

## A Killer App for Doctor's Appointments

*A medical emergency inspired a McKinsey consultant to create a health-care business*

By Alexandra Wolfe

**I**n 2007, Cyrus Massoumi was flying home to New York after a business trip when he ruptured his eardrum. The McKinsey consultant needed to see an ear-nose-throat specialist immediately, but it took him three days to even find a doctor. Massoumi couldn't believe the holdup: If he could book a dinner reservation online, he thought, why not a doctor's appointment? That's when he came up with the concept for ZocDoc, an OpenTable for medical appointments.



A couple of months later, Massoumi, now 34, took a sabbatical and recruited two partners to experiment with his idea. They beta-tested the concept with New York dentists, under the assumption that Web-savvy young people visit dentists more often than they see physicians. The site quickly generated 5,000 appointments, and Massoumi quit his day job. In late 2007 they launched ZocDoc.

While some health-care professionals were initially hesitant, they soon came to appreciate the site. Since 40 percent of ZocDoc's bookings occur within 24 hours of an appointment, doctors found the service helpful in attracting new patients and filling canceled slots. Today, ZocDoc lists more than 4.1 million appointments for dentistry, primary care, dermatology, OB-GYN, and other services. The site, which is free for patients and charges doctors an average of \$250 per month, has a base of 500,000 monthly users and has expanded to Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. Massoumi has helped raise \$20 million in venture capital and now oversees some 100 employees. Massoumi's ambition has also grown. Now, he says, "We're focused on bringing better access to health care to all of America."

### MASSOUMI'S BEST ADVICE

- 1. Invest in customer service. "Great customer service is always important, but it's essential when you're dealing with people's health. That's why we spend most of our marketing dollars on customer service. Patients who use ZocDoc tell their friends and doctors about us and we spread by word of mouth."*
- 2. Stay focused. "It's tempting to try to grow as fast as possible, right from the start. But we chose to stay focused on New York for the first few years. That allowed us to perfect the ZocDoc business model before tackling the challenges of expanding to other cities."*