

# Monday's Business

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## Making a clear point

### Derry firm goes virtual to assist firms on a budget

By **KIMBERLY HOUGHTON**  
Union Leader Correspondent

**DERRY** — Virtual assistance is a relatively new concept in the high-tech business world, however one local company is promoting the theory that virtual reality is better.

ClearPoint Marketing Communications, founded in Derry about two years ago, started with just two clients and one dedicated owner. Since then, it has expanded to provide virtual assistance to about 50 New Hampshire clients, in addition to clients in Chicago, Florida, Hawaii and Europe.

The company provides strategic marketing, community relations, advertising and graphic design for small businesses trying to succeed with small budgets. ClearPoint has been so successful, the owner needed to assemble a team of independent collaborators to help her meet increased demand.

"A lot of companies start out with these great ideas, but never have the resources to follow up on them. ClearPoint allows those companies to implement new ideas without having to spend a lot of time and money to achieve it," said Renee Fellows, principal and owner of ClearPoint.

"We are here to help them accomplish their dream. The whole thing is about reducing stress for them."

Fellows and her team work from home, eliminating payroll for a large office staff and expensive office space. The team works with businesses to provide them with public relations services, copywriting and editing skills, advertising assistance, graphic design and photography services, and direct mail and



Kimberly Houghton Photo

**MARY MANSEAU, LEFT, a partner with ClearPoint Marketing Communications in Derry, and Renee Fellows, owner of ClearPoint, display some of the advertising campaigns they have created virtually for other businesses.**

marketing assistance — online via e-mail, fax and the Internet.

They will construct media kits, prepare press releases and design Web sites for \$45 to \$90 an hour, depending on the difficulty of the service.

The team of partners may work months with a client before meeting them face-to-face, Fellows said. Fellows' team consists of Stephanie Vore Apple, Carla Gates and Mary Manseau.

"Many people don't know that virtual assistance exists. This concept may take a little longer to be accepted, but once people realize that virtual resources are available, they are sold on it," said

Manseau, a team partner who works from her Amherst home.

By allowing a virtual assistant to take care of the publicity and marketing side of a business, it enables management to spend valuable time and money on important other core issues, Manseau said.

Resser-Thorner Antiques in Manchester is one of several clients taking advantage of virtual-based services by ClearPoint. The small antique company opened for business about a year ago, transforming an old corner store into an antique showroom.

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## VIRTUAL

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Owners Annie Resser and husband Richard Thorner said ClearPoint assisted Resser-Thorner with newspaper and magazine advertising, as well as creating a logo and slogan for the new business, along with news releases in the local press and the Maine Antique Digest.

"We've had many positive responses from people who have seen these stories and ads," Resser said. "It worked out very well for us." Resser said she is not technologically savvy, and it was easy to learn how to use the computer and work virtually with representatives from ClearPoint. Manseau said, "We know how the technology works, so they don't have to."

ClearPoint ([www.oneclearpoint.com](http://www.oneclearpoint.com) or [www.marymanseau.com](http://www.marymanseau.com)) has become a member of the New Hampshire High Technology Council and Business Networking National, and word-of-mouth is helping to promote the Derry company.

"We are still in a recession," Fellows said, noting caution among businesses about spending money on advertising and marketing.

But she believes companies that continue strong public relation campaigns during the difficult times will have a distinct advantage over companies that abandon those objectives once the economy becomes stronger.