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Up Front



DirecTV hopes its germ-resistant remotes will click. **PAGE 3**

News & Analysis



Why you see more business people on bikes in Century City. **PAGE 5**

People



How Ben Reznik became a combatant in L.A.'s many land-use wars. **PAGE 15**

Angel Investors Talk Up Video Tech

INTERNET: Vokle's 'virtual auditorium' a funding favorite.

By **JOEL RUSSELL** Staff Reporter

When Republican presidential candidate Ron Paul decided to organize a virtual town hall meeting last week, his campaign did it with video streaming technology from a Santa Monica startup called **Vokle Inc.**

The Paul campaign was the latest in a string of Vokle success stories that have made the company a darling among small tech investors. This month, the company announced a total investment of \$1.26 mil-

lion by **Tech Coast Angels**, the largest network of individual investors in the United States.

Vokle's technology couples two hot Internet trends: social media and video advertising.

Chief Executive Robert Kiraz explained that while Skype is the dominant Internet video service for one-to-one communications – what he called a video telephone – and services such as GoToMeeting provide a virtual boardroom, his company handles large gatherings online in a format that he called a virtual auditorium.

"There are lots of video streaming technologies but we're different because we turn video into a social



RINGO H.W. CHIU/LABJ

Socialized: Vokle Chief Exec Robert Kiraz.

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Racking It Up: President Steve Lee at clothing wholesaler Esley in downtown Los Angeles.

Better Fit

Free-trade pact tailor made for L.A. apparel firms?

By **ALEXA HYLAND** and **HEEJIN PARK** Staff Reporters

KOREAN-American Steve Lee and many others in the L.A. apparel industry have long manufactured much of their clothing in China, mostly with Chinese fabrics. But a big alteration may be coming to L.A.'s fashion world.

If a pending U.S. free-trade agreement with South Korea is ratified by both nations, Lee and some similar businesses may move their manufacturing to the United States or South Korea. And Lee, for one, could start using more Korean fabrics in his women's clothing lines, which could lower costs.

That's because the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement, which the Obama administration is expected to send to Congress in the coming months, would give duty-free status to a significant percentage of apparel and textiles imported from Korea, which have average tariffs of 17 percent and 11 percent, respectively. The agreement also immediately would eliminate tariffs on most textile and apparel exports to Korea, which average 8.3 percent and 12 percent, respectively.

Lee, president at **Esley**, which has a showroom in the wholesale quarter of downtown

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IHOP Aims High With Middle East

DINING: Arab region on the menu for several L.A. chains.

By **ALEXA HYLAND** Staff Reporter

IHOP pancakes are heading to the Middle East, but bacon and sausage won't be served as sides.

In its first major expansion outside of North America, IHOP operator **DineEquity Inc.** of Glendale announced plans last week to open 40 franchise restaurants in nine Middle Eastern countries, an increasingly popular destination for American restaurant chains.

The deal, a franchise agreement between DineEquity wholly owned subsidiary **IHOP Franchise Co.** and an affiliate of Kuwait-based **M.H. Alshaya Co.**, is part of the company's plans to grow the international market for the IHOP chain, known for its pancakes, eggs and other breakfast fare. In recent months, IHOP restaurants have opened in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin

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Content Control Makes Headlines

MEDIA: Ebyline software helps clients manage news freelancers.

By **NATALIE JARVEY** Staff Reporter

In this age of the incredible shrinking newsroom, how can editors get enough stories to fill the paper?

Former newspapermen Bill Momary and Allen Narcisse founded **Ebyline Inc.** in 2009 to provide a solution, giving news organizations a way to work with freelance writers and syndicate stories more efficiently.

Since launching last year, Ebyline has signed up some big-name customers, including the Los Angeles Times and Variety. The company now has expanded its service to include radio and TV stations.

Joe Howry, vice president and editor of the Ventura County Star, said Ebyline has helped the paper in the cost-cutting transition from covering news mostly with staff reporters to using more freelancers.

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Downtown L.A. Firm Looks to Get Politically Active

EXPANSION: New unit at Englander Knabe formed to pursue campaign work.

DOWNTOWN L.A. public policy advocacy firm **Englander Knabe & Allen** has launched a subsidiary to focus on political campaigns in California.

EKA Campaigns will operate as an independent entity to focus mostly on ballot measures, but will also work with candidates and independent expenditure committees that pay for campaigns. EKA Campaigns is signing up

ADVERTISING & PR

JOEL RUSSELL



clients for the 2012 election cycle, but declined to disclose them because the hopefuls have not officially announced that they're running.

Chris Bryan, a Republican campaign consultant EKA hired to lead the venture, said he will help clients deal with the new redistricting lines and open primaries. He believes third-party candidates and innovative nonpartisan personalities will have better chances to win public office because of the new conditions.

Bryan plans to help clients through web-based and mobile fundraising, online town halls, and Internet advertising to publicize their message.

Bryan began his career as a field representative on Jeb Bush's first gubernatorial election in Florida. He later worked as a regional political director for Meg Whitman's California gubernatorial run.

Vegas to L.A.

R&R Partners, a Las Vegas-based ad agency, has opened an El Segundo office through an acquisition.

R&R purchased two small local agencies, Ballpark and Kaiser Marketing, and combined them to form an L.A.-area office. The company also hired Sean Hardwick, former account manager in the Orange County office of **Draft-fcb**, to run the El Segundo operation.

Local clients of R&R include **Boeing** in Long Beach and Pepperdine University's Graziadio School of Business and Management in Malibu.

R&R combines advertising, public relations, government advocacy and research. Its best-known work is the "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas" campaign for the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority.

BizBash Anniversary

BizBash, a trade publication for the event planning industry, threw a big party to celebrate its 10th anniversary at the Pasadena Convention Center. The event attracted more than 1,400 people and 100 vendors.

The publication gave out awards for the best local events. Winners include the Emmy Awards Governors Ball, **Fox's** party for the Television Critics Association Winter Press Tour and "A Midsummer Night's Gala" to recognize the retirement of USC President Steven Sample.

Speakers at the BizBash bash included Michael Vargo, director of corporate events at **Walt Disney Co.**; Hillary Harris, executive director of special events at **Warner Bros. Entertainment Group**; and BizBash President Richard Aaron.

Hot Wheels Stunt

Venice ad agency **Mistress Creative** has done some fast work on its campaign to reposi-



Rollout: Hot Wheels stunt at Indy 500.

tion the Hot Wheels brand for client **Mattel Inc.** in El Segundo.

The campaign is based on research that showed young boys and new fathers were the only people that bought the toy cars. The message of TV commercials and events tries to promote collecting Hot Wheels as a hobby, especially among motor sports enthusiasts.

Mistress launched the campaign in May, timed with the Indianapolis 500 auto race. The day of the race, a pickup truck rolled down an orange ramp that looked like Hot Wheels track, then up and into the air before landing. The stunt set a record for truck flight at 332 feet.

A **Mistress**-directed TV commercial and YouTube videos will continue the campaign by showing a test facility where fictional life-size Hot Wheels are built and raced.

Agencies & Accounts

Miracle Mile ad agency **Stun Creative** has

started a division called **Buster Ink** to focus on print, outdoor and digital ads. **Michael Vamosy**, formerly senior vice president of design at Fox Broadcasting, will lead the **Buster Ink** team. ... **Mercury Media**, an infomercial and direct-response ad agency in Santa Monica, has hired **Shayne Forrester** as vice president of new business development. He will focus on short-form commercials, defined as two minutes or less. Prior to joining **Mercury**, Forrester was director of new business at direct-response agency **Icon Media Direct** in Van Nuys. ... **Luxe Hotels** has selected **Pollack PR Marketing Group** in Century City as its main public relations agency. **Pollack** will handle media relations, website creation and trade show strategy for the hospitality chain. ... **Amy Levy Public Relations** in West Los Angeles has added three clients to its roster: **Sherman Infinity Rings**, a jewelry collection; **Jennifer Kushell**, author of best-selling self-help business book "Career Doctor"; and **Kimberly Greene**, author of the "Pop Star" teen book series. **Levy** will handle media relations, trade and consumer advertising, and trade show presence for **Sherman**, and signings and speaking engagements for the authors. ... **Show business PR shop PMK-BNC** has added two Hollywood executives to its management ranks. **Nicole Perez-Krueger** will serve as vice president in the talent department and **Stacy Freeman-Weitz** will become vice president of corporate communications. Both will work in the agency's West Hollywood office. **Perez-Krueger**, a veteran with the agency, has clients who include **Christina Aguilera**, **Laura Conrad** and **Jewel**. **Freeman-Weitz** formerly worked at Beverly Hills talent and literary agency **UTA**.

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