

Business Plus

A chat with ... Brian Ross

Camera staff

DailyCamera.com hosted an online chat Nov. 19 with Brian Ross, founder of Twist, a Boulder-based startup that is commercializing environmentally friendly sponges and cleaning cloths.

The moderated chat included questions from Camera Business Writer Alicia Wallace and members of the public who visited www.dailycamera.com/chat.

The following has been edited for length and clarity:

Moderator: Welcome, Brian. First off, can you tell us a little about your company, Twist?

BrianRoss: Twist is a new company that we launched



Ross

this spring that manufactures and sells environmentally friendly cleaning products with smart, clean design.

Currently we have three products: European Sponge Cloth — a replacement for paper towels; Loofah Sponge — a biodegradable sponge on one side and a loofah scrubber on the other side; Euro Sponge — a biodegradable stylish sponge.

wallacea: When I last talked with you, your company just launched. How is business going now, and where are Twist's products sold?

BrianRoss: Business has been great! We have already exceeded our 2007 projections. Whole Foods is putting all of our products into their stores nationally in January. Locally we are in McGuckin, Peppercorn and Lucky's Market.

wallacea: What makes the sponges and cloths different from what's out on the market?

BrianRoss: The European Sponge Cloth is biodegradable and one cloth is equal to 17 rolls of paper towels. The Loofah Sponge has displaced the plastic scrubby on traditional sponges and is 100-percent bi-

Sponge talk with Brian Ross

Continued from 3

odegradable. In addition, all of our packaging can be converted into birdfeeders.

wallacea: Why environmentally friendly cleaning products? It seems like that would be a bit of a shift from your past experience with beverage companies Oregon Chai and Izze.

BrianRoss: Cleaning products are an undeveloped category in natural products and I felt we had a lot of good ideas to make significant improvements to existing products. In addition, I am passionate about the environment and I feel that this is a great area to focus on to help make a positive difference for the future.

Moderator: Aren't sponges one of the dirtiest items in the house? How can people keep bacteria out of them?

BrianRoss: There are different ways to keep them clean. You can microwave your sponge for 1 minute if you put in the microwave

slightly wet. You can boil your sponge or you can put it into your dishwasher.

Moderator: What were some challenges you faced in starting your own business and how did you overcome them?

BrianRoss: One of the earliest challenges we faced at Twist was our initial packaging design. It was beautiful and put us on the shelf; however, the customer was unable to immediately see what was inside of the box. As a result, we had to do a redesign that showed more of the product.

We made the change and the product's velocity tripled almost overnight.

wallacea: What's the potential for additional products? Do you plan to stay in the sponge arena or make other products?

BrianRoss: Great question. In January we are launching the Naked Sponge in Whole Foods. The Naked Sponge has no dyes and is 100 percent biodegradable. In March, we will

be introducing Dish Soap, Counter Top Cleaner and a Stainless Steel Cleaner. All of the soaps will be plant-based and 100-percent biodegradable.

wallacea: As a newer company that worked this year on getting its products into retail stores, how much was Twist affected by the acquisition of Wild Oats by Whole Foods? Did it hinder your ability to get product on the shelves sooner?

BrianRoss: The merger is helping Twist. Initially, we were approved for only 30 Wild Oats stores. Since we are going national with Whole Foods, we will now get into all of the old Wild Oats stores and, of course, all of the Whole Foods stores.

... Thanks for having me today. If anyone has any additional questions please contact me at brian@twistclean.com You can also visit our Web site at www.twistclean.com