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## Industry Spotlight

# e-tailing

### With web technology and Canvas as ammunition, Synergy Icons of San Diego is revolutionizing the world of e-tailing

Lon Safko is a man of many talents who can summon any one of them upon command when necessary. Among his many credits include founding three companies from start-up, developing over seventy software applications, and registering more than one hundred fifty copyrights. During the late eighties, he even pioneered the assistive technology field with a series of innovations including SenSei - the world's first voice-activated computer hardware and software systems for the disabled.

Just last year Lon co-founded San Diego-based [Synergy Icons](#) with business partner Jeff Clough, a former Chief Engineer of the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) and MIT graduate with two degrees in Engineering. As the main principals, the two of them are leading the way in online marketing tools for Fortune 500 companies. Their products are downloadable paper models used primarily for web site promotion purposes. At virtually no overhead, Synergy Icons operates without any inventory and with minimal personnel - a very profitable set up that Lon gives credit to [Canvas](#) for success.

"Synergy Icons produces the world's first tangible products distributed exclusively over the Internet," Lon explains. "We start with digital photographs and use Canvas to implement our entire Patent Pending process, which results in a downloadable, photo-realistic three-dimensional model. Our product models include everything from Boeing 737s to historical landmarks. Canvas also gives us the power to publish PDF files directly onto our server for web distribution."

The possibilities are endless with models from Synergy Icons: specialty advertising, sales, new product promotion, web content, etc. Once downloaded from the company's web site, they can be easily assembled as paper models in minutes. Each of the downloadable models is created from scratch in Canvas.

"When we worked with the Port of San Diego for the San Diego Port Activity Center web site, the vector [illustration](#) features in Canvas were critical," says Lon. "In order to produce the Boeing 737 and 747 models for this particular project, we needed to control arcs with colored fills, create irregular shapes with unique gradients fills, and generate appropriate-looking text. Canvas provided all of the necessary tools. In fact, this web site recently received two prestigious industry recognitions: the American Association of Port Authorities 'Best Web Site in the Western Hemisphere' Award and the Public Relations Society of America 'Best-In-Class' web site."

Besides corporate projects, Synergy Icons also has a major presence in the state of California's educational curriculum. This started when they were commissioned by former San Diego Mayor Susan Golding to create downloadable models of San Diego's six most historic landmarks. Through this particular project, Lon learned that California has a Federal mandate to teach state history in the Fourth Grade. As one part of the requirement, all fourth graders in California must learn about Mission Basilica de Alcalá, which is a landmark monument considered to be the birthplace of California, and build a replica of it. This program was recently featured on the MSNBC web site. As a result, NBC has agreed to become an official media sponsor for Synergy Icons by assisting with promotion activities throughout California and also nationally.



Synergy Icons downloadable 3D paper models can turn into a variety of things such as this representation of an NBC news van.

## With web technology and Canvas as ammunition, Synergy Icons of San Diego is revolutionizing the world of e-tailing (continued)

"Synergy Icons and San Diego Unified Schools have partnered to provide the Mission Model Kit to all fourth graders throughout San Diego, which is approximately 17,000 students, and then throughout the entire state of California to approximately 510,000 students," explains Lon. "After this expansion into the educational market, we started using Canvas to design geometric shapes created from digital photographs of actual landmarks. The resulting downloadable models enable students to build and view important, historical places in California that they may not have the opportunity to visit."

Synergy Icons relies heavily on the precise drawing capabilities within Canvas to produce these intricate templates available from their website. "The ability of Canvas to create irregular objects, edit points, and insert fills with captured textures is key to our product line," says Jeff. "We have to create irregular shapes that can be cut from an 8 1/2 X 11 card stock and then folded up into an accurate replica of a particular structure. With Canvas, we can edit these objects until the pieces fit together with unparalleled accuracy."



Synergy Icons uses Canvas to design downloadable 3-D models such as the Mission Model Kit, which is a replica of the Mission Basilica - a landmark monument considered to be the birthplace of California.

Since creating these models often involves working with complex digital texture patterns, both Jeff and Lon have become experts with the image editing features of Canvas. For a current project with Bayer Pharmaceuticals, the Camera tool was used to create a special fill. "We recently developed a model dog for Bayer's Veterinary Division by digitally capturing fur from my own dog," explains Lon. "With the Camera tool in Canvas, I was able to replicate the fur pattern onto various irregular shapes. This process produced a very photo-realistic paper dog. We have used the Camera tool time and time again for numerous assignments including ones for the San Diego Museum of Man and the San Diego Zoo."

Once a model design is complete, it is published to the Synergy Icons web site in PDF form - which provides a quick way for the company to distribute its products online at a nominal cost. "With our dependence on the Internet increasing every day, PDF is becoming more and more important for document handling and distribution," says Lon. "This particular file format can reproduce a newspaper page, a brochure, or an HTML page. Whether it's stored on a disk, sent via e-mail, or burned on a CD, Canvas-exported PDFs will include the proper text, graphics, and format compressed as small as possible for efficient transfer and storage."

"The PDF Export feature in Canvas 8 is critical to our product line," Jeff adds. "Since

everything is distributed via the Internet and usually very graphic in nature with complex vectors and digital fills, accuracy and file size are of the utmost importance. We often take a finished file that is running approximately 25 MB or more and compress it all the way down to 800 KB with the Canvas 8 PDF Export filter."

Now that Synergy Icons has demonstrated how major corporations around the world are successfully using its services, others are quickly lining up to get a piece of the action too. Company projects that are already in the works include ones for McDonalds Corporation, General Motors, Birch Telecom, and WOLF Radio Dallas - just to name a few. With everything that's on the horizon, it's certainly an exciting time for Synergy Icons and Canvas continues to play a very important part of it all.

"Canvas contains all of our necessary design software tools in one application," says Jeff. "As a result, we only need to upgrade and support one application. Canvas has allowed us to produce a higher quality product in less time than we could accomplish with any combination of other products. Not to mention, having just one full-featured product at our fingertips cuts an immeasurable amount in payroll and indirect costs while providing a higher level of service to our customers. I definitely believe that our company and Canvas have created a true "synergy" in every sense of the word."

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United 737 Airplane

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NBC Television Van

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The above image showcases a completed 3-D paper model of the Mission Basilica de Alcala.