





# Springwise newsletter | 23 April 2008

This week's promising new businesses include cargo bikes for urban deliveries, brain gyms for baby boomers, a nap hotel by IKEA, and more. Our next edition is due on 30 April 2008. In the meantime, check out our daily postings on [www.springwise.com](http://www.springwise.com), send us your [tips](#), and please don't forget to [tell your friends and colleagues](#) about us. Much appreciated!

Forum Latest	Current Vote	Top 40 Latest
 <p>23 APR 2008 <b>Public Image Limited ??????</b> <b>Mind you not sure...</b> By: Wyndham Earle</p>	<p>CLOSING DATE: 02 MAY 2008 <b>No.1: Which bank?</b> Four High Street banks have pitched for our investment of The Tennent's Mutual's money. <a href="#">more</a></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Bank of Scotland</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Clydesdale Bank</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Co-operative</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Royal Bank of Scotland</p> <p>Please note: This vote is open to founder members only. To become a founder</p>	<p>1 MUSE <a href="#">Established</a> / <a href="#">Indie</a> / <a href="#">England</a></p> <p>2 !!! <a href="#">Established</a> / <a href="#">Alternative</a> / <a href="#">United States</a></p> <p>3 BIFFY CLYRO <a href="#">Established</a> / <a href="#">Metal</a> / <a href="#">Scotland</a></p> <p>4 ARCADE FIRE <a href="#">Established</a> / <a href="#">Indie</a> / <a href="#">Canada</a></p> <p>5 JUSTICE <a href="#">Breaking</a> / <a href="#">Dance</a> / <a href="#">France</a></p>
 <p>23 APR 2008 <b>We've had a couple of suggestions on alternat...</b> By: The Moderator</p>		
 <p>23 APR 2008 <b>Thanks for that Tony, a glitch with JB showing...</b> By: The Moderator</p>		
 <p>23 APR 2008 <b>the smiths or the cocteau twins for me. think...</b> By: neilm</p>		

## Prefunded, crowdmanaged music festival

We've already written about a number of efforts to crowdfund and [crowdmanage](#) music bands, and now in Scotland a crowdmanaged music festival is in the works that was prefunded by a local brand.

Last week Tennent's Lager launched [Tennent's Mutual](#), a new music venture that will ultimately result in a live music festival this fall in which fans select artists, debate locations for gigs and call the shots on ticket prices. To kick off the effort, Tennent's created a start-up fund of GBP 150,000. Fans who sign up before June 30th will be given founder member status and the right to vote on the "who, what, why, where?" of all decisions as to how that start-up money is invested. Counsel will be provided by the Rolling Stones' Andrew Loog Oldham, Babushambles' Drew McConnell, journalist and broadcaster Keith Cameron, former Scots chart-topper Ken McCluskey and local musicians Stewart Henderson of Chemikal Underground and Johnny Lynch of The Fence Collective. Tennent's Mutual is a not-for-profit enterprise, and no booking fees will be charged for shows. Ticket income, meanwhile, will be ploughed back into the central fund, creating a self-generating amount that will grow and continue to create yet more live events.

As fans and customers claim increasing control in the music industry and beyond, it's a smart brand that will jump to the forefront with funds and a supporting model. Imagine the transformation in Microsoft's image if it ponied up the funds and let users decide how they were spent! It's just a matter of time before this comes to other countries and other industries; who else will stand up and be an early leader?

Website: [www.tennentsmutual.com](http://www.tennentsmutual.com)

Contact: [www.tennentsmutual.com/contact](http://www.tennentsmutual.com/contact)

Spotted by: Lyuba Stevasarova

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Go to [www.springwise.com](http://www.springwise.com) for more smart new business concepts from around the world.



# Brain gyms for boomers

Our brains resemble our muscles in one key respect: don't exercise them, and they're likely to lose strength. Conversely, many experts now believe that brains stimulated in a healthy manner can better resist debilitating mental conditions such as Alzheimer's. Which begs the question: how to keep brains in top shape?

The solution offered by [vibrantBrains](http://vibrantbrains.com), a San Francisco start-up, is to create a workout centre for the brain, patterned after a health club. Instead of exercising muscle groups via a series of circuit-training machines, vibrantBrains members hone their mental skills using a variety of computer software programs and other tools, for a monthly membership fee of USD 60. vibrantBrain's health-club-for-the-mind approach should appeal to the millions of baby boomers who've spent their adult lives regularly visiting gyms. As they approach retirement age, they'll want to maintain their mental agility, too, as attested by sales of Nintendo's Brain Age, which sold 10 million copies, according to the [San Francisco Chronicle](http://www.sfgate.com).

No doubt we'll see plenty of additional products and services aimed at enhancing baby boomers' brain power, joining a long list of companies already selling everything from vitamins to training seminars. Still, vibrantBrain's model is unique. And from a business standpoint, it has a couple of profit-enhancing advantages over the traditional gyms that it's based on. Space requirements are minimal compared to health clubs, and entrepreneurs won't have to lease or buy an expensive array of exercise machines.

If the mental health club idea catches on, the real competition eventually may come from traditional health clubs, which could add brain-exercise routines as easily as they've added yoga and martial arts instruction. However, even if that happens, there should be plenty of opportunities for start-ups to differentiate themselves—from rehabilitative clinics for the elderly to centers focused on mental and physical exercises for kids.

Website: [www.vibrantbrains.com](http://www.vibrantbrains.com)

Contact: [info@vibrantbrains.com](mailto:info@vibrantbrains.com)

Spotted by: Wendy Hoffman



# Bottle deposit refunds: push to donate

In Denmark, as in many other countries, consumers pay a refundable deposit on bottles. When they return them through a retailer's collection machine, it prints out a slip of paper that states how much they'll receive at the cash register. Generally, these aren't large amounts, but they're enough to get people to return their containers.

One of Denmark's largest consumer goods retailers has now added a charitable twist to the process, adding a button that lets customers instantly donate their bottle money to charity instead of collecting it for themselves. A partnership between [Coop Denmark](#), UNICEF Denmark and DanChurchAid, the 'push to donate' system was launched in September 2008 in 14 of Coop's [Kvickly xtra](#) stores. In the first three months, customers donated over DKK 120,000 (USD 25,750), proving that tiny donations add up to significant amounts. This year, Coop will be adding the option to 1,200 bottle collection machines in its other supermarket chains.

If you want to entice consumers to be charitable, make it easy for them. One for other retailers to be inspired by? (Related: [Reverse vending.](#))

Website: [www.coop.dk](http://www.coop.dk)

Spotted by: Frida Berglund



# Cargo bikes for greener business deliveries

It's a fact of life in the business world that companies in urban areas tend to require frequent, small deliveries of merchandise and other goods from the city outskirts and beyond. That's a recipe for inefficiency, traffic congestion and pollution, as so many delivery trucks make their way in and out of town with partial loads again and again. French [La Petite Reine](#) has come up with an alternative, greener approach to business deliveries by using truck-sized cargo bikes instead.

La Petite Reine maintains a fleet of about 60 Cargocycles for hire by businesses that need to make small to medium-sized urban deliveries over a distance of up to 30 km. Weighing only 80 kg (as opposed to a tonne or more for most delivery vans), each Cargocycle can transport about 180 kg of merchandise in its 1,400-liter cargo space. (For larger loads, La Petite Reine also has electric trucks suitable for deliveries that size.) Cargocycles' small footprint lets them travel anywhere on the roadways, including bus and bike lanes, and they can park easily between two cars. Cargocycle deliveries are faster than those made via traditional truck, and also 10 to 20 percent less expensive, La Petite Reine says. Perhaps most significant, however, is that they are completely nonpolluting—in terms of both emissions and noise. Cargocycles are also available for lease or sale, as well as for advertising space and use at special events.

Paris-based La Petite Reine was founded in 2001, and has since expanded to Bordeaux, Rouen, and Dijon. It now makes some 2,500 deliveries every day for clients including DHL, ColiPoste and Monoprix. The company is interested in signing up franchise partners--one to bring to an urban area near you?

Website: [www.lapetitereine.com](http://www.lapetitereine.com)

Contact: [contact@lapetitereine.com](mailto:contact@lapetitereine.com)

Spotted by: Pavi Ani



# IKEA builds nap hotel

Earlier this year, we wrote about a sympathetic [initiative](#) by Paris airports, giving weary travellers a chance to recharge with a dose of full-spectrum light therapy.

Last week, [IKEA](#) offered fatigued Stockholm shoppers a similar form of respite by installing a Sovhotell (sleep hotel) in one of the city's downtown shopping centres. After checking in at Sovhotell's front desk, guests were asked whether they normally sleep on their stomach, side or back, and were given a pillow to suit their personal sleeping style. In addition to single and double beds, the Sovhotell also featured a bridal suite.

Guests were welcome to snooze for 15 minutes, and were given eye masks and headphones with soothing soundscapes to help them benefit from their sponsored power naps. According to IKEA, inspiration for the Sovhotell came from Japanese capsule hotels and from the fact that the shoppers in its own stores are occasionally found napping in the bedroom section.

No word yet on whether IKEA is planning to bring this shopper-friendly campaign to malls in other parts of the world, but we think it's a great example of the [tryvertising](#) trend: marketing a product by letting customers try it out in a relevant setting, without pressuring them to buy.

Website: [www.ikea.com](http://www.ikea.com)

Spotted by: Frida Berglund



# Alcohol breath testing for events

It's estimated that one in every three traffic fatalities in Europe involve alcohol-impaired drivers. In the US, alcohol-related car crashes kill someone every 31 minutes, according to the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and the problem extends around the world. [Blow Me](#) is a UK-based company that hopes to reduce such statistics by bringing its mobile alcohol breath-testing service to private and corporate events.

Event organizers can hire Blow Me to attend any party or other happening where alcohol will be served. With the same equipment used by police forces throughout the UK, Blow Me's trained team conducts unlimited alcohol breath tests for event guests in a non-threatening and professional manner. Both branded and unbranded packages are available, and Blow Me's staff will follow any dress code to suit the occasion—tux and ties if needed. They can offer custom promotional materials, if requested, as well as information for guests about local transport options. The result, Blow Me hopes, is that more people will think twice before getting behind the wheel. Package prices start at GBP 695.

Launched in 2006, London-based Blow Me serves clients all over Europe; by January of this year it had stopped more than 1,000 people from unknowingly driving drunk, founder Sam Rose says. Undoubtedly it has also enhanced many a company's corporate image. Blow Me is currently considering franchising the brand—one to bring to an area near you?

Website: [www.alcoholbreathtesting.com](http://www.alcoholbreathtesting.com)

Contact: [info@alcoholbreathtesting.com](mailto:info@alcoholbreathtesting.com)



# Web tools for landlords

Managing a rental property is no task for the faint of heart, and that challenge only multiplies as the list of properties grows. Fortunately, two companies on two different continents have come up with tools to help make the job easier.

Australian [Streetfolio](http://www.streetfolio.com) gives property managers a central way to manage their entire property portfolio themselves, without having to pay fees to an outside agent. A portfolio section gives an overview of all the owner's properties on a single page, including photo, cost, value, mortgage outstanding and other details for each. The property dashboard, meanwhile, zooms in with more detailed information about a property and its financials. Cashflow and analysis sections help manage those financials—including rent and taxes—while other sections provide at-a-glance details on mortgage, insurance and lease information, as well as contacts and reminders. Using Streetfolio for just one property is free; plans for more than one begin at AUD 7 per month.

From Massachusetts-based Investment Instruments, meanwhile—makers of Rentometer, which we covered not long ago—comes [Rentomatic](http://www.rentomatic.com), a site that focuses on facilitating relations between property owners and tenants. A portion of the site dedicated to landlords provides a secure environment for managing properties, including quick views on upcoming or critical events for each; income and expense tracking tools specifically designed for real estate; and the ability to advertise multiple listings online, track important lease, rent and tenant information, and create detailed income and expense items. A separate tenant portion of the site, meanwhile, gives tenants a straightforward way to communicate maintenance requests, for example, as well as to make and track electronic rent payments. Launched in January, Rentomatic offers basic tools for up to 5 units for free, while the advanced plan costs USD 30 per month. Management of electronic rent payments costs USD 5 monthly per lease.

Once again, the web streamlines countless tiresome tasks in one fell swoop. That's the US and Australia taken care of; still plenty of room to spread! (Related: [Using pictures to help tenants request repairs.](#))

Websites: [www.streetfolio.com](http://www.streetfolio.com) — [www.rentomatic.com](http://www.rentomatic.com)  
 Contact: [media@streetfolio.com](mailto:media@streetfolio.com) — [www.rentomatic.com/contact](http://www.rentomatic.com/contact)

Spotted by: Bill McMahon



# Baby concierge service with an eco twist

Back in 2006 we wrote about [Babyplanners](#), a UK firm that helps parents-to-be prepare for the arrival of their first baby. Now Oregon-based [Itsabelly](#) provides similar services but with an eco twist.

Launched last year, Itsabelly offers personalized plans that can include whatever services an expecting couple needs, such as identifying the best baby items to buy or request as gifts; help finding a good doula, midwife, birthing center or prenatal yoga classes; guidance on baby-proofing at home; maternity clothes shopping consultation; private cooking classes focused on making homemade baby food; and assistance designing and decorating the baby's nursery. For families interested in taking a green approach to raising their children, Itsabelly can also help choose baby products that are eco-friendly and made from natural products—the Itsabelly Boutique has collected a range of organic and natural products from a variety of manufacturers. Itsabelly offers a complimentary consultation to discuss expectant parents' current situation and lifestyle needs, while the Itsabelly VIP Hotline offers clients unlimited consultation via phone or email. Pricing for Itsabelly's services can be by the package or a la carte.

Itsabelly currently serves families in the Portland and San Francisco Bay areas—which leaves how many other markets still to be tapped...? To make it easy, Itsabelly offers a Baby Concierge in a Box Kit to help entrepreneurs launch their own services. One to bring to your neck of the woods!

Website: [www.itsa-belly.com](http://www.itsa-belly.com)

Contact: [info@itsa-belly.com](mailto:info@itsa-belly.com)

Spotted by: Nancy Grossman

# Merlot & other premium grape juices



The line between kid and adult beverages began to blur a few years ago, when vintners began offering wines in Tetra Paks resembling juice boxes. Now, the confusion goes the other way with [First Blush](#)'s Cabernet, Merlot and Chardonnay fruit juices. First Blush varietal grape juices are alcohol-free and entirely suitable for kids, with no added sugar or preservatives. Like wine, however, they're also full of polyphenol antioxidants. Launched last May, the drinks are available in upscale grocers such as Whole Foods and Wild Oats, along with delis and restaurants in select states nationwide. Retail pricing is about USD 4 for each 16-ounce bottle.

Juice is already well-entrenched in the world of 'snobmoddities', as we've [noted before](#). But rather than focusing on organic ingredients, as so many others are currently doing, First Blush takes a different approach with its use of grape varietals. It just goes to show: not only can everything be upgraded, but there's usually more than one way to do so!

Website: [www.firstblushjuice.com](http://www.firstblushjuice.com)

Contact: [sales@firstblushjuice.com](mailto:sales@firstblushjuice.com)

Spotted by: Martina Meng



Few things are more frustrating to those trying to effect social change than an effort that fails simply for lack of participation. [The Point](#) is a new activism site that avoids that problem by giving planners a way to organize fundraisers, rallies, boycotts and other events so that they occur only once enough people have promised to join in.

To do this, The Point takes the notion of the tipping point—that point at which group action will produce a clear result and inevitable change—and applies it to organizing group efforts. Those who join a campaign pledge to take specific action—to boycott a company, for example, or donate funds toward a cause—but no one actually acts until the campaign reaches its preset tipping point, or number of pledged participants. When that point is reached, however, the action is triggered and participants make their donations, attend the event or boycott the organization. The Point can also be used to organize anonymously until a campaign builds to a level that provides safety in numbers and allows people to reveal their identities comfortably.

Andrew Mason, The Point's founder and CEO, explains: "The Point is a new way of thinking about collective action. People need a way to know where their participation adds the most value. That's what The Point offers—an environment where people are only asked to participate when their action can be combined with others to create a solution."

There have been efforts in the past that used crowd clout and conditional participation—[MyFootballClub](#), which we covered last year, comes to mind—but The Point takes a generalized approach and facilitates many different types of such efforts in one place. (Some, in fact, border on the frivolous, such as "John's Proposal" to a woman named Patty—which he'll make only if 999 people give their blessing.) Based in Chicago, The Point only just launched in late November, but in January it received USD 4.8 million from venture capital firm New Enterprise Associates; eventually, it plans to accept advertising as well. The site recently released an "Ultimatums" application on Facebook, and last month it was named a finalist in the SXSW Annual Web awards. Those in social activism will want to try the site out for their own organizing purposes. For all others, it's a model to emulate! (Related: [Crowdfunding software development](#).)

Website: [www.thepoint.com](http://www.thepoint.com)

Contact: [info@thepoint.com](mailto:info@thepoint.com)

Spotted by: Bill McMahon



# Self-serve frozen yoghurt

Korean-style frozen yoghurt stores like Pinkberry and Red Mango, which we [featured](#) in 2006, are popping up across the US, hooking consumers on a dessert that's tangier and less sweet than fro-yo of yore. Entering a crowded market, a small Californian chain has come up with a simple sales model that sets it apart from the competition. Customers serve themselves at [Yogurtland](#)—choosing from 16 frozen yoghurt flavours and 33 varieties of fruit and other toppings—and pay USD 0.30 an ounce, no matter which toppings they've picked. To stress the simple pricing, it's printed on staff members' shirts.

Besides offering customers the opportunity to create exactly the dessert they want, it wouldn't surprise us if the portions they serve themselves are larger than they would buy if faced with the choice between small, medium and large. One to look into if you're thinking of bringing new style frozen yoghurt to other parts of the world.

Website: [www.yogurt-land.com](http://www.yogurt-land.com)

Contact: [info@yogurt-land.com](mailto:info@yogurt-land.com)

Spotted by: Amy Leung



# Pop-up work spaces in vacant buildings

Faithful Springwise readers are undoubtedly already familiar with both [being spaces](#) and the [pop-up](#) trend. Now a new Dutch company is combining the two by offering pop-up work spaces in abandoned shops and vacant buildings.

The [SpareSpace Foundation](#) transforms empty inner-city shop and office buildings into temporary work spaces for copywriters, designers, artists and other young creative professionals. Featuring furniture by designer Jack Brandsma, SpareSpace equips each empty space with seven mobile units: four desks, one meeting table, a bar and a fold-out wall. All units are crates that can be folded in and out quickly and easily for instant setup; conversely, when the space is let or sold, they can be packed up and relocated to a new building within 24 hours. Spaces typically are available for several months, SpareSpace says; rental fees are EUR 150 per month to cover water and electric charges. Currently the project inhabits a vacant storefront at the Westerkade 24 in Groningen, the Netherlands. Beginning this week, however—to coincide with the Salone del Mobile international design event—it will also open another office in a vacant building at Via Ventura 6 in Milan, where it will stay through April 21. SpareSpace is a project by [Nieuwe Garde](#), a Dutch creative agency.

By making use of space that would otherwise be wasted during the transition from one paying tenant to another, SpareSpace brings the urban office within reach of budding creatives who otherwise might not be able to afford it. The concept should also find favour among real-estate managers, since it keeps buildings from looking abandoned or barren—which can only help get them rented or sold. It's a win-win all around—a concept to emulate in cities around the world! (Related: [Digital billboards revive empty storefronts](#).)

Website: [www.sparespace.org](http://www.sparespace.org)

Contact: [info@restruimte.nl](mailto:info@restruimte.nl)

Spotted by: [Core77](#) via RK