

December 1, 2005

By Gregory Meyer

Sittercity Founder and CEO Genevieve Thiers Spotlight: Genevieve Thiers

Job: CEO and founder, Sittercity Inc., a Chicago-based online service that links parents with babysitters in about 20 core U.S. markets.

Vitals: 27 years old; bachelor's degree, Boston College; master's degree in music, Northwestern University. The oldest of seven who worked as a babysitter through college, she founded the company's Sittercity.com Web site in 2001.

Strong suit: Entrepreneurial enthusiasm and an ability to articulate what she sells. (She's also a part-time opera singer.)

Resume gap: A college English and music major, she's never studied business.

Track record: The company now has 10 employees, \$1.1 million in revenue and 150,000 babysitters. Ms. Thiers says it's been profitable since its second month.

Job one: Currently, the company offers parents a subscription that costs \$39.99 for the first month of use. She aims to offer corporate subscriptions and link employee flexible spending accounts, which allow payment for babysitters.

Obstacles: Online services like Craigslist already list babysitter ads – for free. At the same time, Internet behemoths like IAC/InterActiveCorp, the \$6.2 billion owner of Web sites including Match.com, loom as potential rivals. There are also existing small competitors with names like 4sitters.com and babysitters.com.

The plan: Try to differentiate Sittercity.com from free sites by emphasizing quality assurance: all its sitters are at least 17 years old and come with references, for example. While she says she's turned away recent overtures from venture capital firms, she's not averse to being bought out by a bigger company in the longer term.