



# Workout: ResponDesign plans new features for program

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chief marketing officer at the Portland-based company.

Since the last week of November, sales have accelerated quickly, growing between 30 percent and 35 percent every week.

Barnes expects to have sold more than 100,000 copies of Yourself!Fitness by the end of March. The version for Sony's Playstation II will be released at the end of this month.

Because there are about four times as many Playstations as Microsoft Xboxes in the marketplace, Barnes thinks the new version will give ResponDesign heftier sales.

Barnes and his founder-partner, CEO Ted Spooner, are pleased with their results so far. But these are not big numbers for a traditional computer game.

"Top-selling game titles sell as many as a million copies in a year," said Anita Frazier, entertainment industry analyst with NPD Group Inc., a research firm based in Port Washington, N.Y.

However, Yourself!Fitness is not really a computer game, but a new product in "an emerging category," Frazier added. Sales for the program cannot be judged as if it were an ordinary computer game.

Yourself!Fitness addresses "a key issue in the gaming industry," said Frazier.

"There is a lot of discussion in the industry about how to get people up off the couch, how to make games more interactive," she said.

One game, Dance Dance Revolution, has had a good deal of success, both in public

arcades and at home.

At the Consumer Electronics Show held two weeks ago in Las Vegas, "there were devices like stationary bikes with a video element, changing the scene" as users pedaled the bikes.

Reviewers for computer game magazines have also said that Yourself!Fitness, while designed to work on the Xbox, the Playstation II and on a personal computer, is not really a computer game at all.

Like many popular computer games, the program features a comely female as the main character, but ResponDesign's "Maya" is a personal trainer who guides the user through a custom-designed fitness program.

Although users of Yourself!Fitness use the game controller, they do not sit still. Users of the program go through a series of exercises, which Maya changes over time, as the user becomes fitter and more flexible.

The game console looked like a good platform for an exercise program, said ResponDesign CEO Spooner, because "as an entertainment platform in the home, it was underutilized. It's sitting there in the living room, but women haven't been using it."

Yourself!Fitness has been praised by reviewers for its variety, the intelligence of its interactivity and its effectiveness in helping some of the reviewers to lose weight.

But good design and good technology are not the only attributes responsible for the early success of Yourself!Fitness. ResponDesign's founders have been very

canny about getting the word out on their initial product in a cost-effective way.

Perhaps most important has been a media campaign.

For a startup company, ResponDesign has received an unusual amount of attention, both from traditional computer and gaming publications such as *PC Magazine*, *Wired* and *Gamehelper.com*, and from lifestyle publications like *O*, *The Oprah Magazine* and *InStyle*.

The general press and media have taken note, too. Newspapers such as *The New York Times*, *Chicago Sun-Times* and *The Baltimore Sun*, as well as several television broadcast companies, have featured Yourself!Fitness.

ResponDesign owes its media success to Portland public relations firm 3PR, said Barnes.

"They did a phenomenal job, planning the entire effort, including the media tour in New York," he said. "They made sure everyone was there."

ResponDesign has also relied on some creative partnerships, including one with *Prevention* magazine, which has featured Yourself!Fitness in its editorial pages and is also running large advertisements for the program.

Rather than paying for the advertising in cash, ResponDesign has provided copies of Yourself!Fitness for Rodale Publishing, which owns *Prevention*, to use in its own promotion efforts.

ResponDesign's next marketing step will focus on promotion in stores and on the Web, as the company introduces its

Playstation II version of Yourself!Fitness at the end of this month, and adds new features to the program.

"I think it will be interesting enough, and we'll have enough new features, that the press attention will be there," said Barnes. "We'll go back to the consumer education piece, being smart about where we are selling, and doing our best to partner with the right people."

So far, Barnes said, ResponDesign has had very good results with Best Buy and Nordstrom. Both stores are actively promoting the game, but Nordstrom has stepped out to an unusual degree in its efforts to sell the very first video game the retailer has ever handled.

Nordstrom has set up equipment in its Women's Active clothing departments to showcase Yourself!Fitness, "equipment we could never buy," said Barnes, and has taken time to train its salespeople.

Spooner and Barnes plan to introduce new product lines, all based on the premise of helping people manage a healthy lifestyle, especially with regard to exercise and diet.

"Without going into too much detail, we are looking at a healthy lifestyle management system for consumers," said Spooner. "Fitness technology in the home should be able to help you monitor calories consumed and expended during the day, in a way that's not invasive. It shouldn't have to be high-effort, and you shouldn't have to be a fanatic about it."

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