

## biz 101

**D**EAN FORTUNATO GOT LUCKY. Not only were his women's sparkly flip-flops flying off his display at a trendy Hollywood flea market in 2003, but a top Los Angeles accessories sales rep also happened to be shopping that day and bought one of his designs. A week later, the rep offered to present his line to upscale retailers like Fred Segal and Kitson. By the following week, she'd gotten him orders from 40 stores. It was quite a coup for Fortunato, an actor and director by trade, who was still fastening Swarovski crystals and other embellishments to

the flip-flops from his apartment. An order of 2,000 had to be procured from his distributor, embellished by hand and delivered in a month. "I sent 12 pizzas to my distributor and begged him to put my order at the

top of the list," recalls Fortunato, 46. "He did, thank God." A stressful month followed, as Fortunato recruited friends and family to complete the sandals.

A sudden big break doesn't have to be so stressful, though, says Randi Drinkwater, president of Core Potential Marketing, an analytical and strategic marketing firm. If you're marketing to get attention quickly, make sure you have all the back-



office elements in place: stocking, distribution, staffing, an e-commerce website, etc. "What's the long-term view prior to the onslaught of overnight success?" asks Drinkwater. "Do you have that solid plan in place that covers all the contingencies should you be in the enviable position of needing to manage growth at a rapid pace? Then, once that plan is in place—how are you going to successfully navigate the moment of impact?"

Just like getting a big break in the entertainment industry, you may not know which marketing tactic is going to be explosively successful—but you can prepare for the possibility. If you're pitching to well-known names like *The Oprah Winfrey Show* or big-time print publications, you'll at least have an inkling of where your break could come from so you can plan accordingly, says Drinkwater.

Fortunato managed the deluge of business by keeping cool and being especially kind to everyone who helped. Today, Dini's Los Angeles sandals are sold online and in boutiques nationwide, boosting 2007 sales projections to more than \$1.2 million.

**Good fortune:** Knowing how to manage his stroke of luck made the difference for Dean Fortunato.

### OVERNIGHT SUCCESS

YOU MAY BE HOPING FOR YOUR BIG BREAK—BUT CAN YOU ACTUALLY HANDLE IT? By Nichole L. Torres