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CampusBookRentals Rebrands for Growth

By Judith Rosen | May 08, 2014

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Over the past year, CampusBookRentals, which was *Inc.* magazine's 17th fastest growing company in 2012, with revenue of \$23 million in 2011, has been laying the groundwork for another growth spurt. One result of this effort is a new company name.



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The seven-year-old organization, which began as an alternative to the campus store, has since turned its mission into creating technology to make independent college bookstores more viable—and keep textbook prices down. To symbolize that change, the company has taken the name Sidewalk. "It embodies our belief in local bookstores," says founder and CEO Alan Martin. "You can't walk off the street into Amazon, but you can into your local bookstore."

Sidewalk partners with more than 250 bookstores nationwide, which represents 12% of students, according to Martin, for its core technology offerings: Pro, a point-of sale solution; Marketplace, which enables college stores to source textbooks from each other without a middleman;

Rent, for both in-store and online textbook rental; and Promote, which uses geolocation technology so that local store pricing is embedded in online price comparison websites. "All the Sidewalk technology is meant to make the bookstore more competitive," says Martin, who notes that his company is the first to enable campus stores to list their prices on websites like campusbooks.com.

In addition, Sidewalk is getting ready to deliver digital textbooks to campuses through the kiosks it provides to its Rent partners. The new kiosks will be available in time for the fall 2014 semester. Although Martin stresses that "the physical book is still very desirable," students will have an option to buy a digital book or rent a physical book through the kiosk. The company will also continue to make rental textbooks available directly to students through CampusBookRentals, now a division of Sidewalk.

Other Sidewalk changes include the relocation of corporate headquarters to Salt Lake City late last year. Sidewalk's warehouse and customer service operations remain in Ogden, Utah, where the company began.