

Washington Business Journal - December 7, 2009
[washington/stories/2009/12/07/story1.html?b=1260162000%5E2508911](http://www.washingtonbizjournals.com/washington/stories/2009/12/07/story1.html?b=1260162000%5E2508911)

WASHINGTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

Friday, December 4, 2009

Holistic medicine practice puts deep-breathing app on iPhone to draw in new customers and revenue

Washington Business Journal - by [Melissa Castro](#) Staff Reporter

A Reston-based alternative medicine practice is launching ancient spiritual concepts into the frenetic world of iPhone apps, in yet another sign of technology's steady march into pretty much every fiber of our existence.

Dr. Darshan Khalsa and his wife, Carol O'Donnell Khalsa, went live this month with their first app, "Long Deep Breathing." It's a stress relief technique that is part of the Kundalini yoga that Darshan Khalsa has practiced since the early 1970s.

The Khalsas' collaborative project hints at the limitless opportunity behind smart phones and the app craze, a no-barriers-to-entry industry that has made millionaires out of entrepreneurs peddling everything from flatulent noisemakers to imaginary farms that sell imaginary seeds for genuine money.

If expelling air can make big bucks, there has to be a market for inhaling.

"Apps," or applications, are tiny software programs that give smart phones the power to find a restaurant, hail a cab and identify the song playing on the cab's radio.

Khalsa, a quiet Sikh convert whose gentle hazel eyes and impossible stillness of being inspire healing in his 1,500 or so patients at **Khalsa Integrative Medicine**, is an unlikely prophet for technology and social media. He rises at 4 a.m. to do yoga and pray for world peace, then tends to 10 or 12 patients a day.

If Khalsa were left to his own devices, "I'd have just four or five patients — she's the one who brings in the patients," he said in his Reston office, surrounded by Chinese herbs, maps of the body's energy meridians and dozens of certificates affirming his training in alternative and Oriental medicine.

O'Donnell Khalsa handles the marketing for her husband's practice with a muscular New York brassiness that grabs you by the collar and demands your attention. She has her own long history with alternative medicine, but that's not the contribution she makes to their relationship. "My background is health care marketing, yours is healing the world and together we co-create that," O'Donnell Khalsa said to her husband.

Thanks in part to his wife's tenacity, Khalsa could soon have millions of patients from around the globe, although none will pay more than a dollar for his advice.

In just five days — despite snafus in the initial launch — the breathing app had already been downloaded 46 times. Without a single act of marketing by either Khalsa, iPhone users from as far away as Australia have downloaded the breathing app.

Even the app's developer, George Churchwell, the president of Herndon-based **Tech 2000** Inc., was surprised by its early success. "If they had asked me my opinion, I would have said, 'Eh, I don't know. Do people really need to learn how to breathe?'" Churchwell said. "But Darshan hit on something that resonates with many people."

While Long Deep Breathing is no iFart Mobile — which has been downloaded half a million times since December 2008 and has frequently pulled in as much as \$10,000 a day — it's a reminder of the app craze's unlimited opportunity for entrepreneurs.

"This is the third wave," said Churchwell, who launched Tech 2000 as a software and computer training company in 1984. (The company started writing apps in January.)

Before **Google's** search engines, Churchwell says, most companies were invisible on the Internet. After Google took over the Web and began charging for prominent placement in its search results, "the big guys crawled to the top and owned the Internet again," Churchwell said.

But **Apple Inc.'s** App Store has leveled the playing field once more, creating a space where placement is based on the number of downloads and the level of positive feedback an app has received.

If you're creative and already tech-savvy, it could cost you as little as \$99 to write your own app and put it in the App Store. Last summer, Churchwell's Tech 2000 trained high school students at Woodson High in Northeast Washington to create a basic

iPhone home page for their schools.



Joanne S. Lawton

Dr. Darshan Khalsa has launched a "Long Deep Breathing" mobile application to spread holistic medicine techniques.

[View Larger](#)

Not only does Churchwell believe anyone can write an app, he's also developed a business model to prove his own theory true. By creating engines that can easily program apps for any sort of educational content, Churchwell is now willing to develop any well-conceived app for anyone, free of startup costs. Instead, Tech 2000 takes a 50 percent cut of all sales revenue left over after Apple takes its own 30 percent slice of total revenue.

"We're like mini-venture capitalists," Churchwell said.

The Khalsas' breathing app didn't fit into the existing templates offered by Tech 2000, so it was built from scratch and paid for on a flat-fee basis. (The Khalsas declined to say how much the app cost to develop.)

The Khalsas are already working on developing their next two holistic health apps, including a wellness assessment that will be a free download.

At its current sales clip, the Churchwells expect that Long Deep Breathing will pay for itself within six months. But that's hardly the point.

It's more about *seva* — the Sanskrit word for selfless service. "The cost is irrelevant — it's about putting our energy into something," O'Donnell Khalsa said. "The goal of our relationship is to transform the health of as many people as we can."

All contents of this site © American City Business Journals Inc. All rights reserved.