

SELL



Tell a friend: Dave Balter's volunteer "brand evangelists" help spread the word about his clients' products and services.

[SNAPSHOT] Buzz Skill

PSST! HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT BZZAGENT? FIND OUT WHY THIS COMPANY IS ON EVERYBODY'S LIPS.

BY GWEN MORAN **JUST CALL DAVE** Balter the Buzzmaster. The 33-year-old founder of BzzAgent Inc. (www.bzzagent.com), a word-of-mouth marketing agency in Boston that projects sales of \$10 million to \$15 million in 2005, is so good at talking up products and services that he's got 92,000 volunteers—dubbed BzzAgents—talking up his clients.

Operating on the premise that people are looking for good recommendations before they buy, Balter gives his agents access to the latest and great-

est products and services. BzzAgents test them out and then chat them up to friends, neighbors—even strangers. They'll sing the praises of everything from satellite radio to apparel to candy. Then, they report to BzzAgent with the results of their efforts.

Why does it work? "As consumers, what we search for is credibility," says Balter, whose book *Grapevine: The New Art of Word-of-Mouth Marketing* is due out next month. "A recommendation from another person is a form of credibility."