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Denver's PhotoBucket is a red hot destination

Guess what web site I'm referring to:

- It gets 3 times the unique monthly visitors that Facebook does
- It serves up 50 billion distinct pieces of content every month
- It acquires over 65,000 new registered users a day.

MySpace? Flickr? No. Let me give you some more clues.

- The number of new users it acquires each month is about the size of a Flickr. So you might say it's growing at a Flickr per month.
- It placed above MySpace, Wikipedia, and the like as the fastest growing brand on the net, according to Nielsen NetRatings.
- It was founded and is primarily operated here in Colorado.
- It accounts for about 2% of all U.S. Internet traffic (wow!)
- It's had very little venture investment, and is starting to show a profit.

Still no guess? Well, it's PhotoBucket. Thanks for playing along and pretending you didn't read the title of this post for a while. And those 50 billion pieces of content a month are photos belonging to more than 12 million registered users. PhotoBucket is a tool that allows users to host images for use on social networking, e-commerce, gaming, enthusiast, and blogging sites. Recently, PhotoBucket has also added video hosting for its premium subscribers.

This morning, I spoke with PhotoBucket's VP of Marketing, Sergio Monsalve. Sergio spent 5 years with eBay as Director of New Ventures, so he's used to being in "a natural state of hypergrowth." He compares the organic growth of PhotoBucket to both eBay and Skype. Sergio told me that the company was essentially forced out of stealth mode by its users, and "hasn't spent a dime on PR."

"Very few companies have this true organic and viral nature. It's a very exciting and dynamic place to be." Sergio told me.

Founded in 2003, PhotoBucket now has about 25 folks here in Colorado in technical operations, development, content moderation, and support. The brand new Palo Alto business offices house an additional handful of employees. Pretty amazing what they've done with very little outside investment. The founders are Alex Welch and Darren Crystal (formerly of Level 3 Communications).

Sergio told me that Coloradans should keep an eye on PhotoBucket for at least two reasons. First, they're aggressively hiring talented developers, techs, product managers, and the like and are forecasting "dramatic needs for hiring" in the future. Second, PhotoBucket is very "partner friendly" in that the site is a tool more so than a destination, and offers a very effective channel for its partner companies.

While the company is not currently seeking funding and has turned the corner to profitability, Sergio told me that they will continue to evaluate their capital needs over time. The company aims to be a complete platform for hosting visual content, and it certainly seems that they are well on the way.

I can't wait to see what happens when Sergio ramps up the PR machine with that first dime or two.