

[From inspiration to startup]

Something from nothing

A LOOK AT HOW LIFE LEADS TO BUSINESS

THIS LIFE ADVENTURE:



Bill Treasurer, 46, conquered his fear of heights by confronting them. Working as a professional high diver for seven years, he performed more than 1,500 high dives—many of them scaling to over 100 feet.



Wooed by a nine-month global courtship, **Katy Leakey** moved from California to join her now-husband Philip Leakey in his native Kenya in 2001. They lived among the Maasai. But when a severe drought and political upheaval left them supporting 100 families, Katy and Philip, now 54 and 59, respectively, knew that something had to be done.

Jeff Kelley, now 50, was in Taiwan when he discovered a grass-like carpet lining the bottom of a cab. Kelley bought a piece of that carpet from the driver.



As head of worldwide marketing for the Chambord brand, **Rob Cooper**, 32, traveled the globe looking for the next innovative flavor to introduce in the U.S.



At 15, **Mark Frobose** was staying at a youth hostel in Europe, speaking in broken French with a French musician. Though conversation was limited, they formed a connection. That experience was so powerful that Frobose, now 54, was instilled with a passion for languages.



INSPIRED THIS:

Giant Leap Consulting Inc.

Treasurer's Asheville, North Carolina consulting firm focuses on helping people take whatever "high dive" they may be facing. Founded in 2002, it has worked with organizations such as NASA and, in 2008, brought in revenue of \$590,000.



St-Germain, Delice de Sureau

An artisanal liqueur made from wild elderflowers, the beverage launched in 2007 and has received multiple industry awards. And it all happened through Cooper's brainchild, Cooper Spirits International LLC, a New York City-based brand development company in the beverage and alcohol industry with projected 2009 sales of about \$6 million.



Zulugrass jewelry

Made from fibrous, hollow, drought-resistant grass, dyed in a rainbow of colors and strung with hand-blown Czech glass beads, The Leakey Collection is a line of contemporary, eco-chic jewelry designed by Katy and handmade by the Maasai women. The Kenya/Newport Beach, California collection is distributed to over 1,200 retail outlets and projects year-end earnings of \$1 million.

Sanük

Kelley's footwear company is as much about funk as function: Just check out its "wire bed" sandal. The Irvine, California-based company was founded in 1997 and reached global sales of \$27 million in 2008.



Language Dynamics

Frobose developed this line of language courses out of his garage in Danville, Illinois. He built annual sales up to \$350,000 before selling the company to Macmillan Audio in 2007. —Sara Wilson

