

# Enterprise



LEE HELPS BUSINESSES GET NOTICED BY BLACK MEDIA.

[ MAKING IT ]

## YOUR STORY HERE

Dante Lee's online black news portal is a leading destination for press releases

For small business owners, publicity is one of the best forms of marketing—it's inexpensive and often free. When black-owned businesses and organizations want to get noticed by black media, many send their press releases to Diversity City Media Inc. The multicultural marketing and public relations firm operates BlackPR.com, an extensive press release distribution service, and BlackNews.com, the online portal for African American news and issues.

For just \$150, Diversity City will feature a client's press release on BlackNews.com, plus e-mail and fax it to every African American newspaper, magazine, radio station, and TV station in the country—more than 850 outlets in total.

"We used to have to go out and convince people to accept our press releases, but now we don't," says Dante Lee, the firm's 24-year-old CEO and president. "People call us if their fax number changes. And if a new black newspaper forms, they call us and make sure that they are on our distribution list."

With clients such as Black Entertainment Television, McDonald's, and Marriott, Diversity City generated revenues of \$450,000 in 2005. This year, the three-person company expects to generate \$1 million. The company, founded in 2000, works on a pay-per-release basis with all of its major clients.

"Black radio can be very scattered and it can be difficult to catch all of them, especially in markets that are important to BET. That is where his service can be very useful," explains Michael Lewellen, senior vice president of corporate communications at BET.

Last year, Diversity City, which subscribes to 221 black newspapers and 83 magazines, enhanced its offerings by imple-

menting a new national clipping service. Lee also relocated his company from Long Beach, California, to Columbus, Ohio, in December 2005 to be closer to many of the advertising agencies and public relations firms he works with.

The company has come a long way since Lee founded it as a student at Bowie State University. Diversity City's first product was a Website called BlackHeadlines.com, and it was originally designed to provide news that highlighted destination locations for African Americans. Lee slowly started attracting clients by attending conferences, networking, using search engines, and purchasing small classified ads in industry magazines such as *PR Week*.

But then, something unexpected started to turn Lee's fledgling company around. Celebrity authors, black organizations, and other companies that were hosting events and conferences began to send Lee press releases requesting that he write articles on them or their companies. So Lee decided to launch BlackPR.com in 2001, specifically to distribute press releases. The decision turned out to be a profitable one.

"When I launched [BlackPR.com], I didn't realize how much revenue that particular service could generate," says Lee. "It turned out that I was making more money sending out press releases than I was from advertisers on BlackHeadlines.com. So that shifted the direction of the company."

—Kenneth Meeks

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