



**Entrepreneur Connect**  
 Sign In | Create Profile  
 Sponsored by **Sprint**

Home > Entrepreneur Magazine > September 2009 > Divine Ink

## Divine Ink

### A monk turns to printing supplies to keep his abbey afloat.

By Jennie Dorris | Entrepreneur Magazine - September 2009

[Print](#) | [Email](#) | [Share](#) | [Get the Mag](#) | [Weekly Updates](#) | [Text Size \[+\]](#)



Father Bernard McCoy of LaserMonks calls himself "the worst paid CEO in the country." Photo © John Cizmas

In 1995, when Father Bernard McCoy moved in to the Cistercian Abbey of Our Lady of Spring Bank in rural Sparta, Wis., he had much more to do than pray for nearly five hours a day: He needed to figure out how to earn enough [money](#) to keep the abbey going.

The abbey, which houses seven "full-time" monks, requires about \$175,000 a year to operate. So McCoy, a lifelong entrepreneur, started brainstorming. He researched the traditional monk money-making methods, such as growing and selling shiitake mushrooms or cucumbers. He even looked into creating a high-end golf course on 300 acres of the abbey's property.

McCoy went through so many pages of research that his [printer](#) ran out of toner. That's when divine inspiration hit.

The cost of toner was "way too expensive for a bunch of black dust," he says. "And then I thought, if I can save money for us, there are others who can save money, too." McCoy started calling manufacturers and distributors to see if he could sell cheaper ink and [toner](#) online as a middleman. He also hooked them with a feel-good angle—any profits would go to a range of charities. It turned out that it pays to be devoted to "The Big G" (as McCoy says): Manufacturers and distributors were happy to sign with LaserMonks to gain added credibility in their socially responsible efforts.

Today, LaserMonks is an online retail business that sells toner, printer ribbons, and copier and fax supplies, as well as products from other monasteries, including preserves and dog biscuits. Oddly enough, the company's work still echoes a traditional monk pastime.

"Nine hundred years ago, my brothers were copying [manuscripts](#) and making their own paper and ink," McCoy says. "I'm doing the same thing—just a little more high-tech."

Thanks to a healthy profit margin, the monks now donate between \$25,000 and \$125,000 a year to charities. And despite having never taken a vow of poverty, McCoy says his life as a monk hasn't changed much, even with all

### Today on Entrepreneur



- [Grab the Media Spotlight With 'Carpe Diem' PR](#)
- [Are You Engaging Your Audience, or Interrupting?](#)
- [Entrepreneur Learns to Say No](#)
- [Give Your Business a Spring Cleaning](#)
- [You Violated a Loan Covenant. Now What?](#)

[More Stories >](#)

Free seminar from *Entrepreneur*. Sign up now.

### Current Issue



### Entrepreneur's Annual 100 Brilliant Ideas

A bold concept perfectly in sync with the moment: It's what great companies are built on.

[Read this issue >](#)

### Magazine Resources

- [Issue Archive](#)
- [Subscribe](#)
- [Buy Back Issues](#)
- [Give a Gift](#)
- [Manage Your Subscription](#)
- [Renew Your Subscription](#)
- [Article Reprints](#)

- Starting a Business
- Money
- Marketing
- Sales
- Advertising
- Franchises
- Biz Opportunities
- Home Based Biz
- Online Business
- Management
- Human Resources
- Technology
- Work Life
- Magazine
  - Current Issue
  - Archives
  - StartUps Magazine
  - StartUps Archives
  - Subscribe
- Mobile Edition
- Entrepreneur Assist

**Subscribe to**  
**Entrepreneur**  
 for under \$1 an issue



### More Resources

- Business Calculators
- College Search
- Franchise Your Biz
- Columnists
- Business Forms
- Resource Centers
- Publish Your Book
- Startup Books
- Free Trade
- Magazines
- Classifieds
- Trade Journals
- Entrepreneur Press
- Encyclopedia
- Slideshows
- Get the Magazine

the success. "We aren't hiding a Rolls or Ferrari in the barn, and we aren't wearing bling," he says. "I mean, we're still monks."

[Print](#) | [Email](#) | [Share](#) | [Get the Mag](#) | [Weekly Updates](#)


### Marketplace

 Mobile hotspot.	 Try online printing from The UPS Store®
--	--

Look at your bill and find out how much your business can save with Comcast Business Class.  
Two entrepreneurs will walk away with \$10,000 cash! Register for the Irvine Entrepreneur Forum today!

**IS YOUR CARD RIGHT FOR YOUR BUSINESS?**

**STEP 1:**  
How much does your business charge per month?



**\$5,000**

**TEST YOUR CARD** ▶

**BILLSHRINK**

**FOR BUSINESS**

### Entrepreneur Connect

**How should I market a product that everyone needs but no one knows about?**

Entrepreneur Connect member Leo Vainshtein wants to know the best way to market his new product.

[Join the discussion](#)

### Resource Centers



#### Mobile Entrepreneur

If you want to compete, you need an office that goes everywhere. We'll help get you on the go.



#### 101 People Problems Solved

Find solutions for your most challenging personnel situations.



#### Web Smarts

Get tips and tactics for growing your business online.

### Find Pre-Screened Vendors



- Web Design
- Online Marketing
- Credit Card Processing
- Phone systems / VOIP
- Telemarketing
- Direct mail



Merchant Cash Advance Loan  
[View all 80 categories »](#)

Sponsored Offers

Ads by **Adblade™**



**80% Return In 14 Days!**

Insider reveals all in this FREE live webinar. Learn to profit in any market condition. Sign Up Now! [Learn more](#)



**2550% Penny Stock Gains?**

This Penny Stock newsletter features the absolute best penny stocks on the net. 100% Free Membership [Learn more](#)



**Denver: Moms Make \$77hr**

Single mother finds easy way to earn great money from home during recession. Her shocking story... [Learn more](#)

[Buy a link here](#)



**Entrepreneur**  
NEWSLETTERS

Sign Up for the Latest in:

- Starting a Business
- Sales & Marketing
- Growing a Business
- e-Business & Technology
- Franchise News
- Business Book Sampler

E-mail\*

Zip Code\*

**Submit**