

**Providing Up-to-Date Information about the Best and most
Cost Effective Ways to Build and Manage Business Infrastructure,
ChooseWhat.com is Saving Business Owners Time and Money**

**Business Services
Small Business**

**ChooseWhat.com, LLC
401 Congress Ave, STE 1540
Austin TX, 78701
512-448-9031
www.choosewhat.com**



**Leo Welder
CEO**

BIO:

Leo Welder, Founder and CEO of ChooseWhat.com, LLC and Zilker Ventures, LLC graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with degrees in finance and Plan II in 2001 and has a Master's in Business Administration from the Acton School- an accelerated, case-based program focused on entrepreneurship. Over the course of his career, Mr. Welder has founded or been one of the first five employees in four startups, and it was those entrepreneurial experiences

that sparked the idea behind Choose-What.com.

Leo is also extremely involved in the Austin community through charity and civic organizations. Currently, Mr. Welder serves as the Past President of the Austin Sunshine Camps and the Young Men's Business League.

About ChooseWhat.com, LLC:

ChooseWhat.com saves business owners time and money by providing them with up-to-date information about the best, most cost-effective ways to build and manage the infrastructure of their businesses. Most business owners and entrepreneurs don't have the time or expertise to stay on top of the latest trends in phone systems, productivity tools, marketing tools, etc. We research and rigorously test these products and present this information in language that non-technology business people can easily understand.

ChooseWhat.com is part of a family of business information websites all managed by Zilker Ventures, LLC.

**Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
CEOCFO Magazine**

CEOCFO: Mr. Welder, would you tell us about Zilker Ventures?

Mr. Welder: I started Zilker Ventures (the company through which Welder manages ChooseWhat.com) in September of 2007. At that time I had a business partner in the venture. We started the business, because we saw that there was a gap in the information provided online for people who

wanted to buy business products. There is a tremendous amount of information for consumer products like televisions and cell phones and what-not, but if you want to buy bookkeeping software or communications tools like phone systems, there is not much good information available. We initially set out to build several websites focused on providing information to business consumers and also consumers who want tools to help them make better buying decisions.

CEOCFO: Who is using your sites today?

Mr. Welder: Right now most of the people find our sites through references online from other websites talking about our content, or people finding us through search engines. ChooseWhat.com includes comparison and review information on online fax services, virtual PBX systems, email marketing tools, online backup services, QuickBooks, and several other categories of business tools. People searching for things like that online will oftentimes find our site, click through and investigate. We also do some email marketing to people that have come to our site and ask to be join our list. We send them our newsletter with updates and anything we have done recently that they might be of interest.

CEOCFO: What is your revenue model?

Mr. Welder: Our revenue model is very similar to the revenue model of insurance brokers. In the online world a referral agreement is called an affiliate agreement, which means we make money when someone uses our

site to select a service provider or a product. We have agreements with those service providers, and they pay us a referral fee for customers that are referred by our site. Here is an example to illustrate the similarity: an insurance broker may present their client with five or six different options for insurance, all of which pay the broker a referral fee, if you choose to use them. We work the same way. We have a comparison section on fax services, and we have agreements with the majority of the big players in that space. So whomever you go with, we end up making a referral fee. Our job is to connect you with one of them.

CEOCFO: Do you conduct much investigation of the companies shown on your site or do you take them at face value?

Mr. Welder: We conduct a thorough investigation. We take nothing at face value. Any information that we present on our site we validate. If there is a way we can verify information, like price, just by looking at what they put on their site, we will take that as evidence. When they tell us something about their product, we always want to see proof on their site, where they are publicly promoting that. Additionally, we gather information through our own tests to make sure the product works as advertised. We test the services by signing up as a typical customer and either pay for it or use a free trial to test it. Then we act as if we are a consumer with questions or problems and call into the normal customer support line. We ask them about the product to make sure that the answers we receive are the same that the users of our website will get if they sign up for the service. We gather a larger amount of information internally than we present externally, because if we presented it all it would be overwhelming for an average consumer. We gather all that information and then boil it down into a simple format for the consumer to digest.

CEOCFO: Is there much competition?

Mr. Welder: There is not a tremendous amount of competition in the technology, business-to-business comparison industry but there is some. They are primarily smaller companies providing just a few comparisons in a couple of different areas. The vast majority of larger sites that have comparisons sections like ours are consumer focused, but they do cross over into the business-to-business sections in many different areas. When we first started, they were not in those areas, but they have grown into them over time.

CEOCFO: What are the services of most interest?

Mr. Welder: The most popular services are the online fax services. I think that is because it has a broader appeal. An online fax number is something that can be useful to an individual or a business. I am a perfect example of that: I have my own personal online fax number and I have another one for the business.

“We are in a wonderful market in that we focus on providing information to folks that depend on that information and those tools to run their businesses.”- Leo Welder

My personal online fax number is where I receive personal, private faxes. I am building a house now, so any contracts that I receive that are signed will come through that number. My business has its own number, where we receive business faxes. There are just many people looking for that particular kind of service. Our oldest comparison site is a site called FaxCompare.com. We launched it in December of 2008, making it our most mature site, and we continuously work to improve this product. We recently launched a new site called FindAFax.com. We are trying to bring the features and flexibility that you would find in any high-end consumer comparison site to our comparison of online fax services. Today, the consumer oriented comparison sites have gotten so advanced that a user can narrow down their choices and create their own custom comparisons to view the most relevant information and features. We actually built FindAFax.com in the

same way giving our users the ability to come to the site and filter the products based on price, features, customer support and apps. They can limit their search to only the plans that meet their needs, and they create their own comparisons from that list. We are really excited about this technology and hope to also apply it to the comparisons on ChooseWhat.com in the future.

CEOCFO: Are there services you would like to offer?

Mr. Welder: One of the things I am instituting as we speak is face-to-face consultations with businesses owners. I am calling these Tech Tune-Ups, and I am starting locally in Austin. During these meetings, I perform an audit of the technology and tools that they use to run their business. I also look for areas where they are using what I call “technology band-aids,” which I define as tools that are being used to manage activities that they were not designed for. This is a two-fold benefit: I help them find better tools making them more efficient and giving them a better chance for a long-term success; I also learn more about which

businesses and industries are using which types of tools. I can use that information to better recommend products to other businesses. For example, if many construction companies are using a particular tool, I can recommend similar tools to other construction businesses. The same principal applies to technology businesses, legal firms, accounting firms, etc.

CEOCFO: That sounds like a daunting task!

Mr. Welder: Well, as we meet face-to-face, we will build our database online, which will make the process scalable, and we will use search engine marketing and other types of marketing to increase the volume of people interacting with the information.

CEOCFO: Would you compare yourselves to Angie’s List?

Mr. Welder: Angie’s List is much more likely to have a service provider

like an accountant or a lawyer than we would. We focus on tools rather than professional services. For accounting and legal, we focus on software and online services like Legal Zoom and QuickBooks.

CEOCFO: With so many changes to technology, how do you keep up with the changes even in the companies you recommend?

Mr. Welder: We have built internal systems for retaining, tracking and recording that information as well as the sources of the information. We try to maintain a cycle of updating products every sixty to ninety days. We also push pretty hard on the companies themselves. They not only help us stay up to date about their product improvements, but they also are usually pretty happy to let us know when one of their competitors does something like raise prices or eliminate features. We also get a lot feedback from users. We try to be a combination of proactive and reactive adjustments.

CEOCFO: What is something unusual where you would offer information?

Mr. Welder: Instead of the most unusual thing, I would call it the least well-known thing, but I also think it is one of the most valuable things available to entrepreneurs. The tool is commonly referred to as a virtual PBX system. PBX is an acronym that stands for Private Branch Exchange, but basically it is an old technology for business phones from decades ago and many businesses still use it. Essentially a PBX is something that all the big companies have that provides them with extensions, separate voicemail and all the business features connected to their primary business phone number. It allows people to call a business through one phone number and use dial by name directory to figure out who you want to reach. Several years ago they invented virtual PBXs. Essentially, these services allow you to sign up for the service, which will either give you a phone number or allow you to port in your existing. Their system creates the functionality of a dial-by-name

directory, corporate voicemail, the ability to set business hours, call forwarding and all kinds of things like that. The prices start as low as ten dollars per month. It is something I think every small business should use when they start. Running a business through a cell phone is easy for customers to spot, because they call and hear your cell phone voicemail. Having a legitimate business phone system adds a significant amount of credibility to your business to your customers, partners or anyone you are doing business with. Also, because you have designated that phone number as your business phone line, you will be able to give out and market that number rather than having to give out your personal cell phone number to all of your customers and contacts. This gives entrepreneurs some much needed control to separate their personal life from their business life. With these systems, you do not have to have a bunch of high-end business phones. When you setup the extensions the virtual PBX will forward the calls to your cell phone or your home phone or any other phone that you have. You do not have to buy any equipment when you sign up for these services.

CEOCFO: Are many people surprised at the variety of options they have in areas like the Virtual PBX?

Mr. Welder: Yes, most of the people who read through the site and find all the different tools are very surprised to find what is available, and often they are also surprised by the compatibility or lack of compatibility of the different tools. The folks that take the time to read through the content that we have in the startup guide are the ones that benefit the most. One of our biggest challenges is to find a way to help someone who comes to our site looking to compare email marketing tools, like Constant Contact and then encourage them to say, "Hey if I am looking for an email marketing tool, then there is a good chance that I would be interested in some of these other services like an online backup service or a website builder or another

tool like that, so I should look at these other tools that are available as well." That is a challenge that we are always facing and working to overcome.

CEOCFO: How is business these days?

Mr. Welder: Business is good and we are working hard to expand into some different categories. We are also trying to bring a new social element to the websites that we manage. One of the big things we have tried to become over the last five years is an industry expert that people can trust for information. While that is very important, we want to add a social proof aspect to our sites. We want people to see that other people like them are also using our site and these products. This is very important in today's online world. Being able to see that your friends are using or recommending a product really gives you an entirely different level of confidence in reading and investigating new products and new things. That is our main focus right now: trying to bring that additional level of credibility to our site that comes when you can have other people providing information and support for those products.

CEOCFO: Why should the business and investment community pay attention to Zilker Ventures?

Mr. Welder: We are in a wonderful market in that we focus on providing information to folks that depend on that information and those tools to run their businesses. Most of the comparison sites which are built that are providing information that is fun, interesting and can be very useful but it is also a luxury. In the case of our information, the people who are reading our sites are those people who depend on these tools and services to actually make money and hire people as well as pay their bills and function in business. As we continue to get traction with that community the value of our site and the loyalty of our users will continue to increase and raise our value.



ChooseWhat.com, LLC

401 Congress Ave, STE 1540

Austin TX, 78701

512-448-9031

www.choosewhat.com