

Cash pours in for student with \$1 million Web idea

This is such an interesting story...if you haven't already heard about it, this is a must read!

LONDON (Reuters) - If you have an envious streak, you probably shouldn't read this.

Because chances are, Alex Tew, a 21-year-old student from a small town in England, is cleverer than you. And he is proving it by earning a cool million dollars in four months on the Internet.

Selling porn? Dealing prescription drugs? Nope. All he sells are pixels, the tiny dots on the screen that appear when you call up his home page.

He had the brainstorm for his million dollar home page, called, logically enough, www.milliondollarhomepage.com, while lying in bed thinking out how he would pay for university.

The idea: turn his home page into a billboard made up of a million dots, and sell them for a dollar a dot to anyone who wants to put up their logo. A 10 by 10 dot square, roughly the size of a letter of type, costs \$100.

He sold a few to his brothers and some friends, and when he had made \$1,000, he issued a press release.

That was picked up by the news media, spread around the Internet, and soon advertisers for everything from dating sites to casinos to real estate agents to The Times of London were putting up real cash for pixels, with links to their own sites.

So far they have bought up 911,800 pixels. Tew's home page now looks like an online Times Square, festooned with a multi-colored confetti of ads.

"All the money's kind of sitting in a bank account," Tew told Reuters from his home in Wiltshire, southwest England. "I've treated myself to a car. I've only just passed my driving test so I've bought myself a little black mini."

The site features testimonials from advertisers, some of whom bought spots as a lark, only to discover that they were receiving actual valuable Web hits for a fraction of the cost of traditional Internet advertising.

Meanwhile Tew has had to juggle running the site with his first term at university, where he is studying business.

"It's been quite a difficulty trying to balance going to lectures and doing the site," he said.

But he may not have to study for long. Job offers have been coming in from Internet companies impressed by a young man who managed to figure out an original way to make money online.

"I didn't expect it to happen like that," Tew said. "To have the job offers and approaches from investors -- the whole thing is kind of surreal. I'm still in a state of disbelief."

Read his latest blog postings at: www.milliondollarhomepage.com/blog