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## Couple had RX for dot-comedy

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As the Internet bubble was nearing its bursting point seven years ago, husband and wife Eric and Sharon Langshur quit their day jobs to start a dot-com on Lincoln Avenue.

In 2000, the market valued clicks more than bricks, and a relative newcomer like America Online exploited this funny money economy to acquire Time Warner. During this time, the Langshur's opportunistically raised millions from angel investors to fund TLContact, an online health care information service.

"In the early years, like so many Internet entrepreneurs, we created a business plan that showed us catapulting," said Sharon, who previously served as a pediatric resident at Children's Memorial Hospital. "[After the bubble burst], we really slimmed down with personnel and expenses, and had a very tight budget for a number of years."

More than just a survivor of the dot-comedy, TLContact now counts more than 550 hospitals and health care facilities -- including the University of Chicago, the Mayo Clinic and Johns Hopkins -- that are paying annual licensing fees for its service. The company employs 60, and last October moved to new facilities in Ravenswood.

TLContact's flagship CarePages.com is an online social networking site that allows patients to share medical information and their overall state of mind with friends and family.

Before the business existed, Eric and Sharon, each 43, developed the first CarePage for their oldest child who was born with a congenital heart defect.

CarePages.com, which is also advertising-supported, attracts more than 500,000 unique users each month who spend, on average, more than five minutes on the site.

"[Advertisers] are able to get their brand right next to their customers in a very powerful way in an extremely significant moment," said Eric, who serves as CEO and previously ran aviation firm Bombardier Aerospace.

Approximately a year ago, TLContact secured a partner-ship with Washington, D.C.-based Revolution Health Group to incorporate CarePages within the company's new consumer-oriented health portal, RevolutionHealth.com. The brainchild of AOL founder Steve Case and funded to the tune of \$130 million, Revolution Health last month announced that it acquired TLContact for an undisclosed sum. Revolution Health's additional shareholders include former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina and former Secretary of State Colin Powell.

"Their mission is consistent with our own, but on a grander scale," Eric said.

### Payday for Hopewell

Before being acquired by Revolution Health, TLContact raised in excess of \$10 million. In late 2004, the company received its first institutional venture capital funding from Chicago-based Hopewell Ventures.

Hopewell, which manages a \$110 million fund that targets Midwest-based companies, invested a total of \$3.5 million in two separate rounds.

TLContact represents the first liquidity event for the three-year-old investment fund, which includes former Democratic National Committee Chairman David Wilhelm as a partner.

Hopewell Ventures partner Tom Parkinson said, "This is the first company I have ever been involved in where users would e-mail the company and say 'This service is so wonderful, I would like to donate money to you.'"

Additional Chicago area entities funded by Hopewell Ventures include marketing company InStadium Inc. and CSMG, a sports management firm that includes Chicago natives Dwayne Wade and Donovan McNabb as clients.

"We think that the fact that the Midwest is not seen as a hotbed gives us a better chance of having a first look at

some of the most promising opportunities [in the region]," Parkinson said.

### **Plasma for your pump pain**

New York-based Plasmatronics was recently awarded \$1.3 million in incentives from the Indiana Economic Development Corp. to fund the development of a research and manufacturing center in Crown Point.

The center, which will develop plasma-based fuel-efficient vehicle ignition systems, is expected to bring more than 200 high-tech jobs to the area. Plasmatronics CEO Linda Decker said the northwest Indiana site was chosen because of its location within the Greater Chicago area.

The center is expected to be fully operational later this summer, when perhaps the price of gasoline will exceed that of Crown Royal.

*Brad Spirrison is a local technology reporter and president of MidwestBusiness.com.*

You got acquired!

Ravenswood-based TLContact joins AOL founder Case's new 'revolution'