

The Almanac 2 Money & Business

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Bob Miller, left, and Doug Dolezal founded their interior design group in 1995.



Modern Mediterranean-style decor in this dining room designed by Miller/Dolezal Design Group.

A new decade in design

By Jane Knorle
ALMANAC LIFESTYLES EDITOR

Miller-Dolezal Design Group is 10 years old and growing

It seemed an unlikely partnership, but it worked. Almost 12 years ago, Doug Dolezal talked Bob Miller, one of the Peninsula's best known and respected designers, into hiring him...for free.

At the time, Mr. Dolezal, just over 30, was doing small design jobs, working as a waiter, and training for triathlons

American Society of Interior Designers, and been chairman of 11 of its show houses.

"I told Bob I wanted to learn from him and would work for free for a couple of months. You could say I had on-the-job training," says Mr. Dolezal.

Soon he was working full time and getting paid for it. He became Mr. Miller's partner in

Today the firm has an 18-person team, their own warehouse and delivery trucks. There are five designers, an installations/expediting coordinator, and an installation support team.

Opening an office in Woodside in 1995 was great timing. The economy was booming and large luxury homes were

Valley. Two years ago the firm expanded to the San Diego area, opening a second office in Rancho Santa Fe.

Mr. Miller now lives in San Francisco and works out of the Portola Valley office. Mr. Dolezal lives and works in Rancho Santa Fe. Even before the move south, the firm was involved in projects in Palm Springs and Los Angeles.

"I'd been coming down here (Rancho Santa Fe) for several

years to show horses (hunters) and love the warm weather," says Mr. Dolezal. "Everyday is sunny and 78 degrees." He says Woodside and Rancho Santa Fe, both horse-loving communities, are a lot alike "except for palm trees and bougainvillea."

Having separate offices works well for two creative people, he says. Both travel up and down the coast, and keep in touch by phone and through a lot of e-mail. "It's like passing notes in class," says Mr. Dolezal

'Hiring an interior designer doesn't have to be scary

DOUG DOLEZAL

Over-the-top advertising

RoofAds finds opportunities overhead

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

Ten years ago, when Jay Saber was doing a roofing job at a friend's house in the Sierra foothills, his high standards were frustrating his friend.

"Just get it done. This isn't the Ritz," Mr. Saber remembers his friend telling him repeatedly.

"So I cut big black letters out of the roofing material that said 'The Ritz' and put it on his roof."

What started as a gag evolved into a business putting corporate logos and advertisements on rooftops. Mr. Saber started RoofAds three years ago as a division of his company, Saber Roofing Inc.

A former Woodside resident who recently moved to Santa Cruz, Mr. Saber said his 20-year-old roofing company outgrew its Woodside office and moved to a shop in Redwood City, although he maintains his business's Woodside mailing address.

Rooftop ads are the final frontier in advertising, boldly going where no ad has gone before, he says. His business targets large commercial buildings near airports, and he can install advertisements that are visible from 10,000 feet above, he says.

"I flew into San Jose a few years ago, and looking down at all the rooftops, they looked like blank white canvases," he says. "The reason why advertising companies don't do this is because there's a lot of liability in roofs, but I'm a roofing professional and I specialize in coatings."

Mr. Saber says he has developed a proprietary software that plot out roofs in 10-foot grids and writes to scale, and he's worked with Kelly Moore on the



Jay Saber's RoofAds business turns blank roofs into billboards, as this mock-up from his Web site demonstrates.

elastomeric paints he uses.

The paint is similar to what's used to coat the inside of swimming pools. It uses a rubber compound that's weather-proof and can expand and contract without cracking, Mr. Saber says.

"I've done a lot of research, and there's nobody in the world actually doing what we're doing," Mr. Saber says.

RoofAds has put the Seattle Seahawks logo on the roof of Qwest Field, done a logo atop the Hiller Aviation Museum in San Carlos, and the Excite@Home logo on top of its Redwood City headquarters. The Excite@Home job sounded more impressive before the company went belly-up, Mr. Saber admits.

Coming up, he's got jobs for a furniture store in Austin and a computer company in Montreal.

The demonstration photos on the RoofAds.com Web site are mockups, because he's had a hard time getting permission to take aerial photographs near airports, he says. However, anyone equipped with Google can check out satellite pictures of the football stadium.

Mr. Saber is equipped with flight plans for every airport in the United States, so advertisers can be sure that airplane passengers will see the ads, but with the advent of Google Earth's satellite imagery, RoofAds is no longer limited to buildings surrounding airports, he says.

"We can put our sign on your

roof, your sign on your roof, or your sign on our roof," he says. "We can put municipal logos on water towers, hazardous material numbers on the roof (to help) fire departments or do a giant American flag."

Besides the prank he pulled on his friend's roof, he estimates that 99 percent of all of RoofAds' jobs are on commercial buildings.

There are a few things that RoofAds won't do, Mr. Saber says. He won't do advertisements for cigarettes, alcohol or porn, and he won't put Target's logo — a big bull's eye — on anybody's roof. He can use any color imaginable, but he won't work with reflective silver paint because he doesn't want to blind pilots, he says.

And he's got one project in the works of a non-commercial bent. Mr. Saber says he is in negotiations with Rustoleum, the company that holds the patent on glow-in-the-dark paint, because he wants to create a giant, 1,000-yard-long glowing image of the famous effigy across the desert at the next Burning Man.

Why? Well, he's a big fan of Burning Man ever since he started going six years ago, he says, it's never been done before, and would be really cool. ■

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