



## Alumni Profile: The Business of Creativity

March 2008

When Neal Reddy (BSBA '03) and Tony Rodono (UNC '02) got together for frequent jam sessions with guitars and drums at their Sigma Chi fraternity house, sometimes they played from nightfall until dawn. They've changed their tune, but they're still jamming.

In 2004, Reddy and Rodono founded Aleven Creatives LLC, an Atlanta-based company that offers creative consulting, brand development and graphic design. The business originally focused on graphic design for independent musicians but has broadened its scope.

"We make art that has a purpose behind it and marketing messages behind it," Reddy says. "Branding is a story, and through that process we help come up with marketing messages to support their story."

Aleven Creatives became more comprehensive to put substance behind the art. "Our combination of business and creativity, the ability to take something people think is just pretty and put some meat behind it, that's what separates us from other graphic designers," Reddy says.



As creative director, Reddy is involved with sales, business development and graphic design. "The thing I like most is being able to take something that's completely not tangible and develop these ideas with the client and actually come up with something that's tangible."

Among Reddy's tangible challenges are "trying to convince people that there's more to a brand than a logo," he says. "The more consistent you are, the more you can hammer your message in to your final audience."

Most of Aleven's clients are in Atlanta. They have included Ted Turner's Turner Enterprises, Grammy winner Earl Klugh, restaurants, marketing agencies and real estate companies.

Those weren't the places where Reddy looked for work on the job-hunting circuit before he graduated. He interviewed for management and investment banking jobs. "It didn't click and never really was me," he recalls.

Then Rodono called him with the idea about starting a company.

"Anyone who tells you they don't have any hesitancy starting their own business is a liar. There's always an element of fear," Reddy, 27, says. "Part of that fear is what excites" an entrepreneur. "Part of being an entrepreneur is fumbling around for the first part of it and realizing a lot of what you're doing is probably wrong."

Kenan-Flagler fortified Reddy with the fundamentals to start a company: how to keep the books, do sales and projections, cold call, give presentations. "I had a great head start on the majority of people coming out of college as far as some of the basics you need to start a business," Reddy says.

Beyond the basics, Reddy and Rodono have pursued individualism in their work, indicated in part by the quirky humor on their Web site, [www.aleven.com](http://www.aleven.com).