



George Pfenenger

6 "Have a tangible reason for every dollar you spend."

That's sound advice for every new entrepreneur, says George Pfenenger. Getting a company off the ground is tough, so if you can't justify an expense, don't spend the money.

Spending and making money is what Pfenenger and his partners John Dupuy and Carson Coffman are all about. They brought the Internet to Columbia — before America Online or Microsoft.

"Back in 1992, John and I knew we wanted to start a company and decided that there was a pent-up demand for conductivity in the area," Pfenenger says.

Their discovery led to the birth of Socket Internet two years later. Socket then took off like a rocket and for three years

running was cited by *Inc.* magazine as one of the top 500 fastest growing private companies in America. After expanding into full business networking, the partners have now entered the local telephone service market through Socket Telecom LLC because "until we came along there was no competition and only limited options," Pfenenger says.

"I draw a distinction between an entrepreneur and an operator," he says. "An entrepreneur likes to create something out of nothing. An operator enjoys running an existing business."

More the entrepreneurial type, Pfenenger wonders if he would start from nothing all over again.

"I was able to take a chance because I didn't have any children then," he says. "I don't know if I would be as aggressive today."

Originally from Jefferson City, Pfenenger is a graduate of UMKC Conservatory of Music. He is also a classical guitarist who maintains a recording studio in his home.

"Unfortunately," he says, "I haven't much time to play anymore."