



Toronto site builder beats world's best in Flash design competition

By Stefan Dubowski, posted Mar 02, 2001

A Canadian electronic fashion marketplace has brought home a top prize for Web design from the "Oscars" of [Flash](#) innovation.

On March 1 [Minimidimaxi Ltd.](#), a business-to-business portal for the fashion industry, boasted it was one of the finalists at San Francisco's [Flash Forward 2001](#), a competition for fancy Flash designs.

"It was kind of a surprise," said Anita Wypych, Minimidimaxi's chief operating officer and creative director. "We were nominated with a U.S. bank and Solomon (the ski maker)."

Minimidimaxi won kudos in the e-commerce category for its creation, [Ula2.com](#) -- digital home of fashion and furniture designer Ula Zukowska and her firm, Ula2 Inc.

"We designed the whole site, from art direction, photography and Internet marketing," Wypych said. Ula2.com is only a couple of months new and it was chosen from 1,500 entries.

Zukowska, the fashion artist, said she's glad she moved her wares online.

"I'm very happy I asked them to design the site," she said over the phone. "I saw their work before and I was impressed with what I saw."

And so were the judges at Flash Forward, apparently. But Wypych said the award belongs not only to her company. She brought it home as a testament to the power of Web endeavours.

"A lot of companies believe it's enough to tell their clients to have an e-commerce store," she said. "We believe it's much more complicated."

"If you open a retail store, there are certain steps you're expected to take." Consider the adage, "location, location, location." But what does location mean on the Web?

"You're competing with so many for the same real estate," Wypych said. "You have to make your online store a destination. That requires a lot more effort."

Minimidimaxi targets fashion clients first, applying its research to the digital market. The company moved slowly in the beginning, gathering evidence of successes and matching what they could to a pair of distanced worlds, fashion retail and technology.

"It's a completely different world," Zukowska said. "You're going straight to the people. But if I mention to my clients that they can check the Web site, 80 per cent of them have to ask for help with the computer. In this field we're still very far behind."

Wypych said Minimidimaxi opened its digital doors in 1999, but the company only recently unveiled the final version of its fashion marketplace. The company is not traded publicly and it has no plans to IPO anytime soon.

"We didn't quite like what was going on with dot-com companies recently," Wypych said. "We wanted to

grow... not lose everything overnight."

Still, this Web creator figures its Flash Forward first proves Internet marketing is worth the effort - no matter how dot-bummed out you are.

"We wanted to rebuild confidence in the Internet... A lot of people are confused about whether the Internet works, and whether there's any reason to have an Internet presence."

Minimidimaxi will present Ula2 Inc.'s line of fall and winter clothes for 2001 at the Bata Shoe Museum in Toronto on the afternoon of March 21. Prospective attendees should RSVP by March 20 at 416 348 0007.