



March 19, 2007

## CRM from Ruf Strategic

By David Sims

This is Family Hour, so First Coffee is happy to report that Olathe, Kansas-based CRM vendors Ruf Strategic Solutions, a database marketing company, is celebrating its 30th anniversary of business success this year.

This milestone is "a tribute to the commitment of four brothers who are keeping the family business running, as well as carrying on their father's dream of entrepreneurship," according to company officials.

Jacob and Sondra Ruf founded the company in the basement of their home in 1976, where Jacob developed decision support software to help organizations increase productivity and efficiency. Although Ruf passed away from colon cancer in 1995, his business is carried on by his four sons: Kurt, Eric, Jake II and Brian.

Kurt Ruf, eldest son and partner of Ruf Strategic Solutions, explained that his father was a self-taught information systems expert: "He was one of the founding fathers of this industry."

Jacob Ruf, along with Martin Baier, family friend and member of the Direct Marketing Hall of Fame, worked together to create the first ZIP code-level marketing system. Ruf decided to expand on this and focus on database marketing, which led to creating the first commercially available relational database and the first business-clustering system using proprietary "corporate lifestyles." They sold companies tools for managing large amounts of data.

"The industry has changed so much since the introduction of the Internet," said Eric Ruf, brother and partner. "Tracking and measuring has become much easier for companies, but they still need a way to decipher mass amounts of data. This is where we come in because it is so

important not only to have a strategy to reach your market, but also to have the ability to execute a successful campaign," Eric said.

The Ruf brothers' latest development for the travel and tourism industry is Visitor Analysis, a product promising "comprehensive analysis of actual visitors to a destination. It reveals visitors while providing insight into their travel behaviors and preferences," according to company officials.

"We know that the future of this company lies in the expansion of our current products for specific industries, such as travel and tourism," said Brian Ruf.

The Ruf brothers credit their success to the Midwestern values and work ethic their father instilled in them. "Dad always pushed us to compete, whether that was with each other or in business," said Kurt Ruf. "We are all quite different, but I think that is what makes this company work. We all have our own ideas to bring to the table, yet every one of us has the same goal -- to keep our father's dream alive. If we can do that as a family, then we're doing pretty well."

And that, friends, is what this great country is all about.