

Springwise newsletter | 4 July 2007

Another week, another heaping spoonful of smart new business ideas from around the world: hotel innovation from the UK and the Netherlands, a community for subtitled online video from the US, lightweight water bottles from France, a New Zealand start-up that lets budding entrepreneurs collaborate on business plans, and more. Our next edition is due on 11 July 2007. In the meantime, check out our daily postings on www.springwise.com, send us your [tips](#), and please don't forget to [tell your friends and colleagues](#) about us. Much appreciated!



July 4, 2007

Transportation ✈



Hybrid taxis rescue cyclists

We've featured a number of 'green' taxi services in the past, including London's [greentomatocars](#), which launched in March 2006. greentomatocar's hybrid fleet has a new competitor to reckon with: [Climatecars](#) launched in London late last month. The eco-friendly taxi service currently drives five Toyota Prius cars, with three more to follow this month. The company is targeting London's corporate market, offering first class service and extras like complimentary magazines, newspapers and Belu mineral water (the "first bottled water that doesn't contribute to climate change").

Nice, but not entirely new, right? The innovation that caught Springwise's eye is Climatecars' bicycle rescue service. Every Climatecar keeps a bicycle rack in the boot. Cyclists who had an sunny ride to work but face rain on their way home, can take a cab home with their bicycle strapped to the back. The service comes at no extra charge, and offers a practical solution for consumers who'd like to use their bicycles as much as possible, but don't enjoy cycling when it's cold, dark and wet. One to launch in every cycle-friendly city, or to add to your taxi/limousine/livery offerings.

Website: www.climatecars.com

Contact: www.climatecars.com/contact.php

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July 4, 2007

Lifestyle & Leisure ♥



Drill cards for amateur sports coaches

Each year, millions of people volunteer to coach youth sports, but not all of them have the time or resources to develop fun and effective training programs for their teams. [CoachDeck](#) offers a simple yet innovative solution to ensure that coaches never repeat "the same boring practice"—handy reference cards with easy-to-understand practice drills, so that even the most time-crunched coaches can easily come up with unique programs, with very little preparation.

Designed by professional coaches, each deck contains 52 color-coded drills, most of which include a "Make it a Game" feature, plus two double-sided cards on Safety, Terminology, Practice and How to Use CoachDeck. Coaches can carry the cards in their pockets and fan them out for players to randomly select drills. They make a great tool for parents who want to work with their children on

athletic skills, too. CoachDeck is currently available for baseball and soccer, with plans to release a basketball version this fall. Decks can be ordered online for USD 19.95 each, with discounts for bulk orders.

While information on sports drills has long been available in books and videos, putting them on playing cards is a new approach—and one that's portable, fun and easy to use. It's an idea that easily could be duplicated or expanded on for just about any type of training, including sales and marketing, team-building for businesses, foreign languages and more.

Website: www.coachdeck.com

Contact: www.coachdeck.com/corporate/contact_us.asp

Spotted by: Jason Patrick

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July 3, 2007

Tourism & Travel



Back in 2004, our sister site trendwatching.com covered [Yotel](#) as an upcoming example of **no frills chic** hotels. Now, the first Yotel has finally opened at London's Gatwick Airport, where guests can check into one of 46 cabins in the South Terminal building.

The inspiration for Yotel came from Japanese capsule hotels and first class cabins on long haul flights. YO!'s founder, Simon Woodroffe, aimed to combine the best of both concepts to create small but luxurious hotel rooms at affordable prices. The cabins are roomy enough for two, have an in-room shower and toilet, mood lighting and luxury bedding, a pull-down desk, free wired and wireless internet access and a flatscreen television. Customers can upgrade to Premium for a double bed that transforms to a couch at the touch of a button. And budget-conscious travellers will soon be able to opt for Economy cabins if they're willing to share a bathroom.

Like capsule hotels, Yotel cabins are available for short-term hire. Prices for a Standard cabin range from GBP 25 for four hours and from GBP 55 per night, while prices for Premium cabins start at GBP 40 for four hours and GBP 80 overnight. Definitely a concept that makes sense for airports, which is why Yotel is launching at Gatwick, with London Heathrow to follow later this year. Locations outside the UK are under negotiation and will be announced soon. While perhaps not suitable for claustrophobic consumers, Yotel's cabins demonstrate how hoteliers can still rethink accommodation. The broader trend of offering luxury elements at budget prices isn't new, but continues to gain momentum and consumer love. For other examples of hotel innovation, check out what we've written about [Qbic](#) and the [Hoxton Hotel](#).

Website: www.yotel.com

Contact: question@yotel.com

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July 3, 2007

Food & Beverage



Water skin reduces waste

Pitched as a water skin, a new bottle created by French packaging manufacturer [Sidel](#) provides a lighter alternative to traditional PET bottles. A regular plastic half-litre water bottle weighs 13 – 16 grams. Sidel's NoBottle weighs just 9.9 grams. According to Sidel, "Water is the largest beverage market by volume with 160 billion litres consumed in 2006. It also represents the highest growth sector and is expected to expand by 5.7 percent annually between now and 2010." On that scale, waste reduction of 20-30% adds up.

The innovation was made possible by using a highly flexible type of plastic with shape-memory, which lets the bottle bounce back

into shape after being gripped or otherwise compressed. While calling a plastic water bottle eco-friendly smacks of greenwashing, Sidel's NoBottle is definitely eco-friendlier. The potential waste reduction is significant and offering a lighter bottle — and its story — could boost sales for beverage makers marketing to green-aware consumers. NoBottle will be officially introduced at K 2007, an international trade fair in October. For more packaging innovation, check out [push & fizz caps](#) and [biodegradable milk jugs](#).

Website: www.sidel.com

Contact: www.sidel.com/en/contact-us.aspx

Spotted by: Parvez Ahmed

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 [July 3, 2007](#)

Tourism & Travel 



High design, low touch hotel

Qbic, a Dutch 'no frills chic' hotel chain that soft-launched this week, is using innovations in design and service to offer guests a new hotel experience, and investors an efficient approach to converting vacant real estate into hotels.

On the surface, the hotel's most radical innovation is placing everything a guest might need inside a 7 square meter cube — the cubi. A cubi holds a high-quality Swedish Hästens bed, desk, flatscreen television, dvd player, designer bathroom, wireless internet and customizable, coloured mood lighting. Each room is 25 - 35 m², empty save for the white and open cubi and a designer chair, leaving Qbic's rooms feeling surprisingly airy. Instead of standard and deluxe options, all rooms are created equal and all have windows with a view. Other design touches include images of local attractions, attaching a sense of place to what would otherwise be pleasing but generically global design.

Qbic's other defining factor is its self-service philosophy. Convinced that low touch is a worthy alternative to expensive five-star or cheap sub-par service, Qbic applies the self-service to everything from check-in to food and beverage. Guests check in at a self-service terminal, and can buy everything from wine and candy to tampons and USB flash drives from vending machines. Room service isn't available. A simple yet satisfactory breakfast is served at a counter adjacent to the hotel's only other public space, the lobby / living room. Limited F&B offerings mean that the 35-room hotel can make do with a large pantry instead of the standard industrial-size hotel kitchen. From an operations point of view, the self-service concept, reduced food service and limited public spaces keep overhead low, which translates to budget prices for guests. Like an increasing number of other hotels, Qbic uses the easyJet pricing model — early birds snag a low EUR 39, with prices climbing to three or four times as much depending on demand.

It's not just operating costs that are kept low. While incorporating luxury elements like a hand-made Swedish mattress, the room's essence, the cubi, is manufactured off-site in China. After rooms are prepped — walls painted, floors laid and a central plumbing and electricity point installed — the cubi can be placed and hooked up within a few hours. Which means Qbic is a near instant hotel, and a viable option for repurposing vacant office space for as little as 5 or 6 years. Qbic's first hotel just opened in Amsterdam's World Trade Center, with Antwerp (Belgium) and Maastricht (The Netherlands) to follow late 2007 or early 2008. Qbic's founder, Paul Rinkens, aims to franchise the concept to rapidly expand to other European cities.

Related: [No frills chic, Indian style](#) and [New hotel includes work space for non-guests](#).

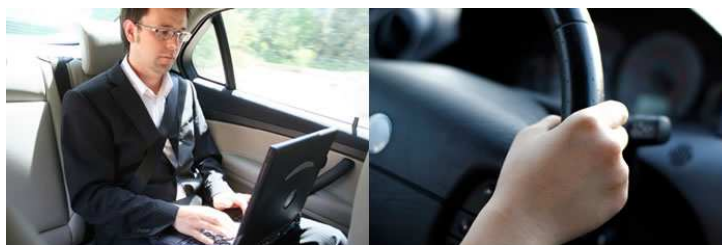
Website: www.qbichotels.com

Contact: info@qbichotels.com

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 [July 2, 2007](#)

Transportation 



Car rental, driver included

Forget GPS—customers in ten major U.S. cities can now book professional chauffeurs for their rental cars. Car rental giant Avis has teamed up with [WeDriveU](#), a private chauffeur service, to make this convenient new option available to Avis Preferred members.

With [Avis Chauffeur Drive](#), fully insured and certified drivers, who know the ins and outs of local thoroughfares and can navigate city streets with ease, pick up customers in their rental cars from baggage claim or passenger loading zones, chauffeur them around town, and can drop them off and return their rentals at the end of their trip. There's no need to wrestle with maps and directions, and customers can get work done while en route to their destination, making the time savings alone worth it for business travelers in a crunch. And offering customers the best of both worlds: a driver for the part of their trip they need one, and just the car for the rest of the journey.

The service is priced at USD 30 per hour, with a 3-hour minimum, in addition to standard rental car charges—an estimated 35% less than customers might spend on standard car and driver services. Customers can reserve chauffeurs up to 24 hours in advance in Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Detroit, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Phoenix, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. But there's no reason why this concept couldn't take off in other regions or industries—entrepreneurs in any hire business should consider how their clients might benefit from booking professionals along with their rentals. For an extensive look at the role of rental in the experience economy, check out trendwatching.com's [transumers](#) briefing.

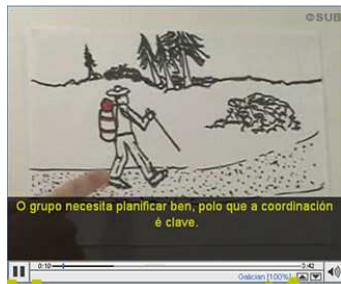
Website: www.avis.com/driver

Contact: info@wedriveu.com

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 [July 2, 2007](#)

Media & Publishing 



User-captioned video

More translation innovation: [dotSUB](#) enlists users to create captions for online videos. How it works? After uploading a video to dotSUB's website, it's first transcribed in the original language. Sentence by sentence, a user can then translate the resulting text into his or her own language. Subtitles are automatically imbedded in the video and can be viewed on dotSUB in everything from Korean to Ukrainian. The system also allows for collaborative captioning on a single video. If a work is still in progress, the amount of speech that's been subtitled is displayed (e.g. Italian 12%), and other users can pitch in to finish the work. Like Wikipedia, anyone can edit or add to the captions.

Another provider of captions for online videos is [Project ReadOn](#), which doesn't embed captions, showing them in a separate frame instead. While ReadOn's captions are rendered in large type and therefore easy on the eyes, they're prone to falling out of sync with videos, since both are loaded separately.

As web video's popularity continues to grow, making it accessible to both the hearing impaired and speakers or students of other languages is a worthy cause that could grow into a substantial niche market. One to look into if you're involved with online media, accessibility or education.

Websites: www.dotsub.com — www.projectreadon.com

Contact: info@dotsub.com — support@projectreadon.com

Spotted by: Sachin Pai

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 [June 29, 2007](#)

Tourism & Travel 



Translation cards for travellers with allergies

Travellers with food allergies or other dietary restrictions, who don't want their diets to get in the way of enjoying international culture and cuisine, are now catered to by Canadian [Allergy Translation Cards](#). The company's credit card-sized printouts can be

customized to suit a person's dietary needs and travel destination—with information available on more than 175 food allergies and 11 special diets, which can be translated into 22 languages.

To get their cards, customers simply log on to Allergy Translation's website and enter information about their particular food allergies or sensitivities. They can choose from a long list of common allergens, including nuts and seeds, shellfish, soy and berries. There also are options for special diets such as gluten-free, vegetarian, kosher, halal, low-fat or low-carb. They then select the language of their destination, so the information can be translated for customers to share with restaurant staff, grocers and hosts. For CAD 8 they can print as many copies as they like. It's an easy way to ensure that dietary restrictions are accurately communicated, without having to fumble through the pages of a foreign language dictionary. And since they can be printed instantly, spur-of-the-moment trips aren't an issue.

A simple and practical way for food allergy sufferers to buy peace of mind, Allergy Translation Cards could be a smart investment for health insurance companies. The concept can also be replicated to other types of information. Cheat sheets for business travellers, for example, with customized translations of the phrases most relevant to their industry or travel purpose. While consumers might not be as likely to pay for information that isn't potentially life-saving, offering free, relevant information to a narrowly targeted audience can bring in the ad dollars, yens and francs.

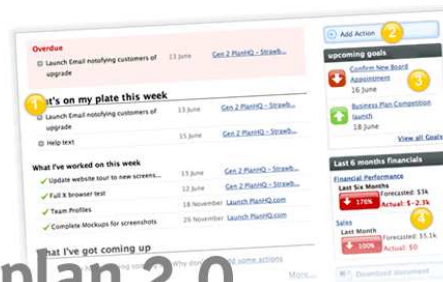
Website: www.allergytranslation.com
Contact: allergytranslation@gmail.com

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June 28, 2007

Life Hacks X



Business plan 2.0

While budding entrepreneurs can choose from a wide range of standard business plan software, [PlanHQ](#) is the first we've seen that allows for easy online collaboration. In the start-up phase, this means partners can work on a plan together from anywhere they can get online. Later on, investors and other stakeholders can easily keep track of how the business is developing.

The online application takes what is often a static text document or spreadsheet, left for dead once banks have been convinced or investors wooed, and turns it into a tool that can be used well beyond the planning stage. Besides walking a user through the process of creating a business plan, PlanHQ lets entrepreneurs manage key business and financial information online, track finances and monitor timelines, comparing forecasts with actual performance. All in a friendly Web 2.0-style, reminiscent of online applications by [37signals](#).

New Zealand-based PlanHQ offers a free 30-day trial and premium plans are priced from USD 9 – 49 per month. If you've found inspiration on Springwise and are itching to go from idea to business yourself, PlanHQ is worth checking out.

Website: www.planhq.com
Contact: Tim Norton, tim@planhq.com

Spotted by: Tim de Jardine

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