

Yoga Stretches into New Arenas

The industry is booming, and entrepreneurial ventures are expanding its reach.

By: Eve Gumpel | 4/18/2008



Seane Corn says yoga has opened her heart and extended her perceptions.

When [Seane Corn](#) started teaching yoga in 1994, she wasn't sure whether she'd make ends meet. No one was more surprised than Corn when her first class drew 60 students, launching what has become a rewarding career. Today, Corn is an internationally known instructor, conducting yoga workshops around the world.

"More and more people are doing yoga, and it's been inspiring to watch this emerging culture," Corn says. According to *Yoga Journal*, yoga classes and consumer products have become a \$5.7 billion industry in the U.S., with nearly 16 million people as potential customers.

And more teachers and studios continue to emerge. Teresa Kennedy, chair of the board of the nonprofit [Yoga Alliance](#), says 18,000 yoga teachers and more than 800 schools have registered with the organization. That compares with 8,000 teachers and 300 schools in 2004.

But yoga's influence extends beyond classes and associated consumer products. Corn sees a movement toward social entrepreneurship among yoga teachers and practitioners. Social entrepreneurs are on a mission to do good and make a difference along with making a profit. The yoga-related enterprises often incorporate a spiritual component, and the results encompass everything from clothing to corporate training.

Kennedy and Farrah Nayka Ashline are examples of social entrepreneurs who employ Eastern philosophies to help people live better, more purposeful lives.

After almost dying from an ulcerated digestive system, Kennedy left her career at MTV Networks to become a social entrepreneur and health advocate.



Teresa Kennedy says doctors are beginning to refer patients to yoga for healing.

She created [Power Living Enterprises Inc.](#), a business and lifestyle coaching company, to achieve that goal. Kennedy also conducts an increasing number of corporate wellness programs as companies tie employee health to their bottom line.

Ashline describes herself as a spiritual entrepreneur and coach. Her practice features a variety of Eastern modalities, including tantra, reiki, energy medicine, aromatherapy, creativity exercises and integrative breath work.



In today's society, says Farrah Nayka Ashline, "We leave our soul and our emotions at the back door."

Ashline took a year off to live in India after her dotcom failed in 2004. The result of her odyssey is four separate ventures focused on integrating mind, body and soul. [Heartache Helper](#) is geared toward improving relationships and sexuality. [PotenZENTial](#) offers business coaching, including sessions on Karma Capitalism and Samurai Sales Strategies. [Get Me That Designer.com](#) incorporates the principles of vastu, the Indian version of feng shui, while [Affordable India](#) arranges tours to India.

The Trend Toward Health Care

Kaitlin Quistgaard, editor-in-chief of *Yoga Journal*, predicts that yoga will become an integral part of the health-care system in the next few years. She points to research showing that yoga "is a valuable, therapeutic tool for many health conditions."

Alyssa Dinowitz can attest to yoga's healing potential. Yoga cured her knee problems when she was a young woman. Years later, as a yoga teacher married to an orthopedic

surgeon whose patients include professional athletes, she realized that yoga could help athletes enhance their flexibility to inhibit sports injuries. The result was [Athletes Yoga](#), incorporated as an LLC about a year ago.

Most of Dinowitz's clients come to her for rehabilitation after they've been injured. But word of mouth is expanding her business. "Last year I had two pitchers who had not been injured and were doing this because someone suggested it to them," she says. Dinowitz also works with non-athletes who are injured or chronically ill and envisions yoga therapy growing in popularity over the next few years.



Alyssa Dinowitz uses yoga to help professional athletes.

Dinowitz recently started a line of T-shirts, and she says that sales have "exploded." The T-shirts are acronyms. For example, the word "ego" stands for "enthusiasm, gratitude, optimism." Also available are T-shirts with the company's tagline: "If you don't bend, you'll break."

Creating Positive 'Vibes'

Linda Horowitz and Alison Smetana, who teach yoga to children, are also experiencing success after developing [be.ology](#), a line of T-shirts with positive messages. According to the company's website, "be.ology

strives to encourage people to put forth their best 'energy' by sharing a bit of who they are and what they believe."

The shirts boast such phrases as "be.kind," "be.strong," "be.inspired." Be.ology also has a be.charitable line that donates 10 percent of proceeds to various organizations, including [YouthAIDS](#) (be.involved) and the [Bright Pink foundation](#) (be.bright).



Linda Horowitz and Alison Smetana believe that spreading positive thoughts, messages and energy can make the world a better place.

"It's been quite a journey," said Horowitz, noting that they spent one-and-a-half years looking for a fabric with the right feel. Founded two-and-a-half years ago in Horowitz's basement, be.ology has since outgrown a 1,600-square-foot warehouse and added four sales representatives. Sales in 2007 totaled about \$500,000, and Smetana projects that will grow to \$1 million in 2008. The duo recently added a line of coffee mugs and soy candles, and a jewelry line is in the planning stages.

Corn, a YouthAIDS ambassador who approached be.ology on behalf of the charity, applauds the T-shirt line. She describes the product as positive, thought-provoking and empowering.

"I'm going to buy a T-shirt regardless," she says. "I'd rather buy one with a positive message . . . or one that's tied to a cause."

<http://womenentrepreneur.com/article/2882.html>