is very specific to a carrier or a show whereas Pangolin's software can be used by any carrier or company.

Blue-chip client list

That Pangolin is tackling this market is a tremendous departure from its award-winning laser show software that is used by companies all over the world — a small, niche market of which it is the recognized global leader, generating about \$1.2 million in annual revenue.

Regionally, Pangolin's clients in-

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clude Sea World, Disney, Universal Studios, Astronaut Memorial Planetarium at Brevard Community College, Busch Gardens and the Science Center of Pinellas County.

However, Benner says he was motivated to do something different after getting a request from a Dutch nightclub client who asked him to come up with something that would combine text messaging and laser shows.



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Pangolin Laser Systems is primarily noted for being a global leader in laser show software.

"It's one of the ways we can keep our 90 percent market of the laser show business," Benner says.

Benner, now 40, co-founded Pangolin in 1986 with former partner Patrick Murphy, whom he bought out four years ago. They named the company after a small, East Asian ant-eating critter, basically to avoid any conflict with other companies' names.

Originally, the company was split between Ormond Beach, where Benner was located and Arlington, Va., where

Murphy lived. They eventually brought everything to Orlando because Central Florida is "the laser capital of the world," Benner says.

Today, the company is a lean, mean fighting machine with a grand total of eight employees — five of them working out of offices in the Ukraine, Germany and Slovenia.

"We will hire anyone anywhere who demonstrates the technical aptitude," Benner says. "In the Internet age, it doesn't matter where they are."