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Your Future After High School in Florida

WORKIN' IT



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CEO by 17

By: ASHLEY CISNEROS

Weina Scott is proof that with hard work, the American Dream can be realized. The daughter of Haitian immigrants launched and sold a podcasting website, [Switchpod.com](#), when she was still in high school.

Weina's journey began about five years ago. After teaching herself HTML at age 13, Weina started creating web-based businesses — first a website that offered programming tutorials, then a web design company and finally a web-hosting company. Weina's "office" was the family's laundry room. "I handled most communication through e-mail, so sometimes the clients didn't even know I was a teen," Weina says. "They just respected my knowledge and skills. My father taught me a lot about entrepreneurship."



Big Success

Weina's first three projects laid the foundation for her biggest and most successful company, [Switchpod.com](#), which gives users space to upload podcasts.

Podcasting allows people to create their own audio files and publish them online. Other people can access the podcasts with an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) reader and download the podcasts to iPods, computers and cell phones.

She launched Switchpod.com with the help of Jake Fisher, who she met via a message board about programming. Weina wrote the entire program for [Switchpod.com](#) on Microsoft Notepad and Jake started advertising on message boards. "Switchpod was hard because it was a whole new environment for me," Weina says. "They don't teach you this stuff in the classroom. This involves real life, real people."

As the website took off, Weina and Jake began to receive offers from people wanting to buy the company. "The problem was that they didn't want to give us control," Weina says.

But one day in May 2006, Weina received an e-mail from Chris Spencer, chief executive of Pittsburgh-based Wizzard Software Corp., which deals with speech recognition and text-to-speech technologies. He wanted to buy the company and offered \$200,000 in stock to both Weina and Jake, meaning they'd still be considered part-owners of the company.

"I was doubtful when I saw the e-mail," Weina says. "But after I spoke to Chris, I knew this was a great opportunity."

Weina and Jake sold the company to Chris in August 2006. Chris still wanted them to work for him part time to handle the day-to-day operations. The gig pays \$40,000 a year.



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Hard Work Pays

While still in high school, Weina's typical schedule involved getting up at 6 a.m., attending seven advanced placement classes at school, checking e-mails on her BlackBerry during lunch and finally going home to start her homework. During her senior year, Weina's Switchpod.com duties included creating new features for the website, assisting her marketing person with press releases about the company, being interviewed by the media and sitting in on conference calls with Jake and Chris regarding the company's business plan and strategies.

Weina's parents allowed her to work on Switchpod.com as long as she earned straight A's.



University. She plans to open more businesses.

"School was always the most important thing," she says. "I would work if I had time, but my focus was on my grades. I'd encourage other teens to definitely follow their dreams, but also get an education."

Weina graduated in 2007 from Dr. Michael Krop Senior High School and is now studying medicine, business and computer science at Harvard



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