

# THE FINE ART OF NICHE PICKING

**These scrappy innovators give buyers what they aren't getting from the big guys. ■ by Jaclyn Fierman**

Terlaje's corporate counterpart is Bill Herz, a modern Merlin from Manhattan. Herz doesn't walk anyone down the aisle, but he does accompany executives on-stage, making conferences a less painful experience for all involved. "Meetings are boring," says Herz, 38, who for up to \$40,000 a convention livens things up with sleight of hand, illusion, and lots of heavy equipment that can slice a rival in two, produce a CEO in a puff of smoke, and, most magically, dispel boredom.

A magician since the age of 8, Herz started out on the birthday circuit. His business will generate over \$1 million in revenues this year. He regularly delights executives at dozens of FORTUNE 500

companies. At a recent Price Waterhouse conference of 550 executives, senior partner Martin Baumann spotted a planted "spy" from another major accounting firm in the audience. Herz then helped Baumann pull off a stunt that seemingly flattened the guy in a giant roller. "This woke people up," says Baumann. "It showed them I was willing to take chances and be innovative." Established corporations everywhere, eager as they are to reinvent themselves, would do well to learn a trick or two from today's successful entrepreneurs. ■