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## Cyber Cache: Rev Shark Draws Flock of Online Followers

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It's quiet where Jim De Porre lives.

At least that's how he describes Anna Maria Island, Fla. The barrier island is no more than a mile across at its widest point. Not quite 50 miles from Tampa, it has no mail delivery, no high-rise condos, no 7-11s, no stoplights -- not quite the place you'd expect to find a busy trader, a hyperactive online poster and the host and inspiration for The Shark Attack, the acerbic traders forum on **America Online**. De Porre -- or Rev Shark, as he's known online -- says he likes it that way: "quaint and quiet."

But for De Porre it would be quiet no matter where he is. Few of his online devotees know it, but Rev Shark is deaf.

He wasn't always that way. Eleven years ago, De Porre was a CPA with a **University of Michigan** law degree under his belt and a burgeoning law practice in Ann Arbor, Mich. But at age 30 he began to suffer an unexpected and rapid hearing loss. His doctors had no explanation, specialists were of no help and within a few short months, De Porre had entered the world of the hearing-impaired. A certified genius (he's in **Mensa**, and is a dues-paying member of **Triple Nine**, an organization of those with IQs in the 99.9th percentile), now his life was a shambles and a once-promising career was in the toilet. "A lawyer without a phone," he says, "is like a crook without a gun."

De Porre had a computer that he used for word processing and decided that he'd like to find out about this new **Prodigy** thing. "I just figured out how to do it on my own," he says. "I'm autodidactic (I like that word) as far as computers go -- same goes for the stock market." Just as the hearing world was closing to De Porre, a new community of online traders was opening up.

In time, De Porre was drawn to the **Motley Fool**, but incensed with what he calls "the preachy attitude" of the Fool posters. He was an active participant in the seminal **Iomega (IOM:NYSE)** folders, trying to argue that momentum matters, and that technical analysis has a place in trading. These were not always popular ideas in the land of Fools,

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but De Porre's acid posts managed to cut through the criticism -- he donned the identity of Rev Shark to fight the technical analysis fight. "I just wanted a balanced discussion," he says. "They tended to try and squelch talk about anything other than their approach. Traders and technical analysis are evil in their world."

By 1992, De Porre was trading online, experimenting with **Schwab, E\*Trade** and **Brown & Co.** "I still use them," he says. "They all still suck at times." None to his surprise, De Porre started making money trading. And with every successful round trip his online conviction grew.

"I first encountered him on the Motley Fool bulletin boards two and a half years ago," says Scott Slutsky (known on AOL as "LzzrdKing"). "I found him to be uniquely opinionated and confident. He would argue that a good trader can always outperform a buy-and-hold portfolio and he would argue it convincingly."

About this time, **Herb Greenberg**, the *San Francisco Chronicle's* featured business columnist and proprietor of **America Online's (AOL:NYSE) Biz Insider** site, wrote some columns and made some postings suggesting that Iomega was ridiculously overvalued, and he encountered the wrath of Rev Shark. "I started seeing his stuff knocking me and knocking the Fool and it was so pure and honest and with style and wit," says Greenberg. "I thought the guy's ability to communicate was unusual. He had an ability to get to the point and besides that -- he had a great following. So I asked him to join my site."

Thus and so, the good Rev's Shark Attack was borne. The Shark Attack was (and is) an active bulletin board site with regularly scheduled chats. It is not quite a standalone site yet: Negotiations with AOL are ongoing, so for now users have to go to Biz Insider to reach The Shark Attack. But it exists as something of a graduate school for Motley Fools, for posters who are heavy traders of multiple issues, posters more likely to run money for friends and family, posters like, well, De Porre himself. On Shark Attack, De Porre could really show his stuff. Some of the Rev disciples -- and yes there are those -- joined in to help. JP Shark, who runs The Shark Attack Stock Pick of the Month Contest, is in awe of De Porre. "Rev Shark is the **Yoda** of cyberinvestors," says JP Shark (who declined to give his real name). "He doesn't say much, no long-winded ranting, no flag-waving, no told-you-sos. But his weird wisdom shines through." Indeed, in the 133-entrant contest, De Porre is in the lead, averaging a 192% return in the last 13 weeks.

His real-world account isn't doing much worse either. De Porre says he's up more than 70% this year, and he's been able to show some outsized gains with some new funds -- a year and a half ago, he married Jeanette Gail Sizemore Reynolds, ex-wife of an heir to the **R.J. Reynolds** fortune. She's poured some of her money into De Porre's trading fund, as have some of her Hollywood friends and relatives.

"I'm doing quite well lately," he says. "I've had a great bull

run, but I'll take it nonetheless." A long way from the great gray skies of Ann Arbor, De Porre has found a new life for himself in the world of cyberinvesting. Now he spends his days in a sunny upstairs office a block from the ocean. His trading partner Bandit (a border collie named, of course, for SOES bandits) is trained to let him know when faxes come in. Plugged into four souped-up computers in an impeccably neat trading office, he monitors the market's every twitch. And the office has no phone.

"I don't know [American Sign Language] because I don't know any other deaf people," he says. "And I really don't relate to other deaf people very well: Someone who was a professional like me doesn't fit in very well with that community. Losing my hearing was very difficult, no question. Deafness really isolates you. **Helen Keller** said that deafness is worse than blindness because it cuts you off from people; blindness cuts you off from objects. My wife uses some finger-spelling, but generally people write me notes or I struggle to lip-read -- but online, I'm connected to the world."

Indeed, some might say that it was the Internet that has given De Porre the tools to build a new life for himself. But more specifically, it was the meritocracy of the market and the driven community of online investors that created a world in which he could thrive.

"It's easy to be insecure when you're deaf," he says. "But I've made more money in the last few years trading than I ever made as a lawyer. The online world made that possible. That, and a whole lot more."

