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PHOTOS BY GREG GILBERT / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Kobi Yamada, president and chief executive of Compendium in Seattle's Fremont neighborhood, sits in front of the various products his company sells.

## < Report

FROM A11

### COMPENDIUM

**Seattle company that sells notes, journals is doing well amid the downturn**

\$14.95, as well as flip-up notebooks with such sayings as "Trust Your Crazy Ideas, Crazy Might Just Work," and "All the Flowers of Tomorrow Are in the Seeds of Today," each for \$2.95.

Zadra, 62, still works for Compendium as editorial director but long ago turned over day-to-day management to Kobi Yamada, 41, who joined the company in 1992 after graduating from San Diego State University. At the time, Compendium made inspiring pop-open notecards for corporate clients to give their employees.

Today, most products are sold to consumers through about 4,000 independent gift shops, spas, yoga studios, grocers and book stores, as well as large chains, including Starbucks, Papyrus and Target. Compendium also sells directly to consumers on its Web site, [www.live-inspired.com](http://www.live-inspired.com).

Yamada, the company's president and chief executive, attributes its current sales growth to a product mix that is both "hopeful and affordable — a great combination right now."

"People want to connect with their friends and family. They just need to do it a little less expensively," said Yamada, who is married to former Seattle City Council member Heidi Willis.

Before the recession, "people probably would have given a sweater and then one of our books," he said. "These days, they might just give our book."

Compendium employs 18 people in Seattle's Fremont neighborhood, plus seven people at a distribution warehouse in Everett. Its fourth-floor offices in the Fremont Space Building off North 36th Street include a large kitchen, pool table, swing and pair of beach bikes.

Last year, the company introduced a new line of eco-friendly greeting cards called Positively Green, promising to donate 10 percent of the profits to Conservation International and Climate Solutions.

"So far, we're probably at a place where we can donate something in the range of \$60,000 to \$80,000 to these two organizations," Yamada said.

The cards are made of post-consumer recycled fiber at Printing Control in Tukwila, an EnviroStar printer that uses soy-based ink and renewable energy.

Each card offers a different tip under the heading "Do Something Green," such as No. 98: "Simply wiping the dust off your refrigerator coils with a damp rag can reduce energy use by 30%."

It's not as if Compendium is immune from the recession, though. Yamada noted that the company has lost some of its wholesale accounts to store closings.

Hoping to prevent more closings, Compendium recently offered to pick up shipping costs for retailers once their 2009 orders add up to at least \$750.

"Does it cost us a little bit of (profit) margin? Yeah," Yamada said. "But it's important that they keep their doors open. People are spending less money, and their overhead doesn't change."

— Amy Martinez

## IN DREARY TIMES, WORDS OF CHEER MEAN A LOT



### Retail Report

Melissa Allison and Amy Martinez  
Seattle Times business reporters

When former teacher Dan Zadra started Compendium in 1985, he could not have known how much of a need there would be for its feel-good products in 2009. Amid all the economic doom and gloom, the Seattle gift company is on track to do a little more than \$7 million worth of business worldwide this year, up 15 percent from 2008.

Zadra suggests people increasingly are buying Compendium's greeting cards, books, journals and stationery because of the recession, not despite it.



Compendium products are popular now because they are "hopeful and affordable," Yamada says.

"People need to be reminded of the better parts of the human spirit in good times and bad, but right now, I think it's especially important," he said. "The messages inside are very, very important to people."

Top sellers include a quotation-filled book titled "5 — Where Will You Be Five Years from Today?" for

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