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Born to Build, Not to Play: an Entrepreneur's 'Curse'

By [GARY RIVLIN](#)

Chris Lyman tried to live a life of leisure.

After selling the start-up company he had founded, [Hosting.com](#), for \$30 million in 2000, Mr. Lyman, then 26, bought a big house on a bluff above Los Angeles. He bought a \$100,000 sports car. He splurged on heliboarding trips, extreme diving and "other primordial male, risky stuff," he said. In between, there were plenty of days where 4 p.m. rolled around and he was still in his bathrobe.

Yet no more. Like many other young techies who came into an elephantine payoff during the Internet era, Mr. Lyman has chosen to start another company — mainly because he felt he had no choice.

"I've come to the conclusion that entrepreneurship is a curse," said Mr. Lyman, now 33.

To put himself in "the mindset of a hungry entrepreneur," Mr. Lyman said, he sold the expensive home and traded in the racy sports car for a used [Honda](#).

His work schedule since the end of 2003 has been "one continuous day where Christmas comes every once in a while," he said. Last year, he took his first week off in three years. But he so disliked the feeling of being out of touch with his new creation, Fonality, which sells Internet-based phone systems to small businesses, that it is unlikely he will take another vacation any time soon.

Mr. Lyman started his first company shortly after dropping out of college, when he was 21. The next year, he started [Hosting.com](#), which he sold to Allegiance Telecom in 2000, three years after it was founded.

"I took three years off, doing everything I thought I wanted to do," he said, "only to find out I really didn't want to do any of it." He added, "I felt more lost running around the world doing all these fantastic things than being in business."

Yet he is also dubious that this next endeavor, whatever the financial outcome, will satisfy a deep itch.

"Unfortunately, I don't think I'm going to wake up one day and be there at the promised land," he said.

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