

From the Boston Business Journal:

<http://www.bizjournals.com/boston/print-edition/2011/05/06/eons-sale-leaves-investors-reading-the.html>

Eons sale leaves investors reading the obituaries

Premium content from Boston Business Journal - by Galen Moore

Date: Friday, May 6, 2011, 6:00am EDT

Related:

[Media & Marketing](#)

See Correction Below

The acquisition of Eons Inc. last week added a final chapter to the efforts of another company that tried to compete with Facebook. Terms of the deal were not disclosed when Eons and an affiliated ad network sold to Continuum Crew, a San Francisco media services company.

But if competing as “Facebook for baby boomers” didn’t work out, founder **Jeff Taylor** still thinks he can return the \$32 million investors put into Eons via Tributes Inc., which might be described as “Facebook for the dead.” Spun off from Eons in 2008, Tributes offers online obituaries.

Social networking was never the main dish, said Taylor, who founded Eons in 2006 after leaving Monster Worldwide. He said he always envisioned Eons as an obituary-centered service, a natural next step from Monster, disrupting the print obituary as Monster disrupted print classifieds.

“Back 100 years ago, there was a wonderful story that was in the paper and was published. You could get a little sense of the person’s life and their accomplishments,” said Taylor, who chairs Tributes’ board. Since then, newspaper obituaries have gotten shorter, constrained by cost and column inches. “I’m going to put together more story for myself so when I pass away the story is full and rich and really expresses the value of a full life. ... That was where the idea for Eons was built around the obit section.”

Investors in Eons included Cambridge-based General Catalyst Partners and Waltham-based Charles River Ventures. General Catalyst was in from the beginning, putting together a \$10 million Series A with Sequoia Capital of Menlo Park, Calif., in 2006. General Catalyst managing director **Neil Sequeira** is on the board of Tributes — but neither of the two Massachusetts firms mentions Eons or Tributes on its portfolio page. Sequeira could not be reached for comment in time for this article.

Headquartered in Boston's Financial District, Tributes has about 15 employees, said CEO **Elaine Haney**, who has run the company since its 2008 spinoff from Eons. The company is approaching profitability, she said, with about 1.8 million monthly unique visitors and 10 percent to 25 percent monthly growth in its audience. But it doesn't have any Facebook-scale aspirations, Haney said: "We really consider ourselves a funeral services company."

Tributes works with funeral homes to offer their customers a white-label online obituary service that can include video, comments and other trappings of social media. Its revenue comes from fees and revenue sharing agreements, said Haney, who came from the retail directory company Switchboard Inc.

The funeral industry now is about where the hospitality industry was 12 years ago, as far as the Internet is concerned, she said. "The dialogue I had with restaurants and hotels in 1999 is not that different from the dialogue I'm having with funeral directors in 2011."

Meanwhile, Taylor has new projects in mind. An erstwhile incubator in Eons' former Charlestown headquarters is winding down, he said, after providing a few months' worth of office space for about 10 companies. He remains chairman of Tributes' board, but Taylor, a longtime disc jockey, is starting up a DJ talent agency called Buffalo.DJ, out of which he plans to produce his own music festivals. "I finally made a decision that I would pursue something that was in line with my true life's passion," he said, "which is music."

Correction

An earlier version of this story misstated the terms of the Eons Inc. sale to Continuum Crew. The acquisition did not include Meetcha.com, a dating site affiliated with Eons.