
'U' grads start own company on the web

By Heather Miller
Daily Staff Reporter

At the Student Housing Locator web site a student can specify how much they want to pay in rent, where they want to live and even how many bedrooms they want their future apartment to have.

A simple click of a button locates all local apartments which fit that description.

The Student Housing Locator is one of the web sites designed by recent University graduates Jacques Habra and Patrick Sarkissian's company, Web Elite.

Habra and Sarkissian, who both graduated last year, spoke at the Business School last night about their experiences owning their own business. Business fraternity Delta Sigma Pi sponsored the event.

Ed Friedman, vice president of professional activities for the fraternity, said he wanted students who did not want to follow the standard career path to have an opportunity to hear from "two successful entrepreneurs."

Habra started Web Elite 18 months ago, and joined with Sarkissian six months later.

"I developed a belief in myself, which is quintessential to everybody who wants to start their own business," Sarkissian said.

The Ann Arbor-based company now

has 15 employees and designs web pages for small to medium-sized companies.

"There's a tremendous amount of competition (among web site designers) in certain areas," Sarkissian said, adding that there are five to 10 web design companies in Ann Arbor.

Habra said Web Elite is different from others because it takes "the extra step."

"We focus on developing an aesthetic and functional web site," he said.

Successful web sites are based on design, functionality of the design, promotion of the web site and interactivity of the web site, Habra said.

Functionality includes making the web site easy to navigate and understand as well as clearly conveying the company's identity.

"Your web site is a 24-hour salesperson" because it can be accessed at any time, Habra said. "It's an incredible marketing advantage."

Web Elite has created sites for companies ranging from the trucking company CATHomas Inc., to Trendway, a furniture company.

Business senior Andrew Taylor said Habra and Sarkissian offered a useful perspective.

"I thought it was good to hear a couple of youthful entrepreneurs talk about their company rather than a major corporation," he said.